

Hiking Ethnography

A Short Essay on Fieldwork Mobility on Foot

Sabine Strasser

Introduction

As Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst pointed out in their “Ways of Walking” some 15 years ago, careful ethnographic analysis of walking “can help to rethink what being social actually means” (2016 [orig. 2008]: 2). Walking on two feet and talking to one another are features of our bodies that make us human beings. They allow us to relate and *go along* with others, human or non-human. Walking itself, Rebecca Solnit suggests, “is the intentional act closest to the unwilling rhythms of the body, to breathing and beating of the heart” (2022 [orig. 2001]: 5). It is so much part of our everyday practices that we often do not recognise it as a deliberate activity worth mentioning. Walking and talking has been part of learning and teaching, from ancient times to the present. Walking itself can take on different meanings and lead to religion and pilgrimages, science and expeditions or politics and demonstrations. Furthermore, it is universal and has particular meanings locally, whilst it also plays a major role in ethnographic fieldwork. There is probably no ethnographer who has not had to walk in order to attend activities taking place somewhere else, join research participants on their walking routines and think about past steps and future paths in collaborations. However, for a long time, walking as a technique of the body that can be taught and must be learned was sidelined (except by Mauss 1935), and it was activities upon arrival or the conversations en route that made it into the books and articles writ-

ten by anthropologists. Nonetheless, walking, as Ingold and Lee (2008) have shown, is worth reflecting upon because it allows us to focus on the senses, to compare the movements, sounds, sights and smells around us. Ingold (2018) distinguishes between intentionality – the will to do something – and a habit of simply doing something. In a nutshell, he posits “if the principle of volition renders a form of attention founded in intentionality, the principle of habit gives us a form of intention founded in intentionality” (Ingold 2018: 26). If volition and habit are decisive in rendering the experience of walking intentional and attentional, does hiking (founded in intentionality) then differ from walking, in that it requires volition to set a controlled speed, cover a certain distance or practice a certain technique? Does hiking privilege intention over attention to sensory responsiveness? Do hikes requiring preparation and equipment create intentionality and thus confuse attention that should otherwise be paid to listening, feeling and observing the body and the environment? If this were indeed the case, would we lose the very potentiality of the power of walking (attentionality) through the ambition of hiking (intentionality)? Or could ethnographic experiences of hiking lead us towards a more extensive and determined form of walking and thus increase our ability to be attentive?

In any case, the walking and hiking ethnographer is still under-represented in anthropology. The reason for this is that for most of its history, ethnography was constructed as a sedentary field of research until globalisation, transnationalism and mobility were introduced in the 1980s. Additionally, ethnographers prefer narratives about the people they walk with and the events they walk for. When anthropologists look at the learning of different modes of walking in different social contexts, they rarely think about their own involvement in this important matter. Nevertheless, the invitation to think about more than fieldwork, or about what ethnographers do when they live in the field, allows me to focus on their responsiveness and attentiveness when walking and hiking as part of and beyond their fieldwork. And since steps leave traces and create memories, we might also ask how walking and hiking connect ethnographers with the social, environmental and political dimensions of their field.

In the following, I first present some examples of hiking undertaken in the field by colleagues¹ at the University of Bern, Switzerland. I then describe my own physical and bodily experiences of walking and hiking in Turkey and in northern Pakistan. A tracking tour in the Karakorum contributed to a particular understanding of the country through the power of water and rivers, stones and mountains, ice and glaciers. Finally, I reflect on the potentialities of hiking for ethnography and ethnographers. Although hiking, as well as walking, “is a subject that is always straying” (Solnit 2022 [orig. 2001]: 8), it creates traces, memories and connectedness.

Walking in the field, hiking in the mountains

Walking, hiking and running are all considered (similar to drinking water and eating apples) cure-all practices in preventive medicine, helping achieve “a state in which the mind, the body, and the world are aligned” (Solnit 2022 [orig. 2001]: 7). Walking, as expected, is relevant in all of my colleagues’ fields, and depending on the research it is a means to take ethnographers to places where they want to meet someone, participate in an event, share experiences or follow in the footsteps of others. Hiking is not always differentiated from walking, and there is little to discern if it is either part of fieldwork – and even a prerequisite for respect, recognition and exchange – or detached from it. Walking and hiking can help wake up the body in the morning, reflect on experiences from a mountain peak or recover from the noise of a mega-city. Hiking, moreover, allows the ethnographer to appear busy and to escape expectations. In cities there are neighbourhoods in which you can walk or run without being observed and investigated, but in camps, villages or small towns

¹ I would like to thank my colleagues Moslem, Manon, Manuel, Isabel and Maya for sharing their experiences, expertise and thoughts with me. They also commented on my account of their hiking experiences. It was wonderful to be able to perceive them as multi-sided ethnographers in this context.

you usually have to adapt to the rhythms of mobility along the lines of gender and age, and you have to justify any deviating steps.

For his research on gendered mobility and stuckedness on the Iranian border with Iraq, Moslem Ghomashlouyan studied a Kurdish mountain village (Ghomashlouyan 2023) where many of the younger men worked as Kolbars (porters). For them, their job required them to walk across the spectacular border mountains to Iraq to pick up heavy loads of contraband, take these packages back over the pass and then load them onto trucks close to the border for onward transport to cities living under various US- and EU-imposed economic and financial sanctions. Time and again, when Moslem asked to be taken to the border, the young men in the village mocked him for being a 'city boy' not strong enough to walk up the mountain. Without doubt, he had to get used to making his way around a village nestled on a steep mountain, which involved running up and down staircases and steep tracks for every little task. However, even after Moslem got used to walking in the village, as villagers do, he was still not allowed for a long time to join the men on the mountains. When he finally had the chance, he returned halfway from the border (not least for safety reasons and the PhD supervisor's urgent request). 'Going to the border' involved clandestine work and being threatened by border guards, police and intelligence services. For the young men, this walking business was an expression of pride, strength and masculinity. Later in life, they would often complain about back pain, which, as they told Moslem, in turn affected their sex lives. What was crucial for their male pride and economic success was also exactly what was destroying their bodies, their potency and thus their masculinity. 'Going to the mountains' was not a recreational activity in the village but (dangerous) work.

Moslem also avoided hiking in the mountains surrounding the village because of rumours he was a treasure hunter, i.e., someone who explores the mountains in order to dig for gold. Although there was no evidence that anyone had ever actually found hidden gold near the village, foreigners hiking in the mountains were nevertheless seen as suspicious in that respect.

Moslem hiked only once, towards the end of his fieldwork, and this was a dangerous adventure. He met a young woman who insisted on talking to him alone. In order to make this possible, they had to find a place where no one would interrupt them, and so she suggested the grave of a saint high above the village. She was the only person in the village who actually knew how to trek mountains. She even planned to climb Mount Ararat in Turkey: amazing, considering the fact that women live under strict gender segregation and surveillance. For this same reason, hiking to the holy sepulchre and meeting her there was a very real threat to this young woman and to Moslem's fieldwork. Every single step taken in this highly mobile village was controlled and had to be justified. Moslem learned to walk in this mountainous region, but neither intentional nor attentional hiking became part of his fieldwork, since it was either considered as 'going to the mountains' to work or not appreciated in the village.

Manon Borel makes a clear distinction between hiking and walking. For her, hiking since her childhood has meant going up a mountain and wearing hiking boots and a windbreaker. Hiking is at once emotional, relaxing, exhausting and allows one to experience nature from a different perspective. She hiked a mountain every weekend during her fieldwork in Gyumri, Armenia, but it also supported her ethnographic work, as it helped her align with her environment – geographically and psychologically. Therefore, hiking in the Armenian Highlands, in her view, was and was not part of her fieldwork examining the infrastructure of Gyumri, a town in the Armenian-Turkish borderland. She was following the remains of layers of destruction and reconstruction, ruins and rubble as well as refurbished buildings and sites in the city to understand their historical and political reverberations (Borel 2023). Climbing a mountain in Armenia – for her – was different to doing so in Switzerland, as it was both harder *and* easier. There are high hills in Armenia for which you do not need a map, as you can see the whole mountain and decide on a route to the top without trail markings. In Switzerland, everything is already marked and hiking is part of leisure activities and normal for almost everyone. In Armenia, Manon only noticed tourists hiking in the mountains guided by Armenians who had spent a long time in Europe. In

this region, people were surprised, sometimes stunned, when they saw someone in the mountains they did not know, but they also showed respect for the person's efforts. Locals would always use a vehicle, a car or a horse to get up a mountain. Even in the city, she observed that only people who could not afford private transport would walk, and everyone else would take the car for the smallest task, even in the immediate vicinity. On one of her visits to a border village, she wanted to combine a walk to a ruin with an interview about the history of the building. Nonetheless, before she could even say anything, her hosts had taken the car out of the garage to drive her just a few hundred metres. Local hospitality would not have allowed them to let her go on foot. While locals obviously avoided walking and had no concept of hiking, Manon would benefit from her hikes, which afforded her attentionality towards the landscape and people during her otherwise challenging ethnographic fieldwork.

Manuel Insberg grew up walking and cross-country skiing, and so he took his passion for walking, hiking and jogging very clearly and consciously into his fieldwork on refugees in Norway. At the beginning of his fieldwork, he would hike and run in the mornings, when his research participants attended their integration programmes – to which he still did not have access. Manuel is an experienced mountaineer and emphasises the difference between an emotional goal and a destination, between walking along or hiking alone. He describes different ways of walking, with and without a destination, sometimes going straight to the library and sometimes attentively exploring the city, strolling and roaming. After a while, he also met with research participants for walking interviews (Kusenbach 2003), learning about their views of the city and their favourite places, which revealed their (sometimes shattered) dreams for the future. He went with them when they met their integration officers and observed how the boundaries between leisure and research – not only in terms of walking – began to blur. This way, Manuel learned that the Norwegian way of hiking, '*Gå på tur*' (Go on tour), is part of the integration programme offered to refugees by civil society associations on a regular basis. *Go on tour* can also refer to a relaxed walk through the city while practising the Norwegian language.

During these walks and hikes, and in summer camps, Norwegians teach people how to hike, what to wear and how to develop skills for hiking and language – in short, how to become a proper Norwegian.

Like Manuel and Manon, who are explicit about their own interest in walking, hiking and jogging, and the routines related with these pursuits, Isabel Käser considers hiking an utmost ordinary practice, albeit a very useful one, in her fieldwork on the PKK women's movement (Käser 2021). What first came to Isabel's mind, when I asked her about walking and hiking in the field, was these women's pacing: they were always pacing, walking back and forth, up and down, in pairs – when they met journalists and strategic partners walking in a garden – up and down. They got used to this rhythm of walking in prison when they had very little space and their movement patterns protected secret information exchanges. Marching drills, military training, powerful singing of battle songs while walking – all these actions were also inscribed in their mobile bodies.

Isabel grew up in the Appenzellerland, a region in Switzerland known for its beautiful hikes. She has been in the mountains and at scout camps ('pretend' military camps without weapons, as she calls them) since her early childhood. Thus, it was no particular challenge for her when she had to walk to the training and education camps of her research participants, accessible only on foot. The walks were only about two hours, and she always felt quite protected. Guerrilla forces were observing the area from the mountaintops and would warn people in the valleys of attacks by the Turkish army. Although she did not find any of the walks challenging, commanders kept teasing her, expressing doubts about her tenacity and strength, due to her being a European civilian. In Isabel's opinion, this teasing was partly concern for her well-being but also an expression of the expected alignment to a life in the mountains. She explained: "Even the casual banter evolves a lot around bodily appearance (e.g. how skinny you are or that you recently gained weight), which links to how ready you are for 'mountain life'." Straight bodies perfectly trained for exercising, with particular rhythms always ready to get up and go, day and night – particularly in pitch darkness at new moon – this is the basis for survival. For this reason, female com-

manders, like their male counterparts, go through gruelling physical and ideological training, but women often feel like they have to outperform their male comrades. Those who survive the first years in the brutal war against the Turkish army become excellent mountaineers and knowledgeable about food, weather, routes, fire and water. But almost all of them have worn-out bodies and serious problems from carrying heavy equipment, a lack of healthy nutrition, camp beds, torture and prison. But they have to move on if they want to continue the struggle.

In the mega-city of Buenos Aires, with about 15.6 million inhabitants, Maya Ober often walked long distances from the bus stop with either design students or teachers who also aimed to reach the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Urbanism located in the University Campus of Buenos Aires (Ciudad Universitaria) on the northern outskirts of the city. Maya's research focused on feminist practices in design, and she often discussed feminist epistemologies and their application in education and practice with her research participants along this shared path. She exchanged – walking and talking – thoughts about design classes and about feminist interventions in the school. In her perception, she hiked or walked (she used them interchangeably) with the feminist activists in a natural reserve close to the campus and enjoyed breaks there – moments of slow breathing and escaping from the lively – sometimes strenuous – city and from intense institutional life at the design faculty. There, Maya often had discussions while walking in nature that made it into her notebook. Although she did not particularly reflect on the practice of walking or hiking in the nature reserve, these walks or hikes offered intimacy and privacy, which in turn promoted intense conversations. Similar to the meetings in the natural reserve, she also joined these activists on demonstrations organised by feminist or leftist movements in the city. Maya participated in these demonstrations for interconnected political, personal and professional reasons – as a friend, co-activist and ethnographer, and sometimes as a mother pushing a pram along the crowded marches and bumpy roads. These walks in the city were anything but an alignment of mind, body and world, but Maya enjoyed these strolls that helped establish and deepen relationships with activists outside the faculty. The crowds

offered protection from unwanted encounters, and the vibrant sound of the city allowed for intimate conversations. She was also not only walking and talking, but she was also there to align with her thoughts and her feet, to express a political will. Maya did not clearly differentiate between walking and hiking but rather between relaxation and political intervention on foot. For her, unlike everyone else, hiking without altitude was possible because she was making an effort and had a goal. Identifying very much as a 'city person', responsiveness to nature was quite unfamiliar, or at least irrelevant, to her.

In my own fieldwork on vernacular humanitarianism in the Turkish Aegean, I focused on experiences of the so-called 'long summer of migration' (2015/16) and explored the local impact of the deal between the EU and the Turkish government on activists and migrants on the move (Strasser 2022). Like them, I walked regularly over the hills and along the shorelines to understand the networks of solidarities, note the movements of Turkish and Greek coastguards and to identify spots where collapsed dinghies could be found. I walked with my research participants from the associations to collect data on the distribution of food, clothing or hygiene items. Walking also meant joining people in their forced mobility and embracing their experiences with my own body.

"Before we talk, you should first go up to the old, rotten houses on the hills of Agora [a neighbourhood in Izmir, where the poorest of the Syrian, mainly Kurdish refugees live], experience how steep these roads are. And see the despair when you get back home and realise you forgot milk and have to walk the same hill again. Go up there five times, embrace the people who live without running water, electricity, a refrigerator, sometimes even without shoes. Go up there, learn your lesson and we can talk!" (*Haklarin Köprüsü* (Bridging People) activist).

For members of the refugee association *Haklarin Köprüsü* in Izmir, working with refugees mainly meant *solidarity*, including strenuous walking in order to develop affective and attentive relationships. They rejected charity, which, in their opinion, creates inequality and superiority over locals. On the other hand, women on the frontline of the charity organisation *Bodrum Isanca Yasam – Bodrum Humanity* – also walked long hours through the hills of Bodrum to find people who were

hiding from the border patrol. They aimed to treat their wounds, show them the way to places where food was being distributed and provide them with shoes and clothes for the next stage of their journey.

Since my childhood, I had been used to Austrian Alpine hikes, but long walks in the Aegean did not mean hiking to me. Contrary of the contemplative hikes along marked paths in the mountains, walking in the Aegean hills had a highly politicised meaning that included hiding from police and border patrols, finding people in need and supplying them with vital provisions whilst on the move. I never longed to hike in the Aegean in order to enjoy the beautiful Mediterranean scenery and amazing views. Hiking for me involves relaxation, reflection and rhythm on a prepared several-hour tour, all of which was obviously not possible at that time when hundreds of people had died in the surrounding glistening sea. Combining research with hiking, however, was something I had experienced the year before. I had never been to Pakistan, and had never started hiking above 3,000 metres, when I decided to accompany Martin on his trekking tour to the high pastures of Shimshal (on Taghm in Shimshal, see Sökefeld 2018) in the Karakoram Mountains of Gilgit-Baltistan. In the next section, I focus on hiking experiences and bodily sensations in the north of Pakistan. Particularly, I discuss affects and effects that are rarely mentioned in ethnographic encounters because they expose personal anxieties, hierarchies and emotions. Used to travelling independently to and moving around in my own research fields, extensive hiking in a new and breathtaking environment with an experienced colleague pushed me (unexpectedly) into a role similar to representations of 'wives' in early anthropological encounters.

Walking a glacier in the Karakorum

This story begins with walks in the humid heat of the Islamabad summer, with which Martin was familiar. I also had to adjust quickly to the sheer density of bodies in Rawalpindi, which forced me to negotiate my inflexible body clumsily through an astonishingly flexible environment. The first really stressful experience was caused by the huge amounts of

Pakistani traffic, which really made me feel and act like a stranger on the drive from Islamabad to Abbottabad. The driver of the car immediately recognised my anxieties and confirmed my feeling of alienation by asking Martin with a smile if I was German. *No, I am from Austria*, a child inside me protested, but she was silenced immediately by the traffic that demanded my full attention. Martin seemed to be stronger than usual, masculine and supported by other men, among whom I felt quite awkward. Gender relations supported him and made my way of fearing for our life seem strange and cowardly.

Adventure did not quite match the experience, though, when – a couple of hours later, shortly after the Babusar Pass at an altitude of more than 4,000 metres (13700ft) – the car's engine failed and thus could no longer support the braking manoeuvres required for the steep serpentine-like road that twisted down to the Indus valley. I would definitely have preferred to walk down this mountain road, but I knew it was way too far. At least we didn't need an engine when rolling downhill, and so we kept going until the car stopped in the middle of a sandy nowhere on a small hill on the way to Chilas. I could see towers dotted across the landscape which, according to Martin, had been set there to protect people from blood feuds. I saw men who seemingly appeared from nowhere and started to form a circle around the car, curious to see who had got stranded close to their village. I began thinking about Ruth Behar's "The Vulnerable Observer" (1996) in a different way, trying to be invisible by not looking around and keeping my eyes lowered. After a while, Martin took me to a construction shack close by, in order to protect me from the men's gaze, and, without anyone asking me, I covered my face. Walking to this shack was a relief after hours in the car, and yet the mind, the body and the world were all but in alignment at that very moment. Although the men from the village proved to be extremely friendly and pushed the car to the next ridge, from where we could roll further down, I felt exhausted from the immobility and the waiting. I had learned my first lesson about the power of altitude and a local variation of gender segregation, and shortly thereafter I made acquaintance with a nasty virus in Chilas. Broken brakes and traffic were no longer my main concerns.

As we drove through the Indus Valley the next day, I saw the remarkably powerful river with huge waves and whirls in the muddy water. I began to understand a line from a book in which a man who had fled the Indian Partition looks sadly at the beautiful Bosphorus Strait in Istanbul and describes the quiet water there as a prisoner compared to the Indus. The power of the rivers in Gilgit-Baltistan made me feel fear and excitement simultaneously – a bodily sensation I got used to over the next few weeks when walking across them. We caught our first glimpse of Nanga Parbat and had breakfast near a sign indicating that the huge mountain ranges of the Karakoram, the Hindu Kush and the Himalayas met there. Later, at the Karakoram Highway, we had tea in the face of the almost 7,800 m high Rakaposhi, with no mountain between this magnificent beauty and us. Before I start sounding like a tour operator, in describing my arrival in the land of Hunza and Nagar, I would like to return to my growing understanding of mountains, landslides, rubble and water while preparing for our hike in the Karakoram.

In Hunza, we drove along the highway from Karimabad to the small town of Gulmit, for which we had to cross the Attabat reservoir in a small boat. We had to share this boat not only with many people, but also with motorbikes and our car, which stood on two wooden planks and protruded over the boat's edge. The reservoir, which I knew from Martin's work (Sökefeld 2020), had been created by massive landslides that destroyed parts of Attabat village and the Karakoram highway and also dammed the Hunza River. I understood well after a couple of days why Martin spent so much time there and was captivated by the power of mountains and rivers in the region. Personally, I was rather fascinated by the manifold but always noisy interactions between water and stones. While Martin was talking to people and conducting interviews, I had time to look at myself arriving somewhere and getting bodily acquainted with new rhythms and routines, sounds and views. After a couple of days of adaptation to the altitude, facilitated by walks along the steep hills and through the lovely apricot gardens of Gulmit, we planned to move on to Shimshal the next morning, and so we organised a car and went to bed early. In the evening, we were surprised by drizzle, a rather rare occurrence in that stone desert at the time. Since Martin

didn't seem to be worried, I had almost forgotten about the rain the next morning when I woke to a splendidly sunny day. We were therefore quite nonplussed when we found out that this tiny amount of rain had actually caused the closure of the highway to China and had covered the small road to Shimshal with about 15 landslides. Determined to carry out our plans, however, we decided to climb over the hills created by these landslides, accompanied by some villagers who had the same goal. After having crossed four of the huge gravel mounds, we arrived at a bridge that had been destroyed by a rockfall and had fallen into the river. On hearing the tangled debris scraping against itself in the river, about ten metres below us, Martin and I briefly looked at each other, shook our heads and determined not to jump to the other side. We said goodbye to our companions, despite them trying to convince us by all means that it was quite safe to jump to the other side, by jumping back and forth in front of us. My body responded with a clear *no!*

We cancelled Shimshal for that year and decided to do a four-to-five-day trek across the Patura Glacier again, to see how pastoralism had been transformed. We walked with two young men from Passu, namely Habibullah and Ali Sifa, whose families Martin had known since their childhood and who had spent their childhood with their grandmothers in the high pastures. As our guides, they would earn money and pass the time a bit in their long, drawn-out summer. They walked in front of us, disappearing at times and then showing up when needed, such as when it was time for soup, establishing the tent together or helping me over difficult or even dangerous obstacles. My walking rhythm and breathing were clearly different from their extended strides and breaths. They preferred Urdu to English and thus mostly talked to Martin, rarely to me. Nevertheless, they were terribly patient and friendly with me, since I was coughing and gasping a lot as a response to the altitude. They reached out to me when I needed them and let me walk step by step, listening to the glacier's ice and stones passing beneath my feet. With the increasing passage of time, I came to appreciate the feeling of lightness from the extensive hikes and looked forward to the approaching landscapes. Only when we had to cross a raging river on a few branches did I seriously doubt our undertaking. After looking around the bend, I knew that if I

fell, I would disappear into a glacier cave. The river was small compared to the Hunza River but still quite strong. I took a deep whistling breath and walked across. Habibullah told me that there was no other obstacle like this for the rest of the tour, yet I was aware that we would have to come back to this makeshift bridge on our return. The tour was long and exhausting for me, but it was also full of joy, thanks to the beautiful mountains around us, the huge glacier tail, the alpine pastures, the giant and yet so timid yaks and the vast and nimble flocks of goats.

When we reached the high pastures, we met two men from the poorer mountainous areas of Chitral who had been hired as shepherds. Hundreds of goats gathered around our tent in the evening as they scrambled to their sheltered sleeping place. Despite the noise made by the goats and the glacier, I fell asleep immediately, as I was just too tired to care about any possible threats. The next morning, I felt happy and proud when I was awakened by the same sound. I observed Martin taking pictures of the pasture, until recently the summer residence of the village women, and interviewing the shepherds. I was amazed that the villagers apparently walked these trails regularly and without much effort as part of their semi-nomadic pastoral economy. Later that day, the young men caught a partridge on the way and carried it injured over their shoulder to prepare a meal in the evening. When I saw that the other – much more heavily equipped – hiking group we had met on our tour had destroyed the makeshift bridge, I once again became painfully aware of the glacier cave behind the bend, and the power of nature.

We spent one last night under the starry sky before we started our descent along the little sandy trails back to Passu and the highway. The photos we took with Ali-Sifa and Habibullah in the village show the deep joy and unconcealed pride of all of us, I guess for very different reasons. I remember that I thought about many colleagues and friends and wondered what their walks had meant to them, to their research participants, their environment and their research. That was the moment when the idea for an essay on bodily experiences, intentions or attentions and on alignment with new landscapes was born. It has taken me almost eight years to find an opportunity to run with this idea and to start “poking around in a basket of older and more recent memories –

visual, auditory, tactile and visceral" (Tošić 2020, 22), in order to ask about affective, physical and scientific experiences while hiking. But what would have been a better occasion than Martin's *Festschrift*?

Coda

I have followed different ethnographers' intentionality and attentionality, probing their walking and hiking as part of and beyond their fieldwork. Walks and hikes provide access to places that can only be reached on foot, such as guerrilla camps and high pastures, as well as secret meetings. Additionally, they help fulfil local people's expectations, such as attendance at demonstrations or on instructive programmes. On the contrary, they can also lead to surprises, such as Manon's contemplative walks to distant ridges sometimes did. Feet also leave traces of unwanted meetings, dangerous places, prescribed education, political goals and violent encounters, thus creating memories and connecting the ethnographer with their field in various ways. Furthermore, the repeated footsteps engender affects, sensations and experiences, in addition to new scholarly insights, and thus they are more than ethnographic fieldwork. Often, research participants do not frame hiking in the same way, and sometimes they do not even have a word to describe it. In the Iranian borderlands, people do not consider the work of Kolbars as hiking but as going to the pass or over to the other side. Guerrillas march, jump or creep. People of the Armenian highlands use their car or ride a horse to avoid walking in the city or hiking to the top of a mountain, and feminist activists who protest with their feet in Buenos Aires see social transformation as the goal of walking. Refugees hardly see their walks in the hills of Bodrum as relaxing, when the rhythm is prescribed by others and their bodily sensations indicate stress. Many Norwegians do hike, and they obviously think that this physical technique is so much part of their identity that they have to teach it to future co-citizens, to make them fit for society.

Thus, it is not the difference between hiking and walking that creates the distinction between the will based on intention or the habit based

on attention. On the contrary, both walking and hiking enable the alignment of the body to the landscape, to listening, observing and feeling. Both may simultaneously feed into either the tourism industry or into anti-capitalist attentionality. However, only hiking is associated with national imaginaries that also shape the skills, will and practices of ethnographers. Besides relaxation and attention, hiking is also a 'happy object' of national and alpine identity with the potential of differentiation and exclusion as well as the need for critical reflection.

References

Açiksöz, Salih Can (2020): *Sacrificial Limbs. Masculinity, Disability, and Political Violence in Turkey*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Behar, Ruth (1997): *The Vulnerable Observer*, Boston: Beacon Press.

Borel, Manon (2023): "I serve my motherland", Anthroblog, June 27. http://www.anthro.unibe.ch/ueber_uns/anthroblog/index_ger.html

Ghomashlouyan, Moslem (2023): "Landscapes of il/legality: contraband mobility in the Kurdish mountains of the Iran-Iraq border (unpublished)." In: LSE Kurdish Studies Conference, LSE Middle East Center, UK (24–25 April).

Howell, Signe (2003): "Kinning: The Creation of Life Trajectories in Transnational Adoptive Families." In: *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9/3, pp. 465–484.

Ingold, Tim. 2018. *Anthropology and/as Education*. London: Taylor and Francis.

Ingold, Tim and Jo Lee Vergunst. 2016 [2008]: *Ways of Walking. Ethnography and Practice on Foot*. London Routledge.

Fischer, Carolin, and Manuel Insberg. "Asylum as Everyday Life: Exploring Meanings and Experiences of Protection among Refugees in Norway and Switzerland." In: *Geopolitics*, forthcoming.

Käser, Isabel (2021): *The Kurdish Women's Freedom Movement. Gender, Body Politics and Militant Femininities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kusenbach, Margarethe (2003): "Street Phenomenology: The Go-Along as Ethnographic Research Tool." In: *Ethnography* 4, pp. 455–485.

Marcel Mauss (1935): "Technologie de corps." In: *Journal de psychologie normal et pathologique*, XXXII, 1935, pp. 271–93.

Sökefeld, Martin (2020): "The Power of Lists: IDPs and Disaster Governmentality After the Attabad Landslide in Northern Pakistan." In: *Ethnosc 87/2*, pp. 365–383.

Sökefeld, Martin (2018): "Taghm. The Sowing Festival in Gojal." In: *Tsantsa* 23, pp. 127–137.

Solnit, Rebecca (2022 [2001]): *Wanderlust. A History of Walking*. London: Granta.

Tošić, Jelena (2022): "It takes two to tango. (Auto)Ethnographic Reflections on Close Negotiations in Uncertain Times." In: Esquinas Rychen, Ana Maria/Claudia Franziska Brühwiler/Vanessa Boanada Fuchs (eds.), *Coreografias transculturales*, Iberoamericana Vervuert. <https://www.alexandria.unisg.ch/handle/20.500.14171/109572>

