

5 Gardening in Motion

An important aspect I learnt about mekem garen in Vanuatu was that of people walking to the bush and moving gardens to other locations, due to weather, seasons and individual preferences. When horticulturalists around Dixon Reef decided to restrict the use of their home gardens during El Niño, they followed the water and the sun and relocated their gardens. Until now, I have only mentioned in passing that, the work of cultivation takes place over several years and in several locations.

Only in the bush, my interlocutors explained, does the real gardening take place and that is where you would find the numerous gardens that were continually planted and replanted. During the time of El Niño, villagers left their small home gardens behind and walked several kilometres to plant, weed and harvest a wide variety of food crops. These gardens were located at quite a distance from one another, so that the amount of walking during a day would be considerable. Before the arrival of missionaries on Malekula island, people kept gardens away from the house, and although they were not far away, the gardens were always separated from the gardeners. When I talked to older people, they described gardens as being meeting places for the married couple, because in the village they had stayed in the women's or the men's house. After people came down to Dixon Reef at the western shore of the island and planted coconut and cocoa plantations around the village, gardens had to be moved further away. My interlocutors defined leaving the village as going to 'work'. Even if women stayed around their house, cleaning inside, sweeping outside, washing the dishes, doing the laundry and cooking meals for the children, they would tell me in the afternoon that they had not done any gardening the whole day, and thus would feel that they had not really been productive. Men would be referred to as not manly enough if they hung around the village all day. Ultimately, only church community work, taking care of younger children or an illness would be a valid reason to stay at home. When I stayed close to the house

all day to write, people would see it as proof that I needed to rest. People often told me that they felt energetic and strong after a long day in the garden, having walked for hours and would only 'kam bak lo tu dark' (come back when it was already dark) even though it was not always yet dark on their return. After a day working in the gardens, the women especially met in the kitchen and chatted about their day's work. They talked about which gardens they had visited, which routes they took, what they had seen in the gardens of others, how far some crops had grown or whether an area was flooded or dry. Villagers then exchanged information about crops and about the surroundings and how the road, neighbouring gardens, trees and the whole area looked at that point in time. No garden stands alone, because neighbouring gardens are close and so other gardens and important landmarks are passed en route.

By focusing on practice, including walking (Lee and Ingold 2007), I will show in this chapter that gardening or mekem garen in Dixon Reef is a process of movement rather than a single activity taking place in one fixed location. Including literature on the concept of place (Cresswell 2014) and the concept of ples (place) in Vanuatu, which advocates for an understanding of places not as fixed but as dynamic and relational (Bolton 1999; Hess 2009; Rodman 1992), I will then depict how people in Dixon Reef render their gardens and their environment as interaction in motion, seeing them as 'taskscape' (Ingold 1993), since activities drive interaction between people and their surroundings, and 'wayfaring' (Ingold 2007) as an intentional form of navigation through the world.

5.1 On a Garden Day

In the morning, the women started their walk at the house in the middle of the village. Four women, two children, equipped with knives and with long fabric, a calico with flower pattern, wrapped around the hips. Every group member was wearing work clothes, the women a skirt with shorts underneath and a shirt dirty from past work in the garden, some with holes from too much sweat, sun and saltwater. They stood relaxed on the path and waited for me, the houses of my host family being half way out of the village. Martine and Emma, the two 'mamas', smiled, ready and happy to get to work for yet another garden day. I rushed to join the group, because they would probably just head on if they had to wait too long. Then, we slowly started walking on the dirt road which led out of the village. "Where are we going today?" I asked. "We go to our gar-

dens on the side of the hill because we want to harvest some manioc for laplap this afternoon.” I knew this area, one hillside that was covered with manioc plants. I also knew the route to get there; I could even find it on rainy days. A short 30-minute walk led across the coconut and cacao plantation and through a creek filled with water taro. With this plan in mind, I joined the walk of the women. It was a hot, sunny day, although it was a little before 8 o'clock, and my body felt sticky and I smelled of sunscreen and mosquito repellent. When we reached the last group of houses at the entrance of the village, Emma entered the yard. She approached the tree and picked some ripe Navel nuts and told us that she wanted to harvest some. After only a few minutes' walk, this was our first stopover of the day. Josephine, who lived in these houses, left her cooking behind when she heard where we were heading and quickly asked my group to bring some manioc for her as well. Some men passed and short questions about the journey were exchanged: “Where are you going?” “Ah, just walking and looking for the gardens.” I watched as these men passed and went along the big road, which led to the gardens for bananas. Later, one of the men told me that they had visited five different gardens, went up the hill and to the swamp and took a small detour to look at the cattle. Then, my working group continued the walk following the so-called small road, and we crossed the plantation with its huge coconut trees and walked under the smaller cocoa trees, always walking behind each other in a line because the paths were so narrow. Once we had left the last house behind us, our walk became faster. When we had started, group members had been very chatty, while we had been collecting the nuts, we exchanged some village news, but once outside the village, our steps became faster, and we silently and with concentration walked through the landscape. Now, the members of my working group became focused – we had started the gardening day. Once we came to a fork, leading up to the hill or following the plain, Emma called from the back of the line that she wanted to make a quick detour to one of her gardens, because she had just remembered that she wanted to pick some of her island cabbage and she would meet us later on. She disappeared in the direction of the river and Martine quickly called after her to remind her to look for some spring onions as well. We then reached the bottom of the hill. At this point, we had to cross stagnant water: “Look at my water taros, they look really good.” Martine pointed her knife at the heart-shaped leaves of the taro plant. I waded through the water, trying not to get stuck or to lose a shoe from my hands, or my knife, or my clothes. The others checked the tubers as they passed. We were at the foot of the hill and the tree-covered area of the plantation opened up.

The big fire one year before had left a kilometre-wide area without trees and shrubs, and the soil might have been enriched by the ash, making it suitable for planting crops. The next year, families did not hesitate to distribute spots and started planting mostly manioc. We were now standing at one of these sites. I looked up and directly into the sun. Looking uphill, one could see one manioc plant next to another, reaching over my head. It was a hot day, one on which you want to hide in the shade. We climbed up, the others not slowing their pace. The women and children in front of me, light-footed, leapt up the mountain, weaving their way between the plants. At one point, I got lost between the manioc plants. “This is not the path” – I was walking a zigzag course, but apparently took a wrong turn somewhere. “So where is this path?” I looked around me, and down, and up again – everything I saw looked like red soil with manioc plants. “It’s here” – a little annoyed, one of the girls pointed at a gap between the plants. I still did not see any path but followed the way she pointed. “How can you tell this is the path?” I asked. With an irritated expression, she explained: “Because they [other people in the village] walked here before, one can see it.” It would take me some months before I could see what she meant and actually recognise the different paths.

When we reached the halfway point, we spread out among the plants and without hesitating, the working group went straight to work. In order to remove the manioc tuber, they used their machetes as a digging stick, as a shovel and as an actual cutting instrument. Meanwhile our missing group member Emma returned and brought island cabbage and spring onions, but only stopped for a short progress check and was off again a hundred metres higher to plants she had planted. We took a break from the digging and cutting and walked down again to the shady place underneath the trees to drink our coconut. While we were resting, some women cut several ropes and found sticks to make extra material for transport. It was already foreseeable at this point that we would have a very bountiful harvest. And it was indeed: heaps of manioc! We wrapped them into our patterned fabric calicos, swung the bundles on our backs and tied the ends of the cloth together in front of our chests. On other occasions, I had seen men carrying crops on a stick over their shoulders, but women would take the harvest in the same way they would carry their children.

This was surely not the end of our garden day. When we returned to the junction, a crossing between different roads leading to the village of Blacksand and the gardens further away, which we had passed before, we lowered our spoils back to the ground so that we could take a quick detour. We went in the

other direction, further along the coast, and checked on some more gardens for vegetables and bananas. In one, we collected the leaves for the laplap dish in the evening, the women cut the leaves and then split the ends of the stems and rolled up the leaves. The small bundles were evenly distributed among all group members, so that every woman had enough for baking their individual laplaps. In another garden down the road, we checked vegetables for a salad; when wandering through the vegetable gardens at the dried-up river bench, the women bent down, plucking out a creeping grass or taking their knives to clean the pineapples from overgrowing leaves. When we came back to the road, we met another working group: “Where are you coming from?” – they had just returned from the banana garden. Information about the neighbouring plots and the ones they saw on the way were exchanged, some of which also belonged to Emma and Martine. They reached down to cut some bananas and handed a bundle to me. In the end, when we returned to our manioc harvest, it was much too heavy for me to carry, in contrast to my companions, who carried their bundles effortlessly on their backs. The closer we got to the village, the more words were exchanged about the successful working day.

Back in the village, we again passed at Josephine’s yard and delivered the ‘orders of the day’, before stopping at my family’s house to distribute the yield. Martine, Emma and the others headed on, with some more stopovers at relatives’ houses, finally heading to their own kitchens. Returning in the afternoon, sweaty and dirty from the physical work, the women would immediately start their cooking, before even taking a shower. Men went for kava and to tell the stories of the day: “Where did you go today and what did you do today?” Routes were discussed, among other exchanges of political news. After a ‘garden day’ the women also met in the kitchen and chatted about their day’s work. They talked about which gardens they had visited, which routes they took, what they had seen in the gardens of others, how far some crops had grown or whether an area was flooded or dry. Villagers then exchanged information about crops and about the surroundings and how the road, neighbouring gardens, trees and the whole area looked at that point in time.

5.2 Gardens out of Place

The experiences of a typical garden day described above show several aspects to which I will attend in this chapter. When starting their walk, the women expressed what they wished to do during the day, however, the actual imple-

mentation of this plan changed during the activity, as did the plan itself due to either the status of crops, the roads or the weather. Work within the gardens was one part of achieving the garden day, but what happened in between was just as relevant for the wider process of gardening. Plans of where to go changed according to what happened on the road and due to the movements of people through the environment. From an early age, Dixoners learn how to navigate through their environment. The paths, invisible to the untrained eye, are made by traces of human interaction with the ground. Paths lead to the gardens, but, as I will explain on the following pages, neither the paths nor the gardens themselves are static and bound to one location.

There are several detailed descriptions of what happens *in* the gardens of Vanuatu – about what is planted, how it is planted and which rules are to be followed in order to make crops grow (Barrau 1958; Calandra 2017; Gundert-Hock 1984; Rio 2007b; Walter, Lebot and Sam 2007; Weightman 1989). Similarly, in the previous chapter, I have described how diversification of planting and constant innovation is part of the praxis of gardening. However, a large part of the garden day for people in Dixon Reef does not actually happen in the garden, but in the movement between the gardens. This means that, although it is important to see what happens in the garden plot, the process of gardening was achieved both at the location of the garden *and* through the movement to, from and between gardens. Once they arrived in a garden plot, people started planting, weeding and harvesting, working on their own – and communication was reduced to a minimum. Additionally, although the group would stay together for a longer time in one place, one person would often leave the group to have a quick look at another garden plot, or head home earlier. During this time, they picked up planting material or crops, or exchanged some of the yield. Gardening thus comprises largely being on the move through the network of gardens as much as working in one spot. Therefore, in the following paragraphs I want to engage with the garden as place, in order to understand what it means for *ni*-Vanuatu horticulturalists.

The gardening areas outside of the village consist of several bigger or smaller garden plots that merge into one another. Everyone has implicit permission to access any garden plot as passing through another's plot is often necessary to reach one's own. Borders to neighbours' gardens are thus permeable, but the boundaries of the respective plots are clear-cut. My interlocutors constantly told me about a rule that permits you to even enter another person's garden plot, when feeling hungry, to pass some ripe bananas and cut some of them for eating, without the express permission of the owner. As a result of

these arrangements and rules, on my first visit I did not even notice where a garden began and where it ended, or who the owner was. Today, areas where cultivation takes place pass into secondary forest, other cultivated areas or even plantations. All of the areas were at least a 20-minute walk away from the village and most of the garden plots were located at a greater distance, up to one and a half hours' walk.

I was told numerous times that before the arrival of missionaries and the subsequent resettlement of the village, villagers installed their gardens closer to the 'house'¹ and built a fence around it (Rio 2007b). The missionaries and colonial administration placed a focus on plantations for cash crops and animal breeding, so fences were installed around the animal husbandries and the subsistence gardens were located further away from the villages (ibid., 106). Knut Rio points out in his description that in North Ambrym, the yam garden is called *lonor*, which means 'place inside place'. According to Rio this could mean "a fenced-in space within a larger place" (ibid., 106). I will return to this at the end of this section because, in my opinion, the garden could be described, fenced or not, as a place within a place – not in the sense of a demarcation, but through the connections that are created. Today around the Dixon Reef area, people have tried to fence their gardens in again from time to time, but they explained that this often means too much work for them because the released and now wild cattle destroy most fences without much effort. This is one of the changes they criticised because they took it as an indication that gardening is transforming due to changes to community life (Chapter 6).

The life cycle of a garden plot always started even before the first cultivation. After clearing the bushy surroundings with half-grown *Burau* trees (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*) in an oval formation, people would burn down every example of organic material. This is a practice that is now to be refrained from on the request of the government, because it would further increase CO₂ production and thus augment negative processes connected to climate change. The first plant cultivated at that spot would be the yam, which initiated the garden plot as a so-called *alenge wowol* (a *Novol* and *Nasarian* phrase, meaning new garden). The people would put other plants and tubers in between, following the principle of mixed cultivation (see Chapter 3). After the first harvest of yam, the garden has passed from a new garden to an *alenge elewir* (old garden), in which

1 Only a handful of the older inhabitants of today's Dixon Reef village remember when living together was divided into men's and women's houses, and the *nakamal* was used as a ceremonial place, or the gardens were a meeting place between women and men.

bananas would be the last crops to be planted. This location must lie fallow before new planting (of yam) can take place after several years. These garden plots are planted with a wide variety of plants in their life cycle that respect crop rotation. The changing positions of gardens was due to the practice of shifting cultivation where the environment is transformed from what people called the ‘dark bush’, where humans had not yet laid hands, to the ‘bush’, the old gardens from the previous years with secondary forest, and finally the new gardens, with the crops of this cultivation cycle.

The yam plant is the first crop ni-Vanuatu farmers at many places around the country grow when installing a new garden. Yam is mostly planted with other crops; it hardly ever stands on its own (Chapter 4). The yam garden is always considered to be first and therefore names ‘the new garden’. In many places, ni-Vanuatu regarded the yam garden as the most important of all the different kinds of gardens, without which the farmer would have no garden, and even worse, no knowledge of gardening (Calandra 2017; Rio 2007b). Often, when talking about garen in Bislama or alenge in Novol or Nasarian, people in Dixon Reef referred indeed only to the yam garden. Mondragón points out how important the yam garden is to communities in Vanuatu, as it provides the structure for the year. For Torres Strait Islanders, the yearly beginning of yam cultivation marks the beginning of what the Western world would describe as the calendar of the year: it gives structure to community life and agricultural practices (Mondragón 2004, 294). The yam garden as the prototype of the garden also sets the rules for gardening and there are thus many rules regarding the yam garden. For example, women would avoid visiting a yam garden when having their period and people would never make loud noises or wear perfume when going to the yam garden (Calandra 2017; Rio 2007b). Having a strong body smell would prevent the yam from growing well. The yam cultivation was supposed to be a calm and clean process, and this is a further reason why people wanted to burn organic material for the yam garden, since it apparently also kept harmful insects away. The yam garden stands for transformation and movement: every year the new garden can be found at a different location. In the beginning of the garden cycle, Dixoners find a new spot to start their yam gardens.

One of the younger women in the village explained a garden as the following: “The garden is a new place where you brush and clean to plant crops like yam, taro, cabbage, banana, all the new gardens. That means garden. It’s a place for mekem garen.” (hemi ples blo mekem garen). Looking at her explanation, she calls the garden a ples. When asked, the women in particular refer not only

to the yam garden as a garden, but to all their different gardens. This is also due to the fact that growing vegetables is mostly women's business and they are very proud of their vegetable gardens. When working at one location, being the yam garden, the taro and banana garden, the mixed garden, Dixoners refer to it as *garen* (Bislama), or *alenge* (Novol/Nasarian), and consider it to be a place. In the following sections, I will scrutinise the concept of place in social science and in Vanuatu specifically in order to understand the connection between place and garden.

In social science literature, place² is usually conceptualised as the materialisation of social interaction. Place is formed through recursive relationships between human agency and structure (Robin 2002; Snead, Erickson and Darling 2010, 15). Places have a sense of materiality in connection to social interaction – political venues or consumer contexts (Cresswell 2014, 3–4). For Cresswell, the material nevertheless has a defining character, also when it comes to gardens. He writes that places are “a collection of buildings and roads and public spaces including the community gardens which are themselves material – made of plants and statues and little sheds and houses with fences around them” (ibid.). I take Cresswell's definition as a starting point: he defines places thus, as made by humans and their interaction, and thus as a materialisation of human practices, by referring to Agnew's definition of ‘meaningful location’ as places with meanings that are made by actors in the environment (ibid., 12).

Gardens as places are also considered to be dynamic. By theorising community gardens, Andrew Cumbers, Deirdre Shaw, John Crossan and Robert McMaster want to see them as active places, and they “view places as more than just the passive backdrop for mediating social relations around the economy and work, but, instead, as containing a more active generative quality in the forging and shaping of these interactions” (Cumbers et al. 2018, 36). They refer to the processual approach of Doreen Massey, that concerns itself with place as “an ever-shifting constellation of trajectories” (Massey 2005, 151). Additionally, Pink writes in her work, which also combines place with garden, that “garden as a place-event that is produced by and engaged with through living bodies” (Pink 2012, 11). In these works, place are products of social action, constituted

2 In this discussion about place, approaches to displacement through migration etc. (e.g. Appadurai 1990; Massey 1997) are not dealt with. Since the 1990s ‘place’, together with ‘landscape’ became an important topic, especially in human geography and anthropology (cf. Feld and Basso 2009; Fox 2006; Hirsch 1995). I will further discuss here the specificities of the Melanesian concept of place, or *ples* in Bislama.

by it, or giving space for social interaction. The conceptualisation of place in Vanuatu adds another thinking point: that human relations and the environment are the key places, through constant movement.

The Melanesian concept of place in general and the concept of ples in Vanuatu has already been discussed in detail (Bolton 1999; Hess 2009; Hirsch 1995; Feld and Basso 2009; Fox 2006; Jolly 1999; Rodman 1992; Weiner 1991, 2002). Similar to results for other regions of the world (Cresswell 2014), these studies conclude that ples is connected to land, identity, belonging, sociality and environment and all of them discuss the difference between a Melanesian and a Western conceptualisation of fixed locations as places in a given landscape.

Place for ni-Vanuatu is at the same time something that everyone has (Rodman 1992), and something that must be produced by people (Hess 2009; Kraemer 2013). Being a ‘man ples’ (man of the place) means for ni-Vanuatu that you have a connection to people and land and it refers to ni-Vanuatu’s sense of belonging (Bolton 1999). Lissant Bolton makes the point for Vanuatu, that the interaction between people and their ples is represented by movement, and she stresses that surroundings are not stable and neither are people (Bolton 1999, 44). Women especially represent ples. Since marriage rules are often exogamous and the virilocal marriage system brings women to live in another village or on another island after marriage, they carry their ples with them wherever they go, and grow like a “branch of the nanggalat – a stinging-nettle tree” in the new location (*ibid.*, 43). Bolton describes that making places for ni-Vanuatu is related to the movement of people, since people and places can only be thought of in connection (*ibid.*). In Vanuatu, ples also holds the connection to land, which is a part of identity. In the case of women, they could take their place with them and produce new ways of belonging, as do young people in the town of Port Vila, by finding new roots through place-making (Kraemer 2013). Ples also became part of the political discourse when Vanuatu was about to reach independence and it directly refers to *kastom*, which at that time became part of the “collective identity” (Regenvanu 2005, 38–41). *Kastom* is defined, in other words, as ni-Vanutu describe it, by their cultural goods and knowledge.

In her book ‘Person and Place’ (2009), Sabine Hess presents a detailed analysis about the different aspects of ples on Vanua Lava in one of the northern provinces of Vanuatu. She focuses on the relationship between people and environment and places and she also looks at the dialogue of building the relationship of people to their surroundings (Hess 2009). According to Hess, a person in Melanesia has a relationship to a place – not individually, but in a relational way including other places and people as well. Hess refers to what

Marilyn Strathern called the concept of the partible person (Strathern 1992). By drawing on this concept of the partible person, i.e. a person who does not exist for himself but as relations to others, place, according to Hess, is similarly connected to people and person. One does not exist without the other and at the same time neither is a person characterised by individuality nor is a place one-dimensional and original (Hess 2009). “Rather, persons, singular and plural, also have place(s) within, which leads to the conclusion that places are also intrinsically dividual or plural.” (ibid., 193) Hess describes in her work the multifaceted Vanuatu concept of ples and how people are connected to landscapes but also to one another through different practices. “Being in place”, Hess explains, she learnt by moving through the landscape, following the lead of her interlocutors. During her research on Vanua Lava, she was introduced to places in the same way as she was to people (ibid., 106). Another example is food. Relationships between place and person are built up by the consumption of food, the crops coming out of the garden.

First, through incorporation of specific foods a person can acquire an individual identity ... Second, a person also constitutes a dividual identity by sharing and consuming food with others. (Hess 2009, 75)

In these approaches to the concept of ples in Vanuatu, it becomes clear that practices among people give rise to places. Interactions also take place between people and spirits, or people and bubu (ancestors). In this case too, food plays a special role, when the place of the bubu has not been sufficiently respected by the living, garden crops are used to appease them. Place is thus not stable, but the result of a relationship that needs to be nurtured.

Margaret Rodman describes Melanesian places in a similar way, as less located, and stresses that they are multilocal and multivocal (Rodman 1992). She further defines ples as the multiple everyday interaction between persons and their environment, stressing that there are both multiple places in one place and singular places among multiple persons. Through this formula, she criticises the use of place as a construction or representation of social action and warns us not to fill the notion with Western concepts. Instead, she follows a constructivist approach in which the practices of people and not only narratives make places – not as static, but as relational. We have to look at multivocality and the power relations in places:

It is time to recognize that places, like voices, are local and multiple. For each inhabitant, a place has unique reality, one in which meaning is shared with other people and places. The links in these chains of experienced places are forged of culture and history. (Rodman 1992, 643)

Rodman sees this multivocality and multilocality in how people move through the environment and relate to it through practices. In Melanesia, and thus also in Vanuatu, place and sociality cannot be seen as separate. As Rodman says, “Places come into being through praxis, not just through narratives.” (Rodman 1992, 642) The dialectic of place and praxis is inscribed in the ritual, political and social life of villagers in Vanuatu (*ibid.*, 649–51). In one of her examples, she makes the point that for a ni-Vanuatu boy who runs through the bush and navigates passing places “while regionally zoned, was not locally fragmented, as in our own lives. But it was multilocal in that there were many connected, named places within that territory, places that linked living people and dead ones with the child through landmarks” (*ibid.*, 650–51). Rodman sees place not as materialisation of belonging but as practice and the network of locations that make sense to one person. Included in this network are locations which surround the village but also all the places that have importance in a person’s life, like the church (as a building), an area where you can find certain stones, and the network of all those places and the praxis and those places and how it comes together (Hess 2009; Rodman 1992). Not only is the interaction between people and the environment (and environment is to be understood here in the broadest sense), but environment itself is also not static and fixed for ni-Vanuatu. Bolton underlines the shifting relational point of relation in the environment:

[I]n a volcanic zone where islands rise and fall under the ocean, and where hurricanes, earthquakes and even volcanic eruptions frequently modify the landscape in small ways, places are understood to move. (Bolton 1999, 44)

Dixoners use the term *ples* in everyday conversation only when they want to talk about a specific *ples* from whence someone originated or where someone went to. However, it is also used as an expression of being in motion. One of the elder women describes it thus:

When I come to a house and stay there, I only say we are staying here (aundi unde). There is no need to talk about place anymore, because the place (aute) is Dixon and we are already there.³

Therefore, once people stay in one location, talking about place becomes pointless – place only exists because people move towards it or from it. People in Dixon Reef distinguished places from land/ground (graon) that could be owned, worked or cultivated. For this, they do use several descriptions but the common word is ‘etene’ in Novol (see Chapter 4). In a national context, the word graon is mostly connected to legal disputes about land tenure or ownership. It is something that is there, but under dispute.

For my interlocutors, it was not a question of whether a person made a place or whether the place exists independently: persons and places are similarly a unity – one does not exist without the other. I heard numerous stories about ‘sacred’ places or places which were tabu for women or people outside the nasara because men held kastom ceremonies there. Other places where ancestors are present today are to be respected and certain activities are to be avoided at this place. Not respecting the place meant that the person who initiated the status of the place, or the ancestors who are present there, would feel insulted and this would have had consequences for the trouble-maker such as disease or destructive weather phenomena such as storms or drought which could harm the whole community. However, this can be remedied by establishing communication between the living and the dead, and places and things.

During the garden day described above, people moved through the area around Dixon Reef, walked up the hills, through valleys and swamps and followed the coastline. The routes themselves changed, because garden plots also moved, to areas where the bush opened up due to fire, to spots where the earth had been kept fallow long enough, to places where watercourses keep the earth moist, or to new spacious spots where people felt they had more freedom to work without neighbours too close by. Locations where Dixoners planted their crops in the wider area around the village were all named. These names were given by people who had lived in the area before or who had started their gardens in that area. The names of the places give clues as to conditions of the places or events that happened there. For example, Lewitetawin means that there is water running underneath the ground. Names show people which areas are best suited for which type of garden, because after all, vegetables

3 For Dixoners, places in Bislama is translated as aute in Novol and Nasarian.

such as lettuce need more water than root crops. When one of my interlocutors shared that they were heading out and said the name of the area, it was also clear to the listeners which garden crop they would be taking care of that day. The land around Dixon Reef is owned by different chiefs and *nasara*, who give and deny access to gardening. If a person wants to start a new garden on land that does not belong to her *nasara*, she has to ask for permission, which, in the case of the area around Dixon Reef, is not to be denied. Gardens themselves, everywhere in Vanuatu, are owned by the people who planted them (Hess 2009, 116) and remain inseparably connected to the farmer as a person. Even if the garden shifts its location, the person to whom it belongs can move and still harvest out of her garden, because it is still connected to her.

If *ples* in Vanuatu is not static, it makes sense that gardens similarly are not fixed entities and not located at fixed locations. Even though they might move around in a certain area, their particularity is not marked by a location, but by their movement and by interactions. Interactions between people and between people and environment cannot be separated, gardens move because people shift them to other locations, and people move because of shifted gardens and vice versa. Gardens change locations due to weather, season and people's preferences. In the same way, the Melanesian *ples* is never a fixed entity nor solely the materialisation of social practices. It is more the practice of building up relationships between people and the environment, so gardens as places cannot be fixed. In the same way as *ples* and people are relational, so are gardens and people. People belong to the garden as gardens belong to them. Furthermore, the garden makes a person part of the place of Dixon Reef and thus the community, a topic I will further discuss in Chapter 6. In a nutshell, a garden in Dixon Reef in itself is not stable but dynamic, not fixed but relational, and above all, it is in motion. My interlocutors referred to the gardens as areas that do not stand for their own, but as places made by the dynamics of *mekem garen*.

5.3 Gardening on the Way

Movement of people in Dixon Reef is driven by cultivation, a juxtaposition of their different practice during the garden day, which in Ingold's word then becomes a 'taskscape' (Ingold 1993). Ingold takes the perspective that practices come first and the bodily engagement of humans create what can be 'seen' as the surroundings, or what he calls landscape. This landscape is not fixed, unchanging or the fundament on which all further life is built, but is rather pro-

cessual (*ibid.*, 160–62). He further states: “Landscape is not nature; here I claim that the taskscape is not culture. Landscape and taskscape, then, are not to be opposed as nature to culture.” (*ibid.*, 161) Therefore, people’s activities are part of what Ingold calls ‘landscape’ and I call ‘environment’.

The purpose of this section is to bring together the topics of movement – and the task that people have that drives their movement – and place, to show how people in Dixon Reef create their environment. I regard environment, like Arno Pascht and Eveline Dürr, as a relational process of making and becoming. Therefore, there is not one definable environment, but many ‘environment(s)’ (Pascht and Dürr 2017, 9). Pascht and Dürr refer to approaches like Ingold’s which seek new ways to conceptualise the environment and refrain from a dichotomous representation. I will show that the movement in *mekem garen* can be regarded as a way of creating and relating to the environment of people around Dixon Reef. Furthermore, what people experience is contact with the ground and interaction with weather (Ingold 2008; 2011) and in such interaction they make their environment.

5.3.1 The Paths and Roads of Gardening

When I was walking along with others to their gardens, it was important to know beforehand about the conditions of the roads. Constant heavy rain for days transformed the paths into muddy slippery streams, and even a little rain could mean that wet leaves covered the surface. This changed conditions for walking, because it changed the surface and the routes we could take. In dry weather conditions, the surface was solid, sometimes even hard as stone, easy to walk on with flip flops. However, this hard ground sometimes broke up and ridges with sharp edges had to be avoided, also there were dry branches or roots, which were more likely to leave marks or wounds on the body. It was thus essential to exchange information about the conditions of the bush and the paths people walked on, in combination with weather details, before leaving the village. When people were coming back on the main road of Dixon Reef, passing the first houses, others shouted over to them from their kitchen houses: “Was it raining in the bush?” Most of the time the soaked clothes of the returnees were an unquestionable indicator but they answered anyhow: “One big rain in the bush.” On some days, we had to hide from the sun in the village, while at the same time, it was raining heavily around the gardens. Walking on rainy days is an experience on its own. The first time I wanted to cross a puddle, I failed to do so straight away, and did an almost elegant balancing act in order

to not fall down. The women had to show me how to walk around muddy and slippery places.

Walking towards and between garden-plots did require concentration. People of Dixon Reef normally accelerated their gait, to a quite fast walk with strong legs, gazing straight ahead or concentrating on the ground – at least this is how it looked to me. In one of my first notes into my personal notebook I wrote about my difficulties following the women – I merely had to stumble behind. Especially in the beginning, I did not manage to look at my surroundings and could not remember anything because all my energy and concentration went into not falling down. Sometimes it could happen that one member of the working group misjudged the conditions of the path and stumbled or fell. But most of the time it seemed as though they could walk on the ground, straight, uphill, downhill, through water or through sticky plants. They undertook a straight-legged walk like the city walker aiming for the next train station, knowing where to go, but always able to stop, make a quick detour and walk into a shop or decide to take another route altogether. It was a combination of knowing where to go, how to do it, but at the same time being aware of everything around you. The walk in the bush made a contrast to the strolling, slow walk in the village which required 30 minutes for a distance I would normally walk in 10 minutes. People in Dixon Reef took their time in the village but never outside of it. When someone let you know about the weather conditions and the rain around the garden crops, people replied, “very good for the yam”, but also sighed and explained about the exhausting conditions for their next round of walking and working.

When I told my plans about my next trip to one of the garden plots, one of the women looked at me and said: “Watch out, it rained and I only could swim to my garden.” This meant that the paths were under water and sometimes could cover your legs up to your hips. Or someone was covered in mud, rolled his eyes and said: “Too much mud!”, which was one of the most difficult conditions because every step could mean you were either stuck and your shoes broke or you fell down. Not to mention getting up – especially with a bundle of fresh tubers and other crops on your back. By this, the environment was transformed, people made new paths and others were ignored for the time being. When making daily walks to the bush, people of Dixon Reef avoided the critical points. While they did not slow down their gait, they found new routes, which were better suited for getting around. Following a path meant following the direction or the traces which someone else left behind. That rainy day, if the first person made a small detour and avoided a mud hole, the next group

saw traces and slowly, by midday, there was a second path next to the original. Since walkers would only take this route under rainy weather conditions, the ground was transformed again when it had dried up. The next people would find a new detour, thereby creating a pattern of paths in the area.

Over the months, I started to recognise the traces of the different lines of paths and could see where to go when the main path was blocked – just to follow the footsteps of the person who had walked there before me. Only on the main road could more than one person walk next to each other and here people slowed down a little to have a chat, but all of the other paths were narrow and garden groups walked one behind each other. This means that the first person, as head of the group, chose the paths to follow and others followed. If children came, they often ran around in between, but adults followed the line they had formed. However, at crossroads, where the group had to decide which path to take, the group could split again, because for example the father might say: “I will take this path, see you back at the house.” There, another trio came through: “Where do you come from?” “We were up the hill and will walk back via the main road now.” A new group was formed and stories of the day working around the garden plots discussed. New paths were created again and again through the movement by people – they could meet or move apart again and thus meandered through the surroundings.

The movement of people through their environment occurs through interaction with the environment. Paths were developed through the community work of different groups of people and they are not only based on the goal of the movement. People spent a lot of time wandering through the environment and the paths are traces of their work, showing not only where people went, but also why they went there, because of the weather conditions, or because of practices they undertook. The following explanation from Hess becomes important for these movements and also the question of where one is going when meeting another person in passing: “Unlike in the English context, where people are always very much interested in how one is, in Vanua Lava people are always very much interested in where one is going.” (Hess 2009, 108) Walking and movement are not only actions to bring people from one place to the next, a way to move from A to B. Movement and walking are practices of place-making in Vanuatu (Hess 2009; Kraemer 2013). Daniela Kraemer’s work is concerned with the processes of place-making of young male ni-Vanuatu in the capital of Vanuatu, Port Vila. For a long time, these young people were referred to by society as the generation without real roots, as they no longer grew up ‘on the islands’ (Efate is generally referred to as the mainland) but in one of the unplanned and

crowded parts of the city. However, Kraemer elaborates on the agency of these young men who made Port Vila their place of belonging through their practice of walking along the streets of the capital (Kraemer 2013). This practice of appropriating the environment reflects not only an urban method of place-making, but one that all ni-Vanuatu have in common. Ni-Vanuatu use walking as a form of engagement with their environment and, by walking paths, make and re-make their environment. In the gardening scene described above, situational decisions led to decisions about where to walk with my friends. Paths changed depending on which gardens we chose to visit, but also according to weather and people’s preferences. People did not simply follow the paths but actually made the paths. Ni-Vanuatu move through their environment because moving is a cultural practice for interacting with the environment.

For a better visualisation of the interaction of people, practices and movement during the garden day, I will turn now to the movement maps that people made of their routes after their day’s work in the bush. I will explicate and interpret three movement maps and demonstrate the practices of the garden day. As already mentioned, these maps were made in communication with my interlocutors by asking them where they went that day and what they did. People drew their activities and the routes they took over a full gardening day. Routes people sketched out on paper were shaped like circles, even though they might head in the same direction or even take the same road/path back.

Figure 5: Movement map 1

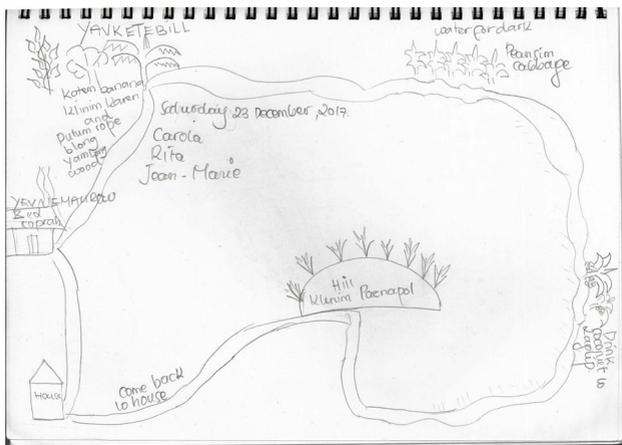
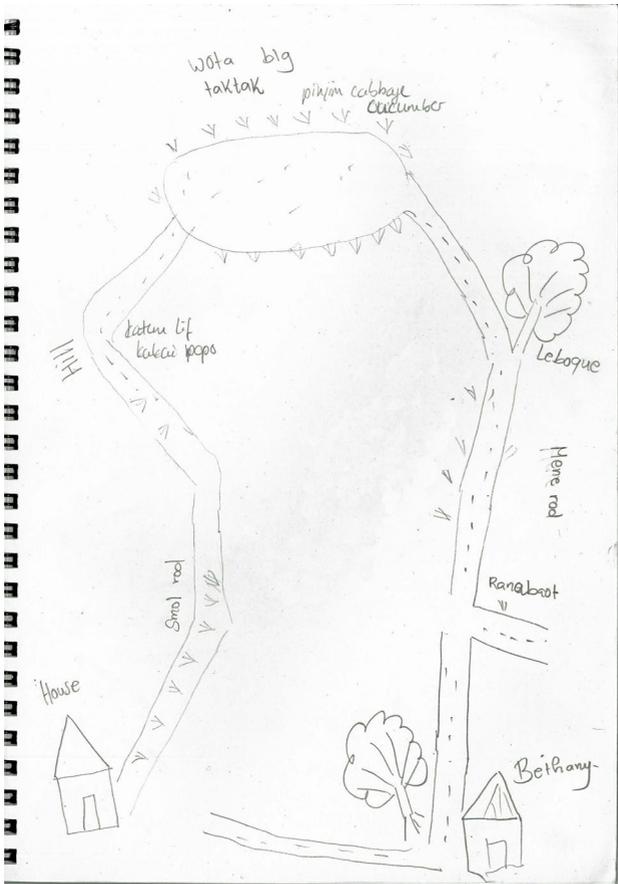


Figure 6: Movement map 2

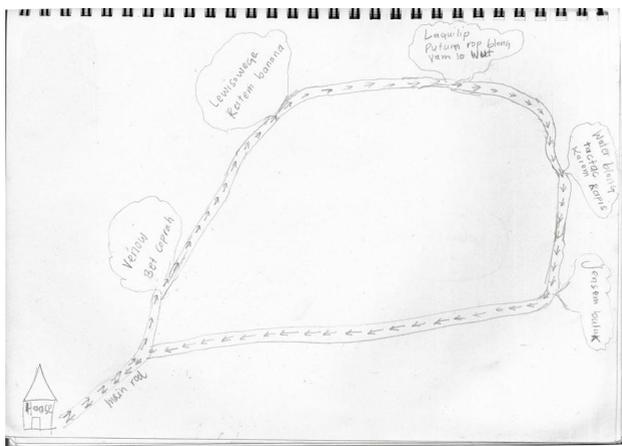


This group consisted of three people, mother, father and daughter. They started their day at the house and then followed the path to Yevnemaurow, which begins the circled road at the top of the map. This path led them to their first stop at their copra oven in the plantation (bed coprah), where they turned the coconut flesh. They then moved on and reached Yavketebill and the first garden, where they harvested some bananas, did some weeding and attached the outgrowths of the yam plant to the climbing aid, which mostly consisted of sticks or small trees that were still in the garden. As they walked on, they passed the swamp area (wota blong dakdak, the water for the ducks), which is

an area which is flooded for half of the year, and harvested some leaves of cabbage. After that, they set off in the direction of the hill, stopping for some refreshments en route, harvesting and drinking coconuts. Once on the hill, they cleaned and did some weeding around their group of pineapples. Returning by another path, they completed their journey for this day.

In this map, the group of three women and three girls, including myself, also started in the village and returned in the afternoon, following a different path. The arrangement of the paths as they have been sketched here by the draughtswoman would, do not show the geographical location, but move exactly the other way, the small road (smol rod) leading in the other direction. It shows that we started our walk just on this small road, moving in the direction of the hill, then set off up the hill, and when we reached the top, we made a small stop and cut leaves for the planned laplap and harvested papaya, some of which we ate on the spot. We then moved down to the swamp area (wota blg taktak, water of the ducks) and harvested island cabbage and cucumbers (pin-jim, cabbage cucumber). When we returned to the area of Leboque, we took a break at the big tree but followed the main road (mene rod) and met some other groups at the roundabout (Ronabaot), exchanging stories of our day. On our route back to the village we stopped at the houses in Bethany, where we handed over some of our island cabbage.

Figure 7: Movement map 3



Starting at the village, this couple of husband and wife followed the main road (main rod) before visiting their copra oven (bet coprah), then went to another area and came to Lewisowege, where they harvested banana bundles. Moving on to the next garden, they took care of their yam vines in Lanquilip (putum rop blong yam lo wut, put the rope of the yam on the stick). Crossing the area of the swamp (water blong tactac, water of the ducks), they broke off some leaves of the island cabbage (karem kapis, take cabbage). On their way back to the house they passed their cow and, because it was fastened to a coconut tree, they changed its position so that it had fresh grass to eat (jensem buluk).

By drawing these maps, people in Dixon Reef visualised for me their garden-day and their walking and working practices during one day of work. All the maps describe the round that people walked, visualised by them on the card. Working groups would start their walkabout (wokabaod) in the morning or after lunch and finish it on their return to the village, mostly in the evening, as I have described above. The starting and ending point of their tour was always the place that is called 'house' on the maps. Since there is no word in the languages of Novol and Nasarian that equates to the English word village or the Bislama word vilij, they use the Novol and Nasarian word 'imo' for the big village and their own houses. Therefore, they use the Bislama word 'haos' or the English word 'house' to refer to their journeys' end points. Some of my interlocutors indicated their direction of walking using arrows, which move away from the house and return to it at the end of the day. Most started by sketching out the roads which they took, ignoring all the other paths that were not used by them that day.

When starting their walk, most first put distance behind them, leaving the village, crossing the plantations and then reaching the area where the gardens were located. One can see that paths go to one side or the other, uphill or reach areas where they started to draw little icons, giving insight into what they did in those locations. They included some of the activities they did on the way, such as picking up coconuts to carry home on the way back, cutting leaves to wrap the island cabbage, or leaves for the laplap, or giving water to cattle grazing between the coconut trees. While walking along, some passed the copra oven, taking the opportunity to check process. This could be passing the 'bet coprah' (copra oven) and checking the fire underneath the drying coconut pieces. Their ways led them to different areas, next to which they added names, bubbles and circled areas. Some also drew small pictures of plants, trees or the surroundings, for example bananas which were planted next to a river. In ad-

dition, landmarks people had to pass, cross or climb on, like a swamp or a hill, were indicated, or places where villagers had a stopover and cut some leaves, ropes or took refreshment. Upon reaching a garden plot, most wrote the word *garen*, thus showing that this was a place for working in the garden. All the work that needed to be done in the garden was listed: planting, cutting, taking care of plants and harvesting are written down. All of the maps shown illustrate that the garden group did not just approach one garden on the day in question, but several. In addition, the paths were also lined with practices. People thus did not limit their gardening to one place. The gardening extended both locally over a wide area and temporally throughout the day. Peoples' drawings of the rounds often end with the finishing sentence that the whole group came back to the village (*Kam back lo haus/house*) and with that they finished their day of work and the full cycle of gardening.

It is rare that one person walked to one place, did work there and directly came back, with the exception of some of the younger boys who were sent by their mothers to bring home something for dinner or who went to 'hang out' and have some quiet time. However, even they checked the cattle on the way or harvested some coconuts, but they hardly enjoyed writing this down or telling me these details. Drawings of their routes had nothing to do with topographies but with their actions of the day. Landmarks were only indicated when needed to tell the story. The important paths to draw were only those on which they definitely set their foot, the ones led by the activity and not a certain place. Other paths, which were not used that day, were left out, because they had nothing to do with what the people had worked on and worked with, not even to indicate the location to which they went.

The maps show that walking is the important factor rather than the routes; paths are there for walking and were made by people walking. For *ni-Vanuatu*, paths are often an expression of their social relations. John Patrick Taylor explains for the *Sia Raga* on the island of Pentecost: "The landscape of north Pentecost is deeply inscribed with the tracks and traces that link people to places and thereby to other people" (Taylor 2008, 136). Some paths are accessible to all, literally public. They often connect places of residence. Others connect people with their ancestors and are therefore only accessible to them (Jolly 1999; Taylor 2008, 136–37). Around Dixon Reef some roads were *tabu*, and especially women had to be careful that they would not cross a road which would lead to or come from a place of *kastom*. In relation to gardens, Calandra writes that in Tongoa, people have a road to their gardens that is assigned to them (Calandra 2017). That may be partly true for Dixoners as well, although they do not attach that

much importance to it, because several people might share paths leading to their garden plots, or cross someone else's garden or path on the way. In the case of the visualisation of their gardening on paper, however, my interlocutors showed only those paths that have been important for the working day. Here, the activities are in the foreground for them, and these paths only appear through such activities.

People chose their direction according to the activities they wanted to do for the day; steps during the working day showed up on the maps not only in the garden, but also in the intermediate space. People walked from one place to another because they wanted to reach their garden plots but nevertheless, small but important work was carried out on the way from one garden to the next. Every person who has ever eaten laplap knows that without leaves, there is no laplap. Gardening is therefore not only a matter of visiting the gardens, working there and returning home, but is an accumulation of different garden practices dispersed over the period and different locations. The work of the garden day is the driving force for movement. After the garden day, people visualised their movement through their environment, which was guided by this practice of gardening. As I described above, paths were made by people's movement and the movement of the gardens, they are the inscription of their activities. Routes changed according to these movements, but people still made detours in order to cut leaves, ropes and coconuts or find certain nuts from trees. Those paths were only visible on the maps because people walked them on the day they drew their maps.

5.3.2 Walking the Environment

Scholars considering the lives of hunters and gatherers above all also scrutinised walking and the use of paths. James Weiner captures in 'The Empty Place: Poetry, Space, and Being Among the Foi of Papua New Guinea' (1991) the relationship of the Foi in the highland of Papua New Guinea with their environment through the seasonal productive movement through place and space:

Journeying through Hegeso territory on foot is never a matter of merely getting from one point to another. People pause to inspect trees for signs of fruiting, or for the spoor of animals. [...] In these and other casual 'productive' acts, Foi men and women truly turn these paths into conduits of inscribed activity. Motion and movement is always exploitative, productive

movement in Foi. There is no artificial distinction between ‘commuting’ and ‘work’. (Weiner 1991, 39)

Here, Weiner emphasises that individual locations are not fixed points of work, but that one must see all practices in relation to each other. Similar to the manner in which my interlocutors in Dixon Reef walk their trails, walking among the Foi is driven by their practices, their ‘tasks’. Movement through their environment consists of complementary practices and serves again as the impulse for this movement (cf. Robin 2002). Dixoners follow their garden paths, in contrast to the Foi people and their hunting paths, but one can see nonetheless the similarity in their movements. I suggest that it is possible to draw a parallel between horticulturalists, like those in Dixon Reef, and hunter-gatherers, since they have in common daily wanderings through their surroundings. Both draw their life courses by movement through their environment and the way or the route is the goal, rather than the destination itself. Paths are inscriptions of the diverse actions and interactions of the people. The garden itself as a place is not stable within the environment, but is rather a stopover in the network of paths and activities.

Thomas Widlok writes about the #Akhoe Hai//om hunter-gatherers in Namibia and their wayfinding on certain routes that:

These paths are not deliberately cut but rather emerge as a consequence of regular use. Moreover, at least in some cases, the regular movement also generates the reason for using these paths, through a process that involves the unwitting cooperation of humans, animals and plants. (Widlok 2008, 60)

People in Dixon Reef walk to their garden plots and through plantations, walking between important spots with useful plants. By walking, people in Dixon Reef connect and interact with the ground. In the same vein as Widlok writes that hunters and gatherers in Namibia make their paths through constantly walking them, people in Dixon Reef make theirs, using and not using them, depending on the infrastructure and the weather. Their gardening or mekem garen is a strategy in life for producing enough food. It also means meeting other people, interacting with plants and animals during their movements on their paths and in certain locations. The interaction between human and other-than-human actors creates the environment and constant ‘cooperation’ and the practice of interaction establishes and re-establishes the environment. Walking through the landscape thus means making the environment. Furthermore,

the rhythm of walking takes them from one place and practice to the next, rather than walking in order to reach a certain endpoint. Thus, walking is itself a marker of engagement with the surroundings. Post-structural approaches in archaeology have been working on the relationship between paths, movement and structure for some time. Clarke Erickson, for example, concludes: “Repetitive bodily movement through space and the physical structures that result from and channelize this movement create a tight recursive relationship. Places determine networks of movement and these networks structure new places.” (Erickson 2009, 207) In the Dixon Reef area, the daily use of the paths creates them, but they also lead the way for others to continue this way. The network of roads was built up by Dixoners because of their practice of shifting gardens; the location of the gardens was the reason for the paths. Additionally, the gardening practices I have mentioned above do not concentrate on the garden plot alone but also on places and activities en route to or from the garden plot.

As I have described above, what was planned for the day, which work people undertook and where they went was decided according to the needs of the day and what was found en route – the work plan was elaborated in the doing. This plan was interspersed with other decisions that allowed people to take different routes and additionally followed cultural rules of cultivation. The plans of the morning were crossed, diverged or added to. Women and men could structure their day in retrospect on the movement cards, showing the different directions of their working day. I will expand on this with reference to Ingold’s concept of ‘wayfaring’ (Ingold 2007). Ingold distinguishes two types of human movement through the environment: for him there is a difference between wayfaring and transport (ibid., 75–84). Transport is a movement from A to B, unidirectional and with a destination in mind. This would mean that a person had a plan in mind and as long as nothing interfered, this plan could be implemented in a direct ‘way’. The practical implementation however differs:

While the road provides the infrastructural support for transporting persons and their effects from point to point, quotidian life proceeds for the most part along winding paths that infiltrate the ground on either side. (Ingold and Vergunst 2008, 12)

In Dixoners’ everyday lives, walking from A to B was intentionally interrupted in order to do something else related to their gardening tasks but not necessarily pre-planned. In this practice, or what Ingold would term ‘wayfaring’, they

depended on taking different paths which were reliant on their needs at that time. Ingold's point is that by 'wayfaring', people inscribe their practices in the ground. Walking here is not solely a practice of making paths, but a method of navigating through the world, and a way of learning about and thus knowing the world (Ingold 2007, 134). Through this method, the wayfarer apprehends what is going on around him/her and can thus act. This he or she has to do by engaging with human and non-human actors, like the ground or the weather (Ingold 2008). Ingold also writes that humans are terrestrial beings who can only move through life in connection with the ground (*ibid.*). Being terrestrial (*cf.* Latour 2017) is what makes life as a human – with our bodies, we are always part of what surrounds us (Ingold 1993, 170–72). This may also apply to my ni-Vanuatu interlocutors, as they create a network of paths and gardens in their interactions with the weather, with plants and with their fellow human beings. Here, the driving force for people are their practices on the path which give them something to follow. Paths are inscriptions in the ground which render the network of gardens visible. Looking at the maps of the garden day activities, the person who has crafted the map has usually only depicted those paths that have been travelled. Weiner and Ingold both see paths as traces of human work and life; the physicality of human action made visible. Walking, in combination with what Weiner calls the little 'productive activities', form an interplay.

Activities are not the result of interacting with the environment, but *are* the environment, or as Jeanne Feau de la Croix, writes: "Places are not only performed, they come as rhythms or taskscapes." (Féaux de la Croix 2017, 30) With this statement, she also refers to Ingold's phenomenological approach to place and environment. I consider 'taskscape' to be an appropriate term to capture what I have described as 'making the environment'. With his approach, Ingold once again abolishes the dichotomy of acting people and a passive, pre-existing environment. First, Ingold refers to 'task' as the work of humans, asking:

How, then, should we describe the practices of work in their concrete particulars? For this purpose I shall adopt the term 'task', defined as any practical operation, carried out by a skilled agent in an environment, as part of his or her normal business. (Ingold 1993, 158)

The taskscape is then represented by mutually complementary and conditional human works, "the ensemble of tasks" (Ingold 1993, 158). Ingold furthermore

puts these tasks centre stage and writes that “the landscape is the congealed form of the taskscape” (ibid., 162).

When walking and working in groups, me and my garden working group interacted with plants and people, diverging plans in these interactions. ‘Tasks’ are only guiding the way. Dixoners walk their paths with a script, but they re-create it continuously on the way. Which paths they follow and what work they do are decided in the situation and therefore the path is only the script that is acted upon, and activities and paths change during their movement. Weiner claims that the Foi create their environment through their seasonal movement from one area to the next along the hunting routes.⁴ I argue that people in the Dixon Reef area create their environment through their daily movement. Mekem garen, which to an important part is movement, and which is an important part of the overall taskscape of Dixoners, is thus central for the creation of their environment.

5.4 Conclusion

Each everyday alteration in gardening is woven into this landscape of activities – as mekem garen as well as changes that are attributed to or identified as climate change. I argue that climate change is a part of this process of engagement and interaction. Mekem garen is about the movement of gardens and people in Dixon Reef and thus part of making the environment. The way in which people engage with climate change and see it as contributing to changes in life (Chapter 3) is also characterised by gardening in movement. The movement is necessary to proceed with knowing the landscape, learning where to plant in which season or which year, as well as to connect working spots in the landscape and thus re-work entire surroundings. Spending time and effort on a single location would mean losing connection to this network. Staying at home and not spending time outside the village has been criticised as having a negative influence on communal life and identified as one aspect of *klaemet*

4 People in the Dixon Reef area also go hunting, although today this is something practised exclusively by the younger men who leave and spend the night in the bush. Longer trips, however, are also combined with a visit to the countryside and the kava gardens in the interior of the island. There is thus, although not as Weiner describes it with the Foi, a hunting season for the Dixoners as well.

jenj (Chapter 3). Thus, including diverse activities in a garden day is one strategy for food security, answering to adverse weather events through caring for people and the environment.

By taking into consideration the concept of *ples*, I have argued that places are not containers of human actions, nor are they immobile, disconnected locations in the landscape, but rather they are relational and *dividual*. Gardens around the area of Dixon Reef are not bound to certain locations, as they too move. Every year new locations for new gardens are found and people find and walk on new routes which lead to other garden plots. A garden is primarily a point in the network of gardening, of *mekem garen*. In this context, it is important to perceive gardens in their context, in their flexibility, and therefore to consider the totality of gardening apart from the garden as simply one (or even several) stable location(s). The connections and practices of gardening in relation to all gardens and what happens on the journey there and back is equally as important as the actions which take place in the garden plot itself. By creating this network of gardens, Dixoners walk through their environment, at the same time interacting with the ground, plants, weather and other people (cf. Ingold 2008; 2011). Moreover, movement in space is led by the location of gardens, but activities that are carried out along the way shape gardening practice in the same way.

People showed on their maps that the practices of gardening set the direction of walking, and thus one important aspect of gardening is walking through the environment. Likewise, talking to people in Siviri on the main island of Efate, I found that they supported this argument through their movement to their gardens, which happens through walking or many times by car, while still making as many stops as possible en route. *Mekem garen* represents not only work that takes place in the garden but also elsewhere – villagers in both Dixon Reef and Siviri refrain from concentrating on one garden alone. Asking Dixoners why they walked such long distances while learning about home gardens in the climate workshops, some explained that it related to finding a good spot for a garden, but most simply invited me to come along and find out for myself. By using descriptions of garden days and visualisation, I found a way to show what happens while people are *mekem garen*. This movement is a method of place-making (Bolton 1999; Kraemer 2013), but also a way of making and re-making the environment. I have shown that these practices and interaction with human and non-human actors form the ‘taskscape’ of actors in the Dixon Reef area (Ingold 1993). In summary, drawing on Ingold’s theoretical explications as sketched out above, the environment

created through the practices of Dixoners can be interpreted as an interplay of various practices, which, in summary, are constituted by movement. In this chapter, I have concentrated on one important set of activities in terms of mekem garen. This happens to an ever-changing environment (Chapter 3). Correspondingly, therein lies a conceptualisation of climate change as one aspect of this shifting environment, namely an all-encompassing transformation that includes changes in intensity and duration of solar radiation, change of soil richness and changes in community life. As we walked along the paths and passed the gardens, chatting and sometimes stopping for a moment to take a break and hold a longer exchange of thoughts, we talked about things that we had seen or done during the garden day, creating and re-creating social ties anew.

