

Book Review/Recension d'ouvrage

Walking Methodologies in a More-than-Human World: WalkingLab

by Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E. Truman

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Reviewed by/ Revu par

Erin Spring and Jennifer MacDonald

Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary

In *Walking Methodologies in a More-than-human World: WalkingLab* (2018), Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E. Truman acknowledge the current epoch of the anthropocene and disrupt normative conceptualizations of walking. Their book is located at the nexus of multiple disciplines, emphasizing and privileging the complexity of new materialisms and more-than-human theories. In doing so, the authors offer a wide range of both conceptual and practical approaches to walking methodologies and collaborative, transdisciplinary research-creation. Springgay and Truman do this by offering discussion and responses that de-centre human authority, honour the intelligence of all beings, and bridge the often separated dichotomies of human/non-human, individual/collective, culture/nature, and settler/Indigenous perspectives. Many of the project examples are contributions to the WalkingLab, an international research collective established by the authors promoting partnerships between artists, arts organizations, activists, scholars, and educators.

Within the introduction, the authors outline four key themes that are woven throughout each chapter, namely: place, sensory inquiry, embodiment, and rhythm. In reading and sharing this book from our different perspectives, these terms were invited into a conversation, pushing us to think differently about the politics of walking,

movement, and participation. As settler scholars living with Treaty 7 land, and as avid walkers with research interests in relationality, place, and embodiment, we had already been engaging the complexities of privilege and living well with all beings. The text therefore offered us a sense of community. With that said, the criticality and praxis of this text prompted important discussions around the multiple interpretations and ethics of the more-than-human world, especially through the additional themes of land and geos, affect, transmateriality, and movement. Through our co-reading, we were not only prompted to think, but shared a felt sense of provocation and event. Specifically, we were inspired by new methodological considerations and ideas for research-creation, were led to new frames of reference and various areas of scholarship, and were further disrupted to think, write, and walk-with the land and each other in new ways. Themes of “queering the trail” broadened our understandings of queer theory, and drew attention to the disruptive modes of space, time, and performance.

Each of the eight chapters of this book have a different grounding based on the themes discussed in the introduction. Throughout, the reader is gifted with examples of how walking research could be taken up through “walking events” and as “research-creation”(p. 2). Outlined as a guiding principle, research-creation is process driven and does not necessarily follow a strict set of guidelines. This approach focuses on “walking-with” (p.11) rather than individual’s fixed encounter, highlighting the complexity and multiplicity of the more-than-human. In doing so, normativity is challenged and disrupted. Chapter 4 queers the standardized logics of participation by providing examples of three different WalkingLab projects. For example, the Ring of Fire collaborative project, a 300-person procession opening the Parapan Am Games, provided a counter-cultural space and included several unrepresented groups, such as the Mississauga Credit First Nation. As discussed, this project honours rehabilitation rather than participation as a method of inclusion for overcoming the normalized able body. From the outset of the book, we were inspired by how it brings together different methods that rely on collectivity and participation rather than passive observation. In Chapter 1, for example, the authors share their Stone Walks on the Bruce Trail: Queering the Trail project. More than seventy people walked the Chedoke radial trail, an urban greenspace, and while doing so encountered pop-up lectures and art installations that outlined different tensions to evoke thoughts about the experiences of place and land. As researchers, this project encourages us to

expand our understanding of data and how it might be collected and represented, linking with other questions of ethics and participation raised in subsequent chapters.

In the final chapter, the authors highlight a series of walks that readers can engage with in order to embody the theoretical ideas put forth in the previous chapters. Together, we have taken up the first walk, “Walk one: queering the Euro-Western walking tradition” (p.131), at Nose Hill Park in Calgary. Our research-creation event reiterated two main threads of this book. Firstly, rather than thinking about this park as an urban, recreational space, we endeavoured to intentionally walk in order to honour the ecological teachings of the land and stories of place that have been graciously shared with us. Linking with the authors’ “Walk three: surfaces,” we did not just walk across Nose Hill from edge to edge, but attended to how we moved through and were moved by the place. Secondly, we were disrupted to go beyond the act of walking simply as a wellness activity; rather, we took up the theme of slowness and used this shared experience as a reimagining activity for ethical and political questioning. This chapter further provokes us to incorporate walking-with into our pedagogical practices so as to be and experience differently. As a whole, the book provides tangible ideas for incorporating such work with our students, collaborators, and community-members.

While the last chapter offered practical suggestions for research creation, many of the chapters were theory-heavy and therefore might require a particular readership with a grounding in posthumanism and new materialism, theories that are not necessarily fully distilled for the reader. For educational practitioners or those more interested in the “how to” of walking methodologies, we recommend Chapters 7 and 8, as well as reading this text alongside the WalkingLab’s website and social media accounts, where they offer extensive and accessible profiles of the work being done by the collaborators. We also wondered whether the title’s use of the word “in” was intentional, and question if substituting the word “in” for “with”, “through”, or “from” would further complement the theme of “walking-with” developed throughout the text. Overall, Springgay and Truman’s text offers a contemporary, expansive, and inclusive dialogue that is strongly grounded in theoretical and scholarly discourse. The authors encourage their readers to “walk-write-think-cite as a political practice of co-composition” (p.138), a praxis they demonstrate. The authors position themselves carefully as white settlers and, writing and walking from a similar context ourselves, we feel that they do an admirable job of researching and

privileging multiple bodies and voices through their work with the WalkingLab and in the writing of this text.