Qualitative Health Research
2025, Vol. 0(0) 1–18

DOI: 10.1177/10497323251353409
journals.sagepub.com/home/qhr

Staying With the Trouble, a Rhizomatic Approach to Posthuman Methods: Assemblages and Becoming in the Posthuman Walking Project

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Abstract

Persistent pain is the leading cause of years lived with disability worldwide. Research into pain experiences often adopts a humanistic perspective, predominantly relying on interview data and rarely engaging with real-world contexts. The *Posthuman Walking Project* brought together a transdisciplinary network of individuals with lived experiences of pain alongside academics and clinicians from five countries to collectively explore how posthuman philosophies might challenge human-centered paradigms. Specifically, we used mobile phone video footage to investigate the more-than-human entanglements of walking in the landscape when experiencing pain. This paper reflects on our engagement with the uncertainty and multifaceted nature of exploratory methods and how the process of "becoming posthuman" did not follow a pre-determined path. We outline our rhizomatic methodological approach, emphasizing the contributions of walker-partners, project development meetings, and the value of allowing methods to remain responsive and emergent. Finally, we discuss the complexities of studying the assemblage of humans, walking, pain, and landscape, illuminating the transformative potential of posthuman frameworks in understanding lived experiences of pain.

Keywords

posthuman; walking; pain; landscape; video

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Correction (November 2025): The captions for Figure 8 and Figure 9 and the textual citation for Figure 8 have been updated in the article since its original publication.

Introduction

Living With Persistent Pain

Persistent pain affects more than 30% of people worldwide and is the biggest cause of years lived with disability. Among various pain conditions, low back pain is particularly prevalent, with projections suggesting that by 2050 more than 800 million people be affected (GBD, 2023). Persistent pain is inherently complex and is influenced by a range of physiological, psychological, social, cultural, economic, contextual, and environmental factors (O'Sullivan et al., 2016; Smart, 2023), highlighting the need for holistic interdisciplinary approaches.

Studies taking a humanist perspective provide insight into the experience and meaning of living with persistent pain. Pain has been described as an intrusive threatening object and some persons living with it may experience suicidal ideation (LaForge, 2025). The loss of their sense of self is conveyed in quotes such as "chronic pain…. led me to question if I am whole anymore" and "This is not human life at all" (Ojala et al., 2015, p. 368 and p. 366). Persons with persistent pain have described reconnecting with their former selves during periods of decreased pain (Snelgrove & Liossi, 2013). The effect of their pain also reverberates through their relationships with families and friends and their being in the world (Goubert & Bernardes, 2025; LaForge, 2025; Smith & Friedemann, 1999). These humanist studies are dominated by interview data where researchers narrate participants' experiences and disseminate findings within predominantly academic communities. Also dominated by interview data are studies exploring persons with persistent pain experiences of healthcare encounters where some persons feel disbelieved (Hintz, 2022), delegitimized, stigmatized (LaForge, 2025) and dehumanized as reflected in this participant's quote from a phenomenological study: "you don't feel like you have been treated as a person at all" (Walker et al., 1999, p. 623). This suggests that alternative approaches to pain care may be needed.

Pain Care

In current approaches to pain care, multimodal and interdisciplinary management is advocated including physical activity or exercise, analgesics, and psychological interventions (Macfarlane et al., 2017; National Institute of Clinical Excellence, 2021). However, these have varying results and only explore some of the factors that contribute to pain and how persons navigate their lives with it (Elbers et al., 2022; Macfarlane et al., 2017). Pain management programs often remain located in clinical, biomedical settings, which is likely to frame both the expectations of patients (persons) and their ability to apply their learning to their specific lived context. New, novel, creative, and diverse approaches to pain management are therefore needed so that those living with pain can consider what options might be useful for them, at any given point in time and in relation to their context. In this regard, greenspace exposure and arts therapy have been highlighted as pain care options (Raudenská et al., 2023; Stanhope et al., 2020).

Pain Research in Real-World Contexts

Within physiotherapy research, studies are rarely conducted in real-world contexts that reflect the complexity, unpredictability, and relational dynamics of the everyday. In contrast, within the creative arts, shared or collaborative approaches to knowledge making have become more familiar with initiatives such as project art works challenging the hierarchies often associated with who produces and experiences understanding.

Some research approaches are situated in meaningful contexts chosen by participants, for example, "Significant Walks" https://significantwalks.com/ (Chubb et al., 2019), a project led by Shirley Chubb, a co-lead of the Posthuman Walking Project (PWP) discussed in this article. The Significant Walks study, based in the southeast of England, used film and biomechanical data to explore personalized real-world experiences of walking with persistent low back pain, defining an innovative synthesized approach to simultaneously gathering and adapting qualitative and quantitative data. While adopting a particular and innovative hybrid method, Significant Walks also revealed how the walkers' interactions with the environment were particular to their personal experiences; for example, one walker's pain was magnified by navigating refuse bins on the pavement on collection days. These and other walker examples in the Significant Walks project captured the various impacts of particular urban and rural environments on participants' experiences of walking, but also prompted further questions as to how other than human elements of the landscape itself might move understanding beyond a humanist perspective to capture human/non-human interactions when walking with pain. These questions led to the emergence of the PWP where the project team focused on how posthuman philosophies might reorient human-centered paradigms to explore the more-than-human entanglements of walking.

The collaborative nature of the PWP was designed to explore how walking becomes entangled with place, climate, and purpose across diverse cultural and socioeconomic contexts. Drawing from the wealth of walking-methods and discourse (Gros, 2015; Ingold & Vergunst, 2008; O'Rourke, 2013; Solnit, 2002), we sought new ways to document walking experiences. Using mobile phones to video each walking site we captured how

landscapes held personal significance and revealed the material, and relational entanglements between walker-partners and place, that might otherwise remain unseen or unspoken.

We approached the project from a post-structural perspective, not as an inquiry into justice or oppression, and therefore did not use critical theory traditionally associated with these concerns. However, we intended our project to be diverse and inclusive and to explore unique entanglements of culture and human and non-human agents and thus drew on the critical post humanities. Posthumanism is a philosophical perspective that challenges the centrality of the human, emphasizing the interconnectedness of humans, technology, animals, and the environment while rethinking what it means to be human. Posthumanism takes an ontological turn in recognizing health as not just human but an assemblage of human and non-human actors (Andrews, 2019).

Our posthuman approach drew on new materialism and its move away from anthropocentrism and humanism to more-than-human thinking about the relational nature of the material world (Bennett, 2009). To guide us through the disruptive focus of our work, so that it could become generative, we drew on new materialist feminist philosopher Donna Haraway's concept of "staying with the trouble" (Haraway, 2016). We were also influenced by the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) whose interrelated concepts form an expansive and fluid ontology in which *assemblage* refers to the dynamic interplay of people, objects, environments, and experiences that continuously shape one another; *rhizomes* signify non-linear, non-hierarchical modes of connection; and *lines of flight* enable escape and transformation from fixed structures. Collectively, these concepts generate fluid relationships and emergent meanings that inform ways of becoming responsive to shifting contexts, circumstances, and experiences.

We were not interested in theory for theory's sake, but in what theory could bring to our thinking of and about an otherwise physiotherapy practice. Thinking with theory has been described as a reorientation away from conventional research approaches, rooted in philosophy. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "plugging in", it involves connecting theory, data, and the researcher in a fluid and generative process that resists fixed or predetermined meanings. Rather than applying theory to data, *plugging in* involves thinking *with* theory to provoke different ways of seeing and knowing to create new assemblages that are continuously becoming (Jackson & Mazzei, 2022). We acknowledge that our perspective is influenced by Western understandings that divide practice and theory, and nature and culture, dualisms which contrast with indigenous ontologies, and thus use the term "natureculture" to highlight their inseparability and mutual co-constitution (Guttorm et al., 2019; Haraway, 2003).

The aim of this paper, therefore, is to share how our methods were not fixed or prescriptive, but exploratory, responsive, and informed by rhizomatic thinking that resists linear structures in favor of offshoots that disrupt conformity and open new pathways (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Furthermore, drawing on these concepts led us to the ongoing, transformative process of *becoming* that embraces fluidity and difference (Braidotti, 2019b), while also illuminating the tensions and complexity of working with conceptual plurality. We explore our entanglement with methods which were not fixed or prescriptive, but exploratory, responsive, and informed by rhizomatic thinking, which resists linear structures in favor of offshoots that disrupt conformity and open new pathways (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In line with a "post-qualitative" approach and an ontology of immanence, we became "less interested in what is and more interested in what might be and what is coming into being" (St Pierre, 2019, p. 4). We embraced the notion that "we don't have to *understand* everything to do something" (St Pierre, 2023, p. 24), recognizing co-constructed transdisciplinary methodologies as an opportunity to advance understandings of placemaking, boundaries of care, and human/non-human interactions (Lury, 2020).

becoming Methods

The PWP was funded by the Landscape Research Group (LRG) in response to their 2023 call for research exploring landscapes of care. The LRG supports investigative approaches and recognizes the need and value of pilot studies and exploratory approaches, and this openness enabled our *becoming* methods to be responsive and oriented to emerging dialogue, in which there was no authorial, monological, or concluding voice (Bakhtin, 1984).

As project leads, Shirley and Clair assembled a network of interested transdisciplinary academics, clinicians, and individuals with lived experience of pain, from five countries (Table 1). Rather than participants, these persons were referred to as *walker-partners*, reflecting our non-hierarchical approach to knowledge, where all voices contribute equally to the collective inquiry, and were recruited using a critical friends model (Mat Noor & Shafee, 2021). This involved the academic-partners inviting participation from individuals known to them who had lived experience of persistent pain, were eager to collaborate, and could offer valuable insights into shaping the direction of the project. As part of the project's ethical commitment to informed choice, walker-partners were invited to decide whether they wished to be identified by name or remain anonymous; most chose to be named to acknowledge their contributions and visibility, while one elected anonymity, a decision equally respected. This

Table 1. Background of the Project Partners.

Partner Name	Country of Residence	Ethnicity	Role	Occupation/Professional Background
Clair Hebron	UK	White European	Project co-lead	Physiotherapist
Shirley Chubb	UK	White European	Project co-lead	Visual artist
Fe Stevens	UK	White European	Walker-partner	Artist
Branwen Lorigan	UK	White European	Walker-partner	Arts practitioner
Roger Kerry	UK	White European	Academic-partner	Physiotherapist
Natalie Sherritt	UK	White European	Walker-partner	Student
Patty Thille	Canada	White European	Academic-partner	Physiotherapist
Jeni Ross	Canada	White European	Walker-partner	Yoga instructor/project administrator
Filip Maric	Norway	White European	Academic-partner	Physiotherapist
Lena Gudd	Norway	White European	Walker-partner	Artist-researcher
David Nicholls	New Zealand	White European	Academic-partner	Physiotherapist
Valentin Dones III	The Philippines	Filipino	Academic-partner	Physiotherapist
Donald Manlapaz	The Philippines	Filipino	Academic-partner	Physiotherapist
John (pseudonym)	The Philippines	Filipino	Walker-partner	Gardener
Manang Norma	The Philippines	Filipino	Walker-partner	Nanny

approach was explicitly addressed and justified in the university ethics application and received approval.

Throughout the project, our empirical activities were interspersed with regular online project meetings that included academic-partners and walker-partners in a discursive, non-hierarchical environment. These exchanges helped us to stay connected with our posthuman methodology when navigating fluid, less definitive methods to explore the entanglement of research entities, theory, discourse, and cultural values. Each online discussion introduced new questions, suggestions, and considerations which were both stimulating and challenging as the team worked to capture wide ranging opinions, academic backgrounds, and sociocultural experiences. This collaborative approach also prompted supra-disciplinary, pluriversal thinking as we considered the interplay of different forms of knowledge and attended to the processes and ethical implications of our project. By *pluriversal, we* refer to the recognition and value of diverse ways of knowing and experiencing the world across disciplines, cultures, and lived realities. In this spirit, Braidotti (2019a) describes a shift toward "supra-disciplinary sensibility" driven not by disciplinary purity, but by a desire to open new relational modes of knowledge production. Braidotti's posthumanism (2019a; 2020) speaks directly to our approach in its embrace of uncertainty, difference, and *becoming* as necessary conditions for collaborative inquiry. This framing helped us to navigate the tensions of working across artistic, academic, and lived experience spaces and encouraged us to see knowledge as emergent, situated, and relational.

The project leads Clair and Shirley benefited from having previously collaborated over several years. A part of our research development involved visiting art exhibitions both separately and together, spending many hours discussing these, our fields of practice and philosophical reading. In this way, we came to better understand each other's perspectives, and in doing so, our research practice itself was *becoming* more intertwined, forming the basis of working together as a wider collective. Our shared interest in creative perspectives provided a line of flight toward exploratory, reactive, and visually responsive methods that embrace the visual as equal to the verbal when communicating experience. This approach resisted structured, linear trajectories by allowing the uncertainty and material entanglement of creative practice to unfold as the project developed. In this context, our engagement with Haraway's concept of "staying with the trouble" became a vital anchor. It invited us to sit with complexity, contradiction, and discomfort rather than seeking resolution or fixed outcomes. Haraway's call to "making oddkin" (Haraway, 2016, p. 4), to embrace "unexpected collaborations and combinations" (Haraway, 2016, p. 4), and entangled interdependencies "in hot compost piles" (Haraway, 2016, p. 4) encouraged us to remain present within the messiness of our methodological *becoming*. Rather than positioning ourselves as detached observers or striving for neat narratives, we engaged "as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings" (Haraway, 2016, p. 1). This ethos allowed us to navigate uncertainty with openness, making space for the emergence of insights that could not be pre-planned or contained by conventional research designs.

By following lines of flight that break from structured systems and open paths to new ways of thinking, our exploratory methods disrupted dominant frameworks, enabling the emergence of transformative possibilities. This became particularly evident as the collaborative editing of walker-partner films developed, where innovative

juxtapositions and video effects manifested the responsive *becoming* of our collective approach. In meetings, our *becoming* was explored and unpicked, some understood the term as finite and static, while others saw it as a process suggesting a point of completion. These discussions, and the collaborative videos that they helped to inform and shape, manifested how new connections, intensities, and possibilities can emerge by acknowledging the dynamic state of flux whereby individuals and entities engage with the world. In this way, *becoming* is not about reaching a literal or metaphorical destination; rather, it is about embracing unpredictable processes of transformation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In what follows, we explore how this ethos of *becoming* emerged from our different fields of experience, informing our methods and allowing the unfolding practices of the project to shape the ways we navigated relationships, knowledge, and creativity.

Posthumanism and new materialism are well-established within arts practices that challenge long-held hierarchical assumptions of the artist as the "holder" of the creative impulse, with this renewed perspective embracing methods and discourse around research creation that recognize the non-human agency of materials and technologies as vital contributors to visual outcomes (Konturri, 2018; Modeen & Biggs, 2021; Stern, 2013). Our original LRG grant application had outlined these "methods" and while we used these as a starting point, we were open to a rhizomatic flow of exploration that allowed the project to responsively and collaboratively evolve. We started by filming a sequence of walks with walker-partners who were accompanied by academic-partners using mobile phones and cameras to document the experience. Each walker-partner selected a route that held personal significance in relation to their experience of pain. Using a guide developed by academic-partners within the early stages of the project, questions like "why did you choose this walk and how is it meaningfully related to your pain?" and "what is the focus of your attention at this moment?" were discussed during the walks. Through this, the academic-partners brought a particular focus on pain to these encounters, shaping how the walk was experienced and narrated. Walker-partners Fe and Natalie said they "put on a brave face" (project meeting 31-10-2023) while filming with academic-partners and suggested that filming alone would offer different perspectives that were not molded by the academic-partners' presence and their questions.

When sharing these initial films in project meetings, we reflected on the omnipresence of the human perspective (e.g., Figure 1 from Fe's first film), as filming tended to be from the perspective of how we (humans) experienced the landscape.[1] The presence of an academic-partner during the walks added yet another layer of humanness; Shirley sought lines of flight away from a human-dominated perspective:

> to allow something and push something … without its associated commentary or reinterpretation because it's a bit like the human on human issue we talked about a few meetings ago. It's like we're kind of doubling up with that as well. (Project meeting 31-10-23)

We became acutely aware of the inherent tensions in our project: we were exploring the essential human

Figure 1. Stills from Fe's first film on the South Downs in the UK, July 2023. *Fe, PWP Film #1*, Video still, 2023 [Online]. Videographer: Clair Hebron, 2023.

activity of walking, and thus, unsurprisingly, humans dominated the footage and at times the sound. Yet, our aim was to "de-center" the human by explicitly embracing non-human entities within the walking-pain assemblage, where the process of "de-centering" shifted away from human-centric perspectives. As we questioned whether this aim was being realized, we sought ways to capture the agency, entanglement, and value of non-human entities in understanding the world.

Walker-partners who joined the PWP meetings were mostly unfamiliar with posthuman philosophies but were curious, and in project meetings, they discussed their lived experience, awareness, and engagement with these theories as we collectively questioned whether we were realizing our posthuman aims. This caused the academic-partners to further question their own and each other's understanding of the term, and these discussions crafted the movement of our project within each particular landscape. The interview guide was abandoned and walker-partners became the directors of their walks, liaising with Shirley to co-edit their own film documentation. Through this method, we came to realize how, when uninfluenced by academic-partner intervention, their experience of walking became more aligned with the concept of the *rhizome*, where knowledge and meaning spread horizontally and organically, without central authority or fixed structure. As a result, the visual presence of humans became less central and variations in walker-partners' perspectives of pain began to emerge, reflecting the fluid, interconnected nature of their experience of the environments they walked in.

Lena walked alone on a windy day in the muted light of the polar night in northern Norway (Figure 2(a) and (b)). She chose this walk saying "I know I will not meet anyone. … I don't want to look at houses and lights" (Lena, PWP Film #1, 2023). Lena is not visible but is present behind the lens, and her focus and narrative draws attention to non-human entities: moss, bark on the trees, lingonberries, and animal prints in the snow. The sound of Lena's narration dominates, but from time to time the power of the wind overtakes. As we questioned "what is happening here?" we came to understand the landscape as central and walking as a means to move through and within it. This resonates with Tim Ingold's (1993) conceptualization of "landscapes" as dynamic, relational processes shaped by the interwoven practices of humans and non-humans over time, coining the term "taskscapes." Ingold (1993) emphasized that rather than a static backdrop, landscapes are co-produced through activities like walking, dwelling, and multispecies entanglements.

As we discussed Lena's walk in our project meetings, we felt that we were becoming posthuman, but remained curious and looked for lines of flight that might move closer to more fully de-centering the human by realizing the landscape itself as a project partner. We sought other ways to explore non-human assemblages of walking, pain, and landscape to change the perspective of documentation. In order to explore how footage might capture different perspectives, Shirley attached the camera to her ankle generating immersive footage that offered an alternative to the human eye-level view of the landscape (Figure 3). Patty noted, "You know a camera on a foot really changes our experience of what we're seeing" (project meeting 26-3-24). Group discussions of this footage encouraged the team to explore different ways of filming, leading to cameras being placed in the landscape as walker-partners moved past, as if the landscape was observing the human. Additionally, cameras were attached to harnesses of companion dogs (one who was limping due to a painful paw), to provide images from their perspective.

As it developed, our project revealed and explored various assemblages that we describe below. However, where these sub-titles and subsequent text suggest a certain sequence or relationship, in practice these were not linear but rhizomatic, and thus alternative connections and assemblages are also possible.

walk-narrative-stories-poems-films

Although not an aspect of the methods as described in our original proposal, to capture a sense of the of the first project walk with walker-partner Fe and co-lead Shirley, Clair shared her written reflections in the form of a story incorporating Fe's words. At this time, other partners were at the planning stage of their walks and this narrative created unexpected lines of flight. For example, walker-partner Natalie wrote a poem about her experience of walking with pain and academic-partner Val wrote an account of Norma's walk, providing insight into how pain and walking were meaningful to her. Both Val and Natalie's writing were subsequently incorporated into their films (Figures 4 and 5).

sound-attention-non-human-human-attention

What we hadn't expected was how we would be drawn to sound, the importance of which resonated through the films providing another reminder of how humans perceive the landscape: singing birds, crunching snow, rustling leaves, mud splashing, the whooshing of a wind turbine, a plane engine, swooshing trousers, and rain on tree canopies and raincoats. Patty and Jeni experimented with the use of both a camera and a separate audio recorder, the latter recording passing vehicles on wet roadways, with the wind blowing. The wind buffering the microphone could have been softened by using a microphone cover, but we felt that retaining this noise in its rawness conveyed an acute sense of the power of the landscape. We asked ourselves why sound was so evocative and recognized that through film our attention was renewed as we were reintroduced to familiar sounds we had become oblivious to:

Figure 2. (a) Stills from Lena's films walking during the day in northern Norway in the polar winter, December 2023. *Lena, PWP Film #1*, Video still, 2023 [Online] Videographer: Lena Gudd, 2023. (b) Stills from Lena's films walking the same path during the day in northern Norway in the polar summer, June 2024. *Lena, Film #2*, Video still, 2024 [Online]. Videographer: Lena Gudd, 2024.

> Yeah. I mean, I think sound has been … cause it's technologically mediated. Where the sound is being picked up by a non-human and brought back to us. And so it has made the sound strange to us like making the familiar strange. (Patty, project meeting 26-3-24)

We talked of the possibility of using films of still images with sound, or the audio alone and exploring what else this conveyed.

In addition, there was the sound of human dialogue. We noticed variation in Natalie's narrative as she

Figure 3. Combined footage by Shirley when filming with the camera fixed to her ankle in Sussex UK, November 2023. *Shirley, PWP Film #1*, Video still, 2023 [Online]. Videographer: Shirley Chubb, 2023.

Figure 4. Still of Natalie's film walking in a park, Nottingham UK, incorporating words from her poem, November 2023. *Natalie, PWP Film #2*, Video still, 2023 [Online]. Videographer: Natalie Sharratt, 2023.

moved between talking about the pain as "it" and alternatively as "my pain" (Natalie, PWP Film #1, 2023). We asked her whether the "it" was externalizing or objectifying the pain as other and distinct from herself. Natalie explained that these voices related to two different pains which were experienced differently for her (project meeting 31-10-23). Natalie also used her hand to illustrate the pain (Figure 6), indicating how pain

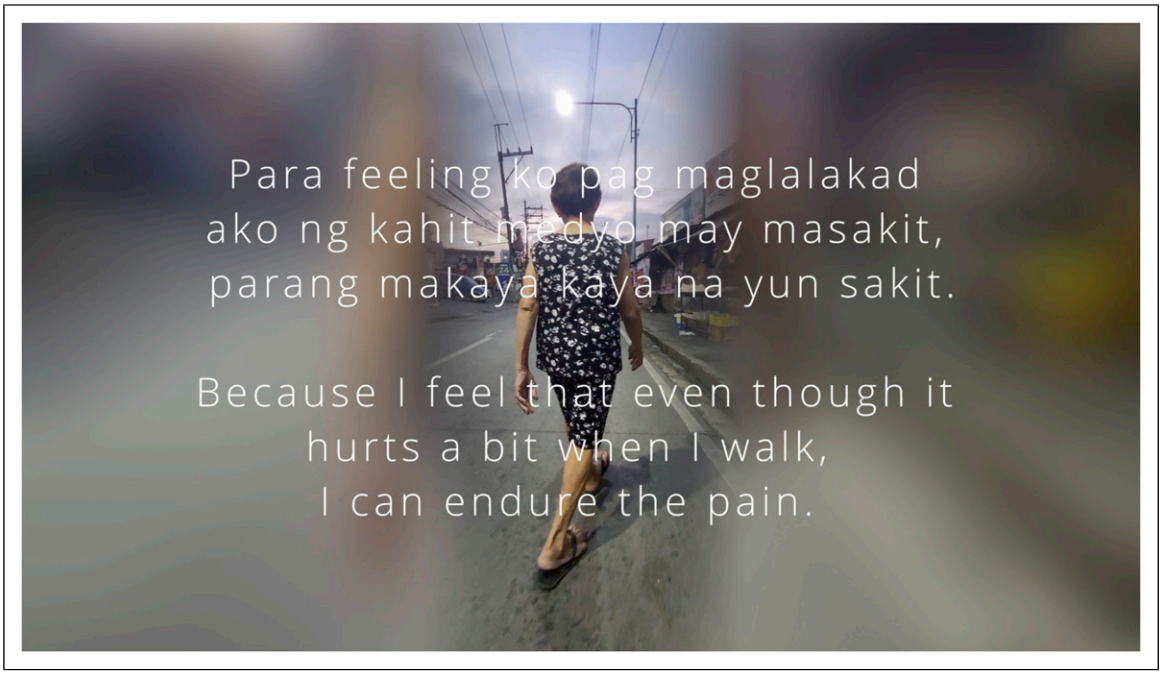

Figure 5. Still of Norma's film in Manila during the summer incorporating academic-partner Val's interpretations, November 2023. *Norma, PWP Film #1*, Video still, 2023 [Online]. Videographer: Val C. Dones III, 2023.

Figure 6. Natalie in discussion during her first walk, Nottingham UK, September 2023. *Natalie, PWP Film #1*, Video still, 2023 [Online]. Videographer: Roger Kerry, 2023.

resists and challenges the limits of language (Scarry, 1985).

film-edit-multiplicity-power-co-edit

Having made initial edit suggestions, Shirley discussed with all partners what the process of choosing and juxtaposing film edits might suggest. At times, the split screen was used to convey the multiplicity of walking while stills drew attention to pivotal moments captured by walker-partners or accompanying academic-partners. The pace of elements and techniques such as fades and the use of text were also discussed in terms of how they directed "readings" of the films. Our vision was for the films to convey the experiential breadth of walking, landscape, and pain when seen in relation to each other. As the project developed, we noticed that the focus on pain was less central, partly because when alone in the landscape walker-partners mentioned their pain less and sometimes observed that its presence faded as they immersed themselves in reflecting on and capturing the environments they were walking through. For instance, toward the end of her walk a slightly surprised Lena says, "I didn't really think about my pain when I walked, I just noticed" (Lena, PWP Film #1, 2023).

From the onset, Shirley grappled with the multiplicity of herself as an artist, researcher, and collaborator. In her creative practice, she was used to making her own aesthetic choices, whereas within the PWP, this approach and her sense of responsibility to the authenticity of the walker-partners' documentation led to discussions about where the authorship of films resides and how collaborative approaches could be captured.

To mediate these questions, Shirley discussed with partners (at meetings, and at times in separate editing sessions) how the films might be edited. For example, walker-partner Natalie suggested changes to the initial edits of her film by email. Shirley then prepared sample changes that included various special effects that could be applied to the footage and how the color of text could be changed. Natalie's academic-partner Roger (who had initially filmed with Natalie in Nottingham) and Shirley then met online and shared screens to explore the mechanics of the latest edit of Natalie's second PWP film where she walked independently. As they reviewed the footage, Natalie became more specific about the edits she felt would work best. She was happy with the longer footage sections but had particular ideas about the crucial text and how certain image clips should align with text from the poem she had written. These phases focused on the episodes of pain she experienced when walking and how this disrupted the otherwise calm narrative of the film. Font accents were tweaked from "bold" to "light" as they discussed how these changes might influence the film's tone or reception. When sampling color options for text, Natalie became aware that she wanted a more precise shade of red than the initial stock options used to start the discussion, leading to the use of a richer, darker hue. These choices reflected her growing awareness of how subtle but significant tweaks in film elements could better convey the depth of her walking experience.

As the team discussed with Natalie what motivated the type of film she took when documenting her walk on her own, she became more precise about how the film might be further edited. This led to making more use of specific clips that showed how she had moved the camera abruptly to match the sharp jolt of her pain, and synchronized overlays of the words "spasm" and "twinge" over these passages of film. The discussion with academic-partner Roger during the editing session was also revealing, highlighting how this level of collaborative editing could add meaning and interpretation. The aesthetic decisions that Shirley had instinctively made in the first edit were discussed in relation to Natalie's direct input, as she was able to see what would happen as changes were made, and that her insight and aims for her footage were more subtle and specific than she had initially realized. This revealed Natalie's growing visual awareness and that, when given the opportunity to refine initial edits, the walker-partners had a clear understanding of how the specificity of text, film, effects, pace, and color could all enhance and convey particular messages about their individual experience.

Other films varied in their complexity. Lena's film conveys the natural world of her close surroundings and a sense of human–nature–culture connectedness. John (pseudonym) filmed his route home from work in a busy urban city, navigating and crossing busy roads. We don't see him in his film, but we share his journey. Jeni explored filming with the camera strapped to her leg; her edited film viewed her walk from this perspective and thus reflects the dynamics and varying pace of her movement from this level (Figure 7 and Jeni's second film).

walking-landscape-natureculture-distraction-pain-mind-tool-healing-care

While pain was present in some walker-partners' dialogue, this varied. Natalie gave insights into pain as a violent disruptor:

> When I'm in that situation (in pain), obviously I don't particularly want to be filmed, but I just, I feel like there's a different perspective from the pain point of view that we need to somehow get across. I don't quite know how, but yeah, it kind of just feels like that. It's still a little bit, not kind of the true, kind of brutal nature of it in a way. (Project meeting 26-3-24)

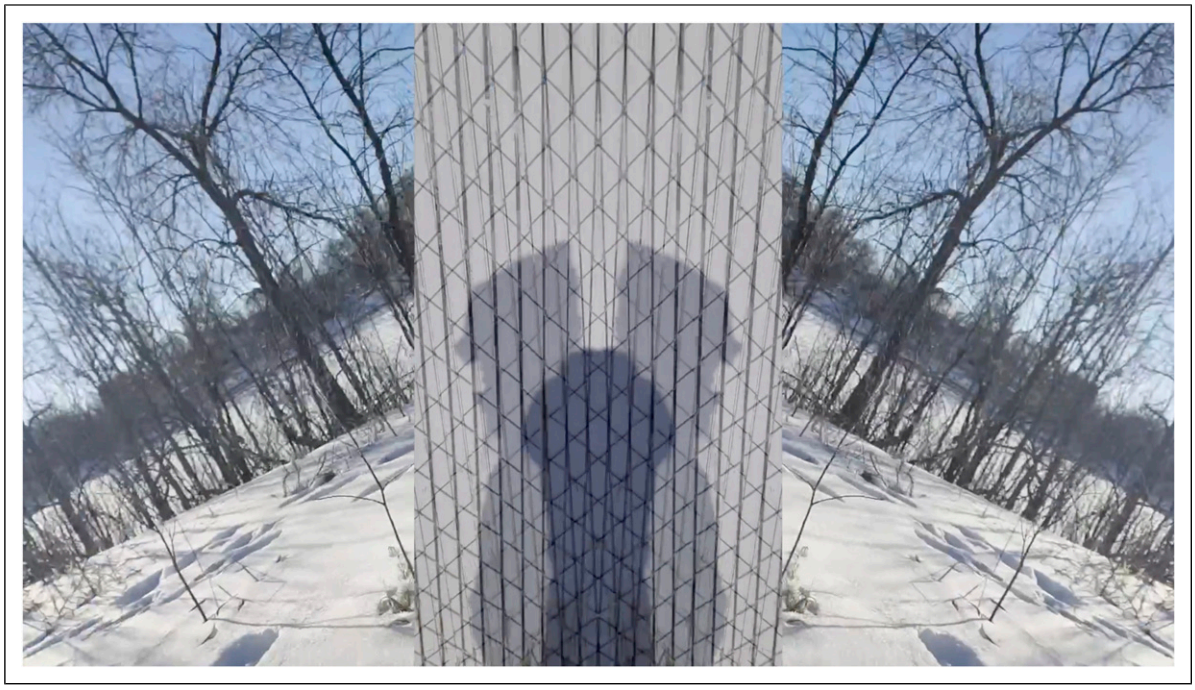

Figure 7. Edited still from Jeni's second film walking in a Canada winter, February 2024. *Jeni, PWP Film #2*, Video still, 2024 [Online]. Videographer: Jeni Ross, 2024.

This prompted (academic-partner) Filip to reflect, "I'm really struck by this notion of the contracting/narrowing/territorializing force of pain, contracting the one in pain into self/me" (email reflections 2-11-23). But Fe also recognized walking as a "distraction" which seemed to de-center the pain (project meetings 31-10-23 and 19-01-24).

Branwen described using walking in natureculture as a healing modality. Although she conveyed a sense of tussling with and challenging her pain when walking, she also described how the landscape itself became a treatment tool (Figure 8):

> I look at what it [the landscape] can offer me for the pain. So, I suppose that there are tools there that you don't have in your home. I'm always scanning for places where I can stretch or lie down or that are the perfect height to do my stretches. I often look for rivers so I can take my trousers off and just sit in the river because the ice-cold river or stream gives so much relief. (Project meeting 26-3-24)

Patty, a white woman, reflected on her past learning from Indigenous peers and scholars that challenged and unsettled Western and human-centric understandings of landscape.

> These comments really make me think about how different indigenous scholars that I know in Canada talk about the land, about the relationship with the land, that it is the land cares for us. ….. You know that the land provides medicine. All these plants are creating fresh air and they're holding water and they're like all the things that are happening in that space. (Project meeting 26-3-24)

Learning about relational worldviews, such as those described by Wilson (2008), supports a refusal to locate humans on any unique plane of existence, instead emphasizing reciprocity and care.

Lena in her first film described how the entanglement of walking, pain, and landscape marginalized her pain. She narrated as she walked through the "beautiful, beautiful winter" and how her "mind and sight open up" as she engaged with the non-human aspects of landscape and examined animal prints in the snow; she asked, "who has walked here: birds, mice, elk, reindeer and grouse." Through encounters like these, we came to more fully understand how the landscape itself was a formative experiential element when walking, actively offering distraction through the complexities of site that diverted walker-partners' attention to flora, fauna, surface, weather, and sound. We again reflected on how the landscape itself was a central partner in a landscape-natureculture-pain-walking-care assemblage.

Like Lena, at times, all the project partners lost the focus on pain, and we took time to interrogate this shift. Through project discussions and subsequent changes in awareness when walking on their own, the

walker-partners were better able to interrogate how humans are entangled in broader ecologies of living and non-living objects and spaces (Bennett, 2009) and conveyed their sense of being embedded in our ecosystem. Filip reflected, "Maybe the more-than-human and more-than-pain-ness of walking is precisely the therapeutic reason why walking can be so relevant for people in chronic pain, insofar as this is what connects and opens to new lines of flight" (email reflections 2-11-2023). What echoed through the project was a conception of the landscape as a site of care that was implicitly understood but had not yet been acknowledged outside the walker-partners' self-awareness.

pain-landscape-human-flora-traffic-walking-care

As we responded to the rhizomatic movement of the project, we explored how we might illustrate the possibility of pain as a more-than-human experience, for example, pain implied by the trampling of grass under human footfall as seen in the footage captured when Shirley filmed with the camera strapped to her ankle (Figure 9). These project discussions illuminated how all entities (human and non-human) are relational.

This resonates with theorist Jane Bennett's concept of "vital materialism" which emphasizes the vibrant, dynamic, and interconnected natureculture of the material world (Bennett, 2009). Vital materialism recognizes "thing-power" and acknowledges the vitality and agency inherent in all matter, from human bodies to non-human entities like plants, animals, and objects. Vital materialism challenges the anthropocentric view that only humans possess agency and vitality. Instead, it suggests that all forms of matter participate in a complex web of relations, influencing and being influenced by each other in dynamic ways. This perspective opens new ways of thinking about ethics, politics, and ecology, as it encourages a deeper appreciation of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all things.

walking-movement-natureculture-urban-leisure-work-culture

As we played with different rhizomes in our project assemblage, Filip wondered if a critical node of the project is "to show how walking is so much more than what we really think" (email reflections on 31-10-23). What is it about walking? There is the movement of the human body that is the focus of much physiotherapy attention. Norma at 75 years old had not experienced back pain until recently and she simply wanted to walk without pain. Walking allowed her to move around the home where she works and to access her local shops. Clair, a physiotherapist, noticed the reduced movement in Norma's spine and hips, but also recognized how movement in the film was more than individual and more than human. As Norma *moved* through the side streets of Manila, the

Figure 8. Photo of Branwen stretching and using roots to massage her back, Sussex UK, May 2024. Photographer: Anonymous, 2024.

raucous call of a cockerel and a local shopkeeper sweeping the pavement muted the sound of her footsteps. This contrasted with the throng of traffic and the omnipresence of the human as she moved through busy main streets and into shops where she navigated the obstacle of packages in narrow aisles. The sense of space narrowed until she turned around returning to the side streets where the noise quietened, and space opened again for her to walk more confidently.

What was powerfully evident throughout all the films was the more-than-human natureculture of the weather across different seasons and conditions, where the movement of streams, animals, trees, and grasses in the wind became more apparent. The movement of machines such as a wind turbine, motorbikes, and passing cars also became significant. In John's film, we see how a bridge offers safe passage across the highway. Our aim of including walker-partners who use(d) wheelchair or other "walking aids" and those with visual or hearing "impairments" was not realized, and thus these entanglements of machine-human-walking remains relatively unexplored.

What has become apparent across the spread of experiences captured in the PWP is the varied meaning of walking and its entanglement with landscape, place, and task. In the United Kingdom, Norway, and Canada, walking was a means of leisure, healing, and distraction where walker-partners chose walks in the natural world for the purpose of leisure. When in natureculture environments, flora and fauna were the focus of attention but the ability to access these greenspaces varied. During Jeni's first walk, she walked through the alley behind her house and alongside a busy urban roadway before being in nature. The urban spaces were ones she was restricted to, when her acute pain limited her ability to tolerate long walks, while consequent footage captured her increasing mobility. Norma and John in the Philippines walked in urban environments as a means of transport or for work, and there was little evidence of greenspace. In these urban environments, humans remained central, but encountered different non-human entanglements with cars and motor bikes, bridges, and shops. The crowing cockerel in Norma's film (Norma, PWP Film #1, 2023) provided a stark juxtaposition with all that was human-made, while in the dialogue between walker-partner and gardener John and academic-partner Donald, the assemblage of place-culture-walking-work is illuminated (Figure 10)

> Donald: How's your work today? (Kamusta trabaho mo ngayon?)
>
> John: It's been okay. I'm about to head back home. (Mabuti naman. Ito po pauwi na)
>
> Donald: Nice. Is this your usual route home? (Nice. Ito ba ung lagi mong dinadaanan pauwi)
>
> John: Yeah, I have to walk and use that pedestrian bridge to catch the jeepney or bus on the other side. (Oo, dito ako

Figure 9. Footage by Shirley when filming with the camera fixed to her ankle, Sussex UK, August 2023. *Shirley, PWP Film #1*, Video still, 2023 [Online]. Videographer: Shirley Chubb, 2023.

dumadaan sa taas na bridge pauwi para makuha ko ung jeep and bus sa kabilang side ng kalye)

Donald: You mentioned last time about having painful knees and back issues. (Sabi mo last time masakit tuhod mo at likod)

John: Well, getting old... It's a bit of a challenge. (Bale, ito tumatanda na… pero ito ung nagpapahirap)

Donald: Yeah, but it's a form of exercise. (Pero parang exercise din yan)

John: True, but not after cleaning two units today. Gotta earn some money. (Oo, pero pagod din sa paglininis sa dalawang room ngayon. Kelangan kumita ng pera)

Donald: I get that. How long does the commute take? (Nakuha ko naman po. Gaano katagal po ang biyahe?)

John: About 45 minutes, plus another 10-15 minutes of walking. (Mga 45 minutes pa, tapos lakad ng 10-15 minutes)

In the Philippines, walker-partners approached walking primarily as a functional necessity linked to work, daily tasks, and livelihood. Academic-partners Val and Donald noted that walking has limited recreational value within Filipino culture where people walk in the landscape for work and in urban settings there is little greenspace: "In our country, walking is really part of their job and not part of their leisure activity, because living in an urban area, we don't have that green of parks in our place" (Donald, project meeting 26-3-24). This practical perspective underscored how walking in the Philippines is deeply interwoven with productivity, economic needs, and daily responsibilities, symbolizing resilience and practicality in the socioeconomic landscape. This prompted discussions on how the entanglements and meaning of walking vary across contexts and created new rhizomes, leading some participants to document additional journeys, revealing contrasts in walking's purpose. Unlike her initial walk (Fe, PWP Walk #1, 2023) in the South Downs, Fe hesitantly recorded an urban walk (Fe, PWP Walk 2, 2023/4); initially, she reflected, "I … could not bring myself to an urban walk—I seem to clearly define walking for me is in nature, what I do in urban environments is 'getting around'" (email reflections 19-04-24).

posthumanism-worldview-power-culture-indigenous-task

The project team sought to explore walking with persistent pain in diverse cultures and socioeconomic groups. Through our partners in Norway, New Zealand, and Canada, we hoped to include the perspectives of Sámi, Māori, and First Nations/Métis/Inuit. Our perspective was not that indigenous communities needed us to "empower" them or "give them voice," but to learn from them, respecting pluriversality, and include their films when

Figure 10. Still from John's (pseudonym) film walking in urban Manila, January 2024. *John, PWP Film #1*, Video still, 2024 [Online]. Videographer: Donald Manlapaz, 2024.

representing the multiplicity of walking-pain-landscape-culture.

Early in the project, as we began to resolve ethical dilemmas so they would align with the differing requirements across partner countries, we came to realize the challenge of bridging diverse cultural perspectives. At times views were polarized; for example, in the Sámi population in the arctic region, offering payment to walker-partners may cause offense, whereas in Canada payment was considered an ethical imperative.[2] We were not able to identify critical friends with persistent pain from indigenous communities who wanted to join our project, and thus these entanglements are missing. In Aotearoa (New Zealand), obtaining the necessary ethical approvals was not possible due to the legacy of violent colonial history. Māori as the "Tangata Whenua" or people of the land hold a deep connection to their whenua (land) expressed through the concept of "Turangawaewae," a place to stand. Their connection is further reflected in the tradition of "Hikoi" or walking as a form of protest. In what is currently called Canada, where different Indigenous nations live, despite different cultures, relationality with earth, water, and living beings is central. We acknowledge that the PWP offers yet another western research paradigm, relying on western theorists, some of whom seem to have the same extractive practices that characterize colonialism (Wilson, 2008).

Western cultures are human-centered and unlike indigenous cultures do not inherently value the landscape. As Rosi Braidotti stated, "When it comes to human/non-human relations, it is time to start learning from the South" (Braidotti, 2020, p. 467). In this regard, walker-partner Lena asked:

> Posthumanism is a certain world view. When you have this worldview, you don't need posthumanism anymore. ….. the human is still so present in the language of posthumanism (decentered in human, non-human), whereas in an indigenous worldview these concepts have always been there in a way. So, it's important to acknowledge that it's not some white Western Scholars that have come up with this, but that it's actually rooted in indigenous philosophies. (Project meeting 26-3-2024)

Lena pointed to the article "Verbing meahcci: Living Sámi lands" which attempts to communicate and translate indigenous practices and the meaning of the *Sámi* term meahcci to outsiders. For Sámi, the landscape is a place of safety and productive relations and meahcci refers to an assemblage of place-times-task, a creative multiplicity of land-practices (Joks et al., 2020). Thinking about the importance of task, we came to realize that in our methods, the video process manifested an assemblage of walking-pain-landscape-video-task-pain care. We were curious about how an otherwise pain management program could extend into spaces outside clinic walls and incorporate tasks within our documentation. Our methods introduce the possibility of a novel form of pain management, which challenges the traditional boundaries of healthcare. This approach, by integrating walking and task with the landscape, allows pain to be understood and treated in more individual, creative, and context-specific ways, offering a promising direction for those living with chronic pain to explore new possibilities for managing their experiences.

Moving forward, we need to consider if and how we might include films from indigenous persons and more diverse contexts, and continue to explore the multiplicity of walking-pain-landscape-culture which will enable new assemblages. We acknowledge the complexity of this and that, although deeper discussions are present and continue to emerge, they are beyond the scope of this paper.

conclusions-walking-beginnings-next-steps-rhizomes

In this article, we have walked through our project, highlighting restrictions and new rhizomes. Having previously used more pre-determined methods in our empirical work, we have realized the potential and possibilities of methods that are responsive and generative and where our focus on walking, landscape, pain, and posthumanism offers lines of flight.

There were times when we questioned the appropriateness of following new rhizomes; we were aware of a critical voice arguing that we were giving ourselves licence to do what we want without discipline or rigor. When discussing this possible critique, our engagement with posthuman philosophies became an anchor in a stormy sea and we recognized the coherence of our immanent ontology and our rhizomatic methods that were truly responsive and exploratory. As framed by Braidotti (2019b), our exploration is not about becoming anything; rather, it celebrates approaches that are compassionate, inter-relational, and collective, providing a mode of thinking that permeates our work. As we proceed, we take a position of radical openness within which we resist the confines of pre-defined direction or methods.

Our supra-disciplinary network meetings and our "generative cross pollination" (Braidotti, 2019a, p. 44) aimed for non-hierarchical vital forces (Braidotti, 2019a). In this critical context, we came to understand the value of exploring the potential of unanswered or unanticipated questions. As we moved with the project, we asked critical questions of ourselves, including "what makes our project posthuman?" and in doing so came to realize that our project wasn't posthuman but was "becoming." We took time to think with theory, explore our varying

understanding of posthumanism, and discuss the multiplicity of the underpinning and interrelated philosophies. New rhizomes created a multiplicity of new entanglements with the landscape as a healing modality and point of connectedness. The resulting assemblages are dynamic socio-politico-economic entangled entities (ibid). Worlds are always in the process of becoming and as such, there is no final version of our films or practice: "The properly therapeutic goal is to identify those assemblages that affirm life, and then to analyse how the forces immanent to these arrangements achieve this affirmation" (Duff, 2023, p. 2).

Walking in the landscape offered more than physical movement; it provided an experiential space where pain could be shifted or reframed through the interaction with the landscape itself, fostering a relationship between walker-partners' bodies and the world around them. This allowed pain to be both marginalized and transformed in ways that traditional pain management methods, confined to clinical settings, might not be able to achieve. By incorporating tasks such as our walking-filming methods, which connected individuals to the landscape, we were opening alternative avenues for pain care. The landscape itself became not only a backdrop but a therapeutic tool, offering an environment where participants could experience their pain in new ways. This interaction with the landscape created a different type of space for pain management.

New Rhizomes

As we started to share our project films on the website and at conferences, our emerging methodology seemed to chime with clinicians who, as they interacted with our group, brought different natureculture-based assemblages with pain such as sea swimming or forest bathing, identifying other possible rhizomes and assemblages with persistent pain programs that extend beyond the boundaries of clinical walls.

Richness was brought to the project by walker-partner's engagement with the online meetings, and some of the project's rhizomatic methods were realized by deliberately collaborating with them as partners rather than subjects or participants. Two of the walker-partners—one a physiotherapy student and the other an artist designer—have presented at international conferences alongside academic-partners. Together, some walker-partners plan to write an article on their becoming through the project.

Throughout the project, our use of creative practice to manifest the experience of walker-partners helped the academic-partners to resist the comfort of being drawn back to prescribed methods and anticipated answers. Rather, we remained open to the possibilities of *becoming*, and thus the assemblages we have explored here are not fixed, and they remain open to different connections. To find new rhizomes, we need to continue to stay with the trouble, to "follow the threads where they lead in order to track them and find their tangles and patterns crucial for staying with the trouble in real and particular places and times" (Haraway, 2016, p. 3).

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the following for their valued contributions to the development of the PWP: Norma Bautista, Housekeeper and Walker-Partner, Manila, Philippines; John (pseudonym), Caretaker and Walker-Partner, Manila, Philippines; Neil Bryant, Department of Creative Industries, University of Chichester, Chichester, UK; Ann Moore, Emerita Professor, School of Education, Sport and Health Sciences, University of Brighton; Charlotte Taanevig, Department of Health & Care Sciences, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the Landscape Research Group.

Ethical Statement

Ethical Considerations

Overarching ethical approval for all partner countries was gained through the University of Chichester Research Ethics Committee (Approval Number: 2223_55). Additional local ethical process and approvals were gained as required by partner countries. Additional approvals were gained in Norway and the Philippines.

Consent to Participation

All walker-partners signed a consent form and an image release form. All but John (pseudonym) chose to be identifiable in their films and contributions.

Consent for Publication

Academic- and walker-partners reviewed and approved the manuscript. Walker-partners Norma Bautista and John (pseudonym) do not speak or read English, and therefore this was facilitated through the academic-partners in the Philippines.

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Notes

1. We acknowledge that the term "landscape" is a contested concept rooted in Western thinking, often implying a human-centered, aestheticized view of nature that overlooks indigenous and alternative perspectives which see land as a living entity intertwined with cultural, spiritual, and ecological relationships. Further discussion of this is beyond the remit of this paper.
2. In our project, walker-partners' time spent walking and contributing to project meetings was paid for by the LRG funding.

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