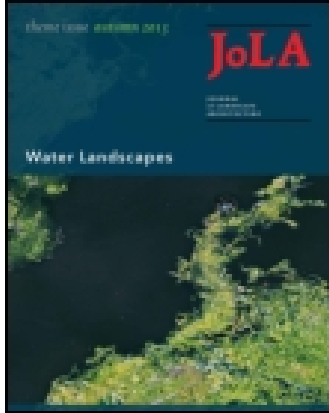


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Designing large-scale landscapes through walking

Henrik Schultz Stein+Schultz, Frankfurt, Germany

Abstract

The simple act of walking stimulates the complex, iterative process of landscape design. It supports and integrates engagement (intensively perceiving space), flow (encouraging intuition), and reflection (supporting organization). In the rhythmic, often strenuous act of walking, designers can change the landscape, as well as generate knowledge and ideas. Walking therefore has the potential to become a method for large-scale landscape design. Additionally, because perception, creative action, and reflection come together in the process of walking, it becomes an important practice of research through design. Walkers can generate knowledge, exchange ideas, and discuss their experiences with other walkers of different professional backgrounds. The article begins by describing the key processes of large-scale landscape design and research. After that, the author develops three characteristic walking modes: the 'discovery mode', the 'flow mode', and the 'reflective mode'. Finally, a framework for a method of 'walking in large-scale landscape design' is laid out. The findings are based on the author's research on walking, his experiences with projects at Stein+Schultz, and by taking approximately 100 walks in areas such as, the Swiss Alps, Scottish Highlands, parts of Patagonia, and in large cities, like Berlin and London.

Large-scale landscape design / performance / reflection in action / research through design / walking

Imagine this—a team of landscape architects, urban planners, and geographers are asked to find ideas regarding the future development of a region; for example, parts of the greater region around the German city of Hamburg. The expert team has been charged with drawing images of landscapes and tracing paths that show potential land uses and structures. But, how is the team going to approach this challenge? They will want to collect facts and figures, get an impression of the area, uncover potentials. Therefore, they will talk to representatives from the involved municipalities and counties, search the Internet, dig into libraries. And right from the beginning, as they work on a design, they will want to generate and test ideas.

In order to generate ideas, they need to explore the potentials, characteristics, and atmospheres of the landscapes—the reason why the team prepares an excursion. The experts know that taking a car, or a bus, will debar them from hearing, smelling, tasting, and experiencing the landscapes. They want to engage with the space and develop a sense of place. So, they set out on 21 April 2012 and walked the area.

Can the team build on the tradition of walking as creative practice from other disciplines? Can walking foster their perception of space and stimulate the interaction with the landscapes' components? Will rhythm, physical effort, and flow enable the walkers to understand the landscape? Can walking stimulate insight and ideas? Are there any rules the team should respect in order to be successful?

Large-scale landscape design: perceiving, intuiting, reflecting

During the twentieth century, landscape architects have increasingly extended their focus from designing green and public spaces to finding ideas for large-scale landscapes.[1] Designing these complex systems of interrelated artificial and natural elements can no longer mean primarily organizing and confining land uses. In fact, landscape architects aim to design images and strategies. In order to cope with the complexity of landscapes, designers try to stimulate the interplay of intuition and reflection (Prominski 2004: 83).

Hille von Seggern describes the dynamics of landscape as a steadily changing *Geschehen*, a multidimensional performative process (Seggern 2008: 224). Designing landscapes is an iterative process of perceiving, intuiting, and reflecting. Designers have to become part of the *Geschehen*, in order to understand, creatively express, and change it to first find ideas. My thesis is that walking stimulates this process of perceiving, intuiting, and reflecting and thus, is the best way to explore an area, to intervene in the *Geschehen*, and to generate ideas for large-scale landscapes.

Sigrun Langner says that navigation and mapping can be a creative tool of exploration (Langner 2013). Exploring is an undirected process of searching. At most, there is a framework and a set of questions that guide the designers. Every new finding opens up a path to other, useful information.[2] Bernhard Lassus calls this inventive analysis (Lassus 1991: 127 ff.), but I think these first steps in a design process go far beyond analysis. In fact, exploring can already be a process of perceiving, intuiting, and reflecting. Phases of engagement alternate with those of looking at the landscape from a distance. At one stage, designers want to intensively perceive the atmosphere of a space, to become part of the landscape. At another stage, they want to look at the landscape from a distance and be able to reflect their findings. While exploring, they can understand the *Geschehen* and express their first inchoate ideas. Creatively exploring a landscape is a key process in large-scale landscape design.

What do we get out of such an exploration? Often, the insights reach beyond factual knowledge. It is rather a robust, implicit knowledge (Nowotny et al. 2001: 166 ff.) that is best presented in, and discussed with, maps, images, collages, and poetic texts (Stein & Schultz 2008). The interplay of perceiving, intuiting, and reflecting allows designers to grasp the constantly changing spatial elements as an open image, which is, nevertheless, a consistent ensemble. Having found the first idea, designers want to test it by inventing strategies. They can, for example, tell stories that exemplify the interplay of land uses. Neuroscientifically speaking, knowledge that thus far had not been linked is brought together (Hüther 2008: 128).

As research on landscape is conducted by several professionals, as well as discussed by artists, philosophers, biologists, and social scientists, the reflections have to be interdisciplinary and open. The process of uncovering interrelations, drawing images, and reflection in action (asking relevant questions, discussing ideas) can be a successful path to understanding complex situations (Jonas 2007). Walking encapsulates the essence of this process and it is the best way to explore large-scale landscapes. But why?

Walking: discovery mode, flow mode, reflective mode

In this research, walking is defined as a steady, physically challenging, and rhythmic way to get from one place to another by foot.[3] Walkers make use of all their senses, are involved with the whole body, and are sometimes exposed to exhaustion. The rhythm that characterizes the act of walking enables a complex interplay of body and mind.

On my own walks, for example, through the Swiss Alps, parts of Britain, and large cities, like Berlin and London, I was able to raise questions and find ideas for these complex landscapes. My journey through scientific papers, as well as novels, and reports of walkers led me to the conclusion: there are numerous experiences with walking but, funnily enough, not in large-scale landscape design. Lucius Burckhardt did research on 'strollology', but his focus lay on using walks as a tool to perceive a space and to establish a critical attitude towards landscape planning (Burckhardt 2006: 259). His walks helped to analyze the urban fabric, but did not necessarily support the finding of new ideas. Rebecca Solnit, however, calls walking not an analytical but an improvisational act (Solnit 2002: 21). She says that walking the English gardens, and close-by landscapes, had been constitutive for the European landscape tradition, because they were the origin for the changing perceptions of space (Solnit 2002: 93).

Walking is an act of movement, perception, and creativity and is deeply rooted in our history. 'It was by walking that man began to construct the natural landscape of his surroundings. And in our own century we have formulated the categories for interpreting the urban landscapes that surround us by walking through them,' says Francesco Carteri (Carteri 2003: 19). Today, landscape designers can draw from ample walking experiences in other professions. The artist Boris Sieverts,[4] for example, combines paths, situations, and views and creates a sequence of images while walking. Participants of his tours are guided to experience these newly written landscape stories. The geomorphologist Sven Lukas[5] walks to find out how glaciers grew, as well as to reconstruct aspects of the palaeo-climate. Walking helps Lukas capture the complexity of a landscape and its genesis. The landscape architects at Vogt,[6] the Swiss practice, have already discovered the benefits of walking—they walk in order to find ideas for landscapes.

Why is walking such an important part of a creative process? In short, step-by-step walkers change their perception of the landscape and the traversed *Geschehen*. Walkers constantly cross the threshold of change. Additionally, the simple and rhythmic act of walking supports and integrates engagement (allowing one to intensively perceive space), flow (encouraging intuition), and reflection (supporting organization). Therefore, it stimulates the complex, iterative process of large-scale landscape design. Designers of large-scale landscapes need to engage in order to discover the landscapes' potentials. Occasionally, they want their thoughts to stray and to experience flow in order to stimulate associations. And finally, they want to reflect on both their experiences and their ideas.

To understand this process of walking and designing, I define three modes: 1) the 'discovery mode', 2) the 'flow mode', and 3) the 'reflective mode'. They interfere with one another, depend on each other, and can appear in long, or very short periods. The act of rhythmic walking holds them all together.



Figure 1 Richard Long: Cotopaxi Circle

Discovery mode: experiencing space

In the discovery mode, walkers focus their attention on the traversed space. They are curiously searching without a specific objective, collecting information: 'Walking does indeed heighten one's attention; one is more alert, more efficient' (Fulton 2001: 143). Walking is a precondition for perception. According to J. J. Gibson, perception can only be explained in terms of observers that move (Gibson 1979). Sven Lukas describes the knowledge he acquires during his walks as a visual conglomeration of feeling for proportions, dimensions, scales, and relations (Lukas 2010).

Walkers can experience themselves as an active part of the ever-changing *Geschehen*. They constantly orientate themselves and have the feeling of being part of the landscape and amidst the components of the traversed space. Occasionally, they get overwhelmed by the abundance of impressions. Walkers cross landscapes in motion—animals, people, the wind, moving clouds, sun, and shade change the landscapes constantly. So does the walker. 'When someone walks down a street she co-produces the spatiality of the street and is simultaneously co-produced by it' (Eliasson 2009: 19). While moving and connecting views, perspectives, feelings, and places, walkers get new perspectives, see things from different angles, or in a different light. The scenery becomes a spectacle in which the permanently moving walker plays a role. Playing a role means to intervene and contribute to the *Geschehen*. Walking alone already means to perceive and link

spatial elements and thus, to alter space. Like in the performance arts, the walker can switch from being a spectator to being an actor (Fischer-Lichte 2008: 29). He or she absorbs and shapes the landscape. The aesthetic engagement stresses the continuity and interpenetration of perceiver and object (Berleant 1992).

The works of walking artist Richard Long [7] can be understood as a walking performance that directly translates into sculptures. Long arranges existing material in a slightly new way. Long's Cotopaxi Circle (1998), as an example, is a ring made out of stones, rearranged in a rocky plain (Fig. 1). The movement of the walk passes into Long's movement of making the sculpture. The sculptures are an intervention and immediately become part of the landscape. The walk connects the landscape, the sculpture, and the performance of the whole journey. The interventions structure Long's journey, as well as the traversed landscape. Long's work shows that two aspects of walking cannot be separated—mentally altering space and altering space by drawing lines or by rearranging existing materials. Invisible changes and tangible action are interwoven in the act of walking. 'For whenever we walk or talk we gesture with our bodies, and insofar as these gestures leave traces and trails, on the ground or some other surface, lines have been, or are being, drawn' (Ingold 2011: 177).



Figure 2 Tour with Boris Sieverts

The discovery mode is crucial for large-scale landscape design. Designers try to perceive, analyze, and map spatial characteristics in order to acquire relevant knowledge and to generate ideas. Therefore, they want to open up and intensively engage with the landscape.

Flow mode: stimulating intuition

When walkers enter the flow mode, the space becomes a diffuse scenery and walkers let their thoughts stray, following their intuition. Walking and awareness merge, and walkers become part of the landscape.

Flow is a state where body and mind are aligned (Csikszentmihalyi 1985). The walker is fully involved, his or her emotions are positive, energized, and free. While being in the flow, walkers feel competent and experience themselves in harmony with their surroundings. Flow fosters ease and self-confidence and, consequently, strengthens intuition. Walkers are often forced to give up routines because they have to react spontaneously and intuitively to unexpected situations. In such a situation, walking stimulates the interplay of intuition, body, and reason. Ideas appear.

‘Walking fosters one kind of awareness in which the mind can stray away from and return to the immediate experience of traversing a particular place,’ says Rebecca Solnit (Solnit 2002: 134). The discovery mode and flow mode alternate.

Designing large-scale landscapes requires making use of intuitive ways of thinking in order to be able to grasp the complex interrelation of the landscapes’ components as one ensemble. In the flow mode, the mind can stray while the walker intuitively relies on the experiences he or she made before.

Reflective mode: recognizing and exchanging perspectives and ideas

The reflective mode reconstructs the distance, and the walkers try to understand what they have experienced. They have to reflect, focus their findings, and transfer their implicit and embodied knowledge into words and images.

The reflective mode can be reached alone or in discussions. Walks taken together with people from different backgrounds and professions are opportunities to exchange views, perspectives, and interpretations of the perceived landscapes right away, on site. Alice Foxley, for example, invites artists and geomorphologists to the field trips held by Vogt, in order to learn from their professional views on landscapes. They discuss the geneses and current processes of landscapes, as well as those which may lie ahead.

The constant change of perspectives and viewpoints helps the designers to complement their knowledge. Walkers can express ideas and relate them to the findings of others. The walks can become a framework for reflection in action (Schön 1983: 76 ff.) and thus, help to objectify the ideas.

Walks are also a great opportunity to facilitate discussions with an interested public (Fig. 2). Everybody is capable of experiencing atmospheres, observe changing land uses, and imagine stories. Walking touches the emotions, enabling people to approach abstract discussions on landscape development, both creatively and practically.

Alternating modes: generating knowledge and ideas while walking

The three alternating walking modes help us to understand the complex process of designing while walking. The act of rhythmic and strenuous walking allows these modes to appear and inspire each other (Fig. 3). The knowledge that Sven Lukas, Alice Foxley, and Boris Sieverts gain while walking is creative knowledge. They engage with the landscape, follow their intuition, and reflect their experiences. In this process, they pick out elements and combine them by inventing strategies. They may come up with a story that allows the different spatial elements (people, plants, weather, etc.) to become part of a plot.

Opening up and perceiving space, with all the senses, is one precondition for what neuroscientists call 'learning'. The intense engagement with the landscape allows the walker to call up visual memories, add new experiences to his implicit memory, and create new images (Bauer 2004: 71). The walking person gains and connects knowledge that consists of feelings, images, and visions. 'Walking the landscape is more than an alternative to intellectual knowledge: it is essential to knowing' (Jacks 2007: 270). The fact that walkers can become part of the *Geschehen*, and intensively perceive and change it, makes walking a process of 'understanding'. Hille von Seggern says that, 'as a transformative process, understanding is directly linked to design' (Seggern 2008: 233). Walking is such a transformative process of understanding and creativity. Walkers can explore what is already there and immediately change this 'reality' by walking through it and connecting elements in their minds and with their bodies. Walking rhythmically merges the motion of the body and the lines of thought.

It merges perception, physical challenge, and rhythmic movement. Thus, it brings perception and flow together, creating an interplay that is well-suited to generating new ideas.

By evoking, and combining, the three modes with their phases of intense perception, flow, and reflection, walking qualifies as research through design. The knowledge is not acquired by interpreting a video after the walk, but comes straight through the act of walking. Tim Ingold says that 'cognition should not be set off from locomotion, along the lines of a division between head and heels, since walking is itself a form of circumambulatory knowing' (Ingold 2011: 46). The knowledge generated on a walk can be effective for a research project, because the gained insight has direct consequences for the layout of the study, the next step made, or the next questions asked. Walking stimulates and connects the perception, the generation of ideas, and the interdisciplinary reflection; and, therefore, the complex interplay of intuition, body, and reason.

Walking as method: setting up rules and frameworks, practicing, transferring

Walking can help to intensively perceive and understand the traversed space, generate knowledge, stimulate intuition, and grasp single spatial elements as ensembles, as well as recognize and exchange perspectives and ideas, and thus, be part of the design process. But how can we walk to design? How can we make sure all these prospects of walking can be operative? Are there any rules for 'how to walk'? Can we learn to apply walking to the tasks of large-scale landscape design? How can the findings be transferred in order to make them applicable to large-scale landscape design?

First of all, walkers have to be interested in the landscapes. As with every design process, they have to get into the task at hand. In addition, there are three crucial aspects to walking as method: setting up rules and frameworks, practicing, and transferring.

Rules and frameworks facilitate walking for design purposes. They allow the creativity to unfold (Seggern 2004: 19) and give a rough orientation and starting point. Erika Fischer-Lichte says that art performances are often playing with rules. Actors and audience negotiate these rules; rules are object to design (Fischer-Lichte 2004: 47).

On her field trips, Alice Foxley encourages her colleagues to start with something that triggers their curiosity and then to document their imaginations, rather than the landscapes they walk. She facilitates reflections and 'transformations through conversation' (Foxley 2011).

Planning a walk with a framework and having rules is the object to design. Like a landscape design, it needs the interplay of intuition, body, and reflection. Walking is experimenting. The framework is designed upon assumptions and needs to be tested and adjusted. For example, walking a desert may require walking a straight line to the next place that provides water.

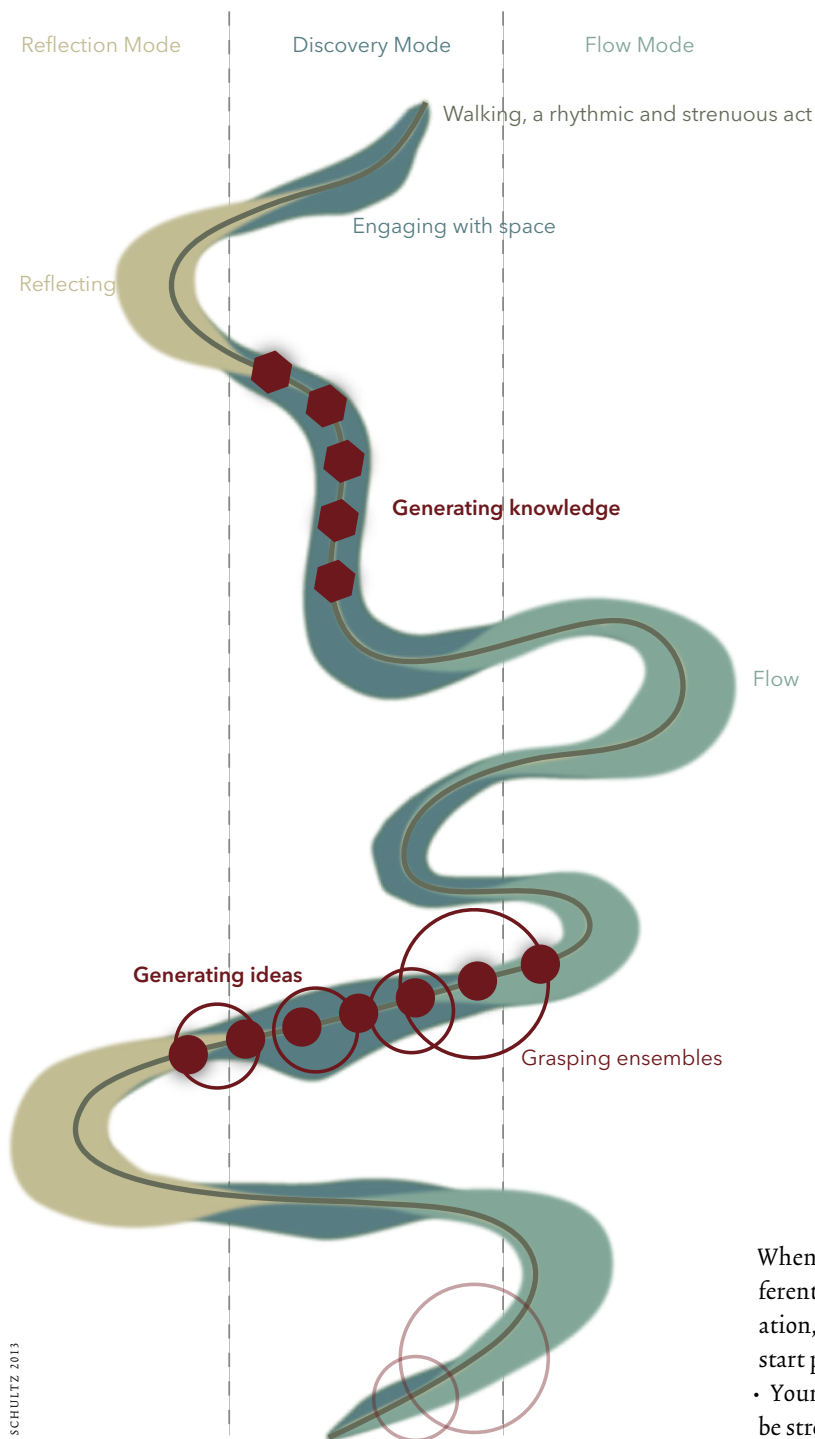


Figure 3 Designing large-scale landscape while walking

When experimenting with walking as a method of design, I tested different rules. Though they need to be designed specifically for every situation, the following rules can work as guidelines for those who want to start practicing:

- Your walk should take you at least one day. The journey is supposed to be strenuous.
- Once you have studied the map, try to avoid sticking to it. Use a compass to navigate the landscape. Choose a direction rather than 'the right path'.
- Experiment with following beaten tracks and with crossing the terrain by following a straight line.
- Walk alone most of the time, at least for half of your journey. Start a conversation with people you encounter on the way.
- Try to wander around and to become part of the landscape. Observe the place with all its scents, flavours, views, and textures. If you find something that triggers your attention, examine it and, if possible, take it with you for a while.
- Take as few photos as possible. Draw and write only the most important things that come to your mind.
- Breathe calmly through your nose and try to find a rhythm that suits you.
- There is no pressure at all. Open up for the landscape. Play walking!

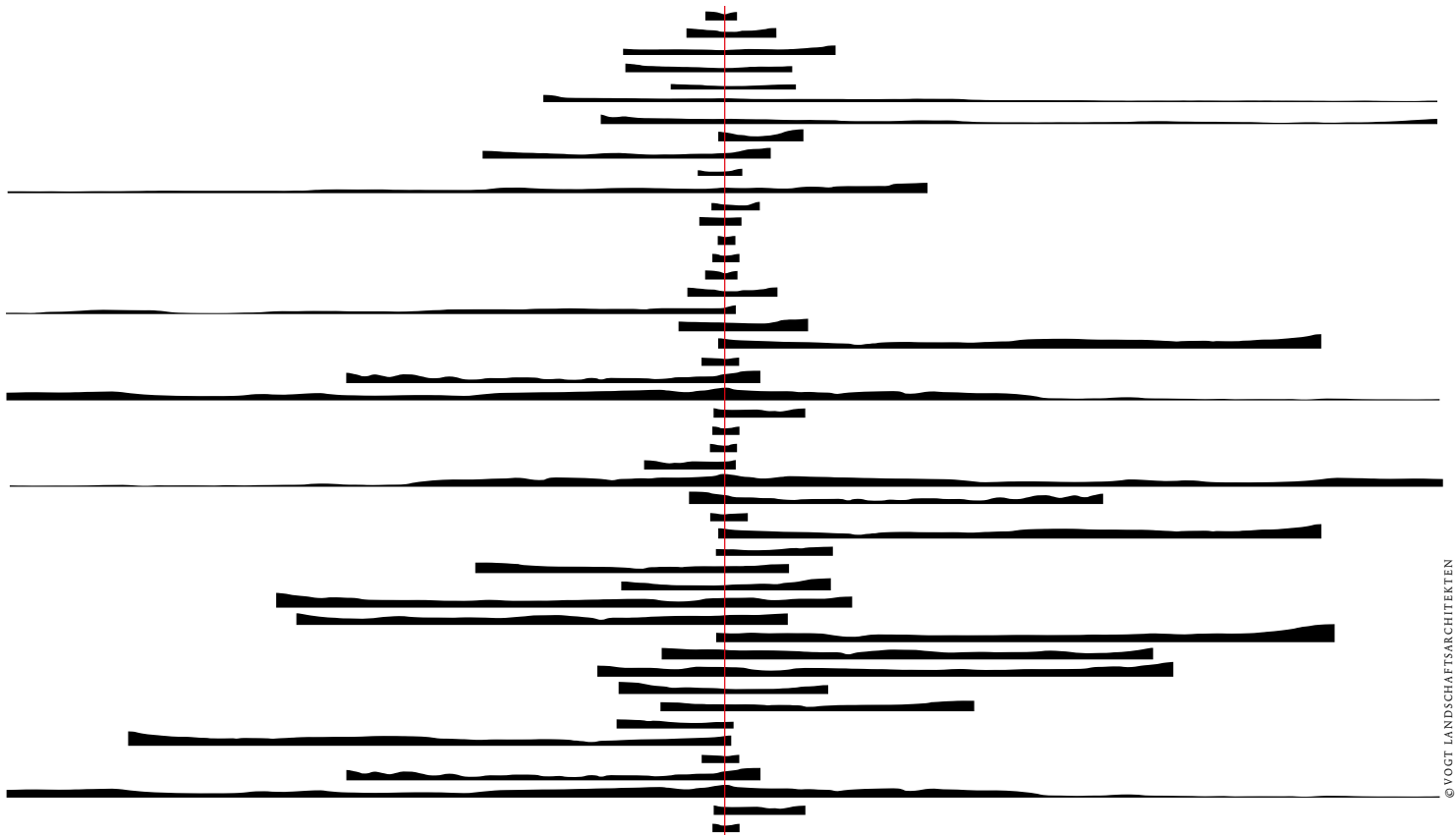


Figure 4 Shape of a walk

Like every creative work, walking for design purposes has to be practiced. Walking designers want to focus on five things. First, learn to open up and intensively perceive the space. Second, allow the flow mode to appear, which means avoiding constant reflection. Third, work on letting the switch between the three modes happen. Fourth, practice getting lost and enjoying the creative process of reorientation. And fifth, rehearse transferring first ideas into designs. Therefore, walking for design should mean walking frequently and learning from more experienced walkers who can assume the role of a trainer (Sloterdijk 2009: 503).

To ensure that all the acquired knowledge and ideas can be operative for design processes, the experienced characteristics, atmospheres, and ensembles have to be put down in images, sketches, and texts. Alice Foxley says that documenting is a way to translate experiences. Unlike Lukas, she does not try to visualize the landscape but instead, documents her emotional response to the walk and the landscape. By transferring this response into drawings, maps, and paintings, Vogt Landscape Architects make it accessible for their design process. The perceived atmosphere, stories, processes, and structures are available for the landscape design (Fig. 4). 'Some of our perceptions were recorded in field sketches and photographs, and translated in the studio into representative sections, maps, and models. Representing both real and imagined walks is one research focus at Vogt, in particular the plan view (maps, aerial photographs, etc.) and the perspective of the walker (sketches, photographs, film, etc.) (Foxley 2010: 373).'

When walking with inexperienced designers, it is especially important to facilitate an open dialogue in order to be creative. This can mean telling stories rather than giving precise reports.

Experimenting with walking

Back to our group of landscape architects, urban planners, and geographers in the periphery of Hamburg. On 21 April 2012, they walked some 20 km, in a time frame of about seven hours. They started their walk in Ehestorf (Landkreis Harburg) and met again in Königreich (Landkreis Stade).

On their search for ideas for the landscapes of the Harburger Berge, the Altes Land, and parts of the river Elbe, they applied a set of rules. The first rule was they avoided looking at their maps; instead they tried to navigate the landscape by following their intuition and using their compasses. They walked most of the journey alone but tried to talk to people they met on their way, in order to learn more about the landscapes. The second rule was that they could only shoot a maximum of ten photos. Another rule was to find their own, individual rhythm; and a fourth was they immersed themselves into the landscapes, trying to enjoy the excursion and what they termed, 'play walking'. Before and after the walk, they documented their images and questions that resulted from the walk.

What did the group experience? They were able to intensively perceive the traversed space and enjoyed being part of the *Geschehen* with animals, other walkers, the changing weather, and the like. They gained knowl-

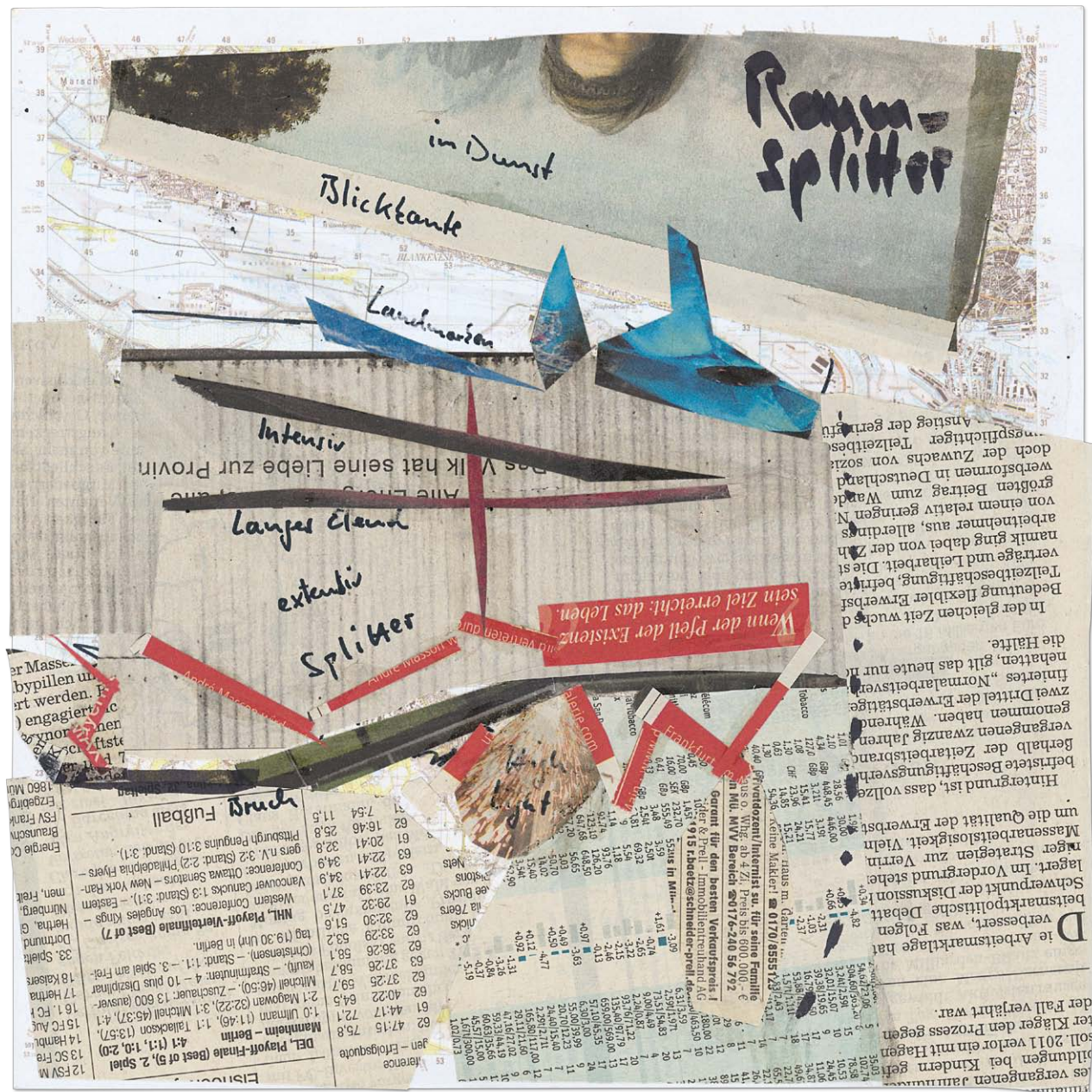


Figure 5 Documentation after the walk, Thomas Layer, 21 cm x 21 cm

edge and created new mental ensembles out of spatial elements, which they connected by walking. Before the walk, ownership structures, municipal borders, and patterns of land uses dominated the sketches. After the walk, paths, fringes, passages, contrasts, and landmarks became more important. They found new, poetic words for the different parts of the landscape and drew images of the whole area. For example, the landscape architect Thomas Layer designed a collage out of newspaper (Fig. 5) and asked, 'Can the space be incoherent?' (*Darf der Raum splitterhaft sein?*). His collage was aimed at connecting different parts of the traversed space in order to make it a better landscape in which to walk. The collage represented his way of reading the space and of creating a new landscape. This rather abstract image made for a great starting point from which to elaborate a design for the area. The next step would be to test the first idea, invent a story that explains the image, and link it with the interests of stakeholders.

The experiment in the periphery of Hamburg exemplifies the power of walking in large-scale landscape design that has become evident in my research. Although the participants did walk and thus, experienced only a small section of the periphery, each of them was able to enhance his or her knowledge, as well as find relevant questions and ideas for the whole area. These ideas arose from the simple, strenuous, corporal act of walking with its three alternating modes of discovery, flow, and reflection. The three walking modes allow the interplay of intuition, body, intensive perception, and reflection. Each of these elements is already crucial for large-scale landscape design. But, bound together in the act of walking and induced by a framework, rules, consistent documentation, and practice, they become far more powerful. Walking initiates, inspires, and structures design processes for large-scale landscapes.

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NOTES

1 In fact, cities, regions, and federal states in Germany invite tenders for large-scale design studies. These newly formed concepts for large-scale landscapes are named spatial vision, spatial image, or atlas. Examples are: *Testplanung Metrobild*, Metropolregion Zürich, 2010, Verein Metropolitanraum Zürich (berchtoldkrass space&options, Studio UC, integral ruedi baur, Hosoya Schaeffer Architects, yellow Z); *Langfristige Siedlungsentwicklung München / Gutachten Stadtrand, Landschaft*, 2011, Landeshauptstadt München (Cityförster, Stein+Schultz, landinsicht, freiwurf landschaftsarchitekturen); *Gesamtperspektive Flusslandschaften Regionale 2016, 2011, Regionale 2016 Agentur* (Stein+Schultz, Koenzen, landinsicht, farwick+grote); *Raumvision Luxemburg Côte du Sud*, 2007, Großherzogtum Luxemburg (Stein+Schultz); *Wasseratlas—Neue WasserLand—Topologien für die Elbinsel*, 2008, IBA Hamburg (Studio Urbane Landschaften).

2 Techniques of creative exploration are practiced at different universities, e.g. those who are associated with the Studio Urbane Landschaften (Leibniz Universität Hannover, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, University of Stuttgart, RMIT Melbourne). Experiments with walking are, for example, done at the University of Glasgow, School of Culture and Creative Arts.

3 The English term 'walking' includes different forms of movement by foot. Other than the German term *Wandern*, it cannot be separated from strolling or hiking. Strolling and hiking are ways to walk. Thus, the German word *Wandern* describes more specifically what I mean by walking—a steady, physically challenging, and rhythmic way to get from one place to another by foot.

4 Boris Sieverts studied art in Dusseldorf and owns the practice Büro für Städtereisen, in Cologne since 2000. Sieverts designs walking tours and accompanies the participants of his tours through urban landscapes.

5 Sven Lukas teaches at the Queen Mary University of London, Department of Geography. He studied geography at the universities of Bochum and St. Andrews. His research focuses on 'Glacier response to rapid climate change' and 'Timing of glacier-climate interactions and its effects on the shaping of landscapes'.

6 Alice Foxley studied architecture in Newcastle and Bath and worked from 2003 to 2012 at Vogt Landscape Architects. She was head of the section 'Search and Research' and developed, together with Günter Vogt, the practice of 'field trips'. Her book *Distance and Engagement* is part of a sequence of installations, exhibitions, and publications by Vogt Landscape Architects and received the 2011 DAM Architectural Book Award in the category 'Office Monography'.

7 Richard Long studied art at the St. Martins School of Art in London and works as a walking artist. He was awarded the Turner Prize in 1989 and the Lehmbrock Preis in 1996. He does walks in vast landscapes all over the world. They often take several days, or even weeks. With the material he finds during his walks—such as stones, water, ash, wooden sticks, and snow—he creates sculptures at the places where he rests. The sculptures are often circles or lines, and emerge like spurs in the landscape. Long's art is presented in photos, maps, and texts. He also creates sculptures for galleries and museums.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Henrik Schultz, landscape architect, PhD, is co-owner of Stein+Schultz, Frankfurt. He works on research and design projects for large-scale landscapes. Together with Ursula Stein he integrates walking into design processes to facilitate the perception and reflection of urban landscapes. Henrik also teaches and researches at the Faculty of Architecture and Landscape Sciences of Leibniz Universität Hannover and is a member of Studio Urbane Landschaften. The paper is based on his PhD thesis 'Designing Large-Scale Landscapes through Walking' (German title: *Landschaften auf den Grund gehen. Wandern als Erkenntnismethode beim großräumigen Landschaftsentwerfen*), which will be published in 2014.

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