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A photograph of a person wearing a grey beanie and a dark jacket, climbing a stone wall. The wall is made of large, rough-hewn stones and runs diagonally across the frame. The person is positioned on the left side of the wall, reaching up with their hands. The background features a lush green landscape with rolling hills, a body of water on the left, and dense ferns on the right.

# The Trespasser

An aesthetic figure for feeling the (un)commons

Liam Healy, Sarah Pennington, Louise Rondel & Tobie Kerridge, 2024



We (designers, social scientists, lecturers, students) reflect on a project conducted with the European Architecture Student Assembly (EASA) in Sheffield in 2023, to explore how we can operationalise commoning through aesthetic engagement practices.

When faced with what Stengers calls Gaia,  
we must learn from one another the art of  
paying attention to the commons, to  
common causes, and to undo ‘the sinister  
diagnosis of the “tragedy of the commons”’

Adapted from *In Catastrophic Times*, 2015

## EASA brief (1 of 2)

Understanding commons as verbs and actions; by considering how to become involved in both *commoning* (Linebaugh), and learning to *pay attention* to the commons.

## EASA brief (2 of 2)

To approach commons literally by engaging with the specifics of Sheffield's history of access movements and protest







SHEFFIELD  
**CLARION RAMBLERS**  
 1949-50      Forty-Ninth Year  
 Price 1/6

A Rambler made is a man improved!



Whibbersley Cross, Leash Fen  
 Photo by C. Tyson

*The man who never was lost, never went very far*

Ronksley Lane, Rivelin Reservoir embankment, Allen Sike, Lodge Moor and Fulwood. 15 miles. Return fare, 5d.

Leader: Miss B. J. Furniss.

Even here on earth, not altogether fade  
 The good and vile! Men, in their words and deeds,  
 Live when the hand and heart in earth are laid;  
 For thoughts are things, and written thoughts are seeds—

Our very dust buds forth in flowers or weeds.  
 Then let me write for immortality.  
 One honest song, uncramp'd by forms or creeds,  
 That men unborn may read my times and me,  
 Taught by my living words, when I shall cease to be.

"Spencerian," by Ebenezer Elliott (1781-1849).  
 Poetical Works. William Tait, Princes St., Edinburgh, 1840.

Elliott did "write one honest song" "for immortality" and, if all else were lost, his great hymn "When Wilt Thou Save Thy People" is known throughout Great Britain, if not in the U.S.A. and every Dominion.

**Sunday, February 19th, 1950.**

Meet at Beauchief Post Office, 930 a.m.  
 Return by Beauchief car.

Route: Ryecroft Glen, Dore Townend, Whitelow Lane, Dore-Hathersage B.R. to Green Drive, Bridle Bridge, Carl Wark, Winyards (Wind Gates) Nick, High Lee Lane, top, Millstone Cottages (lunch), Hathersage Booths, Leach House, Leadmill Bridge, Hazleford and Leam Halls, Sheriff Wood, Grindleford Bridge, Hay Wood, White's Moor, Longshaw Park Drive, Wooden Pole, Totley Moss B.R., Totley Bents, Totley Brook Rd., and Beauchief. 16 miles. Return fare, 5d. Leader: Miss V. Roper.

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How weak, how vain is human pride!  
 Dares man upon himself confide?  
 The wretch who glories in his gain,  
 Amasses heaps on heaps in vain.  
 Why lose we life in anxious cares,  
 To lay in hoards for future years?  
 Can those (when tortur'd by disease)  
 Cheer our sick heart, or purchase ease?  
 Can those prolong one gasp of breath,  
 Or calm the troubled hour of death?  
 What's beauty? Call ye that your own?  
 A flow'r that fades as soon as blown.  
 What's man in all his boast of sway?  
 Perhaps the tyrant of a day.  
 Alike the laws of life take place  
 Through ev'ry branch of human race.  
 The monarch of long regal line  
 Was rais'd from dust as frail as mine.  
 Can he pour health into his veins,  
 Or cool the fever's restless pains?  
 Can he (worn down in nature's course)  
 New brace his feeble nerves with force?  
 Can he (how vain is mortal pow'r)  
 Stretch life beyond the destin'd hour?  
 Consider man; weigh well thy frame;  
 The king, the beggar is the same.  
 Dust form'd us all. Each breathes his day;  
 Then sinks into his native clay.

From "Fables by the late Mr. (John) Gay" (1685-1732), printed for W. Strahan, etc., London, 1769.  
 First part published in 1727—others posthumously.

**Sunday, February 26th, 1950.**

Meet by Abbey Hotel, Woodseats, 9-30 a.m. Return from Abbey Lane by car.

Route: Graves Park, Fish Ponds, Jordanthorpe, Hazlebarrow Farm, Troway, Blackamoor, Unstone, Monk Wood, Keepers' Bridge, Barlow (lunch), Peakley Hill, Cowley, Stubley, Barnes Farm, Lower Bradway, Beauchief Park and Abbey. 16 miles. Return fare, 5d. Leader: Mrs. V. Reed.

59



How does a verbing of commons  
(commoning) affect how we (re-)learn the  
art of paying attention to commons in this  
specific place?



epistemic questions are prefaced by aesthetic questions: what we know is always preceded by what we feel, or at least, what we can know requires the semblance of what we feel. We have to feel something before we can know it.

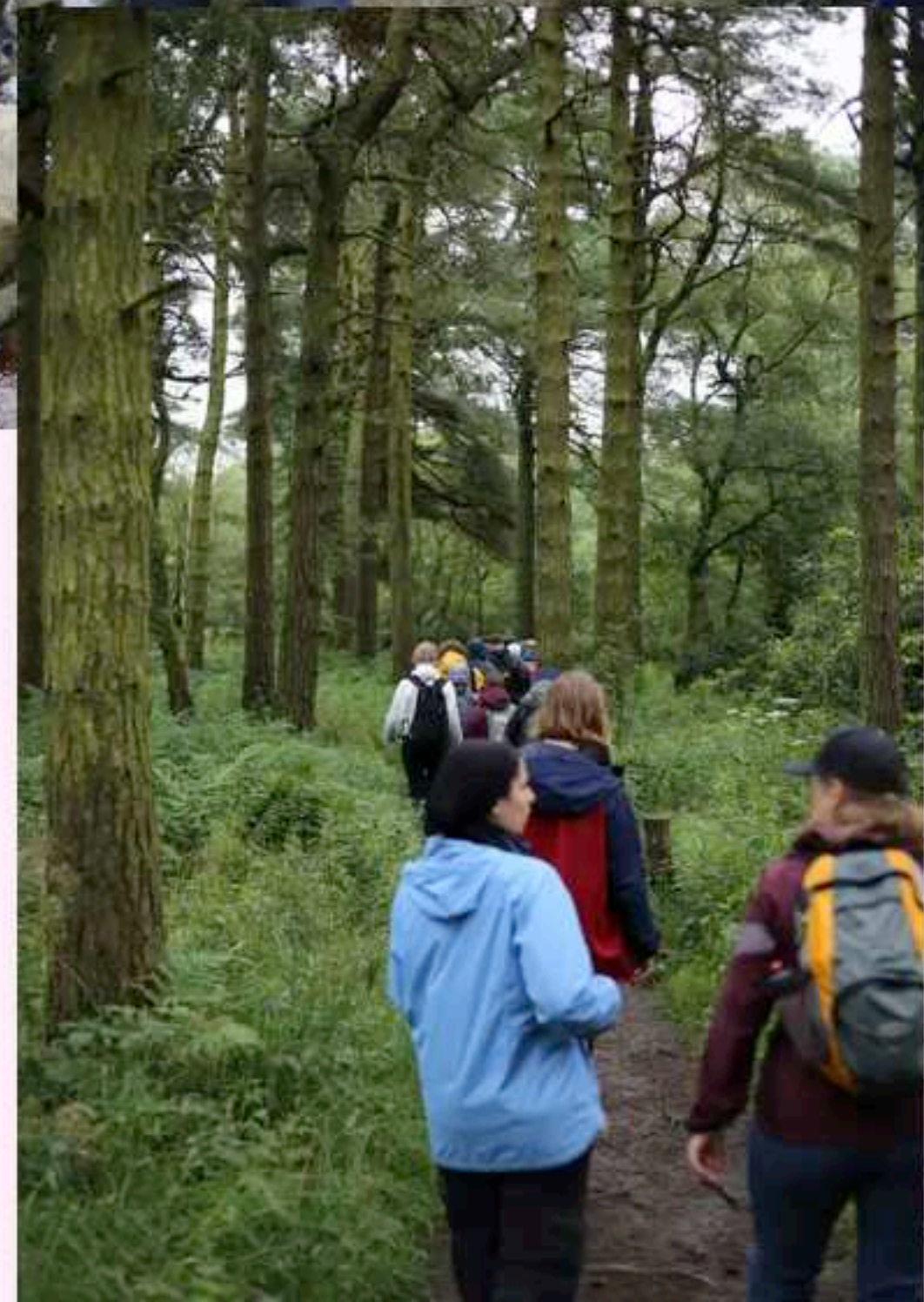
[...]

Aesthetic figures, such as the poet [or trespasser] demand that we acknowledge the complex richness of the empirical in all its heterogenous, unfolding and aesthetic complexity



**What happened....**  
**walking / reading / making**







**What does the figure of the trespasser do?**



walking, talking, questioning, debating, climbing, becoming  
out of breath, posing, re-arranging, warning, logging, thinking,  
seeing, feeling, belonging, accessing, hiking, roaming,  
campaigning, maintaining, resisting, trespassing, reading,  
climbing, scrambling, moving, dividing, providing, disturbing,  
swimming, conflicting (presence), (signs) discouraging,  
sharing, following, caring, repairing, sonifying...

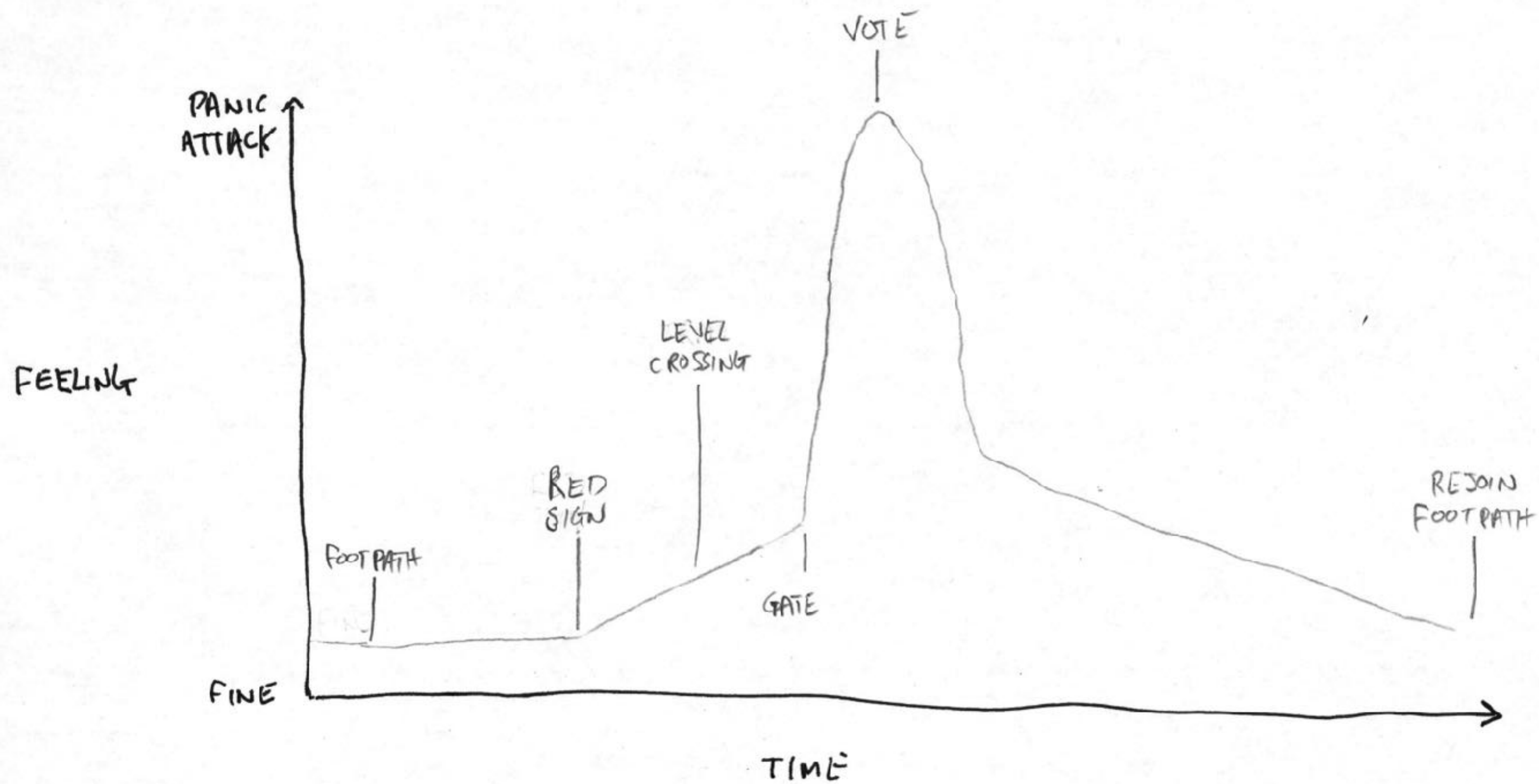
(Verbs from the participants' publications)



# 1. Feeling the (un)Commons

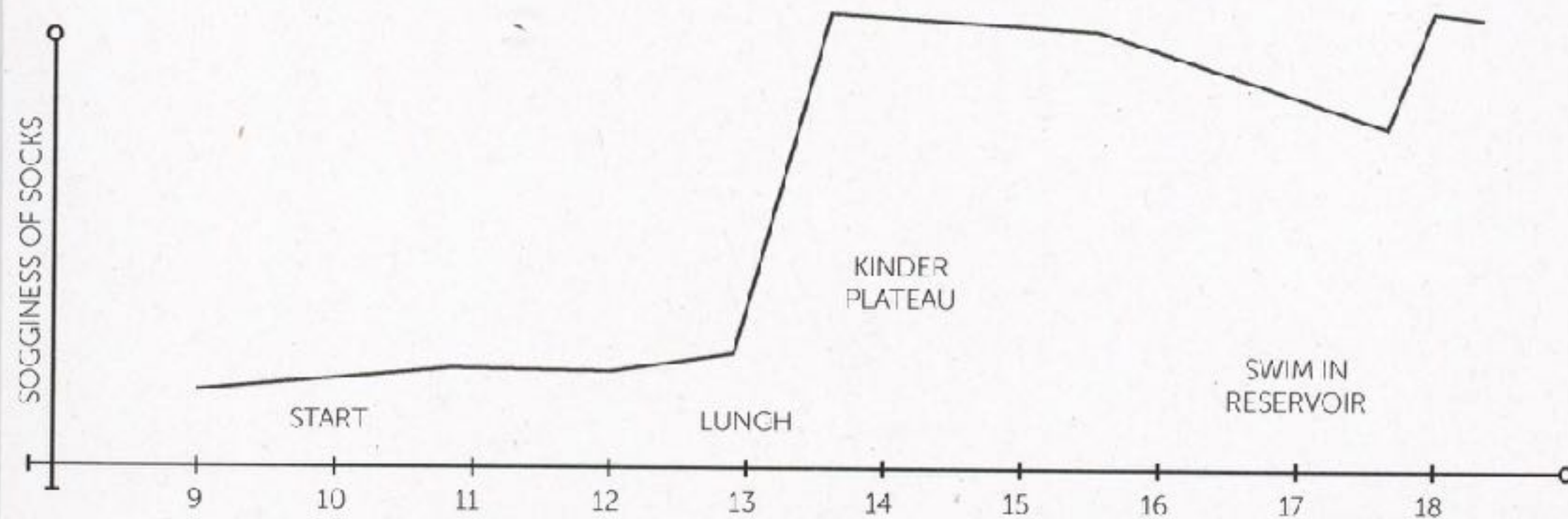
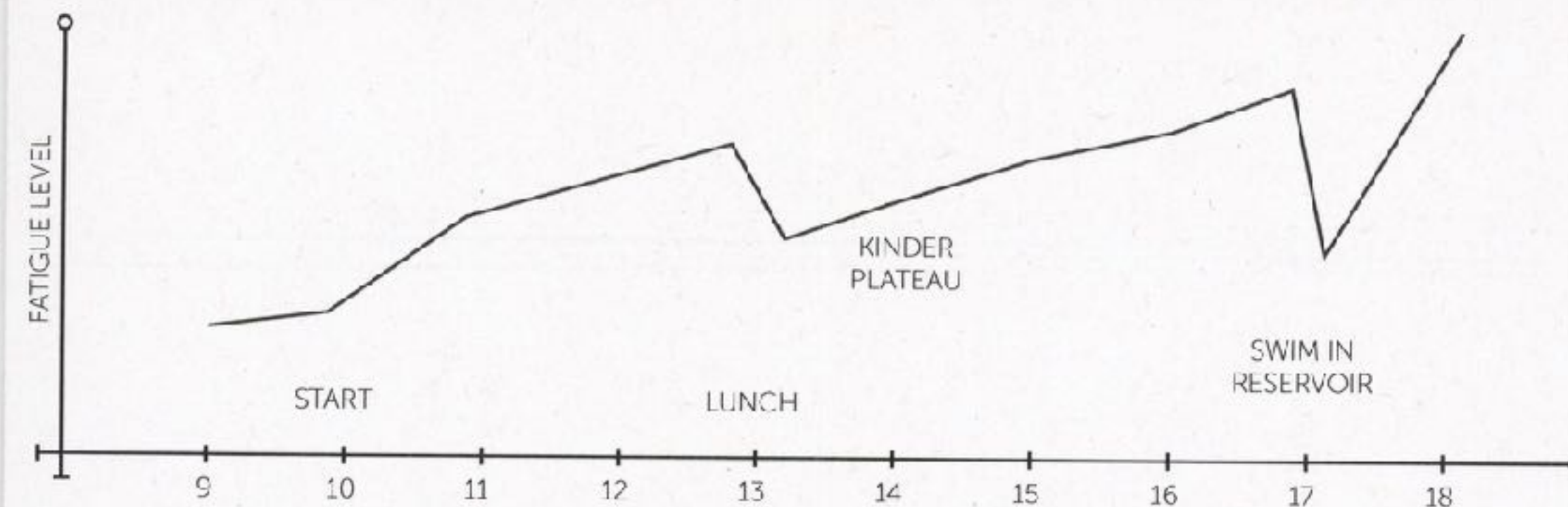


# TRES PASS BELL JAR CURVE





# MAP OF FEELINGS





walking  
----- and -  
posing

Andrius Mazrimas  
Dovilė Ratkutė

intro

posing for

to pose- to assume a particular attitude or  
stance

in the act of posing, one experiences a  
momentary sense of ownership over the  
landscape.

posing in itself indirectly raises a threat to the  
legal owner of land.

to pose- to present or constitute

in a picture of a natural a landscape, humans  
often need a dominating figure in order to  
relate to the specific environment or situation  
(human/ tree/ animal in the frame and nature  
as background).

that's why the composition of a singular  
landscape often feels incomplete.

in the moment of posing, the subject  
experiences a certain sense of ownership and  
pride over the surrounding environment.

these moments of temporary ownership are  
shared with others which solidifies it

posing a

question  
problem  
threat

when posing and sharing not only the photos  
but also the feeling that comes with being  
part of the landscape, which is part of private  
property, we, in a way, pose a threat to the  
status of the legal owner if the mentioned land.

by getting a fleeting sense of ownership one  
does not feel compelled to follow the social  
agreements and laws of land enclosure,  
therefore, contesting the legality of individual  
land ownership.

posing is not only an act of sharing pictures  
among peers but of a possibility to explore a  
certain place.



similar to mass trespass, posing is a  
commoning practice, encouraging people to  
cross property lines and indirectly contest  
the legality of individual land ownership and  
enclosure.



## 2. Attunement to Bifurcation

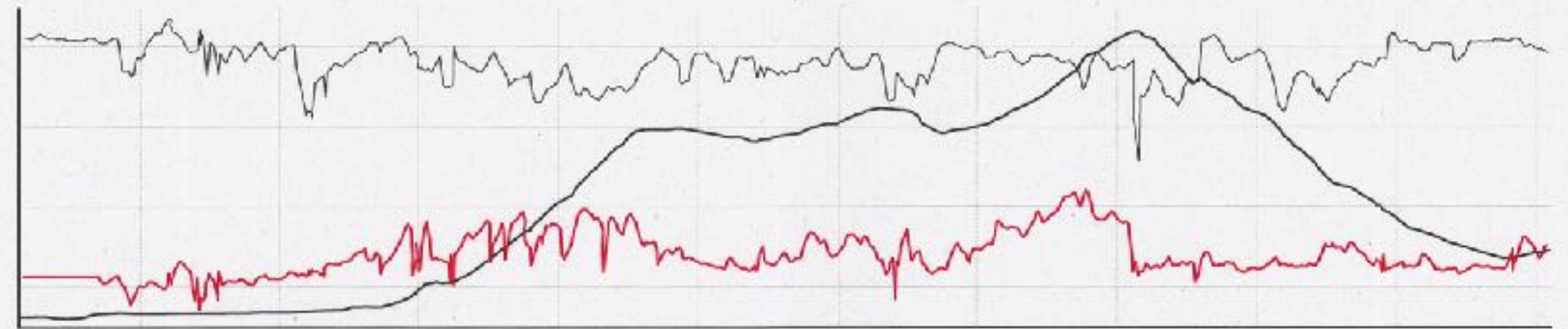


# Walking & Sonifying 3

Walk 3  
EASA 2023

Walk 3  
EASA 2023

## Walking & Sonifying 3



Bridge
 Gate
 Stile
 Cattle Gate
 Bitumen
 Paving
 Car Track
 Track
 Grass
 Gravel
 Steps
 Graded Path





*Ljung | Heather*

*Resa till Kinder Scout, 3:e augusti, 2023.*

*Ormbunke, blåbär och ljung  
Ett stenkast bort från där jag växte upp  
Här klär de bergets branta sluttning*

*Först klättra  
Sen kläfsa över hedens blöta mark  
Jag byter strumpor*

*Vi är trötta  
Men ändå muntra  
och vi sjunger på The Rambler's Song*

*Ormbunke, blåbär och ljung  
Som jag alltid tagit för givet  
Här klär de bergets branta sluttning*

*Men också andra engelska berg och marker  
Ett stenkast bort  
Trots detta  
Utom räckhåll*



*Blåbär | Bilberry*

*Trip to Kinder Scout, 3:rd of August, 2023.*

*Fern, bilberry and heather  
A stone's throw from where I grew up  
Here it covers the steep slopes of the mountain*

*First climbing  
Then squelching across the wet moorland  
I change my socks*

*We are weary  
But still cheerful  
We are singing The Rambler's Song*

*Fern, bilberry and heather  
Which I've always taken for granted  
Here it covers the steep slopes of the mountain*

*As well as other English mountains and land  
A stone's throw away  
Despite this  
Not reachable*



# 3. (Speculating) non-human aesthetic experiences



## *Walking & Thinking*



*Ormbunke | Fern*

*Peak District, 2-3rd August, 2023.*

*I ramble the path next to the sheep  
Parted by the barbed wired dry stone wall for  
us to separately keep*

*I wonder:*

*Is this for protection?*

*Captivation?*

*Who is it for?*

*Against?*

*I think:*

*The calmness and innocence of this undulating  
landscape faded a bit just now*

*My presence here is conflicting, but I cant  
explain how*

...

*When I walk the streets of Sheffield I see traces  
of 'making space' in everything, everywhere*

*I go*

*Small paths deriving from human laziness and  
inconvenient city planning*

*Sights I see while walking on the moor*

*Flowers purple, berries blue, grass green*

*But when I walk the trails of Peak District I  
know I only belong to the trail in front of me.*

*I wonder:*

*Why cant 't I be trusted to enjoy the beauties  
beyond the borders of this path?*

*Am I being controlled by someone else's wrath?*

*Am I more free to make space in an  
environment filled with traffic, concrete  
buildings & sharp fences than in the vast nature  
of emptiness?*

*I think:*

*There is no room for making my own space here  
So I simply 'maintain space' by being there  
I must be following someone else's orders in my  
own recreation*

*Peak District, 2-3rd August, 2023.*

*Behind every hill I conquer*

*I see sheep*

*Seemingly emancipated from the dry stone wall,  
but not from me*

*And they walk as they wish*

*And they eat as they wish*

*I wonder:*

*What is it like up there?*

*What am I emancipated from?*

*I think:*

*If the cow symbolizes the common*

*Then these sheep symbolise the control and  
power of privatisation*

*The sheep here are more free than I am*

...

*As I approach the reservoir wrapped in signs  
standing tall*

*I notice the lack of barbed wire by the water  
and walls*

*I am informed by colours in bright yellow and  
red*

*'Danger'*

*'Keep out'*

*'No swimming'*

*So trespass and keep on wandering*

*I wonder:*

*How come this body of water is said to be  
dangerous for me, yet it has less of a barrier to  
cross than the dry stone wall containing sheep?*

*I think:*

*It doesn't matter*

*Because now I find myself soaked as I bathe  
and I breathe*

*I have made my own space as I please*

*Writings by Ebba & Linnea*

*EASA Commons 2023  
Walking & reading*





Private Land Gravel



Contracted Faux

Imported gravel  
for the  
convenience  
and movement  
of stuff on a  
piece of land.  
Not used to  
go long  
stretches.

Only intended for  
the use of the landowner.

Private Land Gravel

Taking outsider  
soils and  
geology to  
create a

constrained and  
finished article.

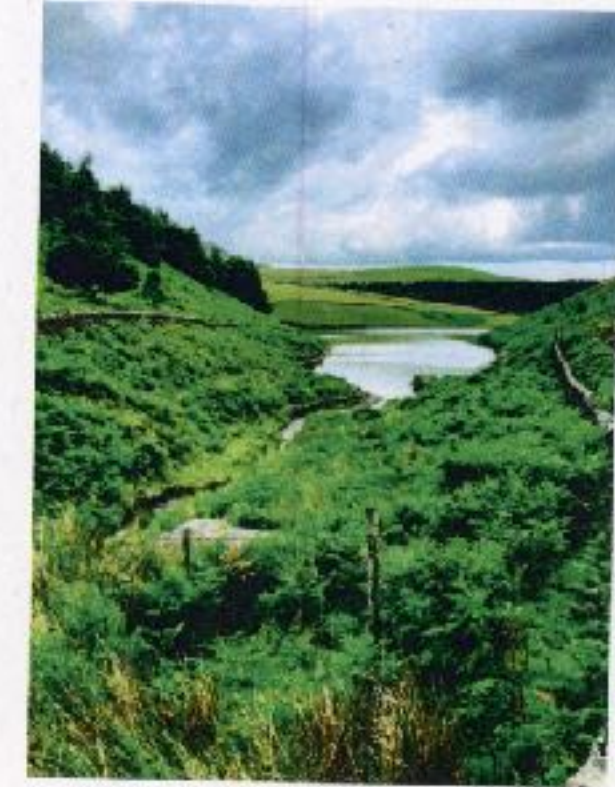
Large boulders,  
tend to last  
a long time

but eventually require repair.

Contracted Faux



Re-arrangements



Trodden

Moving  
sandstone  
routes and  
a rugged  
The re-arrangement  
reduce path  
erosion.

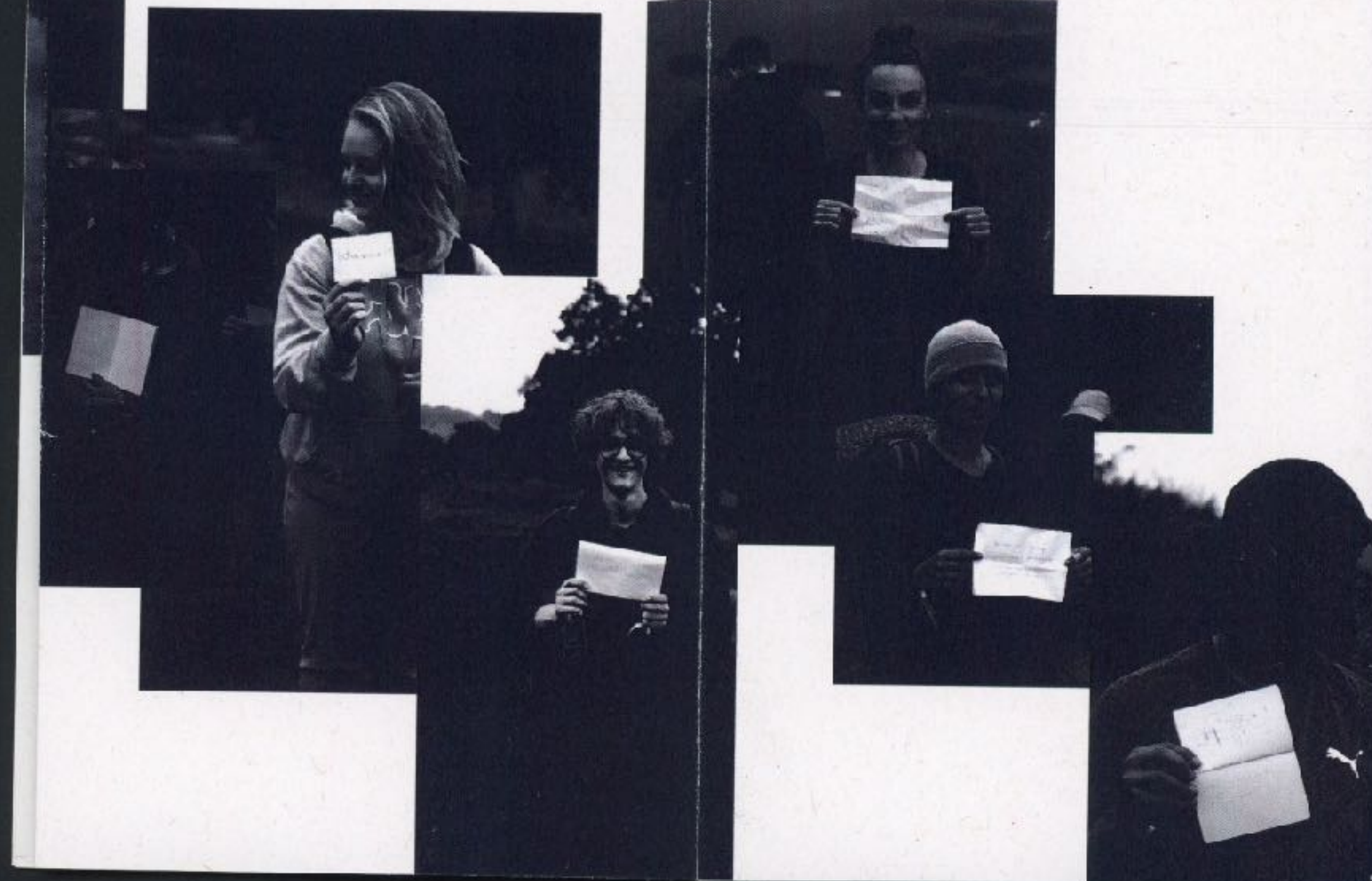
A sign of  
someone  
dividing  
the path,  
often  
providing  
access for  
the next person

Re-arrangements

Trodden



Walking &  
Talking,  
Questioning,  
Debating,  
Climbing,  
Becoming out  
of breath

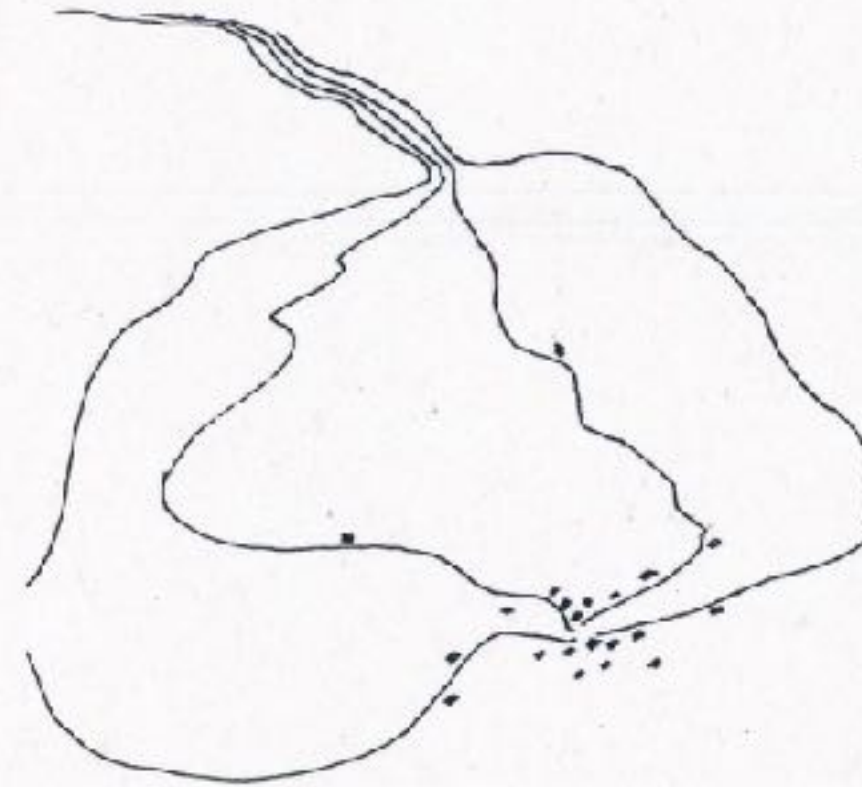




## HOW OLD IS THIS PATH

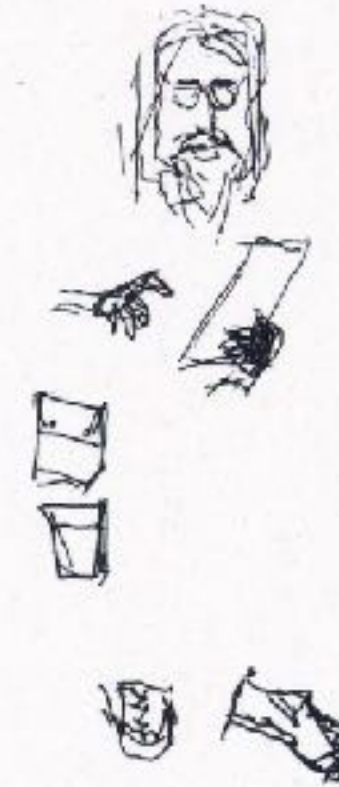
WHO AND WHY  
WALKED IT BEFORE

**WHY**  
SHOULD WE SAVE IT FOR THE FUTURE



ELENE (RIDE SHEFFIELD ENTHUSIAST) STRESSES ON  
"WE DONT WANT PATHS TO TURN INTO  
HIGHWAYS"

AT THE SAME TIME WE DON'T WANT MORE  
PATHS THAT ALL TOGETHER MAKE  
A BIGGER FOOTPRINT.



TERRY (FIGHTS FOR RIGHTS TO ROAM)

HE SAID THAT BEFORE IN COMMON  
LAND YOU COULD PICK BLUEBERRYS, BUT  
YOU COULDN'T TAKE ANY WOOD.

"WE STILL HAVE SO MUCH TO LEARN FROM  
SCANDINAVIA"

HE WAS THERE IN THE 1960'S AND FOR  
HIM THE ABILITY TO  
USE WOOD FOR CAMPING FELT LIKE A  
**STATEMENT OF FREEDOM.**

WALKING &  
*CARING*



**WHY AND FOR WHO**  
ARE WE SO DETERMINED TO  
INCLUDE MORE HISTORICALLY USED  
PATHS IN DEFINITIVE 2026 MAP?



# We propose the aesthetic figure of the trespasser as:

- the one who feels the (un)commons;
- helps to understand legalised sociomaterial territory;
- speculates on what might be (com-)possible in the commons



# Thanks!

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