



Fig.052 An early screenshot showing me retracing a daily walk. As one A4 paper might not be sufficient to trace my walk, I either continue the tracing on the other side of the paper or attach another A4 to it. I can also use bigger paper formats but generally I try to recycle the back of letters I receive from the tax authorities or the back of the drawings of my children or some paper my partner might have taken home from work to take a few notes. After having digitally retraced a walk, I scribble over the one that is on paper so as to know I have already digitized it and then use this paper for other annotations and calculations until it is full and I put it in one of the boxes of my digital archive.

#### **WALKS 04**

The variety of sketches presented each month in each panel also shows my economic situation. On a few occasions I might have a job but not so much time to take long walks. As a university researcher for example I had little time to walk but I got to travel and commute much more from one place to another, taking every opportunity to make small walks in whatever place I reached. By doing so I generated panels with many small and scattered sketches. Also later while working as a carpenter I was sent to this or that client for a work and made use of my breaks to walk. Generally however these situations never last too long. The impulse to be hitting the road and cultivate my life-project always prevailed and within a very short time I was unemployed from work and employed back into my own ecology. Doing so I also

rescued my children from being confined in one room kindergartens bringing them also back out into the fresh air.

Besides my short-lived experiences as a wage-slave, the usual situation is that I am broke and I often have to walk several miles to places not having the money to purchase a bus ticket. In this respect I have acted in accordance with the transcendentalist principles underlined by Henry David Thoreau who said that it is faster to walk to a place than having to go to work to be able to afford the train ticket to go somewhere. With my oldest son for instance we took not only long walks while living in Sweden but also while living abroad, crossing on foot entire metropolis going from Brooklyn to Central Park in New York City, from the French Concession to Fuxin park in Shanghai or walking weekly from Cambridge to the cheap fruit market in Boston and back with the grocery, under snow-storms or the heat of the summer.

Often my question “how do I get to a place” is answered with “take this or that bus or metro”. As I reply “I want to walk” people are bewildered especially if they see me with small kids. The answer is that people have never walked such a distance or have never even conceived to walk it. They rather drive as when I lived in North America, or at the most bike as when I lived in the Netherlands. Even the shortest of distances are rather covered with a vehicle. Nowadays even in the alps I walk and there are humans on electric bikes climbing with no effort whatever hill. Yes walking can be very tedious as it can be very tedious to be left alone with one’s own thoughts, without a podcast or some music playing in the background. Given that I managed to establish a connection with my inner nature I don’t have the need for such entertainment and I am very eager to just explore and cross whatever there is to close, even the dullest of environments.

Early postmen used to walk several dozen kilometers everyday. Some of them must have hated it or either way they weren’t so much looking forward to it. Others, like the French postman Ferdinand Cheval found in walking a constructive activity. In his long walks to deliver the post the Frenchman constructed his memory palace eventually also picking stones on the way to actually build the palace he had conceived in his head. I believe I also found my constructive activity in walking. It did come quite naturally to me to do so even before my project but especially because of my project I am very much eager to walk and explore, to pick samples from the reality I trespass and

ultimately add them to the place in my memory building I have allocated for the various samples.

Russian constructivists like Dziga Verotv also had the same drive to explore with his cameras the landscape and then sort the resulting film reels in a cabinet. Beyond the arts foo-gathering people also went on such daily errands. They walked the forest, they explored the natural landscape and from it gathered food or just even insights. So one doesn't need to be a necessarily a poet in the lake district and explore to later recollect in tranquility his or her experience. Walking is just the very basic motion humans have always undertaken to keep on learning from the environment and to gather from it something more or less unexpected. Even when in the neolithic period people became more sedentary, they still had much wilderness to explore and much food to gather from it. With feudalism first and industrialization later, people got caught in locked dimensions and with walking also the imagination that can derive from it came less.

This is why I do not criticize a particular class so much but the overall system which literally locks people up to their very determined conditions. It is likely that they need to be constantly on the move yet these movements are that of commuters who have to face over and over the same itineraries with always a glass separating them from reality. I am also in the same situation. My children have to go to school, I have to accompany them and pick them up. With whatever time is left I sometime manage to improvise a little adventure but it is never the same as it used to when they did not have to attend mandatory school and we could travel through the continent and improvise our walks always managing to reach a pick, a moment of katharsis and joy bringing us to heaven.

Even the smallest of routines shape life, even the smallest of imposition become the reference around which everything has to rotate. The only way I have figured to break such a terrible dependence is to establish personal routines obliging people to get out of the authoritarian routines. In this respect I see my walking, my departing from the town and my walking through the landscape and my pushing the boundaries trying to make it more to one or another end, I see walking as my daily rebelling. Soldiers march and they all march to self-destruction. I walk, I pause, I annotate, I increase the tempo, I sit on a rock to contemplate, I breathe and I stop breathing if a car passes, I pick a fresh leave

with my fingers, a little rock to be put in my archive, a small flier. I sense the nature around me. Walking becomes the ritual to keep part of it.

Despite myself being a dark little immigrant that at first sight have nothing to do with the landscape of the foreign country where I live, I feel more part of it than anyone I know, I feel the bridge between the middle class going to their jobs and only taking their dog out to poop even though they are too tired, or only taking their motorcycles out in the weekend to cut through the landscape and release all their frustration, or finding a rather scenic spot to get fully wasted with their friends or those who absolutely never venture out, I feel the bridge between them and the surrounding. My project then can be seen as a key, a key to unlock such a disconnection between humans and the environment.

This reconnection to me is essential in that it no longer heals humans from all their neurotic disorders that a life disconnected from nature bring about but also it is in my opinion the way to heal the environment, becoming more frugal and eventually coming up with ways to reconcile with it, imagine a life back to it, break up the giant latifondo of the big farmers and redistribute pieces to the people to spontaneously create without governmental supervision ecological type of communities, communities in direct touch with their imminent nature and therefore directly responsible for them.