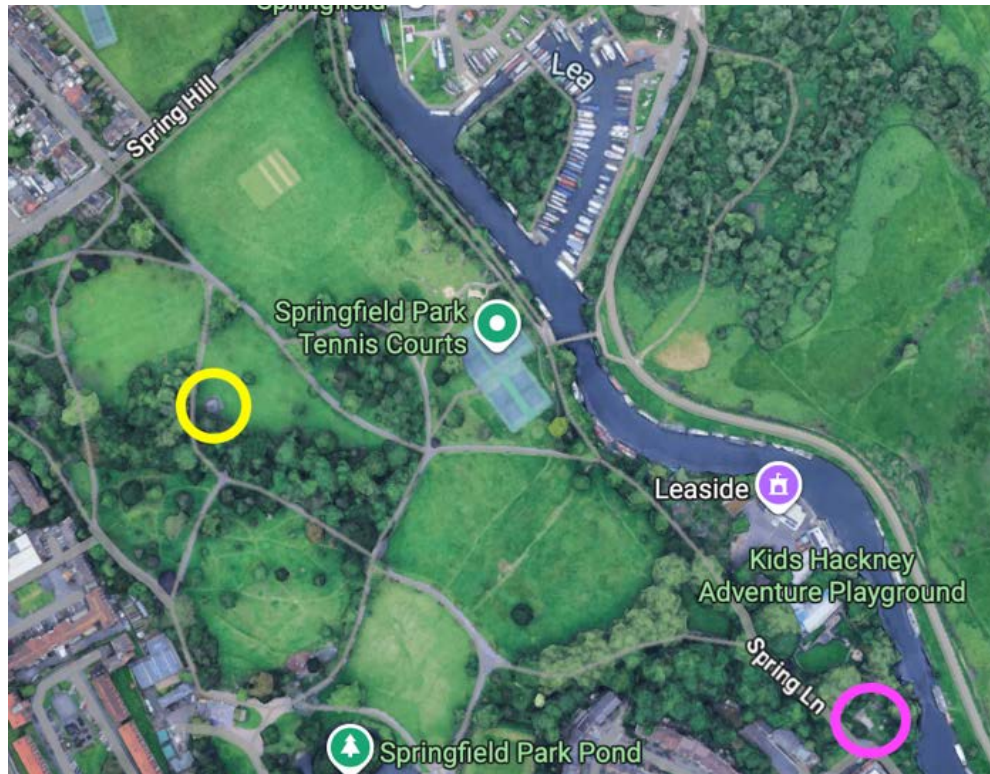


Walking in Air in Springfield Park & Walthamstow Marshes

10/01/2026



Friday 9th January 13.52pm, Thornton Heath

Six months since our last walking in air in a dry Mounts Pond, in Blackheath. Five years and two days since my first fieldwork in a nearby meadow during lockdown. Tomorrow, sax player and sound artist Artur Vidal is welcoming conceptual poet/writer/walker James Davies, Will and I on his turf: Walthamstow Marshes, Springfield Park and its bandstand that he uses for his musical practice inspired by Pauline Oliveros sonic meditations and listening practices. Bandstands are designed to amplify and project sound, to best serve their original purpose as a stage for concerts and other community events. Will visited a bandstand five years ago for his first fieldwork in Battersea Park.

Few bandstands remain in London parks nowadays. Very popular in Victorian times, only a few have survived, mostly in well to do privileged areas. In my local park there was an octagonal bandstand built by Croydon Council next to a bowling green that is still there today. It was demolished in the 1960s. The open-air gym installed around ten years ago and the nearby basketball court are now the focal point for the local youth. Artur told me that his bandstand is used a lot with all sorts of activities besides his deep listening and playing alone or with others. There is yoga, boxing, tai chi sessions, teenagers' gatherings, birthday celebrations and a kung fu master is practicing there.

I now remember my confusion at finding an empty pond, circling it and feeling pulled towards the hollowness of it, until the lack of water dragged my mind spiraling down to dry places around the world and all those who do not have access to water nor food, in devastated war zones, occupied territories, slums and deserts, to global warming, social inequalities, and to the cruel mirror world of double standards and fake truths responsible for it all, so well described by Naomi Klein in *Doppelganger*. Six months on we are drowning in rain, almost literally, Storm Goretti bringing very strong winds and snowfall to the south-west of England which will no doubt trigger flooding in many areas. At the same time residents in Kent have had no water for the past week, allegedly due to burst pipes, no doubt caused by the privatized and bankrupt water companies more interested in the dividends given to their shareholders and CEOs than in maintaining water infrastructures. Morocco has seen record level of rain and snow after many years of a drought, and many towns are experiencing recurring and deadly flash floods. Luckily the weather forecast for tomorrow is good: rain will stop just for the day. A beautiful sunny crisp and cold day in perspective. I am not sure I will go as far as the Marshes unless the wind takes me there. I am more inclined to stay in and around the bandstand, using it both as an anchor and shelter and a circular path for my now customary walking and thinking aloud.

The quotes informing our steps are intriguing to me. James's proposition that a change of direction, in space, is induced not by a change of movement in air - along the corridors of the weather-world as Ingold implies - but by a renaming / rebranding of the path walked. An

interesting proposition, recalling the power of words and positive thinking to manifest reality, change it even. There is a darker side to this idea, the bizarre and dangerous alternate reality that language creates in Klein's mirror world, and the words of the powerful emperors without clothes ruling over it: Trump demanding the Nobel Prize for peace while openly supporting Putin and Israel. Putin and Netanyahu claiming self-defense to justify war and genocide. What other name could I give to the bandstand if I was to not walk to it tomorrow? Artur prompts us to walk, touch, listen, wait, sound... like an ecotone. A new word for me. Eco tone, echo tone ecological tone, ecological tension. An echo with a tone, tons of echoes, ecological echoes, tones with attitude. One of Cage's porte-manteau words that sounds particularly French and is spelt the same in French, with the addition of un accent aigu, acute accent on the first e. I often use in my writing and text scores these words that spell and sometimes sound the same in French and English (a form of poetic effective or lazy translation depending how you see it): pause, total, music, guide, piano, air, fragile, possible, probable, simple... I could stand at the bandstand and recite to the wind some ecotone words between two linguistic systems, thus renaming what the bandstand is: a place for the listing of and listening to words which are spelt the same in English and French. A bandstand – a kiosk for cognates, vrais-amis in French, a kiosk for true friends. An ecotone thriving with cognates; same spelling and meaning in French and English, while homographs share the same spelling but a different meaning.

Ecotone is a true friend: *écotone* (plural: *écotones*). It refers to a transition area between two distinct ecosystems (another true friend), two different ecological communities like a forest edge (*lisière d'une forêt*), an estuary or a marshland. The Walthamstow marshes is an ecotone. Walthamstow marshes is one of the last remaining floodplain marshlands in London, bordered by the river Lea, 'a precious, urban refuge for over four hundreds plant and animal species' (Wikipedia). The word *ecotone* was coined (and its etymology given as a combination of *ecology* plus *-tone*, from the Greek *tonos* or tension –) in 1904 in "The Development and Structure of Vegetation" (Lincoln, Nebraska: Botanical Seminar) by Frederic E. Clements. It means literally a place where ecologies are in tension. An ecotone is a transitional area between two (plant) communities, where these meet and integrate (Wikipedia).

They contribute to biodiversity. Ecotones occur at multiple spatial scales and range from natural boundaries to human-generated ecotones. A park is an ecotone, between urban and natural environment. A bandstand is an ecotone, between the park and the built environment but also, between nature and man and they can also become a hub for promoting social life, according to Artur's description of all that take place at this bandstand. So, could or do ecotones also benefit cultural and social diversity? I could rename a bandstand a socio-ecotone/ a sociotone for eco tones. It looks like someone else has already coined this term as well as tested and proved its efficacy in many communities in Africa and elsewhere. According to Urbanist May East, 'a sociotone is a conceptual framework, derived from the ecological term *ecotone* (transition zone), that describes the rich, diverse, and often tense "edge" where different social, cultural, or economic systems meet, offering unique opportunities for innovation, integration, and transformation, especially in multicultural societies. In essence, sociotone theory encourages us to see the "edges" not as barriers, but as fertile grounds for positive evolution in human systems, much like nature does in its own systems.'

Inspired by the discovery of these two terms - ecotone and sociotone - that pretty much describe and define my status as an inbetweenener (between cultures, languages, mediums of expression etc..) more than an outsider, and my interests in fostering connections between our inner and outer landscape, between each other. I now feel ready to walk in air in and around the bandstand with a possible visit to the marshes, time and energy allowing, after making my own ecotones and whistle-walking in the groundless ground.

09 01 2026 Springfield Park 13.55pm

..... Early January 2026..... I am walking in...air.....in Springfield
Garden.... Walthamstow..... I just entered the park..... I am.....
looking.... at.... the bandstand..... in the distance..... the air ...
is cold..... but crisp..... a gentle breeze..... against my cheeks
..... and rustling.... the few dry leaves left
.... hanging.... dancing... on the trees..... old.... trees..... framing the park
..... one way..... is to walk a different path.... than the one I am following right
now.... along the naked trees.....
another way..... is ..to give it...another name.....
..... a pigeon flying high..... left to right..... as I leavethe path
to cross the green..... in a straight line..... making my own way..... towards
the bandstand..... a rare sight..... a bandstand
..... a cut tree trunk... lying on its side..... two men
walking on the path... that I am crossing..... to join..... another path.....
towards..... the bandstand.....
..... I can hear parakeets.... in the distance
..... I can see two crows..... flying from one tree.... to the next..... a seagull.....
crossing the path of the crow.....
..... I am leaving the path
..... a teenager with a hood.... is sitting ...
at the bandstand..... with... a dog.... a black dog... with a black coat..... unleashed.....
and looking at me.....
..... a train passing in the distance on my left..... a dog..... running..... in the trees
ahead of me..... the grass under my feet..... is green..... car tracks....
crossing it..... dry leaves..... everywhere.....

as I walk..... in this.....
ecotome..... as the wind..... is whistling.... in my ears
..... echo..... tone..... a man.... and his young boy..... are
scanning the ground.... with a metal detector..... hoping to find..... some treasures
..... I raise my gloved hands
..... palms towards the sky..... and I
turn slowly widdershins..... my eyes..... scanning the landscape
..... listening..... feeling
..... these..... echo... tone..... this green space.....
surrounded by..... individual houses..... housing estates..... the river.....
allotments trees..... more housing estates
.....
this green ground..... with a big open sky..... of low..... grey..... clouds.....
..... speckles of blue.... on the horizon.... behind a tower block in construction
..... this park..... this
borderland full of air
..... (deep breath)..... full of
distance for the eye to scan
..... I stop..... turning.... scanning..... the horizon
and walking.... towards... the bandstand.... towards the teenager and the dog..... wagging
its tail..... as I approach.... sniffing the ground... eyes low..... hello..... hello..... it is
coming to greet me..... turning its back towards me..... demanding a stroke
..... is the dog ok ?yes she is fine..... yes.... yes....
she is rolling around growling gently..... shaking her body with pleasure.....
yes.....yes a helicopter.... flying low..... dog shaking one
step two steps..... I am now standing at the centre of the.....
bandstand..... (whispering)
..... the sounds..... from the park.... have
become muffled

..... yet my voice..... is amplified

.....

the bandstand..... for..... ecotones..... of another kind

..... the dog is leaving

..... following the teenager..... I am now.....

... .. alone..... in the bandstand

..... another transition space

..... between..... outside.... and inside..... an open

structure..... a stage on which I am.....

standing walking on.... listening.....

..... looking at the train passing in the distance

..... the world as a stage the park

..... as an everyday stage..... carved out of the ordinary

.....

.....

09 01 2026 15.15pm

Hi (to a man passing me on a bicycle and apologising for doing so)

..... walking away from.... the bandstand..... out of springfield park.... across a small

bridge..... over the canal... or the river..... with barges... peniches..... on each side.....

..... walking in still cold air..... towards walthamstow marshes

my gloved hands.... raised.... as if I was ... held at gun point... but I am not..... trying to feel

.... the temperature of the air.... through the skin... of my gloves.....

..... as I am finding my way... to the marshes

..... ecotone..... between ... the river and the land..... (it seems

relevant ... we are not wedded.... heard from two men crossing my path)

..... a sign.... footbridge closed... please use other

bridge the footbridge is open

.....

.....
..... coming at a crossing of paths..... not
sure which way to go..... I am at horseshoe thicket
..... I can go straight on.... I can go right..... and I can go back the way I came..... the
simple way is to take another path..... or..... to change..... the name of it.....
walthamstow wetland..... a quarter of a mile..... straight on..... or hackney marshes..... one
and a quarter mile..... I decide straight on..... (a jogger overpassing
me).... I changed my mind..... preferring to walk a muddy earthy path..... to a concrete
one keep dogs on leads..... cattle grazing
..... (dog barking in the distance).... I am now on lea
valley park..... muddy path..... narrow..... dark... earth..... (dog barking in
the distance) brambles on each side..... leafless trees
..... birds tweetering..... the path separates into
two I chose to go right
..... following the flight path.... of two wood pigeons.....
four magpies..... on the ground ahead of me seven crows.....
perched on a tree on my right dark
grey.... sky.... cloudy
..... slowing down my steps..... as not ... to disturb the crows..... as I pass by... their
tree..... four of them remain
.....
..... the sky is busy with airplanes I stop..... two
are staring down at me..... from their perch.... right at the top of the tall tree..... one
changes position short flight to the next tree.... a bit higher up
..... as I leave...
they celebrate my departure..... leaning against the wooden fence..... of a frozen pond
.....
..... littered with broken branches..... a mag pie flying above it
..... across..... it the crow..... repeating its satisfaction...at my

departure frozen water.....
reflecting a grey muddy sky..... frozen air..... that I am walking
with....through.....
..... a squirrel just crossed my path.... left
to right..... the river lea... ahead of me
..... my hands...
still raised..... palms towards the sky
..... just arriving in a big meadow..... bordering the river lea..... big open
sky..... a duck flying low..... two more crows on top of a tree
..... leaving as soon as they spot me a train in
the distance..... a jogger going right to left..... two cyclists going left to right
..... another jogger..... two dog walkers..... along the river lea
..... a seagull going towards the sea..... along the river lea
..... followed by another..... seagull
..... that changed its mind and flies
towards London now followed by two others..... above.... this ecotone..... that is
walthamstow marches..... it is the day of the Shabbat....
two jewish men in black with their tall hat..... passing me by



Monday 12th January 13.06pm

Sitting at my desk in Thornton Heath reminiscing on Saturday's fruitful fieldwork, consulting my notes written in haste and in a heightened state, just before our recollection session in Artur's living room, around a cup of tea and delicious cherry bun from my local Jamaican bakery and sweet baklava brought back for the occasion by Will from Tufnell Park. I never cease to be moved and humbled by the effect of our simple invitation to walk in air and the soft methods we perfected over the various iterations of our project. Both Artur's and James's stories, although very different, amounted to the slow unraveling, forgetting even of their knowing wanting doing, to be replaced by a drifting in air and on the ground of their sensing towards a changed awareness of their thinking in and of the world.

My experience is no different to theirs or to other of my previous fieldworks, albeit in a more prepared and grounded way than usual. Perhaps because of my decision to remain around the bandstand and consider it as an ecotone from which to observe the air, the world, and speak a list of true friends. I started in the usual way by recording my thinking and sensing aloud reflecting on the nature of the various paths I chose or not to take, changing them or renaming them as well as looking at my environment as a fertile in-

between, an everyman's land bordering various eco-social systems trying to co-exist, more or less successfully. The open structure of the concrete and steel bandstand, allowed me to stand there feeling protected and grounded while allowing the breeze to whistle against my cheeks and spectating the park busy with the usual Saturday users such as dog walkers, strollers, joggers, cyclists, birds, plane, trains, leaves in the wind, and Ashkenazi Jewish men wearing shtreimel furry hats meditating on their Shabbat's walk: walking is allowed on the Shabbat, as long as it is close to home (less than a mile) and done in a slow reflective way. This is perhaps why one of them refused to stop and take a photo of us when asked politely. I then stood in the centre of the bandstand, using it as an open stage to recite the list of true friends I had compiled the day before, while spinning slowly clockwise at a pace that felt in tune with the world around me: birds, strollers and dog walkers rather than joggers and cyclists. I had to redo this a couple of times after realizing that I had forgotten to include the word ecotone. Later, as I walked towards the River Lea, it dawned on me that I did not include the word air...

This is not the end of my forgetting. At the end of my second thinking aloud while walking in air in the marshes, I encountered Will sitting at a wooden picnic table in a big open sky area, busy field recording and live processing on his digital tablet to achieve another kind of eco-tone of the ecotone he was sitting in. I had completely forgotten to whistle-walk with my little pitch pipe tuner in my mouth. It had remained in my pocket the whole afternoon. I pondered on how beautiful it would have sounded under the bandstand with its enhanced acoustic creating a natural reverb. It seemed that I preferred to tune in to the air around me by having my two gloved hands raised, on each side of my body, elbows bent, palms towards the sky, to sense the atmosphere by wiggling my fingers, sails, wings, fins in the air, passers by looking at me curiously. This forgetting intrigued me, it had become such a central and enjoyable strategy of my walking in air, in the way it naturally connects and regulates my breathing (through the pitch pipe), walking, thinking and sensing at a pace that can sustain it. I chose to immediately do so on Will's invitation to contribute to his ecotone in the making. I circled around him as I had circled around the

bandstand a few times, we were eco-toning each other. This led me to reflect on the cyclical nature of our short lives and everything else, the way we tend to spiral up or down in time and space according to our moods, our feet grounded on the earth, gravity's pull preventing them to take off and drift in the air as birds, insects, leaves can do. I imagined spiraling up around the bandstand, around Will sitting at his table, Mary Poppins without an umbrella. I imagined learning how to let the wind lift me upwards before letting the atmospheric corridors carry me as I often observe birds doing so in the wind or as I love doing when swimming, letting the pull of the water currents lead me. Floating and swimming in air, as I was instinctively doing perhaps while walking in the marshes letting my fins fingers probe the air, feet firmly moving on the wet ground.

The earth as an ecotone between us and the universe. Us as an ecotone between earth and air. Air as a groundless ecotone, invisible life giving and fertile matter between earth and sky, man and its environment. The park, the marshes, the city, our communities as sociotones where to cultivate respect for our differences, our environment and other life forms. We can choose another path, away from struggle, pollution, division, fear etc... or we can rename it ecotone, a zone of fertile tension between us and the world we live in, that needs tending and cultivating with care rather than annoyance. 'A path I / we create each time we walk and dance inside out with air. I imagine a multitude of such (in)visible tracks crossing the earth, connecting us, step by step, with our surroundings. "The plants live together without difficulty. And we? How do we share the air?" (Irigaray). How do we live together, and walk together, in that same air? These were the concluding words of my reflections, five years ago after our first walking in air fieldwork (*Performance Research 'On Air'*, Sept 2022).

Walking in air is a sociotone activity taking place in the boundary zone between earth and sky where our breath comes and go (Irigaray). The spiraling nature of my thinking in the groundless ground brings me right back to our beginnings then and elsewhere in the here and now.

List of Anglo- French vrais-amis (cognates)

AIR ACCIDENT AVOCAT

BRILLANT BRAVE BRUTAL

CONTINENT CAUTION CONTACT

DANGER DISTANCE DILIGENCE

ECOTONE EMOTION EXEMPLE

FRUIT FINAL FRAGILE

GUIDE GLOBE GRATITUDE

HORIZON HABITUDE HARMONY

INSECTE IGNORANT IMPORTANT

JUSTICE JOURNAL JOVIAL

KILO KIOSK KOALA

LION LOCAL LOYAL

MUSIC MACHINE MOVEMENT

NATURE NORMAL NUANCE

ORAL OVAL OCCASION

PARK POSSIBLE PROBABLE

QUESTION QUOTA QUADRUPLE

RESPECT RARE RESILIENCE

SECRET SIMPLE SOCIAL

TOTAL TABLE TOUR

URGENT USE

VOYAGE VISION VAGUE

WAGON WHISKY WEEKEND

XENOPHOBE, XYLOPHONE XENON

YOGA YOYO YETI

ZERO ZEST ZONE