

**Mobile methodologies** recognize human relationships “to each other, space, time and place are mediated by our movement through the material and the social world” (Fincham, McGuinness & Murray, 2010, 1)

### Hermeneutic Phenomenology

- Life, understanding, knowledge occur along lines situated in place and time, entangled with diverse flows (Ingold, 2000, 2011).
- Self as *of*, interrelated, and known in social and biophysical world: *flesh* (Merleau-Ponty, 1968/1964).
- Being as interpretive process of action, reflection, learning (*praxis*) guided by particular values and intentions (Freire; 2000/1968; Heidedder, 1962; Van Manen, 1997).

### Outdoor Travel

- Daily rhythm and pattern of activity relating with specific landscape features and environmental flows through skill, solo and in groups.
- Valuing and making time for individual and group discussion, reflection, and experiential learning.
- Drawing on and telling stories of self, land/sea, and history.

### Commonplaces

- Historic *commonplace books* (i.e. personal journals) used to record and revisit observations, readings, and perspectives often understandings of nature (Blair, 1992).
- Repeated use of *commonplace text* (i.e. literary fiction) with students to facilitate insight (Sumara, 2002).
- ‘*Commonplaces*’ created through activities that support interpretation of human experience through data collected in response to instances of indeterminacy (Sumara, 2002).

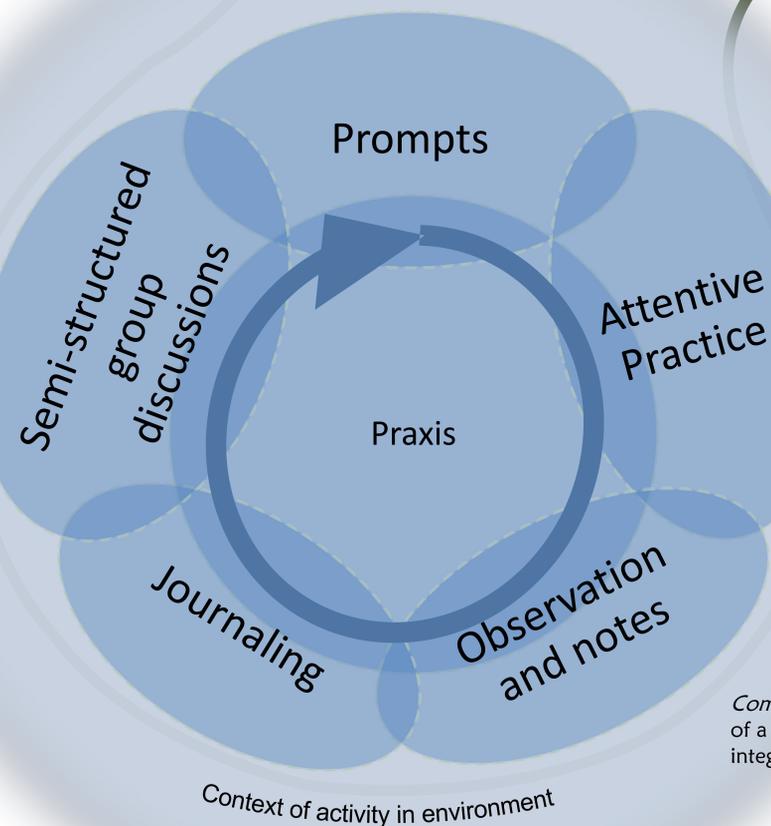


All photos courtesy of the author.

**Group comes together within:**  
Sociocultural & biophysical contexts.  
Personal histories, values, beliefs.  
Purpose, norms, traditions, values.

“Moving together along a trail or encamped at a particular place, companions draw each other’s attention, through speech and gesture, to salient features of their shared environment. Every word, spoken in context, condenses a history of past usage into a focus that illuminates some aspect of the world. Words, in this sense, are instruments of perception much as tools are instruments of action. Both conduct a skilled and sensuous engagement with the environment that is sharpened and enriched through previous experience” (Ingold, 2000, 146)

## Commonplace Cycles



*Commonplace Cycles*. Model showing the process and elements of a single cycle, repeated along the way to facilitate praxis and integrate data collection. Adapted from Mullins (in press).

## Elements

### Modes of Travel

Modes (car, canoe, ski, airplane) and their sequencing shape how, where, when, and in relation to what flows & forces you move; as well as what and who you encounter along the way.

### Route & Timeline

The landscapes, communities, and places engaged in particular order. Itinerary shapes opportunities for and qualities of social and environmental engagement. How is the route related to particular issues, connected with or distanced from home and everyday life? First time, known place, repeated visitation?

### Prompts

A set of questions or queries used to interrelate commonplace activities; explore experience, explicitly and implicitly relate to commonplace text(s) that introduce content or theoretical approach. Keep constant to show change, or adapt along the way to explore facets and depths.

### Attentive Practice

Curious and reflexive interpretation of day-to-day activities (mundane and unique) as positioned, expressive, and impacting socio-ecological contexts, histories, values.

### Observation and notes

Teacher/researcher gathering meaningful anecdotes, practices, language used, related to core interest and prompts. Participants noting own and others’ activities and meaningful phenomena relative to prompts.

### Journaling

Reflecting on observations, thoughts on prompts. Provides individual perspectives brought to group discussion. Can provide data, or be an assignment

### Semi-structured group discussions

Punctuate each commonplace cycle. Recurring forum in which observations, reflection, learning about prompts are discussed (usually in order of the prompts). New prompts and directions of inquiry could follow for next cycle.



# Applications of the commonplace journey: A mobile methodology and pedagogy

IOERC 2013, Dunedin, NZ

Philip M. Mullins, PhD

Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management  
University of Northern British Columbia  
Prince George, BC, Canada

## As Research

e.g. Paddling the Big Sky Expedition, AB, NWT, NU, Canada

### Purpose

To critically and creatively re-interpret canoe travel using Ingold’s dwelling perspective, in relation to sustainability.

### Modes of Travel

Bus, Canoe, Airplane

### Route & Timeline

Full season of paddling, starting near home, travelling Athabasca, Slave, Yellowknife, and Coppermine rivers through diverse landscapes (urban, rural, industrial, remote) to Arctic Ocean.

### Prompts

Explored various critiques of wilderness as well as Ingold’s dwelling (2000) as an alternative theoretical approach. Prompts evolved as we travelled, but were derived from broad topics of *skill, place, interrelationships, self, stories*.

e.g. re *skill*: “Ingold (2000, p. 37) described an “education of attention.” Do you see a similar process at work in outdoor recreation?”

e.g. re *place*: “Explain and explore the following terms: ‘out there,’ ‘in the present,’ ‘back home,’ ‘real life,’ ‘remote.’”

### Key Outcomes

1. Phenomenological descriptions/interpretations of what, traditionally, it had meant for participants to be “on trip”: remote, self-reliant, away from society.
2. Interpretation of aspects of landscapes as meaningful for and through canoe tripping, role of land in shaping experience (Mullins, 2009).
3. Analysis of canoe tripping practices as structuring experiences of place, self, and environment in relation (Mullins, 2011).
4. Reinterpretation of participants’ canoe tripping as situated in, reliant upon, and ignorant of particular social, economic, ecological relations engaged through practice (Mullins, 2011).



## As Pedagogy

e.g. Field course on North & Central Coast, BC, Canada

### Purpose

Explore recreation and tourism within integrated and ecosystem-based management, resource & pipeline development, sustainable communities. Reflect on own position within this dynamic.

### Modes of Travel

Bus, Flights, Sailing, Diesel Power

### Route & Timeline

Ten days aboard schooner *Passing Cloud*, sailing/steaming from Bella Coola to Kitimat, BC, terminus of proposed Northern Gateway Pipeline through unseeded territory of the Coastal First Nations, and the area known as Great Bear Rainforest. Travel via various channels, including Douglas Channel tanker route, and visiting settler and First Nations communities along the way.

### Prompts

One set repeated:

1. Tell me what these words mean to you: *consumption, responsibility, wilderness, stewardship, conservation, place*.
2. Where and when have you noticed community? Who or what does it include?
3. What are you disconnecting from / connecting to?
4. Tell me about an experience that you had with another species?
5. What has life on the boat taught you?

Learning also informed by readings, discussions, guests, and *place presentations* in which students described a place/flow we encountered, its relevance, and their connection to it.

### Key Outcomes

1. Challenged notion of Great Bear Rainforest as ‘wilderness’: learned of socio-ecologies, current management regime, and threats to ecological integrity and human well being.
2. Awareness of present and past cultural, political, ideological, economic, colonial, ecological realities.
3. Students able to position their lives and trip within the issues addressed.
4. Students articulated their stories of the region, journey, issues, and learning through evocative and sharable digital media.



*Begin critical & creative understandings of places & regions, practices & issues, self & others through journeys.*

### References

- Blair A (1992) Humanist methods in natural philosophy: the commonplace book. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53(4): 541–551.
- Fincham B, McGuinness M and Murray L (2010) Introduction. In: Fincham B, McGuinness M and Murray L (eds) *Mobile Methodologies*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1–10.
- Freire P (2000/1968) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Ramos MB, trans). New York: Continuum.
- Heidegger M (1962/1927) *Being and Time* (Macquarrie J and Robinson E, trans). New York: Harper & Row.
- Ingold T (2000) *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. New York: Routledge.
- Ingold T (2011) *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. New York: Routledge.
- Merleau-Ponty M (1968/1964) *The Visible and the Invisible* (Lingis A Trans.). Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Mullins PM (in press) The commonplace journey methodology: exploring outdoor recreation activities through theoretically-informed reflective practice. *Qualitative Research* 0(0): 1-19. DOI: 10.1177/1468794113495037
- Mullins PM (2009) Living stories of the landscape: perception of place through canoeing in Canada’s north. *Tourism Geographies* 11(2), 233–255.
- Mullins PM (2011) *A Phenomenological Approach to Canoe Tripping: Applicability of the Dwelling Perspective*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Alberta, Edmonton.
- Sumara DJ (2002) Creating commonplaces for interpretation: literary anthropology and literacy education research. *Journal of Literacy Research* 34(2): 237–260. DOI: 10.1207/s15548430jlr3402\_6.
- Van Manen M (1997) *Researching Lived Experience*. London, ON: The Athlone Press.