

## Interview with Tim Ingold

Professor Tim Ingold visited Finland in November 2017 and presented a keynote lecture on “The Art of Paying Attention” at the sixth Art of Research Conference, held at Aalto University in Espoo. Before founding and chairing the Department of Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen, Ingold taught social anthropology at the University of Manchester. He is connected to Finnish anthropology through his research on the Skolt Sami people and his work at the University of Helsinki in the early 1970s. Later (1979-80), he carried out a year’s fieldwork in the commune of Salla, in Finnish Lapland, and in autumn 1986 he spent a semester as acting professor of cultural anthropology at the University of Helsinki. Ingold is the author of *The Perception of the Environment* and several other works that have inspired many phenomenologically oriented studies in environmental anthropology.<sup>1</sup>

Timo Kaartinen (TK): You have just written a book entitled *Anthropology and/as Education*, and another which introduces anthropology to students new to the subject.<sup>2</sup> This reminds me that you were also part of setting up anthropology in Finland as a university discipline in the 1970s. I would like to ask what you think about the prospects for the discipline today, and how it compares to that earlier situation. Some are proposing new rules, saying that we should no longer talk about disciplines: in Helsinki we are involved in new teaching programs, and instead of the word *oppiaine* we are supposed to say *tieteenalä*, although both translate as ‘discipline’. I have said a few times in public that it doesn’t make any sense to kill disciplines, since they are the substance of university learning, but then I hear: “Oh no, we are not killing them, we are just putting them in another form, but obviously we still need them”. Then fifteen minutes later someone will say: “In the new-speak, we shouldn’t talk about *oppiaine* any more”. This is baffling. I still refuse to think that we no longer have disciplines. Obviously anthropology has been on the receiving end when marketing people speak about silos, and some of this criticism also comes from people who profess to being educationalists. What would be a good way to bring clarity to this confusing discourse, which seems to come out of nowhere?

Tim Ingold (TI): I sympathize. I have a section of my anthropology and education book on disciplinarity.<sup>3</sup> I particularly object to the accusation that comes from research managers, rather than from academics, namely that we have been stuck inside our disciplinary silos and need to get out more. I think this is a myth that has been invented by managers in order to divide and rule. If you look at any decent article published in the last hundred years in any discipline of the humanities and social sciences – it could be anthropology, history, sociology, law – and look at the bibliography, and at what disciplines the authors cited in the bibliography come from, you’ll find that they come from all over the place. Whatever work is relevant or interesting for the author of the article is cited: it might be from law, from history, from sociology, from anthropology, from linguistics. That has always been the case, for as long as I can remember. It has never ever been the case in the humanities and social sciences that scholars have been locked inside their disciplinary silos. Never! So there has to be a reason why managers are suddenly complaining that we spend too long in these so-called silos. I think the reason is that in order to have interdisciplinarity, you first have to invent separate disciplines to be connected. Just as the word ‘international’ creates boundaries between nation-states, so the word ‘interdisciplinary’ creates boundaries between disciplines, which then have to be

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Ingold, 2000, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, London: Routledge; 2011, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, Abingdon: Routledge.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Ingold, 2018, *Anthropology and/as Education*, Abingdon: Routledge; 2018, *Anthropology: Why it Matters*, Cambridge: Polity.

<sup>3</sup> Ingold, *Anthropology and/as Education*, pp. 74-6.

bridged. This is a way managers have of making themselves appear indispensable. First they decree that there are separate disciplines; then they appoint themselves to the task of building bridges between them! There were no such separations in the past. I have argued that we have to think about every discipline not as a bounded field of inquiry but as a conversation going on amongst scholars. There are particular nexuses in this conversation, where many voices come together in a sort of knot. Then maybe the knot unravels, and another one forms, and so on. Disciplines are constantly forming and reforming, just like conversations. They are not territories. Managers tend to think of the whole field of academic endeavor as a huge territory that has to be divided up like the world of nation-states, so that each can be separately administered. In the case of anthropology, I do think of it as a discipline in the sense that it is both conversational and rigorous, but I also consider it to be *anti-disciplinary* in the sense that it rejects the territorialization of knowledge. I think every anthropologist is against the idea that knowledge can be territorialized. We stand, along with philosophy and some other disciplines, *against* territorialization, but *for* disciplinarity in the sense of rigorous scholarly conversation. Conversation is a knot which will always overflow into other lines going all over the place.

TK: Is it not interesting that these kinds of discussions usually follow a spatial metaphor? Silo is a kind of space, territory is a kind of space; it's always about boundaries and assumptions that there is a body of knowledge and maybe a body of people inside it. I've tried to rethink this in terms of time. When you think about the kind of time-period that has elapsed since we began to have a distinct tradition of anthropology in Finland after the hiatus between the wars, in the early 1970s when you had this seminar about starting anthropology in Finland: that's already almost 50 years ago. It takes almost a lifetime to accomplish this varied conversation where you have both experienced people and new people who are just beginning their studies; you start to have a variety of topics and a variety of fields. You need a huge amount of time to accomplish this. And if you compare this to institutional developments, they are very much shorter. One teaching program lasts about ten years. A major research project has a life-cycle of maybe five years. A dissertation takes about four years to write, with luck. The time you need to educate someone to the doctoral level is about ten years. And so the time that's needed for this conversation is much longer than what the institution itself can offer. Someone has to make that time. Nothing else in the university makes the kind of time needed for deep learning. If you think of the discipline as a conversation, would it be more productive to think about it as a temporal thing?

TI: Yes of course, but it's a time that's going along. If you think about the conversation and the people who join it, they all have their lives and they are born and die at different times. The conversation can carry on because these lives overlap. Usually students are younger than their teachers, and teachers die off before their students do, but these lives overlap like the strands of a rope. We are thinking then of a temporality that is like the time of a life that it carries on, rather than one that can be cut up into a series of stages. When our administrators think about programs they are always asking: "how long is this program? How many years?" They think about life as a set of milestones, in measurable stages. They do not think about a life that can be carried on indefinitely. They are not thinking about scholarly lives; they are thinking about careers or curriculum vitae that can be divided up in terms of these milestones. But I don't know if there's any way to get managers to change their outlook.

TK: What about teaching anthropology then? What do you think about the possibility of teaching anthropology together with other related disciplines? That's how, I guess, anthropology started, but since then we have had a more structured period when we've had a distinct anthropology teaching

program, and now we are being pushed by outside pressures, once again to teach anthropology together with other disciplines.

TI: This is a problem we also faced when I set up our program in Aberdeen, which we started from scratch. The students, particularly in their first two years of a four-year undergraduate degree, did all sorts of other subjects as well: sociology, psychology, history, geography, all sorts of things. The problem we always had was that students would be told things in their other courses – things that were said to be incontrovertible – that we would want to critique or take apart in ours. With students in psychology, this was particularly difficult. The students would go to their psychology lectures, and the lecturer would say: “this is how the mind works; these predispositions are innate; this is how cognition functions”. And then they would go to their anthropology classes and all this would be torn apart. We tell them that it all rests on certain Western assumptions which they are then supposed to criticize, showing how there are other models of mind, of thought, of personhood, than what is assumed by cognitive science. This is really hard for the students. They are only in their first year; they are very vulnerable and have to worry about the examinations that will allow them through to the next stages of their studies. How are they supposed to deal with it when anthropology pulls apart the assumptions that other disciplines simply take for granted? We had the same problem even with sociology. When they go to sociology lectures they would be told, quite dogmatically: “Sex is biological, gender is socially constructed. Fact!” Then they go to their anthropology lectures and are expected to pull apart the distinctions between the biological and the social. As we know, these distinctions don’t really work, and the whole business of the cultural construction of reality is notoriously tricky. The best of our students loved it and were being critical and having fun, but the not-quite-so-confident students, faced with this puzzle when they had to write an essay on gender or whatever, would just go to their sociology textbook and write down what it said.

TK: Where it says what gender is!

TI: Yes: that gender is socially constructed – end of story! We had this problem, in part, because anthropology doesn’t fit into a sectoral model of academic study. Often the assumption is that when you are a student and doing a program, you start with anthropology, sociology, psychology and history, say, in your first year, until you’ve decided what to specialize in. Each one of these subjects will give you a particular segment of the totality, and they should all nicely complement one another so that if you do all of these subjects you will end up with a fully rounded view of humanity in the world. But it doesn’t work like that. Particularly with anthropology, it doesn’t offer a segment of knowledge. It offers a different way of relating to the world than other kinds of academic knowledge do. And so it just doesn’t fit. I think philosophy has a similar problem, despite its many guises. It, too, is not a discipline that occupies its particular segment in the structure of knowledge: it rather underlies the segmentation. I’ve always thought of anthropology as a kind of philosophy anyway, and so I feel the same way about that too. So it’s a problem. And the more that courses become modularized such that you do a bit of this and a bit of that – the more we have a supermarket view of higher education – the more difficult it is for students to make any kind of sense of the totality of what they are studying. This bothers me a lot. Modularization has its advantages, but it also brings its difficulties for the students.

TK: On your keynote speech: I was caught by something in it that has exercised me for a few years. I’m working on a project on the politics of nature in Indonesian Borneo where they have this huge, rapid development of industrial estates even as they also have nature conservation projects partly funded with climate change mitigation money. That’s why I’m exercised by these large-scale ecological issues. I go to these local places and try to get a picture of what nature actually means to these people when it enters into their thinking as a concept for the first time. You were saying in your talk

something like this: science as a whole has lost the kind of radical ecological awareness it had fifty years ago. Ecological problems are nowadays measured and modeled in much more precise ways than in those days. I wanted to clarify what has changed, since it seems to me that fifty years ago in the natural sciences, systems theoretical thinking was already fairly dominant, and in anthropology you were still able to regard culture and human life-forms in systemic terms as well. Today it seems that ecosystems thinking is still very much present, but anthropologists are far less certain about their own ability to look at human life and say: “here is a system”.

TI: When I first arrived in Manchester and got my first proper job as a lecturer in the social anthropology department I was given a course to teach on environment and technology. It was basically a course in cultural ecology, and I had to decide what the students should read. I thought it would be important for them to become familiar with the basic principles of ecology as they were understood scientifically at that time. They would read some of the classic works in that field, many dealing with animal ecology (not necessarily humans), and then they would also read classic anthropological work on cultural ecology and some of the work that was just coming out at the time – that was in the mid-1970s, so there was a lot of ecologically inspired work coming from people like Roy Rappaport and Andrew Vayda. So the students were reading all that literature. But most of the scientific ecology they read was heavily field-based and qualitative. In today’s jargon it would be regarded as ‘soft’. These ecologists were having conversations with local or indigenous people in the areas they were working in, and establishing quite a degree of common understanding. There was also a lot of empathetic understanding of the animals they were working with, in all sorts of habitats, through long-term field involvement. At that time ecology was still a relatively new science, and the people doing it were keen environmental activists: they were concerned with nature conservation and the future of biodiversity. These were the people who at that time, in the 1960s and 1970s, were making the public aware of environmental issues and of their importance; whereas art was in another place altogether. There was a bit of environmental art, but art was not really addressing environmental questions at the time. But now it seems to me that artists, or art and the art world, have really caught up with environmental issues, and if you were to ask who are really making the case for environmentalism, who are really trying to raise public awareness, it’s largely coming out of the arts. Whereas there has been an overall hardening of science over the same period. Science has basically been strapped to the neoliberal agenda, whereas art tends to stand in opposition to it. Science, as it’s done nowadays, through analyzing large quantities of data, has tended to lose that sensitivity to life that comes from close, long-term fieldwork of the kind the founders of ecology used to do. It’s become a laboratory-based or computer-based modeling discipline. Most of the ecological work going on in science now is computer modeling. These modelers are not spending time in the field; they are not getting to know their plants and animals. They are building up what they think to be predictive models.

So that was my feeling: that the arts, and to an extent anthropology – a discipline that’s getting ever closer to the arts – have taken up the mantle of a radical ecological sensibility that I think science has abandoned. I don’t know whether that’s fair, but it’s my perception of the matter. So my feeling is that I haven’t really significantly moved my personal position: I have changed my ideas about specific things, but I’m still basically in the same place as I was when I started, in terms of how I think we have to understand humanity within the total nexus of environmental relations. It’s what I said then, and I would say it now, but back then I could say it by drawing on work being done by people in various branches of ecological science, whereas now I would make the same point by drawing on what a lot of environmental art is doing. And I do think there has been a significant shift in what we call science, over that period.

TK: It took me some time to understand what some people involved in the study of ecological conditions and systems and their changes mean by landscape. When they talk about landscape they mean satellite pictures! For a long time I imagined they were talking about landscapes that you see when you look around. I didn't even picture this change into a God's eye perspective. Even if satellite images are useful when you are trying to draw maps, I never thought they could be the principal or only source for our understanding of landscape.

TI: I remember a conference about 15 years ago in the Orkney Islands (that's an island archipelago to the north of the Scottish mainland), which had just become a World Heritage site, because they have Neolithic settlements and stone circles and so on. The aim of the conference was to set up a research agenda, because when you form a World Heritage site you have to formulate an agenda for it. I was listening to archaeologists talking about the Orcadian landscape. They were quite clearly divided into two camps. On one side were archaeological scientists: they would make their presentations using Power Point, and would project maps showing the outlines of the islands with black dots on them. That, they would say, is the Orcadian landscape: an outline map with black dots. On the other side were the humanistic archaeologists who'd all been reading their Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty and the rest of it, and they would say: "no, no!" They would never use Power Point. But they might use an overhead projector, and show some sketch-like drawings, explaining that you have to understand the landscape in terms of touch, feeling, sight and so on. It's not a matter of dots. The discipline of archaeology was really divided down the middle between these approaches.

But I also remember when the concept of landscape suddenly arrived in anthropology in the mid-1990s: it came to anthropology mostly via art history, though also from human geographers who had of course been discussing 'landscape' for much longer. I had been teaching and writing about 'environment', and I was wondering at the time whether there was a real difference between talking about environment or talking about landscape, or whether the difference was just that environment was the word used by scientists and landscape the word used by humanists. Was it just a change of terms, or did it really signal a different approach to the whole topic? The answer is a bit complicated.

TK: Because both are concerned with perceiving?

TI: Both are concerned with perception. Both are concerned basically with describing the world around us. What difference does it make if I look out of this window here and say: "that's the environment people live in: blocks of flats, roads, trees, water", or, "no, that's the landscape"? Does it make any difference? Or will either term do? If you come from art history, you are likely to call it landscape, and if you come from ecology you are likely to call it environment. And in the end I decided that I ... well, there isn't a simple answer, it would take hours to explain the conclusion I eventually reached.<sup>4</sup>

TK: There is a Latourian argument about environmental politics that says that one can found a new kind of environmental politics by learning to be affected by material things. It used to be a popular way of founding a new environmental politics to learn the ability to be affected by nature. The way I understand this argument is that if we develop a sense of new objects of knowledge that are not yet so stabilized that we give up on exploring them in concrete terms because we think we already know all about them, then there's a potential for people spontaneously to organize into new environmental movements. I imagine there's some clear juncture where that argument would diverge from your view of what makes environmental politics radical.

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<sup>4</sup> The long answer, and how it was reached (and eventually abandoned), is spelled out in Tim Ingold, 2017, 'Taking taskscape to task', in *Forms of Dwelling: 20 Years of Taskscapes in Archaeology*, eds. Ulla Rajala and Philip Mills, Oxford: Oxbow Books, pp. 16-27.

TI: I've thought about it in relation to Latour's politics of nature and why it doesn't work for me.<sup>5</sup> The problem I have with it is that it loses the life of things. It talks about a convocation, an assembly, of human and non-human actants, which can come together and do things and have certain effects. But what is left out are processes of growth, development and formation. The radical sensibility I'm looking for is one that would treat the world as a life-process in which things are continually emerging in relation to one another. So I'm not satisfied with the sort of environmentalism that simply says we have the organism here and the environment there, and that they interact. That's far too static. How do we have an organism? Only because there's a life cycle, an unfolding of relations in and through which the organism emerges and grows, along with the emergent boundary between that organism and its coming environment. So then we have to think of life as the continual unfolding of an entire field of relationships, and of every organism as something that emerges, that is held in place, that grows and eventually dissolves. We have to think of the whole process, in its unfolding. In my view an understanding of this developmental process is absolutely critical for thinking environmentally. That's really where I take issue with Latour's politics of nature, because he's content to deal with a bunch of inter-actants, human or non-human. But if each of these actants is a living being, then each will have undergone some sort of development – it will have been born, it has grown older, it is going to die. It will be caught up in the overall process of life. I want to bring that sense of life back in.<sup>6</sup>

And so when people go on about assemblages these days I really don't like it because it tends to presuppose that you've just got some bits and pieces which don't hold together very well, they just as easily break up. But those bits and pieces are materials, and materials have lives. I want to restore that sense of vitality.<sup>7</sup>

TK: I wanted to tell you about one ethnographic site which prompted me to think about these things. It's an experimental garden made by a high-status Iban person in the Upper Kapuas in the West Kalimantan Province of Indonesia. I've tried to follow him for a few years: what he is doing with that garden, since he has access to several hectares of land which are between two hills. He told me how he was excited by looking at a commercial rubber estate when he was visiting his uncle in Malaysia, and he took a picture of that, and he was marveling at the straight rows of rubber trees which were grafted in such a way that the foliage was divided into three branches. That's obviously an engineering trick to make the tree gather as much sunlight as it possibly can, so that it produces the maximum yield. Everything is optimized to maximize production. He was interested in this, it seems to me, partly for aesthetic reasons. So he has this garden to play with, and what does he do? He does many different things. He started from the idea of just having a rubber garden. I asked him: "You go here early in the morning, you start collecting rubber. How do you choose the trees from which you collect?" And he answers: "You just get carried away by it, you follow the hillside towards the top of the hill, and you collect as much as you can within one or two hours". So it's like talking about the hill in terms of longitude and latitude: the topography of the hill determines his movement. But it became different when he started planting these hybridized rubber trees that need careful tending and grafting. Then he started following a kind of latitude where you stay on the same level, because that makes it easier to make a path, and then you plant trees along that path, so that it's easier to

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<sup>5</sup> See, especially, Bruno Latour, 2004, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>6</sup> On the differences between TI's view and Latour's, see Tim Ingold, 2011, 'When ANT meets SPIDER: social theory for arthropods', in *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 89-94; also Tim Ingold 2012, 'Towards an ecology of materials', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41:427-42.

<sup>7</sup> See Tim Ingold, 2017, 'Bringing things to life: material flux and creative entanglements', in *State of Flux: Aesthetics of Fluid Materials*, eds. Marcel Finke and Friedrich Weltzien, Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, pp. 21-37.

harvest the trees from it. This changes the line along which you move. In both cases it seems to me that the lines he drew in the landscape were determined by topography. But then he also ran an experiment in which he tried to impose straight lines in the landscape. Then you had other things going on: you had places where water collected, where you could have a wet rice field. Every possible application of topographic imagination that you could think of is concentrated in about two hectares. I was thinking about how to apply your model of knots, in your book *The Life of Lines*, to this kind of thing. It was particularly in chapter eight of the book, where you speak about ground.<sup>8</sup> There is a sense of ground which leads you to imagine what goes up and what goes down, but at some point you ignore that and just imagine there's a map on which you can draw a straight line. That's also aesthetically appealing. It seems to me that part of this is living with the landscape and letting your intentions be shaped by the actual shape of going up and down, and part of it is modeled by the fascination with the commercial rubber estate. That's why I started to think about technology – bringing technology from somewhere far away, basically from agronomy to your life practice, when you haven't been trained in agronomy. I started first to think about it in Latourian terms: this is something that has moved from one place to another and is necessarily translated to fit there. But then he doesn't seem very happy with it and moves back to topographic thinking. I'm trying to imagine if I'm on the right track at all here, trying to think of this in terms of lines and shapes.

- TI: One image that comes to mind is that of the gardener who stretches a string between two stakes, and then plants vegetables in a straight line along the string. Maybe your Iban gardener does this too? The thing about the string stretched between stakes is that it isn't like a path: it's over the ground, but then it's translated back into the ground. So you have something that's in some sense quite an abstract line, but then it is given concrete form in the stretched string, which is then translated into plants that are actually growing in the ground and sending out roots in all directions. A taut string between two stakes is like a hinge between the optical and the haptic, because in one sense it's a model for the Euclidian straight line, where everything is done on a neatly ordered grid, but on the other hand, that stretched string is still string: you can pluck it and it vibrates; you can feel it's really there. It's not just abstract. It's not just a model. So it's not one thing or the other, but a hinge between the two. The person you are talking about is also working in an actual garden, balanced on a fulcrum between the abstract, rational, Cartesian layout of space on the one hand and, on the other hand, the earthy, material feeling of plants growing in the ground. This is a balance, and it can tip one way or the other.
- TK: What do you think the abstract model does for him? I'm trying to understand his obvious fascination with the commercial estate as a model for what he should do.
- TI: When explorers from Britain first went to northern places like the Canadian sub-arctic and drew the landscapes – which are very disordered because they were left by the Ice Age with rocks strewn here and there, and trees higgledy-piggledy – they made them look like an English country park where everything is laid out in perfect symmetry. That was their sensibility with which they thought of it. Maybe there's a symmetry and balance in Iban thinking.
- TK: I've also tried to work out what kinds of ethnographic situations the lines work for. You must be aware of Laura Bear's work – I've just used it in my class – and she talks about pilots in the Kolkata harbor.<sup>9</sup> Their problem is how to deal with the failure of the Port Authority to dredge the channel in the Ganges River. She's explaining how it's partly about dealing with various natural forces: you

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<sup>8</sup> Tim Ingold, 2015, *The Life of Lines*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 37-40.

<sup>9</sup> Laura Bear, 2015, *Navigating Austerity: Currents of Debt Along a South Asian River*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

move a ship, and the movement of the ship is always conditioned by various rotating and directional forces, various kinds of vectors that hit it from each direction. You are navigating: you are following a straight line, you are trying to reach a particular point on the map. That's what you do professionally, and these guys are very conscious that they need to have supreme professional skill in order to make it work at all because they have to bring the ship quickly across the sandbank. It's very much what you are talking about: lines are also movements and you are working on the seat of your pants when you are driving a ship. But at the same time there are other forces that come from the financial world: the necessity of the Port Authority to pay back the debts, which were originally not meant to be paid back so quickly because they were intended for the provision of a public service. Then you have this new kind of financial capitalism in which public debt is a liability to the government, so that the government uses every possible income it can get to pay back the debt to the banks. The functionality of the harbor is a secondary consideration. This has all sorts of indirect effects on the pilots. They might not be thinking in the abstract about why the port is not working – for example that it might be result of cutbacks in funding, as we might think about the universities for instance. But still they feel the effects, and these are part of the forces that affect their concrete activities and cause accidents, such as when the ship runs aground. An accident is a result of both physical and sociocultural forces. All those forces are mixed together. I think Laura Bear somewhere quotes you as advocating a philosophical Marxism that focuses on work as something that you do to the physical world. You create objects and you create yourself in the same process. Her ambition is to combine that kind of thinking with one that focuses on the contradictions produced by financial capitalism, which I think partly comes from writers such as David Harvey.

TI: It's a difficult thing, actually. Earlier we were talking about landscape, and one of the most difficult things to do – and I don't think it's been successfully done – is to find a satisfactory integration between a phenomenological account of landscape as what you perceive and what it feels like to be in this world, and a politics of landscape which is all about power relations and access and who can control what form this landscape is going to take. People have tried, but it's really hard to do. It's a similar issue here: you could try a phenomenological Marxism, the kind of thing I would probably want to do, in which – yes – we'd concentrate on work as a grounded activity embedded in an environment in which people constantly have to respond to the vicissitudes of a fluid environment. Commentators have rightly criticized my writing for leaving the political out, meaning by the 'political' the larger institutional, financial, economic and governmental dimensions of what people do at every moment of their lives. I think it is a fair criticism. I found it impossible to do both things at once: it's very hard to integrate the two. I still don't know how it can really be done: part of my argument – in response to those who say that what I have written on environmental perception is apolitical – is to say that to write against the grain of mainstream understandings of human cognition and action is itself a political act. And it's also fair to point out that simply writing about or analyzing politics is not, in itself, political at all. Writing itself is political if it takes a stand. I think my writing is political in that sense.

But I'd be the first to admit that I haven't found a satisfactory way to link the politics and the phenomenology together. Many others have encountered the same problem. For example, one of our former Aberdeen research students, Penny McCall Howard, carried out a brilliant study of fishermen around the West Coast of Scotland. Her book has just come out.<sup>10</sup> These fishermen are skilled people who really know how to operate in a marine environment with complicated fishing

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<sup>10</sup> Penny McCall Howard, 2017, *Environment, Labour and Capitalism at Sea: 'Working the ground' in Scotland*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.



gear, but whose life is also completely hedged around by European Union regulations, by fishing quotas, and by the ups and downs of markets for different species of fish. They have to be thinking about these things all the time. It's easy to say, on a practical level, that observations of seabirds that tell you where fish are congregated, and observations of the market price for fish of this or that species, are ontologically on the same level. But I'm not sure about this. When you are actually fishing or handling a boat your movement has continually to respond to a perceptual monitoring of the situation as it unfolds. As you are steering your boat you are conscious of the winds and the currents and what you know about the seabed. It's not that you are getting an input and converting it to an output: your movement and perception are one and the same. But when it comes to a new regulation from the European Union or an observed rise or fall in the price for a particular species of fish, or some pronouncement by a politician, it's not like that.

TK: It's a sort of a rational sequence: you receive an input, you reach some conclusion, and then respond?

TI: Exactly. And it's more a framing than actually in the act. In old-fashioned language you might say that it's more about external constraints than about the intrinsic, immanent quality of the action itself. So it's one thing to say that the action of a skilled mariner is informed by ongoing environmental perception. It's another thing to say that that mariner is also making decisions about what to do, what to catch and where to sail that are informed by a wider set of constraints that define the situation he's in. Somehow they seem different.

TK: So it wouldn't be entirely wrong to say that they are two different domains?

TI: In a way, they are different domains, and yet it would be easy to challenge that and say, no, no, in experience they are all jumbled up together. But it is difficult to produce a *rapprochement* between the phenomenology of landscape and the politics of landscape because they are very different discourses and hard to integrate. I don't know exactly how I'd resolve the problem. I don't think anybody else does yet. It's one of those things we still have to sort out in anthropology.