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Social world, hiking and nation: the Israel National Trail

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ABSTRACT

Hiking is a system of spatial behaviour. This study explores hiking as practiced along the Israel National Trail and posits that hiking and the hikers' community together constitute a 'social world'. Our study asked three primary research questions: As the mobility of hiking is typically contextualized within the social world of the pastime, how has the conceptualizations of social world and mobility contributed to the research? What are the characteristics, features, processes and constructs of the social world of hiking a national trail? What is the role of culture, sociability, nation, place and place identity in this specific social world?

The study was implemented using two complimentary methods: the quantitative and qualitative analysis of questionnaires and a phenomenological method of participant observation and 60 semi-structured in-person interviews conducted over 20 days of hiking between 2015 and 2016, as one of the authors hiked the trail.

The combination of these methods allowed a deeper understanding of the hikers' social world. The major finding was that Israeli hikers reflect distinct features of a social world, including involvement, commitment and sense of place. A comparison of our findings with other studies and theories of hiking highlights the prominence of place identity in hiking.

Monde social, randonnées et nation: le Sentier National Israélien

La randonnée est un système de comportement spatial. Ce travail de recherche explore la randonnée telle qu'elle est pratiquée le long du Sentier National d'Israël et postule que la randonnée et la communauté des randonneurs ensemble constituent un « monde social ». Notre étude a posé trois questions de recherche principales: étant donné que la mobilité de la randonnée est typiquement contextualisée au sein du monde social du passe-temps, comment les conceptualisations du monde social et de la mobilité ont-ils contribué à la recherche ? Quelles sont les caractéristiques, les particularités, les processus et les vues de l'esprit du monde social de la randonnée sur un sentier national ? Quels rôles jouent la culture, la sociabilité, la nation, le lieu et l'identité du lieu dans ce monde social spécifique ?

Cette recherche a été effectuée à l'aide de deux méthodes complémentaires: l'analyse quantitative et qualitative de

questionnaires et la méthode phénoménologique de l'observation de participants et de 60 entrevues semi-structurées en face à face sur 20 jours de randonnée entre 2015 et 2016, puisqu'un des auteurs a suivi le sentier. La combinaison de ces méthodes a permis une meilleure compréhension du monde social des randonneurs. Le résultat principal a été que les randonneurs israéliens reflètent des caractéristiques particulières du monde social, incluant la participation, l'engagement et le sentiment d'appartenance. Une comparaison de nos résultats avec d'autres études et théories de la randonnée souligne la prévalence de l'identité par rapport au lieu dans la randonnée.

Mundo social, senderismo y nación: el sendero nacional de Israel

El senderismo es un sistema de comportamiento espacial. Este estudio explora el senderismo practicado a lo largo del sendero nacional de Israel y postula que el senderismo junto a la comunidad de caminantes constituyen un 'mundo social'. Nuestro estudio formuló tres preguntas principales de investigación: dado que la movilidad del senderismo se suele contextualizar dentro del mundo social del pasatiempo, ¿cómo han contribuido las conceptualizaciones del mundo social y la movilidad a la investigación? ¿Cuáles son las características, rasgos, procesos y constructos del mundo social del senderismo a nivel nacional? ¿Cuál es el papel de la cultura, la sociabilidad, la nación, el lugar y la identidad de lugar en este mundo social específico?

El estudio se llevó a cabo utilizando dos métodos gratuitos: el análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo de cuestionarios y un método fenomenológico de observación al participante y 60 entrevistas semi-estructuradas en persona realizadas durante 20 días de caminata entre 2015 y 2016, cuando uno de los autores caminó por el sendero.

La combinación de estos métodos permitió una comprensión más profunda del mundo social de los caminantes. El principal hallazgo fue que los caminantes israelíes reflejan características distintivas del mundo social, incluidos la participación, el compromiso y el sentido de lugar. Una comparación de nuestros hallazgos con otros estudios y teorías del senderismo destaca la importancia de la identidad del lugar en el senderismo.

Introduction

In this article, we focus on the unique social world of hiking the Israel National Trail (INT), a north-south running 1000 km cross-country trail that takes between 45 and 60 days to complete. The trail runs the length of Israel, from Kibbutz Dan in the north to Eilat in the south (Figure 1).

Located in its entirety within the boundaries of Israel's 'Green Line' (pre-1967 borders), the INT traverses historical sites, monuments and numerous settlements, exposing those walking it to diverse populations and landscapes. The INT, referred to in Hebrew as *shvil israel*, was first conceived in the 1970s by Israeli Journalist Avraham Tamir, who

Figure 1. The Israel National Trail

was inspired by the American Appalachian Trail. It was first opened to the public in 1995, after years of preparation by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI).

Indeed, over the years since its establishment, and consistent with its name, the INT has emerged as the country's national trail, and a growing number of groups and

individuals (80,000, according to the SPNI(have increasingly been choosing to hike the INT. In 2012, National Geographic named the INT one of the 'holy grails of hikes'. As a result of its ranking among the world's top 20 epic hikes, it has earned renown in the international community.

Two aspects of Israeli culture pertaining to long-distance hiking trails make the country an intriguing arena for research on the subject. First, for its size (20,770 sq. km), Israel has one of the largest and most developed hiking trail networks of any country in the world. More than 10,000 km of hiking trails, marked by hundreds of thousands of coloured symbols and printed on a series of 20 high-resolution topo-graphic maps, make the Israeli countryside a landscape imprinted by trails (Rabineau, 2013; SPNI, 2018). Second, in Israel, the *tiyul* (Hebrew), or hike, has long featured as a prevalent means of maintaining and promoting emotional affinity and affiliation to the country as a 'place' (Ben-Yoseph, 2011; Dror, 2011; Selwyn, 1996). Touring the land constitutes an important element of a complex system of cultivated and ritualized cultural practices that have become a form of 'civil religion' representing a pilgrimage to the motherland (Avishar, 2011; Katriel, 1995). This approach, known as '*yedi`at ha'aretz*' (Hebrew), or 'knowledge of the Land', constitutes a field in which knowledge in the realms of geography, history and society is constructed (Selwyn, 1995, 1996).

Our inquiry employs two conceptual frameworks. The first is the act of mobility and movement that involves a 'displacement, the act of moving between locations' (Creswell, 2006, p. 3) and 'the human ability to shift' (Kellerman, 2012, p. 12). The second is the concept of 'social world', which refers to the world of everyday life as lived and appreciated and interpreted by people of common sense, a domain of action and meaning that is bound to the very conception of action (Lukeman, 1970; Schutz, 1970). Social world is defined as a cultural area and a universe of discourse with boundaries set by limits of affective commu-nication, voluntary membership and participants who share an interest in a collective activity – in this case, hiking (Shibutani, 1961; Levi-Strauss, 1978; Unruh, 1983). The conceptualization of social world (der sozialen welt) was introduced by Alfred Schutz in German in 1932. Schutz based his phenomenology of the social world on ideas of Max Weber, Edmond Husserl and Henri Bergson. His book was translated into English in 1967, and it is most likely that his work first became known to the English-speaking world only at this stage. The interaction between the process of mobility and the social world construct will be investigated in this study by means of the concepts of involvement, commitment, place and sense of place.

Our study asked three primary research questions: As the mobility of hiking is typically contextualized within the social world of the pastime, how has the conceptua-lizations of social world and mobility contributed to the research in different areas? What are the characteristics, features, processes and constructs of the social world of hiking the INT? What is the role of culture, sociability, place and place identity in this specific social world?

We conceptualize hiking as a system, a form of behaviour and a process. As geo-graphers, we are interested in spatial behaviour, of which hiking and walking are but two forms, and we apply a behavioural approach to our subject matter. Hiking is a slow-pace mobility characterized by its intermittent face-to-face connection with people, places and events. In the history of movement, walking is the most significant form and a component of almost all others (Urry, 2007). Walking and hiking can be under-stood as cultural activities that are made distinctive and meaningful by the physical

features and material textures of place (Lorimer, 2010). Body sensations associated with walking are described by words such as enjoyment, happiness, joy, peace, calm, lifting of the spirit, essential for state of mind and time for thinking (Stevenson & Farrell, 2018). Hiking has witnessed a revival in recent decades, as hiking trails have been established in Europe and North America and long-distance trails have been developed in virtually all countries and continents (Timothy & Boyd, 2015).

The social world construct has already been employed by studies in the field of leisure and tourism research (Ditton, Loomis, & Choi, 1992; Gawiler & Havitz, 1998; Kyle & Chick, 2004; MacLennan & Moore, 2011; Scott & Godbey, 1994). Unlike these studies, however, we rely on Schutz phenomenological construct of the social world as an intersubjective, taken for granted life world of communication, interactional involvement, mutual-understanding and mutual experiences (Schutz, 1970).

The present study is largely exploratory and non-positivist in nature. It uses a mixed methods approach consisting of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Conceptually and theoretically, and in addition to Schutz, we also rely on Levy-Strauss (1978), whose conceptualization of the construct of the social world extends beyond the 'spatially transcendent form of social organization' (Unruh, 1983, p. 14) and views each social world as 'a cultural area, its boundaries being set neither by territory nor by formal membership' (Shibutani, 1955, p. 566).

The aim of this study is therefore twofold: first, to analyse and challenge the conceptual frameworks of social world and mobility currently being applied by researchers by deconstructing them, and to propose that they be supplemented by a number of additional concepts; and second, to present and examine the extensive social world of the INT. The article's initial sections will present its theoretical framework, research design and methodology. They will be followed by findings, discussion and conclusions.

Mobilities, walking and hiking

Mobilities have become the hallmark of modern times (Cresswell and Priya Uteng (2008). It has emerged in recent years as a key concept in the social sciences but its application in tourism studies and hiking has been relatively limited. This paper provides a framework for placing tourism within the broader context of mobility, and of hiking-oriented mobility in particular. It also argues that concepts of mobility provide an opportunity to connect understandings of specific patterns of human flows with other mobilities.

A 'mobility turn' has taken place over the past decade or so, affecting not only how we think about migration but also how we conceptualize society and, hence, social science (Cresswell, 2006, 2010; Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Urry, 2000, 2007). Maddrell and Terry (2015) discuss the role of mobility in the social sciences, the arts and the humanities by examining the intersection between the embodied emotional-spiritual experience of places, travel, belief-practices and communities. The term 'mobility' 'examines both the large-scale movements of people, objects, capital and information as well as more local processes of daily transportation, movement through public and private spaces and the travel of material things in everyday life' (Urry, 2007).

The 'new mobility paradigm' has come into being because of improvements to and new forms of mobility, where bodies combined with information and different patterns

of mobility cause new ways of thinking and theorizing about the interconnected mobility of people, ideas and objects (Cresswell, 2010). It is about 'going beyond the imagery of "terrains" as spatially fixed geographical containers for social processes and calling into question scalar logics such as local/global as descriptors of regional extent' (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Researchers are also aware of the problematic nature of the 'grand narrative' of mobility and fluidity. They acknowledge, for example, the politically con-tested nature of many forms of (especially international) mobility, issues of unequal access to mobility among different social groups, and therefore the importance of immobility or 'moorings' (Hannam et al., 2006, p. 5; Cresswell, 2006, 2010).

Tourism employ a 'new mobility paradigm' that offers a conceptual framework for understanding the nature of the tourism phenomenon (Bærenholdt & Lund, 2004). According to this framework, 'places are seen as dynamic,' as 'places of movement'. 'Places are like ships,' posit Benediktsson and Lund (2010, p. 146) 'moving around and not necessarily staying in one location'. Tourism puts people, objects and ideas on the move; it contributes to cultural and religious traffic and provides points of entry into other rounds of meaning. Accordingly, we conceptualize hiking as a dynamic system, a form of behaviour and a process. Hiking is a slow-pace simple mobility characterized by its 'intermittent face-to-face relationship with other people, with other places, and with events' (Urry, 2007, p. 37). As such, it runs counter to the 'time-space convergence' of other forms of mobility and communications (Amato, 2004; Kellerman, 2012).

Hiking, as a form of mobility, can be also understood as a cultural activity that is made distinctive and meaningful by the physical features and material textures of place (Lorimer, 2010). Kay & Moxam (1996) distinguish between two categories of rural walking practices. The first category includes 'sauntering', 'rambling', 'strolling', 'prome-nading' and other conventional forms of walking that are easy, casual, relaxing, sociable and accommodating of spontaneous participation by groups of mixed abilities. The second category, which is more relevant to the focus of this study, includes 'marching', 'trail walking', 'trekking', 'hiking', 'mountain climbing' and other esoteric and minority activities that are strenuous, rigorous, challenging and rewarding, and that require advanced planning. Thru-hiking refers to the act of hiking a long-distance trail from one end to the other and is most commonly associated with the Appalachian Trail and other long-distance trails, including the INT.

The act of walking through landscape has received increasing attention over the past decade (Benediktsson & Lund, 2010; Lund & Wilson, 2010). The research on walking crosses a wide range of disciplines including health, environment, sociology, tourism, politics among others (Collins-Kreiner & Kliot, 2016, 2017; Middleton, 2010). An emerging body of literature also explores people's experiences, with the aim of developing a deeper understanding of walking and the dynamic space of the walk. As a mobility, the current experiences intertwine with memories of other times and places through a process in which connections are made among mind, body, the immediate physical environment, the self and others, and in which people are disconnected from their everyday lives and the wider environment. These connec-tions and disconnections create a sense of perspective, achievement and well-being (Stevenson & Farrell, 2018).

The origins of long-distance walking can be traced to the Romantics of the nineteenth century, who introduced walking as a cultural act and an element of aesthetic experience

(Solnit, 2002: 83). 'In terms of the history of movement', Urry (2007, p. 63) explains, 'walking is easily its most significant form, and it is still a component of almost all other modes of movement'. According to Lorimer (2010, p. 20), a walk can be understood as 'a cultural activity that is made distinctive and meaningful by the physical features and material textures of place'. Walking also produces intense feelings of liberation, refreshment, intensified connection with the fundamental and a slowing down of the hectic pace of life (Lorimer & Lund, 2003, 2008; Lund, 2004). Finally, we can discern an 'enlacement between the mobile walker observing the landscape and the landscape itself – both landscape and walker are constructive to each other' (Ingold, 2004, pp. 328–9; Wylie, 2005, 2006).

It is interesting to note the complicated relationship between mobility and place. On the one hand, mobility of people, objects and ideas appear to undermine place and produce a kind of placelessness or non-place (Relph, 1976). On the other hand, bodily mobility, rather than rootedness and authenticity, is the key component of the understanding of place.

Researchers have defined hikers on long trails as a 'community' and as a 'travelling community', and the benefits of hiking alone have been identified as promoting self-development, communion with nature, self-reliance and harmony of body and soul (Arnold, 2007; Edensor, 2000, p. 89; Amato, 2004, p. 102; Slavin, 2003, p. 11; Turley, 2011). Maddrell (2013) explores pilgrimage walks within the broader context of recent work on 'therapeutic' landscapes and environments, issuing a call for better understanding of the role of the spiritual in therapeutic landscapes. For example, walking in the Santiago de Camino is not about arrival in Santiago but about the journey itself (Slavin, 2003, p. 8). Hikers on the Inca Trail depicted their journey as a self-learning experience (Quinlan-Cutler, Carmichael, & Doherty, 2014). Ween and Abram (2012) researched the role of Norwegian trekking in constituting the nation as part of their greater aim of examining trekking practices as performances of broader ideological concepts.

Also key to a better understanding of the pastime of hiking understanding, in addition to the elements of mobility and movement, is the social world that revolves around it, in which communication, activities, activity sites, places, mobility in and out, discourse and spatial variations are all distinct features. Like mobility, social worlds are dynamic phenomena that are enacted on varying scales and in different places and that, more than anything else, are cultural.

The 'social world': conceptualization and application

According to Schutz (1970), a social world is a world of interpretation (*verstehn*) of one's own experiences and the experiences of others that is used to interpret both objective and subjective meanings and contexts of products. The 'meaningful world' (social world) carries with it an implicit reference to the 'Other'. It is a world of social action and social relationship, namely, communicative relationships: others share with me a community of space and a community of time when their experience is flowing side by side with mine (Schutz, 1970). There is no direct evidence that the concept of social world was known to the Chicago School of Symbolic Interactionism, and only Unruh (1983) quoted Schutz in one of his early works.

But the conceptualization of 'social world' is also grounded in the work of the Chicago School of Symbolic Interactionism. This school is strongly anti-deterministic,

meaning that no preliminary assumptions are made as to whether a social world under study contributes to progress (Levi-Strauss, 1978, p. 127). Process is central for the study of social worlds, which are interactive units that come into existence when a number of individuals strive to act collectively.

A social world is a universe of discourse and regularized mutual response, the boundaries of which are set by the limits of effective communication (Dann, 2002, p. 5; Clarke, 1991, p. 128; Shibutani, 1961, p. 130). It is an arena – a cultural area that facilitates anticipation of the responses of others – in which a person may pursue his or her interests with reasonable confidence and which is characterized by voluntary association and a great sense of mutual identification and solidarity (Shibutani, 1961, p. 127).

Every social world has norms that guide its participants, at least one primary activity, sites where activities occur, a technology and inherited or innovative means of carrying out its activities (Shibutani, 1961; Strauss, 1979, 1984). A social world is a form of social organization in which actors are cognitively linked with one another through shared perspectives arising out of common channels of communication that generate symbolic or interactionist imagery and a universe of discourse (Unruh, 1983).

Social worlds allow many different degrees of involvement and commitment depending on the level of cognitive identification with the world in question and the level of exposure to the social world's ideas, practices, procedures and concerns (Shibutani, 1961; Unruh, 1983). Levi-Strauss also stresses the fact that the spatial variations of social worlds can be concentrated or dispersed and can also vary in terms of the amount of space utilized for activities, as well as their visibility (Levi-Strauss, 1984, pp. 1–2).

The concept of the social world has been understood and interpreted in a variety of ways. According to Strauss, it is 'a perspective', and according to Shibutani it is a 'perspective and approach' (Shibutani, 1955; Levi-Strauss, 1978). Social worlds have been postulated as 'a conceptual orientation... or perspective' (Scott & Godbey, 1994), and as a 'model' or 'form of interpretation' (Levi-Strauss, 1974, cited in Picard, 2002, p. 122).

Transforming theory into practice: social world research

The major concepts of social world as postulated by its founders were extensively studied by their followers, and these themes and their application are discussed in this section.

1. Social world activities

Most of the activities embraced by social worlds are mundane leisure activities such as running (Getz & Patterson, 2013; McCarvill, 2007; Robinson, Patterson, & Axelsen, 2014; Shipway & Jones, 2007), kayaking (Kane & Zink, 2004), angling (Scott & Harmon, 2016), mountain biking (Getz & Patterson, 2013), yoga (Patterson, Getz, & Gubb, 2016; Scott & Godbey, 1994), ballroom dancing and food (Getz & Patterson, 2013), geocaching (Ivan, 2016), music (Scott & Harmon, 2016), the work of seafarers (Maurizio, 2013) and the computer-supported cooperative work (Fitzpatrick Tolone & Kaplan, 1995).

2. Social world involvement and commitment

According to Shibutani (1961), Strauss (1978) and Unruh (1983), involvement and commitment are prominent components of the social world conceptualization. The term 'involvement' reflects the degree to which people devote themselves to an activity or an associated product (Kyle & Chick, 2004). It has been defined as an 'unobservable state of

motivation, arousal, or interest toward a recreational activity or associated product' that 'is evoked by a particular stimulus or situation and has driven properties' (Gawiler & Havitz, 1998, p. 6). Leisure involvement is considered to be 'enduring leisure involvement' because the level of importance that individuals ascribe to an activity is dependent on their personal values, which are less susceptible to variation induced by situational stimuli (Kyle & Chick, 2004, pp. 242–4; Kyle, Bricker, Graefe, & Wickham, 2004a; Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004b).

The affective system of involvement is characterized by three dimensions (McIntyre & Pigram, 1992). The first, attraction, is based on interest and enjoyment and is best conceptualized in terms of recreationists' perception of the importance of an activity and its derived pleasure (Kyle et al., 2004a; McIntyre & Pigram, 1992).

The second is the centrality of a particular leisure activity within the individual's overall lifestyle, which is considered to be high when other aspects of the individual's life are organized around that activity (Kyle & Chick, 2004) – when 'friends and others and social interactions are centred on an activity in the individual's life' (McIntyre & Pigram, 1992, p. 7). This can be understood as corresponding to the conceptualization of 'side bets' of commitment, that is, the investment of something of value in a certain activity, such as financial and emotional resources, friendships and self-perception (the more side bets at stake, the greater the commitment to an activity) (Buchanan, 1985; Ditton et al., 1992; Scott & Godbey, 1994) (see the section on 'commitment' below).

Self-expression, the third and final dimension of involvement, is similar to the 'sign' or symbolic notion proposed by Laurent and Kapferer (1985) and refers to the self-representation or impression that an individual wishes to convey to others through his or her leisure participation (McIntyre & Pigram, 1992). This dimension constitutes the layer of communication and symbolization of the social world.

In a study of the process of involvement among participants in four social worlds (running, ballroom dancing, mountain biking and involvement with food), the attraction and centrality of the specific social world was reflected in its importance to participants' lifestyles and to the benefits they achieve through the specific activity, such as self-esteem, identity challenge, escape and relaxation, enjoyment and excitement, sociability and influence by friends and relatives. Self-expression was found in signs of membership and status – such as badges or models that are displayed on flags or anthems (Getz & Patterson, 2013).

The social world of kayaking is characterized by the centrality of the actors' involvement, as reflected in the social identity derived from that activity (Kane & Zink, 2004). Involvement in the social world of running was expressed on the individual level through dress and language reflecting the participant's social identity. Similarly, the centrality of running was also manifested in the importance of belongingness, defined as a sense of camaraderie articulated through identity, whereas self-expression was manifested in the room for symbols and artefacts. The derived benefits (attraction of the activity) were reported to include a 'sense of euphoria' and 'adrenaline highs' (Robinson, Patterson & Exelsen, 2014). Ivan (2016) found strong participant involvement in geocaching, enacted through communication. Social rewards such as social attraction, group accomplishment and contribution to group maintenance and development received high ratings. The level of involvement in the recreational activity of geocaching had a decisive influence on the importance of its social rewards (Ivan, 2016).

The core of 'commitment' is loyalty to an activity or product and the persistence of goal-directed behaviour over time. It involves some degree of affective attachment to the goals and values of a role, activity, or organization and results in consistent and focused behaviour (Buchanan, 1985; Ditton et al., 1992; Scott & Godbey, 1994). Two central components of psychological commitment are the tendency to resist changes in preference in response to conflicting information or experience (Gawiler & Havitz, 1998), and the motivational ability or disposition to continue investing in an activity, a role performance or a relationship regardless of the balance of external costs and their immediate gratifying properties. Commitment to the activities of a social world is part of the universe of regularized mutual response and is demarcated by limits of effective communication. Commitment by no means stands in contradiction to voluntary participation in the activities of social worlds. High levels of commitment are demonstrated in serious athletic activities, such as running. In its extreme, it becomes an obsession and is excessive, causing injuries and/or poor performance (Robinson et al., 2014; Shipway & Jones, 2007). Ivan (2016) noted that participants in the social world of geocaching demonstrate clear commitment to and voluntary identification with that activity. It was also found that commitment to the Ironman Triathlon community has a dramatic effect on lifestyle (McCarvill, 2007).

3. Social world communication, integration and socialization

It seems highly unnatural to treat processes of communication, integration and socialization as separate from all other constructs of social worlds, such as activities, involvement and commitment, places and sense of places and, particularly, the social worlds of everyday livelihood. Interaction and communication are the blood vessels of social worlds, which evolve, develop and are maintained by interaction. It is therefore self-evident that communication, interaction and socialization are part of all social worlds. A typical expression of these elements in the context of walking is the observation that interviewees in a study 'were walking in pairs or in groups and many made an association between walking and talking. Social interactions with other people were also related to the emotional experience of walking' (Stevenson & Farrell, 2018, p. 9).

4. The social worlds of everyday life, meaning and experience

Living in the world of everyday life means living in an interactional involvement with many people and being entangled in complex networks of social relationship (Schutz, 1970, p. 16). Walking is a profoundly social activity and the walking environment is socially constructed (Ingold & Vergunst, 2008, p. 1; Edensor, 2000). Walking is an inseparable part of everyday livelihood, living, working, celebrating and socializing and is not limited to the narrower concept of recreational hiking. The important relationship between story, walking the land, experiencing places and knowledge lies at the core of walking for Batek hunters (Ingold & Vergunst, 2008, p. 40). The social worlds of Scotland's mountain collectors (the Muros) is analysed through walking, remembering and recording mountains (Lorimer & Lund, 2008). Wylie (2005) is the narrator of the experience and meaning of his 200 mile walk along the coastline of Somerset, Devon: 'The paper writes its way through what might be turned a part phenomenological understanding of the formation and undoing of self and landscape in practice' (Wylie, 2005: 245). Walking is studied as simultaneously a 'place-and-nature making and practice which limits the chaos in everyday worlds' (Waitt, Gill, & Head, 2009). The performativity (of walking) is central to blurring the culture-nature dualism through thinking

of people, plants, animals and places not as static but instead as relational, active, dynamic, ongoing and fluid (Waitt et al., 2009, p. 45).

The relationship between the walking body, the path and the environment is intimate and integrative, 'sewing it together into a continuous experience' (Stevenson & Farell, 2018, p. 5; Solnit, 2002, p. XV).

5. Place, place making and sense of place

None of the founders of social world conceptualization included place as such within the social world construct. However, they did refer to the geographical, locational and spatial dimensions of social world. For Shibutani (1961), the arena of the social world is a culture area, a scheme of life that influences acting, talking and thinking. Social worlds vary in composition, size and territorial distribution of their participants. Some are local, while others are vast. Communities and sub-communities are central to social world construct and are most likely the closest in meaning to place. Strauss viewed space as a necessary dimension of social worlds, as space is a relevant aspect of carrying out social world activities. Space is also relevant to finding sites for activities, maintaining sites and visiting sites and abandoning sites (Strauss, 1978, 1979). Geographically, therefore, sites are visible or invisible, accessible or inaccessible, spatially shaped and designed and visited and sanctified (Strauss, 1979, p. 4–7).

In the 'life-world', people take for granted the bodily existence of fellowmen, their conscious life, the possibility of intercommunication and the historical giveness of social organization and culture, just as they take for granted the world of nature into which they were born (Schutz, 1970, p. 164). This (social) world is given to them, along with interpretation of the manifold phenomena, relationships and so forth of the social world as developed by the cultural 'in group' (Schutz, 1970, p. 16). This concurs with Relph's (2017) basic interpretation of place as a lens through which to interpret experiences of the world. This is one of four basic interpretations of place, with the other three including place as primarily a material attribute of the world; place as primarily a way of being attached to or connecting with the world and with others; and place as a socio-economic construct (Relph, 2017). This is associated with the phenomenological view that place is the first of all things because whatever we do has to be done in place. Places are territories that gather meaning – for example 'masculinity of places' (Liong, 2017), 'beastly places' of feral cats (Van Patter & Hovorka, 2018) and bicycles resting on city streets which often 'matter out of place' (Aldred & Jungnickel, 2013). Humanistic and phenomenological approaches to places have been advanced since the 1970s by writers such as Tuan (1974), Relph (1976) and Malpas (1999), for whom the idea of place is a central component of human life: a centre of meaning and a core field that forms the basis for human interaction (Cresswell, 2004, p. 49). Other geographers insist that places should not be thought of in terms of stasis and boundedness but rather as the product of processes that extend well beyond the particular confines of a particular place (Cresswell, 2004, p. 50).

Each place is a territory of significance distinguished from larger or smaller areas by its name, its particular environmental qualities, its stories and the shared memories connected to it, and by the intensity of meanings people give to it or derive from it (Relph, 2009). Places are connected to the experience and reproduction of memories (Haydan, 1995). Casey (1987) has noted that it is the stabilizing persistence of place as a container of experiences that contributes so powerfully to its intrinsic memorability

(Casey, 1987, pp. 186–7). Performing local history and heritage can be seen as a relational and productive process that connects individuals to wider social memories and practices and serves as a means of sustaining place identities through times of change (Wheeler, 2017, p. 480).

Places arouse a wide range of place-related phenomena such as place dependence, place identity, rootedness and satisfaction (Farnum, Hall, & Kruger, 2005; Kaltenborn, 1998). This phenomenon has been termed 'senses of place' and is comparable to environmental psychologist's conception of 'place attachment'.

Following Farnum et al. (2005), we employ the term 'sense of place' in a general manner to refer to both the affective and cognitive components of place and to encompass the interpretations and representations of these features, as well as the social dynamics of the landscape. We therefore employ the concept of place attachment to refer to the affective bonds between people and places. Particularly relevant to the conceptualization of the social world construct are the sociocultural components of sense of place, including the social processes by which meaning comes to be shared or even imposed (Gieryn, 2000). This perspective is especially characteristic of those influenced by symbolic interactionism, which is essential for social worlds. Stokowski (2002, p. 372) shows how the '"social place" known and understood across sets of people is created and reproduced through interpersonal interaction, formalized in social behaviour, and ultimately persists in collective memory'. In this way, the emphasis is on 'the shared aspects of sense of place as opposed to the individualized meanings that develop out of personal experience' (Farnum et al., 2005, p. 11).

Williams and Patterson (1999) propose a classification of features of sense of place based on four primary dimensions of place attachment: (1) the scenic/aesthetic dimension, referring principally to a place's sensory appeal, including its visual, auditory and olfactory aspects; (2) the activity/goal dimension, or the functional aspects of the setting and the types of recreational, educational and physical tasks performed at the site; (3) the cultural/symbolic dimension, which delves into place meaning and (4) the dimension of individual/expressive attachment stemming from the phenomenological experience of the individual with the land, which is of particular importance in that it is 'where other components of place are amalgamated, blended into an individual's particular cognitive and affective experience and portrayed as a part of the self' (Farnum et al., 2005, pp. 39–41).

As already noted, some view 'place attachment' as a construct consisting of 'place identity' and 'place dependence'. 'Place identity' is characterized by the combination of attitudes, values, thoughts, beliefs, meanings and behavioural tendencies that transcend emotional attachment and belonging to particular places (Proshansky, 1978; Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983). 'Place identity' often assumes the form of 'place belongingness', which is characterized by strong desire and emotional attachment (Kyle et al., 2004a, 2004b; Proshansky et al., 1983; Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992).

'Place dependence' reflects a location's importance for providing the amenities necessary for desired activities. In this context, a setting's value to the individual is based on specificity, functionality and satisfaction with the place and its suitability for specific activities such as hiking, fishing, camping, scenic enjoyment and so forth (Farnum et al., 2005).

Based on the observations made by several scholars of environmental psychology regarding the importance of social ties to place, we maintain that sense of place is an
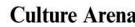
Figure 2. The Social World of Israeli Hikers

inseparable part of social worlds. 'If meaningful social relationships occur and are maintained in specific settings, then it should also be likely that these settings share some of this meaning given that they provide the context for these relationships and shared experiences' (Kyle et al., 2004b, p. 443).

Similarly, hikers' dependence on the Appalachian Trail was found to stem from the social bonds that bind them to the activity, and, in this sense, the trail may be valued for providing opportunities for social interactions (Kyle et al., 2004b). A more fitting conceptualization for lived experiences in the everyday world, particularly in the case of walking, is the realization that the boundaries between human and non-human worlds are highly fluid, resilient and ruptured (Waitt et al., 2009, pp. 6, 13).

In sum, this concept is 'typically operationalized in studies as a combination of place identity and place dependence, or through items specifically addressing emotional ties and feelings of connectedness'. Such usage of sense of place is comparable to the conceptualization of the social world as a whole or as an entity consisting of constructs such as communication, symbolization, activities, membership, sites, technologies and organization (Strauss, 1978, p. 121) (see Figure 2).

Nation and hiking: the Israeli context

In Israel, the pastime of hiking appears to be closely related to what Yi-Fu Tuan (1976) calls 'geopiety', which refers to the emotional connection between human beings and nature, including attachment to a homeland and caring for the Earth and specific places, with an emphasis on attachment to native land, patriotism and rootedness to places where ancestral blood was shed in historic battles (Gieryn, 2000). It is also undoubtedly linked to the 'politics of place' – that is, 'works that highlight the struggle to authorize specific meanings and privilege for certain groups' (Farnum et al., 2005, p. 13).

Hiking in Israel is deeply embedded in the Zionist state-building process, through which, by combining state and nation within the nation-state, sovereign territory is merged with sacred homeland to convert space into place (Katz, 1985; Selwyn, 1995, 1996; Taylor, 1999). In Israel, the 'hike' has been and remains a popular mode of teaching, learning and experiencing the 'Land of Israel', aimed at maintaining and promoting emotional affinity and affiliation to the country as a 'place'. It is also argued that for Israelis, the experience of the hike (*tiyul*) provides conditions under which the 'imagined community' of the nation (Anderson, 1983, pp. 14–16) 'may be recovered from the more complex and fragmented experiences of everyday life in a modern plural society' (Selwyn, 1996, p. 149).

The hike, maintains Avishar (2011), is actually a pilgrimage to the motherland. According to Katriel (1995), touring the land is an important element of a complex of ritualized cultural practices that were appropriated and cultivated during the pre-state Israeli nation-building era and that form the core of Israeli 'civil religion' (Katriel, 1995, p. 6; Katz, 1985; Liebman & Don-Yehia, 1983).

Ben David (1997) has shown that Israeli hikers can be understood as playing two distinct roles vis-à-vis land in Israel: a ritualistic role of actualization by which they serve to 'mark territory' and declare ownership of the land (Ben David, 1997, p. 140) and a second role by which they become part of nature and strive to conserve the environment. In this way, hikes can be conceptualized as symbolic acts that are representative of two categories: 'nature and society' (Ben David, 1997, p. 130).

Selwyn (1996, pp. 160–161) claims that Israeli hikes provide examples 'of a kind of tourism dedicated to the production and consumption of myths'. The theses of these myths relate to danger, defense, universalism versus particularism and the Diaspora-state relationship. According to Massey (), the reactionary sense of place that particular groups of people with their 'own culture' belong in a particular place, seemingly naturally, is widespread (Adey, 2010; Cresswell, 2004).

It should also be noted that 'circulars of the director generals of the Ministry of Education, in the past and the present, stress the importance of the hike or trip to deepening attachment to the land, cultivating feelings of comradeship, and encouraging mutual help'. In this way, hiking remains an important component of Israeli national education and culture, and the mobility of hiking the INT accentuates the essence of Israeli nation and state building and civic culture and consciousness. In Israel, the *tiyul* was and remains a popular mode of teaching, learning and experiencing the 'Land of Israel' in an effort to maintain and promote emotional affinity for and affiliation with the land. As such and in this capacity, the INT serves as an important element of national socialization.

In its emphasis on activities, cultural area, effective communication, involvement and participation and shared perspective, the context of Israeli nation building is consistent with the conceptualization of the social world construct (Levi-Strauss, 1978; Unruh, 1980). Israeli traditions of hiking are reflective of high levels of involvement and commitment and a strong sense of place reinforced by socialization and education. The dimensions of involvement – attraction, centrality, self-expression and commitment – are particularly relevant to Israel's mode of hiking, especially along the INT, as are social ties and social bonding, interactions and transactions. All of these concepts are explored in this study.

Research methods and methodology

This paper presents the findings of an explorative bricolage study of Israeli hikers on the INT. From a methodological perspective, this study was based on mixed methodology of two different complementary methods that together help approach the social world of hikers on a number of different levels. The first was a questionnaire consisting of 40 open-ended and closed-ended questions that was conducted in 2013. The second consisted of participant observations and semi-structured in-person interviews, conducted on the trail itself once a month between 2015 and 2016, for a total of 20 days of hiking.

The Questionnaires – The questions in the questionnaire were grouped into three sections: one that elicited information on demography and socio-economic characteristics; another that explored aspects of preparations and planning for the hike; and a third that contained questions pertaining to the hike itself, hiking specifics, motivations and consequences, levels of satisfaction, sense of achievement, perceived important elements of the hike and important aspects of the INT. Some of the questions allowed for multiple responses. As the questions consisted of open-ended and closed-ended questions, they were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The sample, which included 210 questionnaires, was 57.14% male and 42.86% female. Its members tended to fall into two primary age groups: 20–29 year olds (41.43%) and 50–59 year olds (20.95%). The majority of respondents were born in Israel, most were Jewish and all were citizens of Israel. A majority of respondents (63.73%) also ranked themselves low on a scale of religiosity, and 66% indicated that they had received a university education, attesting to the highly educated character of the sample. About half of the respondents classified themselves as having an income that was 'above average', while the other half defined themselves as having a 'below average' income. Only 61.94% of the respondents live in towns and cities, which is significantly lower than the percentage of the overall Israeli population living in such localities (90%).

Ethnographic Fieldwork – This research is based in part on intensive ethnographic fieldwork undertaken on the trail between 2015 and 2016. The fieldwork consisted of participant observation and in-depth informal interviews. Theoretically, the project's methodology is phenomenological in character, as it examines the essence of an experience using interviews, stories, meetings and observations of people undergoing the experience in question. Data gathering in this study concentrated primarily on understanding the personal meaning, significance and lived experiences of the hikers. The two modes of data collection are addressed below:

(a) *Participant Observation* – Part of the research involved full researcher involvement in hiking activities. We spent time talking to the hikers before and after hiking the trail and on the trail itself. In order to document our observations, we wrote field notes, took photographs and shot short videos of different activities and places.

(b) *Informal Interviews* – To further understand the hikers' experiences, we conducted face-to-face informal interviews once a month between 2015 and 2016 – for a total of 20 days, along 20 different parts of the trail – by engaging in conversation with the hikers who were on the trail at the time. A total of 60

people were interviewed for an average of 3 interviews per day, and all the interviews were summarized. Conversations lasted between 10 min and 1 h. All of them were Jewish and Israelis. Based on extensive observations, this purposive sample seems typical of the people who hike the trail. In this mode of interviewing, the researcher strikes up conversations that deliberately deal with issues in which the researcher is interested. We asked people about their background, why they were on the trail, the activities in which they were engaging and the manner in which the hike was affecting them. Interviewees were also asked about their motivations, their thoughts about their experiences, their connection to the land and the social world of hiking the INT as a whole.

Analysis– At the conclusion of the fieldwork, we inductively mapped out a chart of the tentative summary of the different narratives of the social world we had encountered. Having spent 20 days completely immersed in the activities of the hikers, and after talking to such a large number of people, this framework was not difficult to construct. To further refine these narratives, we then read and reread the interview transcripts, the answers to the open-ended and closed-ended questions and the field notes. On this basis, we constructed a series of categories that corresponded to the various theoretical categories discussed in the literature. We then read through the transcripts again, and these categories were adjusted further to ensure a better fit between the theoretical categories and the data.

The combination of the two different methodological approaches afforded us a dual perspective on the phenomenon under study: while the questionnaires gave us clear answers to the questions that dealt with facts, the ethnographic method provided us with deeper insight into perceptions and attitudes. This integrated approach also proved advantageous by allowing us to explore the more phenomenological aspects of hiking – those that can be best understood through experience and presence in its social world. Our adherence to this approach allowed us to identify deep feelings and emotions regarding self-learning and becoming. Overall, it can be understood as the adoption of the phenomenological perspective, in addition to the Chicago School of Symbolic Interactionism's conceptualization of the social world.

Involvement and commitment in the social world of hiking the INT

Involvement and commitment in the social world of hiking the INT highlights the nature and features of mobility and movement of hiking. It is a cultural activity characterized by its intermittent face to face relationship with other people, other places and events (Lorimer, 2010; Urry, 2007). Hiking mobility in the Israeli context is actually a pilgrimage to the motherland, and the core of the 'civil religion' of Israel, in which the hike is aimed at promoting an emotional affinity to the land.

Involvement reflects the degree to which a person devotes himself or herself to an activity or associated product. Within the social world framework, involvement relates to core features including activities, participation, interaction with others, communication, sociability, symbolization, technology and skills. 'Hiking the trail is an amazing experience that cannot be described in words,' one respondent explained 'If you haven't done it, you can't understand it' (Male, 28). This response reflects the existence of a social

world regarding which a person has two options: either to be part of it, or to be an outsider. The hikers often spoke in a language of their own, including jokes about the trail and unique expressions such as the official term 'trail angels', used to refer to people who live near the trail and open their homes to hikers, and informal terms such as 'road angel' and 'road devil' to refer to drivers who stop or fail to stop for hitchhikers.

The dimension of involvement in hiking was clearly reflected in some of the hikers' open-ended responses. One hiker characterized the INT as 'a trail of 50 continuous days of walking. It's much more than just another hike. It left me flooded with emotions. It's an opportunity to find parts of your soul you never knew existed before' (Female, 24). Another hiker shared the following view: 'I am not a religious or spiritual person, but on the INT you have an experience that is exceptional and unique. You sleep in the nature. It isn't like all the other trails we hike, where we sleep in guest houses…it's all about gaining a great sense of fulfilment and happiness, enjoying the landscapes and encountering new things I've never before encountered' (Male, 21). This coincides with Kyle and Chick's (2004) observation that attraction is conceptualized in terms of recreationist's perception of the importance of an activity and its derived pleasure. Walking is a profoundly social activity and the walking environment is socially constructed (Ingold & Vergunst, 2008).

During their hikes, people expressed their deepest feelings and emotions and spoke of 'a spiritual experience', of changes in their 'inner soul' and of a sense of 'identification with nature, with animals, with humans and with the natural landscape' (Female, 29). Wylie (2005) noted that walking enabled phenomenological understanding of the formation and undoing of self and landscape in practice. Hikers also compared it to other hikes they have taken elsewhere in the world, such as in Nepal or Africa, which in their view could not be compared with hiking the INT from an internal perspective. In order to understand this world, we examined involvement by assessing its three main elements: attraction, centrality and self-expression.

Attraction is based on interest in and enjoyment derived from activities, and attraction to hiking was assessed using questions that probed the walking and hiking behaviour of the individual. One question, for example, asked whether the respondent had ever hiked on the INT before. Of the 204 respondents who answered this question, 22% had hiked the entire INT at some point in the past, 57.3% had hiked parts of the trail and only 19.61% were hiking it for the first time. The hikers were also asked if they had ever hiked elsewhere in Israel, and of the 203 respondents, 40.3% indicated that they had hiked other trails in Israel in the past and 17.7% walked every day or almost every day. When asked whether they had ever hiked outside of Israel, the majority of the 204 respondents indicated having hiked trails abroad on more than one occasion, and only 32.6% indicated never having done so. These responses are indicative of an attraction to hiking in general and to hiking in Israel in particular.

Attraction to the activity of hiking also found expression in responses to some of the open-ended questions and open-ended interviews. In some instances, hiking in general was characterized as 'something that brings you inner peace' (Male, 30). Most respondents spoke specifically of the experience as a 'dream come true' and as 'a wish I have had for as long as I can remember'. For some, the INT was also a source of pride, as reflected in the following response: 'The INT is an amazing thing internationally speaking. It is something to be proud of. We have a beautiful country.' Another respondent

indicated being 'happy that we have a national trail in Israel', and many others expressed the sentiment that hiking the trail was 'one of the most powerful and meaningful experiences' they had ever had. According to one hiker, 'it's not just a hike in the desert or in the mountains…it's a hike that explains and understands an entire country – its people, its history, its cultures and its landscapes'. According to another, 'it's a powerful experience that teaches you a lot about yourself and your abilities'. Finally, attraction was manifested in levels of interest and enjoyment derived from hiking. Among the motivations to hike, 'pleasure' was mentioned by 165 of 208 hikers, and 'curiosity' was noted by 93. Among the achievements of the hike, satisfaction, happiness, pleasure and enjoyment were reiterated by almost one-fifth of the hikers.

The abovementioned emotions reflect that walking is revealed to be a place-making practice, sustaining a sense of self-discovery through ascribing order over place (Waitt et al., 2009). Similarly, the emotions expressed by walkers on the South Downs trail included enjoyment, happiness/joy, feeling well, peace, calm, raised spirit and improved state of mind (Stevenson & Farrell, 2018, p. 8).

The *centrality* of hiking, the second indicator of involvement, refers to the activity's importance in the lifestyle of the individual, friends and others. The activity's centrality to social interactions and sociability was measured using questions that explored the planning process and the patterns of the hike itself. In relation to planning the hike, the 204 respondents to this question could be broken down into 'planners' – those who prepared for the hike for an extended period of time, ranging from a few months to a few years (27.3%) or who had planned it in an organized group (14.2%), together accounting for 41.5%; 'short planners' – those who had planned it for a few days (25.0%) or weeks (31.8%); and those who did not plan it at all (1.4%). Based on these responses, we can conclude that almost all the hikers engaged in planning their hike on some level, with some devoting more time and resources to the process than others. A number of the open-ended responses of 'planners' clearly reflected the time and effort invested by this group. 'I planned it [the hike] for an entire year,' noted one respondent. 'I wanted to know exactly where I was going to be and how.' Another respondent explained having 'planned where to hide water on the trail a few months before setting out', and another acknowledged having 'started reading blogs and websites on the INT a few years before the hike' (Female, 31).

Centrality is widely measured by interaction and communication with, and affirmation of ties to family and friends. This dimension was revealed by respondents' heavy reliance on family and friends as their most important resource for information pertaining to the INT, and the centrality of family, friends and sociability manifested itself in responses to other questions. For example, in response to a question assessing the respondent's partners for the hike, half indicated family and friends and one-sixth were part of organized groups that often-included friends and family members. One family (two parents and two children) characterized the hike as 'a family experience that is educational, personal, national and fun', adding: 'we've loved all the hiking that we've done together'. Of the hikers on the trail, very few were solo hikers, and most were sociable hikers who preferred to walk with others.

Centrality corresponds to the concept of 'side bets' – investment of something of value in a certain activity, such as emotional resources, friendships and self-perception (Buchanan, 1985; Ditton et al., 1992; Scott & Godbey, 1994). McIntyre and Pigram (1992)

stressed the role of friends and others in social interactions that are centred on an activity (such as walking the INT) in the individual's life.

Among the motivations to embark on the hike, a total of 173 respondents specified spending time with family and friends, which constituted the most important motive mentioned. A total of 196 respondents indicated their agreement with the statement 'walking the INT provided me with a first-rate social experience,' with 75% characterizing their agreement with the statement as either 'strong' or 'very strong'. This is a reflection of effective communication, which is a major element of social worlds.

Sociability was also reflected in responses to open-ended questions pertaining to matters such as achievements, thoughts and reflections, as well as the self-learning process of the hike. The achievements specified were related to people, friends and family who occupied the thoughts of the hikers and were also important in the self-learning process.

The extreme centrality of hiking the INT was clearly reflected in some of the open-ended responses. One respondent described the hike as 'a must', and another said that he was hiking the trail with his grandson. 'We started when he was three years old (two years ago),' he explained, 'and we plan on finishing it on his Bar Mitzvah in 2021 (Male, 76). ' Perhaps most reflective of the perceived centrality of the INT to Israeli hikers was another respondent's characterization of hiking the INT as 'something every Israeli should do' (Male, 27). Other statements included: 'Hiking has shaped me and made me who I am.'/'It has caused me to make my various life decisions in the way that I have.'/'Hiking the INT was an experience I will remember my entire life, in all ways.'/'It was a spiritual experience, an experience of consciousness that also changed me.'/'It is an experience that builds you mentally and emotionally and teaches you that you have to persevere, even when the going gets tough…'/'It was the most meaningful experience I ever had.' The hiking mobility of the INT is anchored in the world of everyday life as lived and appreciated and interpreted by common-sense people.

The data collected on the Israeli hikers confirms that their hiking activity is often influenced by the hiker's social circle, which may include colleagues, family and friends, and which offer opportunities to interact, socialize and compete in an environment based on mutual interest (Shibutani, 1961; Unruh, 1983). In this way, a sense of camaraderie, belonging, identity, sociability and even communitas crystallize within the social world of hiking (McCarvill, 2007; Robinson et al., 2014).

Self-expression, the third indicator of involvement, was measured by a question that required respondents to engage in self-classification. In response to this question, approximately 50% of the 208 respondents classified themselves as 'hikers', 24.5% as 'trailists', 18.7% as 'backpackers', 3% as 'visitors' and 3.6% using other terms. These depictions must be considered in conjunction with the impressions generated by the self-learning process that were articulated by many of the hikers, who spoke of capability, devotion to a purpose, perseverance and will, love of hiking, love of the land and love of nature. However, the Israeli walkers did not use signs of membership and status such as badges, dress, flags or anthems (Getz & Patterson, 2013).

Commitment and loyalty to an activity can be postulated for hikers who responded to a question that probed barriers or constraints on the hike as follows: physical barriers (31.83%), lack of time (19.8%), mental barriers (8.98%), insufficient infrastructure (8.98%), health problems (8.23%), lack of information (5.23%), mental barriers (8.98%) and social

barriers (4.11%). This may be interpreted as consistent focused behaviour. Commitment involves some degree of affective attachment to the goals and values of the activity of hiking, is linked to sacrifices in the social world of the activity and is reflected in the attraction to an activity and the time and effort dedicated to it.

Commitment is also reflected in the high levels of satisfaction derived from hiking the INT, which stood at 95% among the study participants, and is succinctly summed up by one of the hikers, who said 'in my opinion, everyone in Israel should hike this trail at least once in a lifetime' (Male, 27), and that 'the only way to get to know your country is with your feet'. Perhaps the best expression of commitment, however, was articulated by the hikers who initially hiked the trail years ago and decided to return to the trail as tour guides: 'I promised myself [during my first hike] to come back, and here I am. I'm also bringing more people with me. I'm guiding the trail, just like I wanted to' (Male, 44). In this way, the commitment to the trail is primarily personal in nature and is expressed in many different ways – both mentally and physically – through different phases of life.

Israeli hikers showed high levels of commitment to the activity similar to the high levels of commitment demonstrated by serious sport participants in social worlds such as running and triathlon (McCarvill, 2007; Robinson et al., 2014; Shipway & Jones, 2007). This trend is also influenced by place making processes in Israel.

Place, place-making and sense of place in the social world of Israeli hikers

There are four basic interpretations of place: place as a lens through which to interpret experiences of the world; place as primarily a material attribute of the world; place as primarily a manner of attached or connection to the world and with others; and place as a socio-economic construct (Relph, 2017). Of the four interpretations, the first and the third are particularly well suited to Israeli notions of place. Place is a centre of meaning and a core field that forms the basis of human interaction (Cresswell, 2004, 2006) and a container of experiences (Casey, 1987).

As noted, sense of place offers the broadest and most all-encompassing conception of the symbolic relationship between people and sites. For Israeli hikers, place and sense of place are deeply rooted in Israeli nation building and the socialization of Israel's citizenry. Touring the country is one of the most important cultural practices of 'civil religion' in Israel, which can also be depicted as the nurturing of the politics of place. This article employs the conceptualization of the social world as a universe of symbolic interaction and discourse as an extremely helpful model for grasping the significance of hiking in Israel.

According to Farnum et al. (2005), the classification of attributes of sense of place that makes the most sense pragmatically and logistically is that of Williams and Patterson (1999), who suggests four main dimensions of place attachment: (1) scenic/aesthetic, (2) activity/goal-oriented, (3) cultural/symbolic and (4) individual/expressive.

The first dimension (the scenic/aesthetic) refers to the types of landscape features that are on site. It is reflected in 'nature, landscape and geography' as a motivation for hiking, which was supported by 13.1% of the respondents, in reflections such as 'how beautiful the land is,' 'the trail environment is dirty' and 'nature'. Among the most important elements of the INT, hikers listed the 'magnificent landscape' (18%). When

the respondents were free to openly express their feelings about walking on the trail they tended to involve emotions other than simply scenic-aesthetic appreciation, such as: 'What a beautiful land we have and how lucky I am to live here. What do I have to do so that my children will think like me?'/'The human aspect [of the trail] the people you meet are no less important and enjoyable than the nature and the landscape.' The performativity of walking is central in blurring the culture-nature dualism through thinking of people, plants, animals and places not as static but as active, dynamic, ongoing and fluid (Waitt et al., 2009).

The second dimension of sense of place, the activity/goal-oriented aspect of the concept, refers to the type of recreational, educational or physical tasks being performed at the site (Farnum et al., 2005; Williams & Patterson, 1999). This aspect was examined in our research by considering respondents' agreement or disagreement with the following statement: 'More than anything else, walking the INT was a physical, health-related and bodily achievement.' Out of 196 respondents, 75% expressed their agreement with the statement as either 'very high' or 'high'. With the statement 'walking the INT is very challenging and allows me to cope with myself and with difficulties on the road,' 76% of 199 respondents agreed to a 'very high' and 'high' extent. This dimension was also manifested in place dependence, as reflected in motivations such as physical and athletic motivation (10.7%), leisure motivation (9.12%), pleasure (13.07%) and even spiritual and mental motivation (7.4%). Place dependence was also reflected in respondents' reporting of achievements concerning physical and athletic activity, personal mental and physical achievement, satisfaction, happiness, pleasure and completion and enjoyment of the hike. The self-learning process also revealed components of place dependence such as 'devotion to purpose', 'perseverance and will', 'love of hiking' and 'walking with friends'. Kyle et al. (2004b) found that hikers' dependence on the Appalachian Trail stemmed from the social bonds and provisions of opportunities for social interactions.

The third dimension of sense of place and place-identity is the cultural-symbolic aspect.

The motivations and purposes for hiking the INT articulated by respondents reveal elements of place dependence and place identity (characterized by values, attitudes, beliefs, meanings and thoughts). Thus, in a question designed to ascertain the elements of the INT which respondents perceived as most important, place identity was reflected in responses that singled out an affinity to and love for the land (17.6%), history and archaeology (11.7%), interesting places (13.1%) and culture (2.7%). Elements of place identity were also specified in responses regarding what many of the hikers viewed as achievements of the hike, such as learning the land, getting to know places and landscapes and thoughts and reflections regarding 'love for the Land of Israel' that were contemplated by hikers during their hike. These findings stem from Israel's use of hiking to promote emotional affinity and affiliation to the country (Katz, 1985; Avishar, 2011; Katriel, 1995).

The strongest indication of place identity was reflected in hikers' agreement (on a Likert scale) with a number of statements. In response to the statement 'hiking the INT enables me to identify with and express my love for the Land of Israel,' 75% of 200 respondents expressed 'strong' and 'very strong' agreement. Similarly, 51% of 200 respondents expressed 'strong' and 'very strong' agreement with the statement 'hiking the INT allows me to express my ownership of and affinity for the Land.' Finally, 66% of

198 respondents agreed strongly with the statement: 'more than anything else, hiking the INT means experiencing and knowing the entire Land of Israel.' Perceived achievements of the hike also included elements of place identity such as learning the land, getting to know places and landscapes and 'love for the land of Israel'. Place identity is constituted by a combination of attitudes, values, thoughts, beliefs, meanings and behavioural tendencies that transcend emotional attachment and belonging to particular places (Kyle et al., 2004a, 2004b; Proshansky et al., 1983).

Finally, the individual/expressive fourth dimension of sense of place, which stems from the phenomenological experience with the land, was deeply embedded in hikers' responses and attitudes as reflected in expressions of involvement and commitment, such as: 'you leave the trail a better person,' 'the best experience of my life', 'a life changing experience', 'this trip is a must,' and 'each person should do it in a way that feels right for them.'

The social world and mobility of hiking and nation: discussion and conclusions

This study sought to answer three research questions: How has the conceptualizations of social world and mobility contributed to the research in different areas? What are the characteristics, features, processes and constructs of the social world of hiking the INT? What is the role of culture, sociability, place, and place identity in this specific social world? The foundations of the social world conceptualization in the anti-deterministic Chicago School of Symbolic Interactionism and in Schutz's social world construct, which refers to a world of interpretation and meaning, social organization, action and process, ultimately yielded a construct that serves as a 'model', a 'perspective', an 'approach', an 'orientation' and a 'form of interpretation'. It is within the dynamism and fluidity of this construct that we detect the peculiar nature of its adoption by scholars with a positivistic science orientation on the one hand, and by others who have employed it as a meaningful humanistic concept. This study, the literature survey on the social world construct and our own research of the hiking mobility of the INT point to the strength of the conceptualization of the social world, as well as to its contribution to the complex and fragmented experiences of everyday life in modern pluralistic society.

The most useful feature of the social world construct is its capacity to accommodate the totality of social organization and to encompass the entirety of a social phenomenon – particularly its dynamic processes, changes and transformations. It is therefore extremely useful in understanding and conceptualizing new social, cultural, geographical and political phenomena, such as in the world of cyber or in the criminal-deviant world, or any process requiring in-depth exploration that transcends causation and determinism. Although the social world conceptualization is a theoretical whole, it can easily accommodate concepts from other fields for the sake of analysis. The social world construct enables us to examine the diverse elements and processes (such as interactions, communication and discourses) associated with hiking and other social phenomena without having to establish the precise causal relationships among their constitutive parts.

The theories of mobility and movement, and specifically the new paradigm of mobility, are naturally linked to the social world construct. Social worlds give meaning to mobility through its social and cultural activities, communication, and symbolic

interaction. The final important element of application of the conceptualizations of social world and mobility to the context of hiking is its blurring of the culture-nature dualism and its ability to sew the phenomenon together into a continuous experience, as Solnit (2002) aptly notes.

Our second research question refers more specifically, to the characteristics, processes and constructs of the social world and the mobility of hiking the INT, and our major findings in this realm are as follows: Firstly, hiking the INT was found to be 'all about' mobility and movement. This is reflected in hikers' personal biographies and experiences vis-à-vis hiking the INT and other trails in Israel and elsewhere. It was measured by the mode of hiking, the attraction of hiking, and the level of satisfaction and derived from hiking. Hiking mobility was mostly planned and was primarily goal oriented, and is a social activity that is highly influenced by family and friends. Hiking mobility is central to the self-identity of hikers of the INT and is an activity to which hikers are highly committed. Moreover, one of the most important facets of mobility is its phenomenological expressive manifestations, as reflected in participant quotations such as 'it is much more than just another hike,' 'it left me flooded with emotions' and 'it is an opportunity to find parts of your soul you never knew existed before.' These and similar sentiments and experiences were articulated with high frequency.

Secondly, involvement in the social world of hiking is extremely high. The activity's strong attraction is evident in the study's participants who, in addition to the INT, hike elsewhere in Israel and abroad. Their attraction is to the activity of hiking in general and hiking in Israel in particular. The attraction of the INT is also reflected in the responses of participants who recommended the activity to others and who display ongoing involvement in their readiness to repeat their experience on the trail. Attraction also sheds light on hiking as a process, as hikers indicated that they had 'walked the INT in the past' and would 'most likely walk it in the future'. The findings regarding attraction also highlight a sense of place identification with the INT. Attraction to the INT manifested itself in emotions such as satisfaction, happiness and pleasure, which were expressed by one-third of the respondents.

The centrality of hiking the INT was measured by the resources and preparations that were devoted to planning the hike and to gathering information on the trail. Two important themes emerged with regard to the planning and information gathering processes: the amount of time that was allocated for it and the reliance on family, friends and other human sources of information. This finding is related to the high levels of sociability and 'communitas' that are an inseparable part of hiking both globally and locally. Hikers were motivated to hike the INT because of their wish to spend time with friends and family, and half of the respondents depicted their experience on the trail as 'a first rate social experience', confirming the social organization and voluntary membership aspects of the social world of hiking the INT. The organization of, training for and investment in acquiring skills and techniques are also indicative of the centrality of hiking the INT. The last component of involvement is self-expression, which was defined by hikers' self-representations as hikers/trialists, backpackers or visitors.

Third, commitment or loyalty to hiking the INT is high, as indicated by all dimensions of the concept of involvement. Israeli hikers tend to be extremely satisfied with their hikes on the INT, with side bets including investments in friends and family. The emotional investment of hikers and their success in overcoming physical, mental, social

and logistical barriers and constraints during the hike are also indicative of a great sense of commitment to the activity, as well as a strong element of place dependence.

The third research question related in detail, to the role of culture, place-making and place identity in the social world-mobility of hiking in the INT. Four dimensions of sense of place or place attachment were explored in this study. With regard to the first, the scenic-aesthetic dimension, nature, landscape and geography were mentioned by 13.1% of the respondents as a motivation to hike the INT and 18% of the respondents listed the magnificent landscape as one of the two most important elements of the INT. Expressive and meaningful comments by the respondents were indicative of a high level of admiration for the landscape and environment and of a perception of the INT as combining the facets of human activity, nature and landscape.

Our research examines the second dimension of sense of place, the concept's activity/goal-oriented aspects which address place dependence, by considering respondents' agreement or disagreement with the following statement: 'more than anything else, walking the INT was a physical, health-related and bodily achievement.' As high as 75% of the respondents highly agreed with this statement, and a similar proportion of the respondents highly agreed with a statement that depicts walking the INT as very challenging and allowing the hiker to cope with the difficulties of the road.

The third and fourth dimensions of sense of place and place attachment, the cultural symbolic aspect and the individual/expressive aspect stemming from the respondents' phenomenological experience with the Land of Israel are undoubtedly the most prominent aspects, and this is a finding that may perhaps be unique to Israeli hikers. Respondents expressed a love for the land, its history and archaeology, its culture and 'interesting places'. They agreed to statements expressing love for and identification with the Land of Israel and their emotions of affinity and ownership towards the land. Hikers also articulated their sense of place in their answers to open-ended questions, as reflected in respondents' explicit expression of 'love for the homeland' and 'love for the country', of 'how lucky' they feel to be living in Israel and of their desire to do whatever they can to ensure that their children feel similarly. Especially interesting were the open-ended interviews regarding these topics. One hiker explained that 'when you hike the INT, you feel the large, close family of the People of Israel giving you a hand and embracing you. It's a feeling of assurance and belonging that's difficult to find elsewhere.'

The emotions of the Israeli hikers are perceived as a world of interpretation of one's own experiences and the experiences of others, which is used to interpret both objective and subjective meanings and contexts of products. The 'meaningful world' (social world) is a world of social action and communicative relationship (Schutz, 1970). Hikers spoke largely about their identification with and love for the country and articulated the view that the INT connects Israelis to the land and the people and enables them to 'meet' the country in which they live from a new angle. Notable statements in this spirit included: 'You can actually feel the country as it is.'/'I felt that I'm in love with the country.'/'There is only one Israel, and not even 12 years of studying history, bible and Judaism can connect you to being Israeli as much as walking and hiking the land can... You get connected to the generous people, to the difficulties and to yourself.'/'It is a bonding experience, between a person and his/her country and his land – I feel like I've walked the land and that I therefore have the right to live here.' Perhaps most revealing

was the following admission by one hiker: 'We used to say that if someone wants to move out of the country, he should be advised to hike the trail – that will definitely change his mind.'

The hikers confirmed that hiking is a 'a cultural activity that is made distinctive and meaningful by the physical features and material textures of place' (Lorimer, 2010, p. 20) and that sense of place is 'reactionary' in nature as Massey () claimed.

Summary

The Israeli context of hiking cannot be understood without reference to the politics of place and the process of Zionist Nation-building in which affinity and affiliation to the land are maintained in order to sustain nationhood and in which hiking is fundamentally a continuous pilgrimage. For Israelis, the INT epitomizes the Land of Israel as a nation and as a place and arouses their geopiety to their homeland. The Israeli hikers confirmed that 'walking is a profoundly social activity and the walking environment is socially constructed' (Ingold & Vergunst, 2008, p. 1; Edensor, 2000) and that walking is a cultural act. We can thus suggest that hiking can be used as a lens through which to interpret the world and as a way of being attached to or connecting with the world as Relph (2017) interpreted place.

The social world and mobility conceptualizations have proven to be promising research tools, particularly when it comes to complex sociocultural and political processes in which the largely positivist existing theories fail to grasp the whole of a phenomenon within the life-world.

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