



Real Life Methods

Part of the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods

Walking interviews: more than walking and talking?

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Methods: Real Life Methods



Connected Lives

- Investigating networks, neighbourhoods and communities
- Inner city neighbourhood case-study: a putative geographical area with a socially, economically, and culturally diverse population
- **Walking interviews**, participatory social mapping and day-diaries used alongside quantitative and qualitative data

“Show us around your neighbourhood”



N=29 of which 2 are car journeys and 6 are with 'key-informants'

Shortest c. 15minutes; longest 5 hours

The significance of route

- The intimate geographies of location (e.g. places of belonging, places of avoidance)
- The importance of 'neighbourhood infrastructure' (e.g. shops, pubs, community centres etc.)
- The local geographies of social networks (e.g. friends houses, neighbours, acquaintances and familiar strangers)

The significance of place

- Places as relational
- Places as networked
 - The significance of getting lost
- Places as biographical
 - A stimulus for stories about lives in place

*M1: This place here [a café],
I've heard stories about it
AC: What sort of stories?
M1: Er, that it's basically a
drugs' haven*

*F1: I got married there
AC: Oh right
F1: And my mum had er, when it
were all houses, a boarding house
and my grandma had a boarding
house*

Places as practices

- The place of everyday practices
 - Embodied practices (e.g. walking through or appearing in place)
 - Social practices (e.g. bumping into friends)
 - Material practices (e.g. physical and institutional infrastructures)
- The place of extraordinary events
 - The significance of time, memory and geography

The place of extraordinary events



F2: [This] is where the riots actually started, well they actually started from t'middle o' road down here. So I don't know if you want to start from t'middle o'road. Are we going to go from where H- got its notorious name, do you want to go from here?

AC: Ok

F2: So like from [19]95 from the riots we kind of got labelled this bad area and things changed.

Some issues about method

- Weather matters
- Anonymity matters
 - Some participants are reluctant to be seen with a university researcher
- Participation matters
 - We seek to give participants the opportunity to control the research encounter, but some do not want this responsibility.

Conclusion

- Our experiences using this method suggest it can reveal how people interact materially, socially, and through embodied practices to create, maintain, and disassemble their networks, neighbourhoods, and communities.