Walking interviews: more than walking and talking?

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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. 15 minutes; 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 dissemble their networks, neighbourhoods, and communities.