We walk the walk, but can we talk the talk (with deference to John Lee Hooker): walkabouts to understand the lived environment of community

Nick Emmel and Andrew Clark

walkabouts

• Something we just do as part of our investigation of networks, neighbourhood, and community and a method that:
  • helps us to understand a place better
  • acts as a catalyst in our research
  • is used in conjunction with other methods
  • helps us gain deeper sociological insight
walking the field site: something we *just do*

complex places…
but *just doing* is not enough

- What are we doing?
- Why are we doing the walkabouts?
- How are we doing these walkabouts?
- What are we learning, not learning, …?

A critical reflection on our methodology.

another complex place: the field and the route

(Base image copyright Google earth 2006)
...one aspect of complexity is history

...supplementing questions I want to ask
starting to know things about the place

the multi-sensory experience

• There are places that are quiet.
• There are places full of hustle and bustle
• There are evocative smells
• There are places that are easy to walk through, and others where you have to look where you tread
• There are places that feel safe and others that feel unsafe
case study: the playground

walkabouts as one method in the research

- Field diaries
- Walking interviews
- Historical data collection
- Diary interviews
- Participatory social maps
- Quantitative data collection
- Key informant tours
- Key informant interviews
- walkabouts
conclusions

• More than something we *just do*
• A way of engaging with place
• A multi-sensory method
• Additive rather than discrete modes of data
• Contribute to a deeper sociological understanding of place

and so to John Lee Hooker

[Image of John Lee Hooker playing a guitar and sitting on a classic car]