



Real Life Methods

Part of the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods

Understanding community: mobile interviews and participatory mapping

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Connected Lives

A project exploring networks, neighbourhoods, and Communities through participatory methods

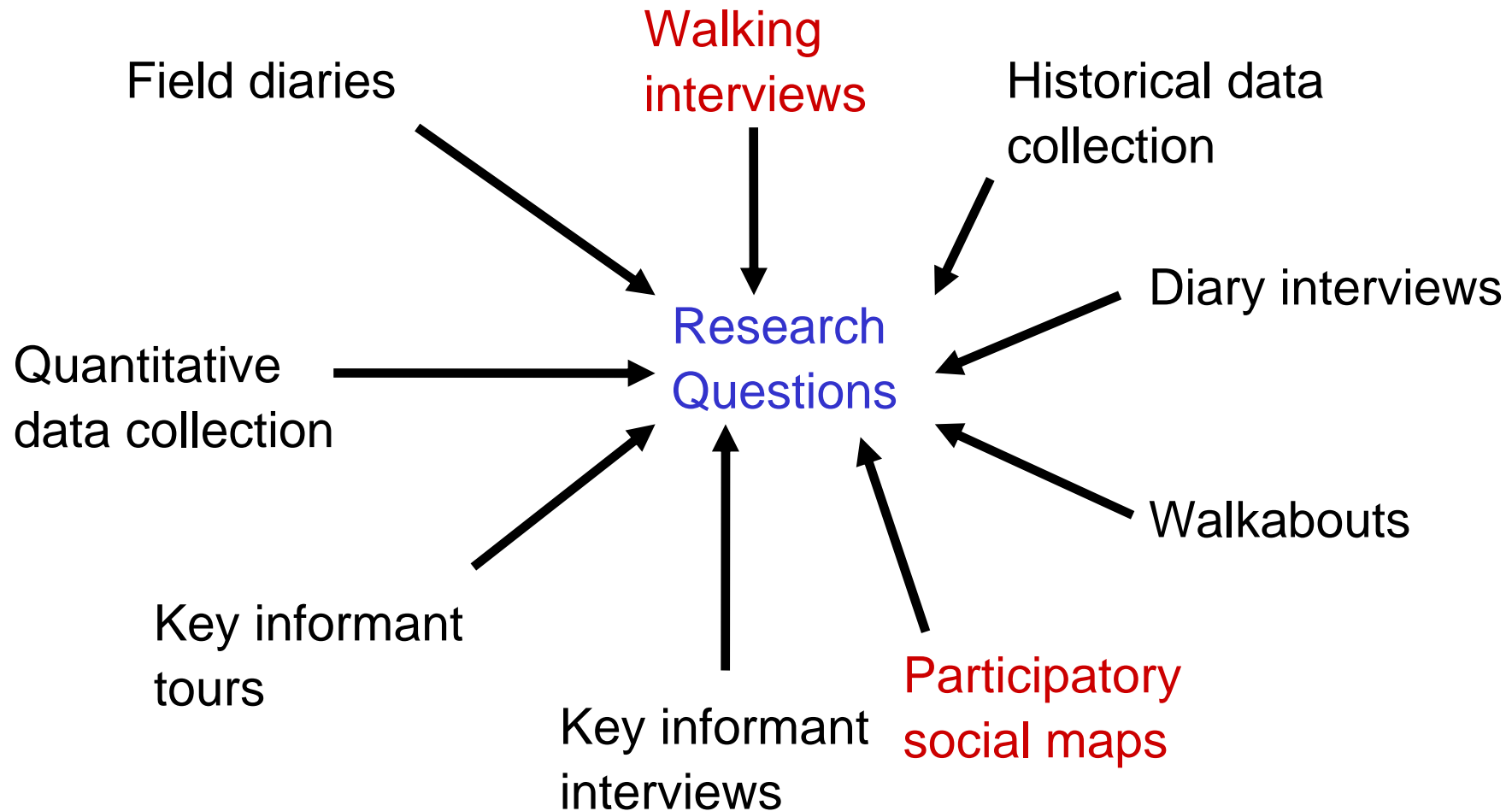
- How do people perceive networks, neighbourhoods, and communities?
- How are networks, neighbourhoods, and communities formed in different contexts?
- What methods are appropriate for understanding networks, neighbourhoods, and communities?
- How can different methods be combined to create 'fuller' accounts of networks, neighbourhoods, and communities?

Methodological approach

- Qualitatively driven, mixed method approach
- Qualitative: visual, narrative
- Participatory approach
- Inner city neighbourhood case-study with a socially, economically, and culturally diverse population
 - 44.4% aged 20-29
 - 24.66% BME groups
 - 33.8% Households in receipt of State benefits
 - c. 58.6% of total population in full-time education



Qualitatively driven, mixed-method research



Participatory social maps

Aim: To explore the perceived networks, neighbourhoods, and community

Part of a participatory social science

- Enable participants to categorise their relationships and contact with others
- Enable participants to describe and represent the relationship between categories and narrate how they make and do their networks
- Encourages the beyond-the-everyday into knowledge and practice because the mapping is emergent and iterative

Role of the social scientist

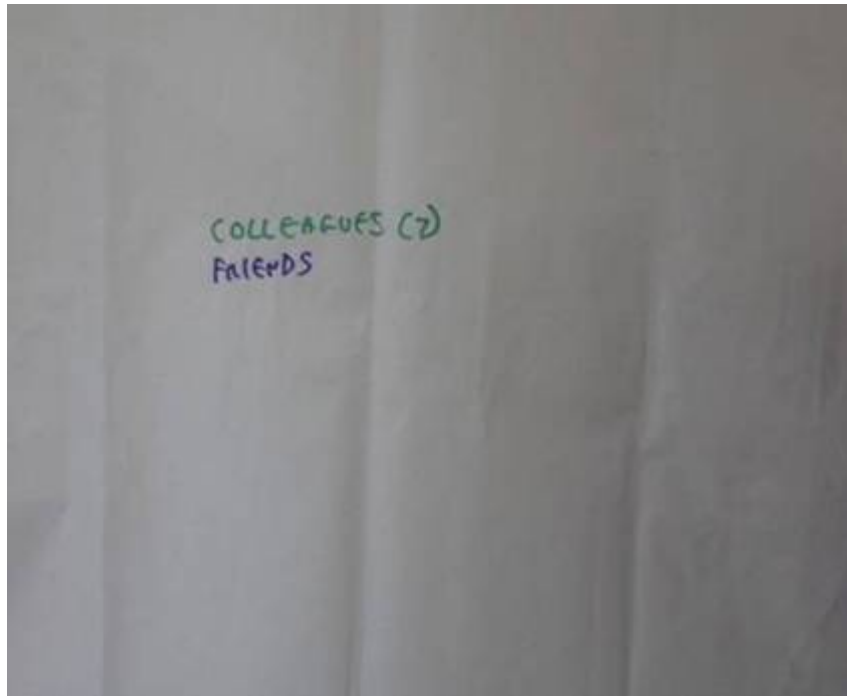
- Facilitate (or be available for) interaction with participant to ensure understanding of the exercise and encourage dialogue
- Recognise the everyday for its significance and value

“Tell me about the people you know”



‘Ego-centricity’

“Tell me about the people you know”

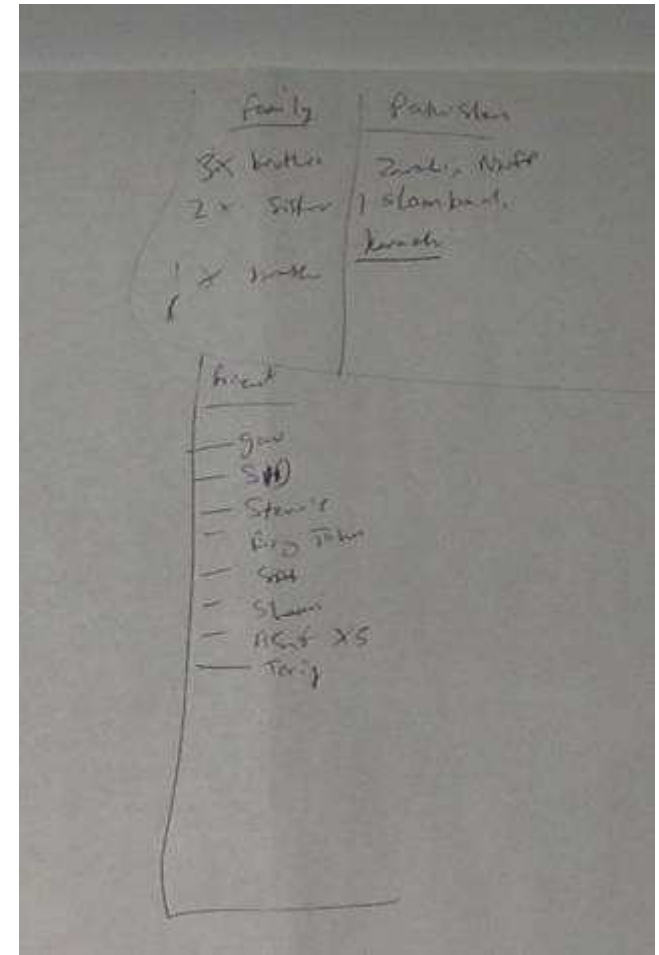


Working within a participatory framework

“Tell me about the people you know”

The value of talk

“Family has a lot of shades... it has all the colours and every colour's in different shades and understanding the family is - I don't know, it's only - I think the oldest in the family will only understand that properly. If you're say second in line or second brother or third brother or fourth brother they see things in a different light. But you have to go through the ranks, you have to go through the ranks.”

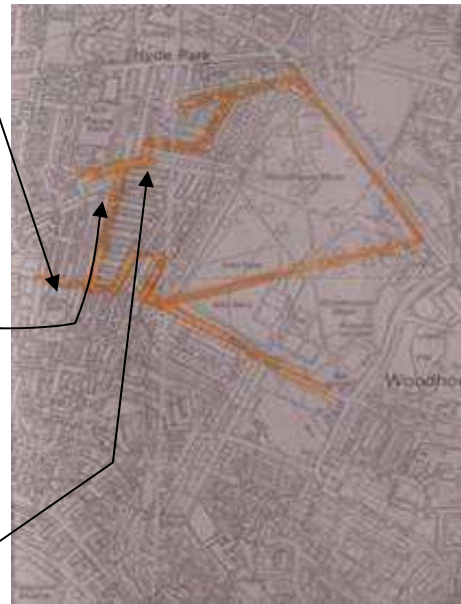


Walking interviews

Aim: To understand the spatiality of networks, neighbourhood and community

- Participants plan the walk (e.g. participants sense they are 'local experts')
- Reveals the importance of place in participants' biographies of everyday life (e.g. being seen in the company of the researcher may compromise confidentiality)
- Reveals how places are made through everyday practices, in part influenced by memories, previous activities, and wider discourses about neighbourhood spaces
- Demonstrates the degree to which the biographical, temporal, and day-to-day connected lives of participants is bound in place

“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



“Show us around your neighbourhood”

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)

“Show us around your neighbourhood”

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*

“Show us around your neighbourhood”

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

“Show us around your neighbourhood”

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.

Summary

- Our research is attempting to think about the social and the spatial in configuration of networks and communities.
- **Participatory maps** - go beyond explanation and elaboration to enable participants to not only describe but also represent and reflect on their categories and relationships.
- **Walking interviews** - reveal how people interact materially, socially, and through embodied practices to create, maintain, and disassemble their networks, neighbourhoods, and communities.