

SAGE Research Methods Cases

Sociology Submission for Consideration

Case Title

An overview of a mobile focus group method for investigating space and place

Author Name(s)

Andrew Clark

Author Affiliation & Country of Affiliation

School of Nursing, Midwifery, Social Work and Social Sciences, University of Salford, UK

Lead Author Email Address

a.clark@salford.ac.uk

Discipline: D3 [please do not alter]

Sub-discipline

Environmental, Urban, Regional Sociology[SD-Soc-5]

Academic Level

Postgraduate

Contributor Biographies

Andrew Clark is Reader in Sociology at the University of Salford. His research focuses on applied but theoretically informed issues relating to social and spatial inequalities. Recently funded research has investigated experiences of domestic fire; perceptions of urban regeneration; and the

neighbourhood experiences of people living with dementia. The latter is currently the focus of a five year ESRC-NIHR funded project.

Published Articles

[insert an APA-style reference for any publications resulting from this research]

Clark, A. (2017). Walking together: Understanding young people's experiences of living in neighbourhoods in transition. In Bates, C. and Rhys-Taylor, A. (Eds.) *Walking Through Social Research*. London: Routledge

Abstract

This case study outlines the development and implementation of a mobile-focus group technique. Ostensibly, this is a blending of various aspects of conventional focus group and mobile interview methods. The case study was developed as one of a suite of methods used to evaluate a series of national-level interventions to promote the active inclusion and participation of young people in the quasi-formal development, and day-to-day activities in, a variety of deprived, predominantly urban, neighbourhoods in the UK. The method involved a group of young people leading researchers (and evaluators) on a guided tour of their neighbourhood. From the outset, the aim is to place participants in charge of where to go, and where not to go, and what to reveal and (perhaps) what to keep hidden. So, the young people adopt the role of local tour guides or experts, 'showing' their neighbourhood to an 'interested stranger'. The case study outlines the rationale for developing the approach, presents a step-by-step account of how the approach was deployed, and details of practical considerations and challenges researchers may face when using the approach. The case study concludes by considering how the mobile and interactional dimensions of the method might recreate authentic ways in which local places are produced and experienced.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this case students should be able to:-

1. Understand the mobile focus group method and its roots in both focus group and mobile methodologies;
2. Identify ways in which the method can be used to investigate the experiences and relationships individuals and groups have towards places and environments;
3. Evaluate the epistemological, ethical and practical benefits and challenges of using a mobile focus group approach.

Case Study

Introduction: Mobile focus groups as new method?

The mobile focus group technique outlined here blends aspects of conventional focus groups and mobile interviews. It was developed as part of a suite of methods for evaluating a series of national-level interventions to promote the active inclusion and participation of young people in the development of, and day-to-day activities within, a variety of deprived, predominantly urban, neighbourhoods in the UK. At a basic level, the method involved groups of young people leading researchers on a walking tour of their neighbourhoods.

The method was intended to place participants in charge of where to go, and where not to go, and what to reveal and what to keep hidden about their lives and where they live. So, participants adopted the role of local tour guides or experts, revealing their neighbourhood to an 'interested stranger'. This could include showing areas that are fun, important, or memorable, places that are kept 'secret' from others (particularly adults), or places that are unpleasant, 'scary' or avoided. Participants discussed the importance and meaning of different places, prompted, where necessary, by the interested stranger.

The method proved most effective when conducted by a small group of young people who know each other and was most useful for gathering perceptions of the neighbourhood; identifying which type of places are important to young people and how they fit into their lives; gathering a sense of whether and how parts of the area are owned or identified with; exploring how the geography of a neighbourhood relates to the people and their relationships within it; and revealing how places have changed over time.

As a blending of conventional focus group and increasingly common mobile interview methods, the approach draws attention to the ways in which person-environment interactions develop and unfold while on the move. This case study details the rationale for developing the method, outlines some practical considerations for those interested in adopting the approach, and details some of the challenges and potential pitfalls. The final part of the case study considers how the approach affords insight into how social life unfolds through interactions while moving through space.

Some context: The rationale for developing a mobile focus group method

In recent years, there has been notably growth in the use of various mobile methods to understand the geographically situated, lived experiences of life for different groups of people (Capriano, 2009; Evans and Jones, 2011). Importantly, given the context in which I developed the approach, this includes young people (Hall et al., 2009). Walking interviews can take a number of forms but all attempt to recreate the interview method while on the move, be it by foot or vehicle. In doing so, it is suggested that they can access the 'small details' of life in ways that are more authentic or that better resonate with participants (Pink, 2008). There are several reasons why a walking interview might be chosen over a static, room-based, interview. These include:

- Offering participants a greater degree of control over the research process, deciding where to take the researcher for example.
- The participant gets to show rather than describe the environments that the researcher is interested in, or which make up the spaces that are significant to the participant.
- Placing events, stories and experiences in their 'actual' spatial context can help participants to articulate their thoughts.
- The participant's narratives told in their lived environment can add greater understanding and more detailed insight.

- The environment and locations walked through can be used in an elicitation process to prompt more discussion or encourage further questioning that may not occur in room-based settings.
- Providing opportunities for the serendipitous and the unanticipated to arise

As the title implies, mobility is just one part of the mobile focus group methods. Focus groups have the potential to obtain a variety of opinions within a relatively short space of time and provide insight into how groups of individuals come to make collective sense of phenomena (Caretta and Vacchelli, 2015; Kitzinger, 1994). Like other group-based methods, it may appear a cost-efficient way of gathering a range of insights a number of different individuals. So, asking individuals to engage in a focus group on the move ought to offer a blending of the benefits of both walking, and group-based methods.

What did I want to find out?

The mobile focus group method formed part of a mixed-method approach to a national-scale evaluation of an initiative by a leading English charity designed to promote inclusive activities, primarily targeted at young people living in urban localities that were undergoing economic, social and physical regeneration and redevelopment. Driving the evaluation strategy was a desire to better understand young people's place in the activities and organisation of neighbourhood life including issues around the formation of belonging and territoriality, safety and risk, social interaction, and youth identities. Drawing on the main premises of mobile methods detailed in the previous section, the approach encouraged participants to produce a 'narrative' of their neighbourhood in the form of a guided tour, photographs, and associated commentary. The technique revealed information about the relative importance of family and friends in a locality; identify how identities are created through local places; perceptions of a locality; and help us understand how places that are important, not important, contested, or relevant to young people in some other way.

Some of the findings to emerge from the study are described elsewhere (Clark, 2017). Where we walked and what was discussed, and just as importantly what was peripatetically and verbally avoided revealed insight into how different individuals and group construct different micro-geographies of the neighbourhood in ways. Important here was the opportunity to 'hang around' with friends and acquaintances from the local area, often revealing a complex geography to these

interactions and the walks and discussions revealed relatively familiar places of comfort and security as well as those to be avoided:

Participant: I hate the people who hang out here. Loads of people smoke who are about age.... I was walking around [park] and they chased me out and they stole [the] chain on my bike.

Researcher: Is it scary round here?

Participant 1: You wouldn't say scary.

Participant 2: Not any more.

Participant 1: It used to be like, cos when you were little you used to see lots of drunk people around.

Participant 3: For me it's just scary cos there's just lots of adults round that's all.... like there's loads of teenagers that mess about here. They play with fire works

Participant 1: You shouldn't be scared of them, you should just ignore them.

Participant 3: I don't like how they cat, because they can be drunk at times. And like they can talk to you and like say stuff to you. Like nasty stuff.

They also hinted at the seasonal and diurnal rhythms of these practices, explaining how their interactions in neighbourhood spaces were dependent on the day of the week, seasonal weather, or whether or not schools were open:

Researcher: So what sort of things do you do when you live round here then?

Participant 1: Come to the shops, hang around with...

Participant 2: Sit on this wall and talk...

Participant 1: ...[continuing] go to a mates house.

Participant 3: Play football.

Participant 1: We play football on Fridays [after school].

Participant 2: In the summer holidays, when there's nothing to do, and you're staying at home, there's a [youth]club.

Researcher: So do you hang out with each other outside of the youth group?

Participant: Yeah. Because we go the same school most of us come and play out. But because it's now getting colder then not a lot of us come out because it's getting colder, but in the summer we come here [to a park].

Participants recalled how they engaged in the social life of the neighbourhoods, offered partial histories of what had changed and remained the same, and provided insight into the intricate geographies of belonging and not belonging that were tied to time as well as space. They also narrated tales of local notoriety, gossip, and hearsay about different parts of the neighbourhood or groups within it. For instance, on one walk the group became animated telling me, and each other, of an incident that took place in a park that contributed to (and proved) the 'tough' reputation of their neighbourhood:

Participant: This is a rough estate. There's a lot of violence. And there was something like an attempted murder a few years ago, and if you go straight down there, there was a murder there last year I think. An old man got murdered.

So, the mobile focus groups begin to unearth something of how young people's environments emerged not just along lines of physical territoriality, but also through the sharing and rejection of stories, histories, interactions and experiences. In this way the approach offers insight into how young people construct neighbourhoods through the assemblage of interactions between their peer group, other individuals and social groups, and the rhythms of daily life.

Planning a mobile focus group

Although the method was developed in the context of a wider, somewhat applied, evaluation context, it can be adapted to projects that aim to understand the role of space and place in all sorts of circumstances and contexts. This can include outdoor and indoor environments such as shopping malls, leisure centres or parkland, as well as different organizational settings such as hospitals, schools and offices. Regardless of context, the points detailed below may offer useful starting points from which to develop and implement the approach.

- 1. Remain focused on your research aims, questions and intentions.**

The walking focus group can provide detailed understanding, from multiple individual as well as collective perspectives, about experiences and activities in their geographical context. The walks are an opportunity for participants to come together to not just share stories and hear other people's accounts. As I have discussed elsewhere (Clark, 2017: p96), this means that the method can lead to re-evaluated or even fresh accounts being created through the group dynamics. Here for instance, three participants assess their perceptions of safety which results in Participant 1 clarifying his views:

Researcher: And what's [this place] like?

Participant 1: It's alright

Participant 2: I think it's a dump.

Participant 3: You do get people with knives and stuff and you do get fights. And drugs.

Participant 2: It's a dump. Everyone says it's a dump

Participant 3: You do get gangs and stuff and people hanging around

Participant 1: It's alright but after about nine o'clock you have to stay off the streets.

If information is required outside of an immediate environment, an alternative method might be needed to compliment the tours and walks. While it is important not to be overly prescriptive to participants (for example by instructing them on where to go or what to show the interviewer), I told participants that I were interested in finding out about their neighbourhood, though without imposing a definition of neighbourhood making reference to any specific geographical boundaries. Participants could take me to any places they thought appropriate, take as long as they wanted on the walk, and take whatever route they wished. I distributed disposable cameras and asked participants to take photographs during the walk. As a result, the technique produces a 'neighbourhood commentary' consisting of participants' narratives of their lives in and beyond the neighbourhood, answers to questions provoked by the narrative, as well discussion of the history and daily practices that take place within particular spaces considered important by the participants. The data produced from each walk thus comprised an audio recording of the walking interview and, sometimes, a photographic record produced by the participant that can subsequently be analysed by the researcher.

2. Strike a balance between putting participants in control and where you go and the topics discussed

Placing people in charge of the walks; determining where to go and what to discuss may offer a clear demonstration that they are positioned as the experts in the research process. Central to the rationale driving the technique was the drive to put participants in control. It is important to approach the young people as 'local experts', free to choose what aspects of their neighbourhood (and their lives within it) they revealed to me. Not all participants may embrace this expert-identity: some may feel self-conscious showing a researcher around where they live, or would rather talk in a private space or away from a group setting. Walking interviews with groups will produce different kinds of interactions in the data to the walks with lone participants, but the group dynamics, and decisions about where to go and the different meanings and practices associated with the places passed through will add to the richness of the data. Since each walk is tailored to a particular group they will vary in duration and distance travelled. I found that 1 ½ hours is the very longest most participants were able to complete the task in comfort and while maintaining interest, though kept most walks to no more than one-hour to allow for some pre- and post-walk briefing time. Experience suggests that there is no relationship between the length of a walk and the richness of insight. After a while, longer walks tended to be reduced to a series of 'list-like' places that resembled stopping-off points on a whistle-stop tour which some participants lost interest in, whereas shorter walks tended to remain focused on revealing detailed insight and engaged more participants for longer.

3. Prepare participants for what will happen

Prior to the walk: Prior to the walk, arrange to meet at a convenient time and location. Walks done in the dark were less successful than those completed in daylight. I discussed the technique in advance with participants, explaining the rationale and what was expected of them. I asked that they show me around where they lived, as a group. But that what they showed me or talked about was up to them. As the walk progressed, I asked questions about the places passing through, their significance to participants.

On meeting participants: I obtained participants' informed consent to proceed and addressed issues of anonymity, confidentiality and personal and group safety were stressed. I obtained consent to audio-record the interview. I outlined how the walks and discussions would unfold, telling groups that they could undertake the walk in whatever ways they preferred; and explained purpose of the wider research (in this case, that I was undertaking an evaluation of a specific programme, their views on participating in the programme, and what impact they thought it may or may not have had on the local environment). I also explained that I was interested in where they

live; what they think about it, how it has changed and asked what could be done to improve it. I suggested that the walk lasts no more than 1 hour but that if the walks finish sooner than this that they should not worry. Participants could any questions before we began and reminded them that could also ask questions as we went along.

4. Starting the walk:

At the start of the walk I reconfirmed what would happening based on the following script:

“The aim of this activity is to try to understand the neighbourhood(s) you know. We would like you to walk us around your neighbourhood and tell us about the place. We can go where ever would like to show us, and take whatever route you think appropriate. The only limitations are that we can only go on foot, we all have to go together, and we cannot walk for longer than one hour. As we go around, you can take photographs if you like. As we walk around I might ask you some questions about where we are, what you think about different places, whether you like or dislike them, and why they are important, or not important, to you”.

Initiating discussion can be difficult if participants feel nervous or shy, though beginning by walking (rather than talking) can be a useful way of beginning the activity. A helpful way to start discussion is to ask participants about the place where you are starting from: ‘what is the place?’, ‘what is its history?’, ‘do the participants come to the place often?’ etc. Below for example is the opening 20 second recording from one walk:

Researcher: So, where are we?

Participant: We are in [name of place].

Researcher: And what is it like?

Participant: It’s ok.

Researcher: Right.

Participant: Its ok in certain areas but it’s not ok in areas that you don’t want to go to.

Researcher: And is the bit where we are standing an ok bit?

Participant: It depends. It has the community centre, which is a friendly place. If you are bored you can just come in here....

Immediately here the participant raises a set of ideas that can be followed up such as appraisal of what might be an 'ok' and a 'not ok' place, about why there are some places she does and does not want to go to, the sorts of people and activities continue friendliness, about where else she might go when she is bored ,and so forth. Then, as the walks progressed, I asked the groups to "tell me about" the places we passed. At points it may be useful to stop, look and talk for a while. You should aim to be specific about whatever phenomena you are passing, as well as encouraging talk about the neighbourhood more generally. Other questions to prompt conversations include:

- What memories do you have of this place?
- When might you come here? When might you not come here?
- Do other people come here?
- What do you do / not do here?
- Where would you not go?
- Where might you meet people you know?
- Do you use any of the [services: schools, shops, youth groups etc.] in the area?
- Do any of your friends/realities live in the area? Where do you go with your friends?
- What do you like and not like about the area? Where are your favourite places?
- Where are your least favourite places?
- Has this place changed?
- Has anything stayed the same round here?

5. Ending the walk:

As the end of the walk I asked the groups for feedback on the method and reiterated issues of consent and issue of confidentiality. I asked groups for their thoughts about what we had done, where we had walked and what we discussed. I asked if there was anywhere we couldn't go or that they had rather not shown me or talked about.

Some Practical considerations:

Maintain a focus on the aim of the aims of your research or your research questions: The technique is designed to be open ended and participative and it is impossible to provide a list of exhaustive questions at the start. But it is important that the technique meets the aims of the evaluation, and questions should return to a grounding in the lives of participants.

Pay attention to silence: Unlike conventional interviews (which often seem to suffer from an interviewer's belief that the whole time must be filled with talk), I have found that silence can be beneficial in this technique, encouraging reflection and further thoughtful commentary. In part, quiet periods will emerge 'naturally' as you walk along. It is important not to create anxiety among participants by encouraging them to feel the need to talk 'non-stop' in order to fill any gaps in discussion.

Equipment and recording: Recording a mobile focus group is a complex, and at times not always successful endeavor. The dynamics of walking in a group outdoors inevitably means that not all discussion might be recorded. I used a digital voice recorder, and on occasions, a second recording either as back-up or to capture additional conversations taking place away from the main group. A good quality small microphone is essential, but even with this equipment be prepared to accept that not all discussion will be recorded because of traffic noise, wind, the voices of passers-by and other sounds, not to mention some participants wandering away from the main group. I used a 'bulb'-style microphone (connected to the recorder with a lead) and held the microphone to the participant. In a group situation, it will be difficult to record all participants. As always, it is vital that notes are made at the end of the interactions, and having a second researcher present, perhaps to manage a second recording device or take notes. My aim was not to produce an exact account of the neighbourhood but rather to collect an interpretation or narrative that will provide detailed, nuanced understanding of young peoples' lives. At the end of each walking interview try to record the route taken, however crudely (I sometimes just use a highlighter pen on a photocopy of a street map). After transcription, I 're-write' the route of the interview onto the transcript, annotating features in the environment being discussed, the approximate location of the route, and the point at which photographs are taken during the interview. It is important not to underestimate the time taken or the potential difficulties of re-inserting this information. For the ease of simplicity, I didn't plot the routes using route-tracking technology such as geographical positioning systems (GPS) or GIS software (for example an example see Evans and Jones, 2011), but developments in technology mean that is a range of applications available for download or come already installed on mobile devices which are relatively straightforward to use.

Producing visual material: The walks I completed were audio and visually recorded, the later via use of a collection of disposable cameras were shared among members of the group with the suggestion that individuals also photograph aspects of their neighbourhood. The use of cameras served three

purposes. First, the images provide a visual record of the walks that can be used to document the locations and sites of interest that were passed or discussed. Provided an accompanying verbal commentary exists to help make sense of them, the images can then be approached as data to be understood in a wider analysis strategy. Second, the process of producing images provides a way for participants to structure the group. Asking groups to produce photographs while walking can help inform, and structure, both the route and the narrative as participants discuss where and what to photograph. Finally, producing visual materials provides something for participants to do if they are not actively participating in direct discussions. The walking focus groups I undertook did not operate as whole group discussions all the time. Rather, individuals drifted in and out of discussion, broke away to form smaller groups, or even left momentarily left the group for some time to walk alone. So, the walks proceeded as a sort of street ballet – with the group coming together and fading away into smaller groups, all moving in the same direction with the researcher acting as a sort of choreographer. Taking photographs thus provided an additional activity for these temporary breakaway groups and individuals to do while the main discussions proceeded. Of course, it is also possible to record moving images of the walk using a hand held film- or video-camera or perhaps mobile phone. There is not space here to discuss the merits of filming (for an example see Pink, 2009) but do not assume that this will somehow be able to accurately capture what happened. Like other visual methods, filming will produce partial representations of events. If you do choose to record the walks with video you should think about who will do the recording (the researcher or a participant), how the recording is made (for example, where should the camera lens be directed), and what might be focused in on with the use of a zoom lens.

Some challenges of which to be aware:

While the approach may draw on the advantages of both mobile and group-based methods, it is not without its challenges.

Analysis: A narrative structured by environment, interspersed by questions drawn from themes that the researcher is hoping to cover makes for a more complex approach to analysis. A framework needs to be developed early, but remain flexible given the walks can often be so diverse. Analysis should take account of the substance of what is being spoken about, as well as the way in which discussion is driven by the nature of the interaction between group members. The approach gives rise to a potentially unique situation in so far as, rather than operating as one group discussion, the walks may operate as a series of smaller or subgroups that would drop into and out of conversation

as we moved. As one of these subgroups held the conversation with me, others would be talking to the second researcher, taking photographs, or deciding where next to direct the walk. This certainly creates difficulties for creating and recording a linear or chronologically coherent 'narrative' that lasts the duration of the walk, and means that not all young people participated in all of the discussions. This process of 'groups walking in groups' opened up moments when participants to offer alternative interpretations and experiences away from the (potentially) charged atmosphere of direct confrontation. One of the key benefits of the approach is this opportunities afforded for group members to break away from the main group to reflect on and discuss issues more privately, for example in a smaller group or directly with the researcher, but an analytical strategy capable of recognising and understanding these different interactions is required.

Ethics: not knowing where you will be walking in advance; the timing of the methods (at night, or in poor weather), managing group dynamics, and ensuring everyone keeps up with each other makes for a wary researcher. At times it will be important to take control, for example by dissuading groups from heading for particular places, stopping a conversation that was becoming uncomfortable (though this is no different other methods). In my case, conducting the walks with a second researcher was helpful as a way of having someone else help record different discussions, record the routes, and ensure all participants stayed, more or less, with the main body of the group. At times groups may break off to discuss particular issues in ways that some may find uncomfortable. Setting some ground rules at the start of the walk is essential.

Power-dynamics: The use of existing groups did not eliminate power-relations between young people. Their own personalities and relationships remained evident. Those who were more vocal and/or confident remain so; and the routes selected and followed, as well as the stories told, were in part the outcomes of how participants mediated their relationships with each other as much as through place. In my research some groups moved through places where some members felt less at ease of familiar than others. In such instances, it was important that participants experiencing discomfort were reassured and particularly charged or sensitive discussions needed to be facilitated closely.

Be cautious of local-centric accounts: The accounts produced by the approach are restricted in scale and scope of where and how far it is possible to walk. As such, they could be overly-localised in content and outlook, potentially romanticizing accounts of social life lived in, or restrict insight to, particular domains. Of course, all research methods produce partial insight, but the result could be

overly- narrow, or even environmentally deterministic unless discussions are able to reach beyond the boundaries of the immediate location. For instance, the method may neglect relationships and interactions made or mediated online or in school or work environments. The importance of experiences gained or informed by events and visits elsewhere, or in places that require transport to access may also be downplayed or not discussed at all.

Unless explored explicitly, the method is limited in the ways in which underlying structural conditions and processes, that may not originate in the places you walk through, nonetheless create and perpetuate particular experiences and accounts. Here for example, a participant who was approaching his 18th birthday discussed the difficulties of finding work or further training:

Researcher: What kinds of things do your friends do?

Participant: [Play] football.

Researcher: Are they working or at college or anything?

Participant: No. Well, some of them are at college and some of them are like me, looking for work.

Researcher: Is it easy to find work?

Participant: No... I mean, I had an interview about a month or so ago and they said, 'I'll get back to you' and they never did. I [telephoned] and they said, 'I'll put you on the reserves list and I'll phone you when I need you'. I've been to a few interviews and they've said the same thing.

Researcher: What kind of job was that?

Participant: In a warehouse.

It is important to understand everyday life in these neighbourhoods in their wider economic context. They were places with high rates of unemployment, unsecure jobs, and low wages. As participants discussed their futures, many were acutely aware that they may find it difficult to find employment, while others discussed the lack of options open to them once they left school. In the example above, the causes of this individual's difficulties finding employment may lie in a complex interplay of the globalisation of manufacturing, de-industrialisation, the rise of low-skilled, casual and/or zero-hours jobs, as well as regional and national restructuring of employment markets. Understanding the causes, and more importantly in my case, the impacts, of all this requires a much broader analysis than can be afforded from a focus on locally constructed narratives of place.

Final thoughts: Mobile focus groups as more than the sum of two parts?

It is naïve to assume that the mobile focus group is simply a fusion of its two constituent methods. Rather, it should be seen as a distinct method with its own benefits and challenges, and, crucially, is capable of producing data in particular methodological circumstances.

In many respects, the mobile focus group resembles a 'guided tour' but with a clear, and important, difference. In a guided tour, the guide is an expert on a particular locality, phenomena, organisation and events, practices and people associated with it. Usually, the tour audience listen to the expert, and while free to ask questions, rarely do so to any great degree. In a mobile focus group, while the participants (the guides) remain the experts, the researcher (audience), remains focused on the research aims and questions. It is essential that the researcher is clear about his or her project and what information he or she requires to successfully complete it. Conducting the walks in a group enables a range of individual and collective experiences, attitudes and reflections to emerge in a similar way to they might in a static or room-based focus group.

However, the technique goes beyond this to reflect, perhaps more accurately than solo-walks with one-participant or static focus groups, something of the ways in which young people experience local places. Here, the method draws on the benefits of emplaced methods (Anderson and Jones, 2009; Ellwood and Martin, 2000), of calling upon the serendipity of causal encounters with people and places or objects in the environment, conjuring up memories and offering insight into how places are embodied, understood and experienced, through movement and in response to sensorial interactions with weather, light, and topography.

Finally, paying attention to the mobile interactions, the technique can offer glimpses into how places are produced through fluid interactions. For those young people participating in my research, the method can offer an authentic account of life on the move. When not in school or at home, the public and pseudo-public spaces afforded by local sites provide important sites of interaction and belonging. In paying attention to how young people move around places in groups, the recreates something of the experiencing of moving through, discussing, and experiencing place, in much the same way they would in contexts away from research. This does not mean that the approach is somehow capable of replicating realities. Rather, it provides insight into the peripatetic interactions between individuals, their peers and others whom they encounter when out and about, as well as some of the ways in which stories about places, people and history, are created, debated and recast.

Exercises and Discussion Questions

1. What research questions might the mobile focus group approach answer? Do these only have to be about 'place' or the environment?
2. What benefits might the mobile focus group method offer beyond static or room-based interviews with a single participant?
3. In what ways, and how effectively, might a mobile focus group address and resolve the problems of 1) mobile interviews (typically conducted between one researcher and one participant) and 2) static or room-based focus groups?
4. What challenges might a mobile focus group present to a researcher and how could these be addressed?

Further Readings

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Web Resources

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