Participatory Biographies: Walking, Sensing, Belonging

British Library
8th June 2015
Creative Research Methods in the Social Sciences
Transformative Research Frameworks (Bronte Room)
2.25-3.45
Maggie O’Neill [Durham University]
In this talk I will…

1. Discuss the Transformative role and power of art and walking as a biographical method / developments in biographical /narrative sociology

2. Share an example-research that undertakes a critical recovery of women’s biographies of belonging, well-being and community in Teesside.

3. Share a film that offers multi-sensory, dialogic and visual routes to “understanding” as performative praxis.

4. Impact, Issues and Challenges?
Why participatory, arts based and biographical methods?

- A commitment to: PAR and PA – inclusion, participation, valuing all voices, action oriented/interpretive interventions.
- We lead ‘storied lives’ (Phoenix; Roberts, Riessman…)
- Transformative - Ethno-mimesis (O’Neill/Cantwell)
Walking as arts based method

• Explore the importance of being-in-place among trans national group - dialogue, biographical remembering, *relational, embodied engagement* – a collective *story-collaborative knowledge production* – *empathic witnessing*.
Women’s Lives, well-being and community

• Small project – follow on from regional research *Race, Crime and Justice*

• 10 women from different countries – as/undocumented or refused

• In partnership with the Regional Refugee Forum and a women’s group -- ways of seeing women’s lived experiences, well-being and sense of community in the context of their lives in the North East. *Walking/Stories*
Research Project Aims

a) conduct a critical recovery of women’s lives, journeys and histories;
b) use storytelling and visual/photographic and walking methods to help make visible women’s lives, experiences, issues and what community means;
c) exhibit the work, producing exhibition, short film, a collaborative report –

https://www.dur.ac.uk/research/directory/view/?mode=project&id=503
What we did

• Phase 1. workshop – share stories – *Draw a map from a place called home to a special place in Teesside.*

• Phase 2 – collective walks/storytelling – photographs/film/sound recording [Myers/Ingold].

• Phase 3 – workshops / narratives/ share images, stories and explore video footage/ agree themes

• Phase 4 - Exhibition/film production

• Launch/celebration/outcomes
Inspired by arts practice of Misha Myers - ‘conversive wayfinding’ (2007)
The Maps: spaces and places of community
Arts based biographical methods

• Create space for voices/narratives/images of women
• Counters exclusionary processes and practices
• A potential space for transformative possibilities – radical democratic imaginary
• Supports principles of social justice, recognition – struggle for recognition – migrant trajectories –
• Is not without its challenges, ethical issues and dilemmas

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjT5IENga_M
Some References


Some references from Maggie’s research:

• Asylum, Migration and Community (2010) Policy Press
• Transgressive Imaginations: crime, deviance and culture (2012)