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Going Out and Going In: an Experiment in Co-Learning using a Delegated Walking Activity with Visual and Mobile Methods

Aim

This toolkit proposes a mobile approach which encourages students to see the everyday world around them as “anthropologically strange” (Silverman 2007, 11). This toolkit develops a practice which builds on the concerns of the mobilities turn in social sciences which explores the centrality of movement to the social and material realities of our lives (Büscher and Urry 2009). The lesson is also informed by the experience of doing research in the COVID-19 pandemic which temporarily limited many forms of human movement and led to an even greater interest in the experiences of walking and movement near where people live.

The lesson provides simple instructions for the students and the teacher/lecturer to complete a short mapmaking and walking exercise near where they live. The idea is that students and the teacher/lecturer do the exercise.

The activity encourages people to think of a short walk they would like to make in their own home, in their own garden, in the streets, fields, or alleyways near where they live, but with an emphasis on a short route that is completed at a slow pace.

Participants are encouraged to draw a map before completing the walk. After this, they walk the route without the map. During the

walk, they are encouraged to use an audio recorder, written notes, drawings, or photographs to capture sounds, sites, senses, and any other stimuli that draw their attention. Upon returning home, they are asked to add notes, drawings and/or pictures to the map and add in any new associations that come to mind. The idea is that those who take part approach an environment that is familiar in a way that allows it to become sociologically strange.

Participants are then asked to send the maps in before the lesson. If any images or words are considered by those who make the maps too personal, they can be covered up before the image is sent.

On the day of the lesson, each person is given time (5–10 minutes) to present the maps and walks to the groups, allowing time and space to introduce their maps and walks as they choose. This is followed by a group discussion in which people are encouraged to make connections between the maps and walks; this is followed by a short group reflection on the process and what has been learned.

Time

15 minutes setup.

2–3 hours self-study time to do the map and walk activity.

2 hours to work with the material in the classroom.

Preparation

Present the written instructions to students in the classroom. Address any questions or issues. Give the students a timeframe to complete the map making and walking exercise.

In class

- The preparation should take place in one class, which will include providing written information, describing how the exercise works, addressing questions and concerns, and agreeing on any

modifications that might be necessary for students with mobility issues or other concerns.

- One to two weeks later, the class will discuss what has been produced.
- This can be done in small groups or in a whole group, depending on the numbers. It can be done in person or online.

Task sheet

Experiment in mobile working.

This task sheet includes a set of instructions which can be followed as they are or modified and adapted for use in a different context (for example, students might all complete a map and walk of the same location, such as a university campus, or an area of a city or town).

Each person (all students and the teacher(s)) makes a map, completes a short walk, shares what they produce in the teaching room, and meets to explore and discuss the process and ways in which it might be adapted in the future.

Instructions for students

Think of a short walk you would like to take. This can be in your own home, garden, streets, fields, or alleyways nearby, but the emphasis is on a short route that you can complete slowly. Please take your time. And please take care on the roads.

Take time to draw a map before you walk. You are asked to think about the place you plan to walk in:

- What characteristics of the environment come to mind?
- Are there specific landmarks, locations, or features?
- What smells, sounds, and sites come to mind when you think of this place?
- Do any memories or stories come to mind?

Use a large piece of paper and colored pens or pencils if you like. The map can be of a traditional sort (what we might describe as carto-

graphic) with places, locations, paths, roads, and other routes, but it doesn't have to be; it could also be thematic, list-like, or associational, for example. The idea is that the mapmaking activity precedes the walk, but it does not have to lead it in the way you might follow a route on an Ordnance Survey-type map. It's your map, do with it what you please. You are allowed to enjoy yourself.

Next (and this can be at a different time or on a different day), walk without the map. Take your camera, audio recorder, or your notebook instead. Walk slowly, as the emphasis is on noticing sounds, sites, senses, and any other stimuli; hence, walking at a reflective cadence is part of the activity. When you notice something, pause, reflect, make a note of it, take a picture of it, or make a small sketch.

If the things you notice provoke any memories, recollections, stories or associations, make a brief note of these.

When you get back home (which can be at a different time or on a different day), add your notes and images to the map and any new associations, stories, or connections that come to you. These can be written or visual as you please. Be creative, you are allowed to enjoy yourself.

Finally, write a few reflections about the process:

- Were there any differences in what drew your attention before, during, and after the walk?
- Did you learn anything new from this about your own life, home, neighborhood?
- Did it lead you to have any new thoughts or questions about the place?

Suggested practice for group exercise:

If working in person, people are asked to take turns to present their individual maps. Depending on the size of the group, it may make sense to have digital copies of the maps and to put these in PowerPoint, so that everyone can easily see the details.

If working online, a space like AHASlides allows participants to respond to each others' maps with text — see the example below.

Give each person space (5–10 mins) to introduce their map, describe their walk, and reflect on the process and what they learned about the place where they live.

After each person has introduced their map, host a group discussion to reflect on these questions or an adapted version of them:

- Did we learn anything about our own and other people’s lives, concerns, homes, and neighborhoods from this?
- What did we like and dislike about the process?
- Are there better ways of sharing this?
- Is there a different way of working that we would propose?

Illustrations 1

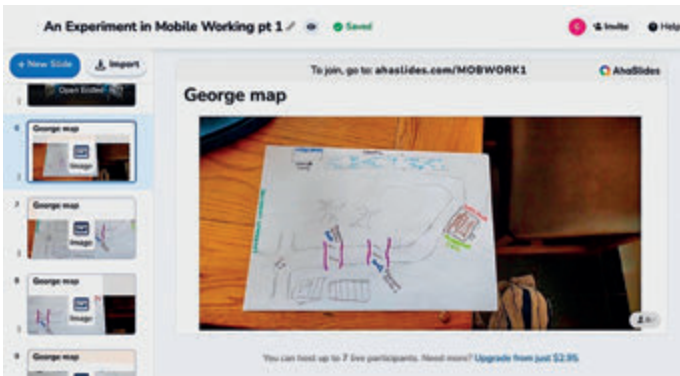


Fig. 23. A map drafted by a student named George.



Fig. 24. Responses and associations to George’s map on AHaslides. The screenshot shows the ways of cooperation between students.

Variation

A similar approach can be used in relation to a single area, for example, a university campus, a city center, a local park, a school, or any other space in which a group has a shared interest. This allows a group of different people to explore the same area and see what different people notice.

Illustration 2

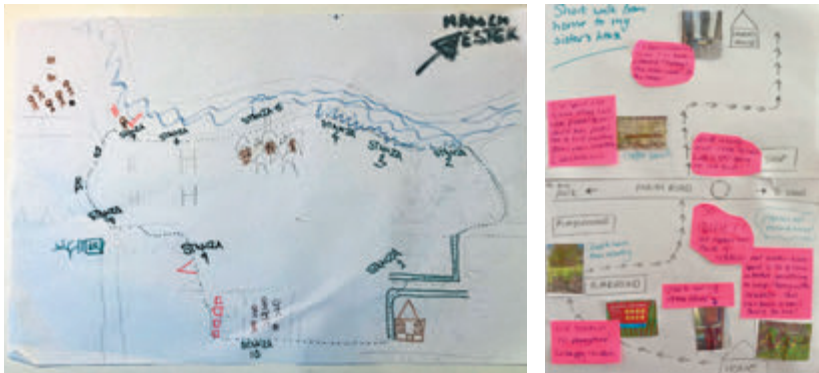


Fig. 25. Examples of other maps created by students.

References

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