

‘Beyond the hype’: Towards a novel typology of walk-along interviews

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Project description

Walk-along interviews are becoming increasingly popular among researchers across the social sciences who are interested in investigating mobile experiences and everyday practices in-place. As a research method, ‘walk alongs’ can provide important contextual insights to situate participants or social life in their complex and dynamic surroundings. Such mobile interviews are able to capture everyday practices and embodied experiences which are often spatially and temporally bound in ways that static research methods often miss or overlook. As such, walk-alongs can be essential for researcher looking to understand how structural inequalities are intersectionally experienced, negotiated and contested.

There is however a tendency of walk-along interviews being 'hyped'. The method then mainly is employed to be 'new and innovative' and 'to walk the extra mile' while core methodological principles and ethical considerations are misinterpreted or even neglected. As a result, what we observe is that the walk-along methodological landscape becomes scattered and at times overwhelming, leading to walk-along interviews being used in incomplete ways which harms methodological development.

The candidate will be part of an ongoing research project on walk-along interviews supervised by Rik Huizinga and Bas Spierings. This project aims to both advance the state-of-the-art of walk-along methodologies and to integrate these insights in educational resources. To simplify the complexity, enhance methodological clarity and guide future research, the main goals are to 1) systematically examine a wide range of empirical studies and methodological contributions across the social sciences to understand how walk-along interviews are currently used, to 2) analyse MSc theses using walk-alongs written by Geography students in the Netherlands and to 3) use this data to develop a novel typology that brings together and organises different types of walk-along interviews.

Concrete tasks include:

- Reviewing relevant literature on walk-along interviews (80h);
- Synthesising these insights thematically in a literature review (60h);
- Retrieving and analysing MSc. theses from various Human Geography programmes (100h);
- Contributing to an open-access academic journal publication (80h).

The 320 hours calculated for these activities can be spread over a period of 5 months.

Job requirements

- English proficiency;
- Experience with conducting a literature review, or a willingness to acquire these skills;
- Thematic analysis skills, or a willingness to acquire these skills;
- Affinity with qualitative methods and an interest in walk-along interviews and mobile methods.