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Ragged places and smooth surfaces: Audio walks as practices of making and doing the city

Kate Moles, Cardiff University

Angharad Saunders, University of South Wales

Abstract

This article engages with how our auditory engagement with a particular soundscape helps frame and construct the places we move in and influences the ways we relate to our surroundings, to others and to ourselves. Its empirical focus is a series of urban audio walks that were made and carried out within a public engagement project designed to actively involve the participants and walkers in a relationship with(in) the place, community, history and culture. The article explores how this project worked with and challenged the form of the traditional, tourist-orientated audio walk, which tend to represent the city as a smooth, historicized space ready to be consumed. The walks produced in this project were more improvisational; they were vehicles for expressing the ragged, common sense topographies or place in the world of the participants. This tension draws to the surface questions of critical citizenship, as we trace how the participants ‘mapped their world’ within the pre-existing and often overwhelming cartographies of their world and how this, in turn, allowed us to think more about the ways in which they position themselves and are positioned within dominant discourses as a particular type of citizen and urban dweller.

Keywords

audio walks

smooth surfaces

ragged places

practice

urban

- Wales

Introduction

This article is concerned with the presentation of, and interaction with, a place through the stories that are told about it. Its empirical focus is a series of urban audio walks that were made and carried out within a public engagement project designed to actively involve the participants and walkers in a relationship with(in) the place, community, history and culture. Broadly speaking, audio walks offer a soundscape, a sonic method to engage with place, and a route to follow. You listen to the pre-recorded soundscape as you navigate the route, offering the walker the chance to overlay sensory experiences of the place and engage with alternative prompts as you move through the settings. As part of our research project in Grangetown, audio walks were employed as resources for the young Muslim men from an inner city area of the Welsh capital of Cardiff, called Grangetown, to promote meaning-making activities about the places through which these men moved. The local university-based research team selected this group of participants, young, male, Muslim residents of Grangetown, as they were an absent voice in the more 'official' and sanctioned accounts of Cardiff's history and place-making narratives. In this article, we explore one particular facet of the project; the tensions between producing these 'official' or tourist-oriented audio walks, that represent urban, historicized space as an experience that can be consumed, and more

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improvised audio walks as a vehicle for expressing the common sense topographies or place in the world of these young local men. In this, questions of critical citizenship become important, as we trace how the participants ‘mapped their world’ within the pre-existing and often overwhelming cartographies of their world and how this, in turn, allowed us to think more about the ways in which they position themselves and are positioned within dominant discourses as a particular type of citizen and urban dweller. We examine the potentials that are opened up for any audio walker, both spatially and imaginatively, through these, what we term, ‘messy’ soundscapes as opposed to ‘smooth’ official ones. The ‘messy’ soundscapes are, in essence, narratives that resist the privileging of particular readings or authoritative versions of a place. Instead they have been composed in a manner that invites audio walkers to recognize and celebrate the multiple readings and understandings of the place through the soundscapes’ fragmented, repeated, disjointed, discontinuous and non-linear narratives, things which run counter to the smooth teleology of city-sanctioned audio walks. Such ‘messy’ audio walks produce a particular type of walking that is evocative of what Gallagher (2014: 5) terms, an ‘audio drift’: ‘a work with no predetermined route [that] made space for... alternative histories, enabling a plurality of stories to be stitched together, partial and fragmentary... encouraging imaginative fictionalizations of place that were not tied “to time, chronology, or official history”’ (Anderson and Moles 2008: 7).

Origins of the project

‘Beacon for Wales’ was a funding stream that sought to establish collaborative partnerships between Welsh universities and local communities through a range of capacity-building projects. ‘Beacon for Wales’ funded a public engagement project entitled ‘Sounding the Way’ that produced two audio walks with a group of young men. Audio walks were a method

that combined our interest in mobile methods (Moles 2008) with experience of using audio walks as a teaching resource and way to alter the engagement students had with the places around them (Saunders 2013). Having completed an audio walks project with the British Broadcasting Corporation or BBC (Moles et al., 2010), we were interested in working in and for a community to produce a more situated, ‘bottom up’ set of walks that would give the participants an introduction to various skills related to technology and representation, while also producing a resource of interest for the community. To our minds, audio walks would offer a chance to stitch together the historical, the contemporary and the imaginary aspects of Grangetown that were significant to these young participants. However, we too as researchers came with our own set of expectations and in the process had to rethink and renegotiate our own ideas of what these audio walks might and should look and sound like.

The project was developed in collaboration with a youth club in Grangetown, a neighbourhood located between Cardiff city centre and the redeveloped area of Cardiff Bay. The area is often regarded by inhabitants of the city as more of a conduit for travelling between these areas rather than it is a destination in its own right, making it already a kind of non-place. The Cardiff touristic ‘Red Bus Tour’ goes close by, but does not enter, so there are no buildings or sites ‘of note’ featuring in Cardiff tourism leaflets, which construct a version of Cardiff that is pleasurable and consumable. Given the levels of disenfranchisement experienced in this neighbourhood, it is also an area, particularly in its southern reaches, that has been designated as a ‘Communities First’ area, a Welsh Government initiative which seeks to alleviate poverty, heighten investment, and nurture capacity within Wales’ most deprived wards (WAG 2001, 2008). Consequently, Grangetown is a neighbourhood that has been framed and understood through a discourse of low educational attainment, poor health, housing, and environmental quality and welfare dependency. This classificatory practice, or

way of seeing, controls how the social world of Grangetown is enacted and comprehended; visions that support this narrative are endorsed, while those that offer something different are suppressed, for they are unintelligible within the overwhelming mediation of the area (Law and Urry 2004; Hacking 2004). This 'smooth narrative' (Jacobs 2006) obscures disagreements, disputes and tensions negotiated both in the course of the construction of this place, and in the practice of its 'telling, making and doing place' in a very controlled, particular way. What is lacking is the voices, experiences and understandings of the residents and people who encounter and negotiate this place in their everyday lives. To this end, this particular project set out to facilitate a making messy of this smooth narrative; offering local young men the opportunity to 'tell us about your Grangetown' through the production of audio walks and the engagement with their own dwelling in a critical, reflexive and creative act.

The audio and maps for the project, and a film made by a film-maker with the young men, can be found on the website <http://www.techniquest.org/STW/walks.php>. We have hesitated to reproduce transcripts of the walks as data in this publication as it would represent a level of translation of these walks into a formalized, mediated account distanced from the work as produced by the young men. Already, the translation of the young men's Grangetown into maps and audio walks produces an effect; by reproducing them as text, it would render these experiences knowable in a particular way to the reader, translating once again into a format with which we are uncomfortable (though we acknowledge the inherent contradictions in this argument, in terms of us writing about this research here). Nonetheless, we urge you to interact with the online data. The maps you will see on the website are apparently simple and uncomplicated, though, significantly no groups who carried out the Grangetown 'messy' walks could follow them and ended up 'lost', something we see as very

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significant, metaphorically and literally. The audio components of these walks are clear and accessible while at the same time presenting a ragged and tangled account of the places. For the remainder of this article, we focus on the way place was mediated and how the young men who created the walks and subsequently the people who walked these urban audio pathways made and did place as a result.

Urban encounters in audio walks

As a way of representing particular places, audio walks are already heavily encoded by prior understandings of undertaking explorations led by something (be they city guides, audio guides in museums or art galleries, public art narratives or other touristic excursions). They are predicated on an ideology of place as something that is ‘discoverable’ through an instructive, narrated engagement with it. The discovery unfolds in a logical, even disciplined fashion, presentable in the format of a map and through a set number of points tied together and ostensibly accessible to everyone. This ideology is further underwritten by an understanding that there are locations of interest, nodal points on the map, that require pointing out and that are assumed to be of interest to all, and, most importantly, that a single narrative can communicate the importance of specific points in a place to generate a coherent narrative about that place more broadly. The Red Bus Tours that traverse cities are a good example of this; they present place as a series of notable sites, visible from the bus, coherent in the narrative of the city presented, connected as a series of points; sanitized, safe and secured. The places included do not move, they do not change, and they are accessible, approachable and welcoming. The way place is presented is unproblematic and uncluttered there are no competing voices, disparaging narratives or elements introduced that disrupt the linear, flowing story that unites these sites. Such approaches present place as smooth,

complete surfaces that yield-up their narratives and offer a coherent insight into what happens there. This ‘view on the world’ from the safe environs of the bus offers a particular way of experiencing place – a vantage point removed from the day-to-day interactions, the lived experiences, counter-narratives and problems. What is presented is a very smooth, polished and choreographed invitations to place that flattens and denies the social, sensory and emotional richness of place, particularly as experienced by those who live (t)here.

There are, of course, alternatives types of audio walks that have become more prolific in the last few years and are closer to the artistic than the authoritative, the performative rather than the informative. These walks move beyond a simple Cartesian representation of place and instead are embodied, active engagements with the places they take their participants to and through. These walks recognize the potential for attunement with the kinaesthetic, synesthetic and sonesthetic perceptions of the walkers, looking to take them to physical and metaphysical places, through memoryscapes and into layered, multiple negotiations of the world around us. This kind of walking becomes more like an art practice (Solnit 2001; Careri 2001; Myers 2010), linking knowledge production and representation in interesting and exciting ways that disrupt the smooth narratives of the audio walks described above, and instead offer an engaged and critical appreciation of place and place-making through these practices. This turn to an approach that is traditionally associated with the performing arts is, O’Neill and Hubbard suggest, part of a search for spatial practices and modes of expression that take us deeper into the textures of place (2010: 47). These types of walk promote a critical engagement with the place whereby social, political and cultural nuance and understanding can be developed.

The Grangetown walks were located somewhere in between these two ‘types’, with the young, local men who produced the walks aspiring to the first type of walk, something

linear, didactic, and offering a vantage point on a series of places and communicating the ‘important’ information transparently. But instead, what ended up being produced were walks that were messy, jumbled, non-linear and very much offering a position ‘in’ rather than ‘on’ the world the young men inhabited. The slippage between their aspirations and the reality of the subsequent output, we argue, following Laurier (2001), is because the first ‘type’ of audio walk contrasts with the way in which these places are understood, presented and accounted in the practical and situated actions of the people who live, work, engage, disengage and interact there. The ‘common sense topographies’ (Housley and Smith 2011) that inform the day to day understandings of our place in the world are informed by understanding based on lived experiences, the complex contours of the landscape and the mundane understandings that are negotiated and implemented through a view in the world, rather than a view of the world. According to this understanding, place is not a crucible of visitable sites but instead it is a product of what people did there that made the place significant. Accordingly, place is not made of sites, but of lived and felt experiences and encounters and often these experiences are not space specific. And so we consider how these understandings of place became translated into a set of audio walks, and produced a particular type of representation of the places encountered. The walks contained multiple temporalities, multiple scales of place and allusions to encounters unknown to the listening outsider. These walks allowed for the plurality of different stories to be stitched together, encouraging imaginative fictionalizations of place (Gallagher 2014; Anderson and Moles 2008). As such, they were far more similar to the more artistic productions that move towards a non-representational, metaphysical understanding of landscape and place.

The urban audio walks produced through the project act as a way of thinking about practices of making and doing place. This allows us to reflect more broadly on the ways

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places are understood within their presentation, how meaning associated with place is created and communicated and about how audio walks tell us about the ways the people who produce them think about, understand and communicate their places in different interactions and social worlds. As part of this we understand that these audio walks are performative; in that they have affects, they make differences and they enact realities (Law and Urry 2004). Nigel Thrift refers to affect as ‘a sense of push in the world’ (2004: 64): a felt volition that is both mental and physical and which, to borrow from Kathleen Stewart (2007), catches us up in something. The way these walks make place, and the manner in which they affect, in the processes of their making and doing, their creators and participants (percipients as Myers [2010] describes them) is extremely important. Those involved become not participants but co-creators who are caught-up in the active making and doing of the places they traverse. This catching-up can be of different durations and intensities but it always leaves a trace on both body and place, a new awareness or a new story for instance, and so attending to the making or doing of place means recognizing the range of perceptual, imaginative and bodily sensitivities and skills being deployed in these particular spatial and social practices. Through this we can recognize a critical citizenship that coalesces around the embodied, emplaced social conduct of those involved and can unpack the way this can be aligned to particular ways of understanding engagement, place and community.

Audio walks as practices of making place

Although interest in audio walks has intensified in recent years (Lavery 2005; Myers 2010), much of this interest has focused around the phenomenology of their ‘doing’: on the rhetorical strategies, authorial voices and sound effects the walks deploy. In comparison there has been little work that examines everyday making, the manner in which such walks are

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bound up with routine beings and doings of their makers. Audio walks hold the potential to reveal the surprise of place (Massey 2005), for they aurally displace us from the immediate while spatially immersing us in the minutia of the world around us. The audio walk has the potential to reconfigure listeners' relationships to place, to open up new modes of attention and movement through landscape and in so doing rework the landscape itself. The practice of making the audio walk alters our 'gaze'. It demands that we attend to our everyday lifeworld in new ways. It directs our interest and eye-line, through our ears, in ways that might not previously have occurred. It insists that we focus on alternative focal points and that we move with our eyes, prompted by our ears, looking up and around. The practices of making place are encapsulated within the production of the walks, but also through the doing of them – something which we turn our attention to in the next section. While we see how the communication is one way 'from the (edited) speaker to the listener' (Butler 2006: 898), we see the opportunities for interaction within the messy audioscapes of the walks we produced as opening up spaces for inquisitiveness, self-exploration and meaning-making. Audio walks invite this sort of making of place on the part of the participants through the holes left in the narratives and the disjointed engagements that require the participants to actively and creatively fill them. Audio walks as a medium are imbued with preconceptions and have particular expectations associated with what will be discovered through their undertaking (following McLuhan 1964,). These expectations are in part a product of the medium, but are also linked to the ways we conventionally put them to use.

Following Schegloff (1972) we recognize the contextual importance of representing place, and the ways that by being located in a different social world, or by being asked to speak to a different audience, we alter the ways we can talk about places:

The problem of locational formation is this: For any location to which reference is made, there is a set of terms, each of which, by a correspondence test, is a correct way to refer to it. On any occasion of use, however, not any member of the set is 'right'. (1972: 81)

Looking at the ways in which the young, local, male participants accounted for their spatial organization within the walks, and the different resources they mobilized to do so, we were able to think about the way they positioned themselves, and in turn were positioned in the ways people related to and spoke to them, and how this was problematized through the medium the audio walks provided. The young men's ways of knowing the world, the understandings they employed to represent it back to us, were based on essentially mundane interactions they had in the place. For instance, the first route the participants created was their daily walk that moved them from home, to school, to the places in which they socialized. It was a route that was woven across several square miles of Cardiff city centre: it was their *place* and this place was intuitively known. Their local knowledge was based on knowing the world in a way that drew on indexical, emplaced understandings. The register of knowledge about place from which they drew did not allow a representation of that place that would be accessible to people not privy to the young men's subject positions (or related to it spatially).

Audio walks demand a greater level of geographical representation, but are made 'interesting' and provide a more sought after experience if they somehow allow the walker to

feel like they are having relational locational formulation, situated in current interactions between them and the place. Although audio walks aim to provide a multisensory experience, highlighting aural and sensual aspects of the social and material worlds potentially unseen by people moving through them, they work through highly ordered engagements with these worlds. This medium of storytelling conventionally requires a pause in the movement and complexity of place to allow it to be captured and reproduced through a singular account. Audio walks present place as linear and coherent and they fix the spatial in time enabling it to be reduced to a map or a route and understood in a very straightforward manner. They present *a* spatial imaginary and, while they make visible aspects of the landscape that were previously concealed, they equally articulate only one layer of the experience of place. Consequently, multiple layers will be ignored, perspectives will go unseen and certain lanes, dead ends and alleyways will go unwalked. The medium requires a particular engagement with the places it takes us, both produced by and in the walk. Through the understanding of place inherent in the idea of being able to introduce someone to it, through that particular way of interacting, and in the content that is conventionally included, the particular way audio walks take their participants presupposes and produces affects. The particular way we fix and present place in this medium means that it can become decontextualized from the interactions that created it, removed from the bundle of connections and threads that characterize it. Following Ingold, the walks our participants produced tried to disrupt this by recognizing and attempting to accommodate the idea that '*The thing* [in this case the place of the audio walk], however, is not just one thread but a certain gathering together of the threads of life' (2010: 10, emphasis added).

Early in the process, we imagined that the audio walks we planned in collaboration with the young men would be outward facing, a resource for the community to showcase the

skills and dedication of the young men involved and to highlight places and buildings of interest in the vicinity. What the young men actually produced was something ostensibly far more mundane in its application. But soon it quickly became apparent that their walks directed our attention to their worlds in ways that were less accessible and universal, offering up accounts of their places as ‘becoming’, challenging and messy. A tension emerged between how we the researchers (constrained with a view on the world produced through existing audio walks and experience of producing audio walks for a particular purpose), imagined the audio walks as an engagement, with the ways the young men understand and experienced their places. Essentially, this distinction is about the spatial organization and membership categories that the young men were looking to employ in their construction of the walks, and, the views of their world that we wanted to incorporate into the audio walks were based on what we began to recognize as our understanding of the places as spectacles.

The data we, the researchers, would have collected about these places would have been very different and would not have allowed us to understand or access the social position of these young men in Grangetown or let us reflect critically on their positions, their citizenships, their ways of being in the world. These young men were talking to us from a position within their social worlds, yet we were asking them to talk about these worlds from a detached position. We therefore adapted and nuanced our collaboration. As we initially focused on producing spectacular audio walks, and listened to the mundane accounts of the young men about their places and the interactions that took place there, we gradually took more and more time to watch how these young men communicated and critically reflected on what was happening in this research space we had brought about. As a result, we were able to pay more attention to the tension between the commonsense, everyday topographies of the young participants and the assumptions about place and space inherent in audio walks. We

were able to focus on the data and move beyond our assumptions and preconceptions of how it was experienced by our contributors, making, we hope, for a richer project for all concerned.

What we learned was that the audio walks that these young men were producing were far more representative of the issues of inclusion and engagement that existed in their social worlds, and should not have been problematized through the imposition of our ideas of what a ‘visitable’, ‘interesting’ place might look like. This amplified the tensions between what the young men viewed as viable and interesting discourses of their place and the local knowledge and understanding they held of the world. We went into the project imagining that the young men would tell us about a particular place, and instead we were confronted with the realization that they told us about multiple places, connected by multiple stories, both real-and-imagined (Soja 1996). These walks represent lived experience and an understanding of place born out of experiencing it *in medias res*; from the perspective of being in the midst of things, pluralizing the locations the audio walks delineated, and resisting their reduction to fixed, clear vantage points. The young participants did not hold a singular view; their understanding and knowledge about this geographical area was not confined to lines on a map, or single threads or routes running through the place. These places were knots and entanglements of lines, from overlaps between their material and imagined places, and their interests and memories and various understandings of what happens in different places at different times. The way the walks were made by the young men produced a narrative that tied together separate layers of experience (the spectacular featured, but so did the mundane) and temporality (the past and the present were overlapped). This ‘stitching’ made personal, individual sense to the young men, but diverged from the official histories and discourses of the place, narratives of community or map-like representations of the landscape. It created ‘a

fictional place, not officially veritable or authentic' (Anderson and Moles 2008: 7) but one that made sense to the young men.

Audio walks as practices of doing place

Place-making is an active engagement between place and participant, something ongoing and expansionary, creating and sustaining spatial imaginaries, leaving traces on the landscape and uncovering hidden and concealed aspects of the material landscape being traversed and altering the cultural and social significance of what is encountered. The place-making opportunities of engagement with a soundscape offers the potential of 'immersing the listener into a lifeworld' (Myers 2010: 61), opening up the 'possibility of a micro-narrative, a customized story and soundtrack, not merely a space but a place, a site of dwelling' (Chambers 1994: 52, in Myers 2010). Understood in this way, the audio walks represent frameworks (following Pink 2008) of understanding; the participant is both an object that place-making is acting upon and a subject complicit in the act of place-making. Audio walks are techniques of place-making that enlist the participant in their consumption and production; they offer a framework for place-making but also require that the walker participate in making, or unmaking, place for him or herself (Pink 2008). As Lavery (2005) suggests, audio walks are lived practices and as such they collapse the traditional boundaries between author and audience, by demanding that both perform place. They allow the creators and participants to notice the eventfulness of place; the unique particular details and events that occur at that particular moment in time, as 'just this body in just this place' (Casey 1996: 22), as well as those of a past or future. 'A particular auditory time and space is created, which enables a kind of temporary community or empathy with the voices heard and the places experienced' (Myers 2010: 61). Butler's pronouncement that audio walks are letters of

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introduction to place seems very apposite, for the audio walk is merely the framework for a journey, which can initiate and support a ‘constellation of ongoing trajectories’ (Massey 2005: 9). To engage with these ideas in this project, we walked the walks with a few groups, talking-while-walking and continuing the conversations beyond the completion of the walks. This made us consider how the nature of a story needs to be actualized through its reception (Iser 1980).

The walks took people down dead ends, pointed out aspects of the landscape that were not visible, and lacked a linear, connected narrative. The walkers often got lost as the maps did not correspond with the audio, or the suggested routes directed them in ways they could not walk. When listening to these walks, people were presented not with a place fait accompli, but with a place in the making. They were offered one side of a conversation, something that required them to engage actively with the audio and the places they moved through. Places were not presented as singular, unified and unproblematic, but were complex, tied to particular understandings embedded in membership of the place, belonging and an active, ongoing relationship between people and landscape. The participants had to ‘wayfare’ (Ingold 2010), finding clues to inform their way from the audio and from the map to navigate a landscape in front of them that was represented by neither source. As Myers (2010: 64) describes of the issues of navigating a changing physical landscape, ‘these transformations of landscape impeded the perceiver’s way and require an active participation from the walker to find and negotiate obstacles both physically and critically’; the landscape they must navigate extends beyond a changing physical one to include a metaphysical one that positions and represents the world incongruently with their own, and so the layering of perceptions and understandings of the place produces ‘fault lines’, underpinned by ‘silences, erasures, distortions and folds’. As one participant on the walks described:

We had to pause it [the audio walk] quite a lot and go to the next [waypoint] it wasn't one long [audio clip] so we paused it for a while and caught up with each other and during that time, when you had like free time almost, you'd look around and the eye would look at it in a completely different way to normal.

Drawing on Ingold's conceptualization of place as 'a complex set of interwoven lines where the lines of the meshwork are the trails along which life is lived. And it is the entanglement of lines, not in the connection of points, that the mesh is constituted' (2005: 26) we can understand the way that this engagement with place facilitated entry into the mesh in a particular way. Audio walks are but one line in this mesh. As they draw the foot or gaze towards particular points of interests they become entangled with other lines both past and present, real and imagined, and this entanglement, or knot, is both part of and productive of place. Place, therefore, is not a pause, but an interweaving of flows and connections. Thus, it is not easy to separate the places an audio walk represents from the places that they create. The walks are pathways in the constitution of the places, allowing people to walk a path they may not have taken before and as such entering and constituting a place that they may not have experienced before. The connections with the place and the people in it were opened up in the spaces provided by these walks:

'R: Did you know the area before?'

‘P: You know the area because you drive through it, but you don’t *know* (emphasis added) it. I’d never even thought about inside the houses; it [the audio walk] makes you think about the people in the houses, rather than the way to Ikea, which is what I know it as’.

These walks made the people who walked them aware of how these entanglements or knots were populated with life, and that beyond a collection of points there were mundane, everyday interactions going on that constituted the places. As Ingold (2011: 47) argues in relation to walking ‘landscapes are woven into life, and lives are woven into the landscape’; as the walkers undertook our walks their own biographies became part of the places they navigated, along with the biographies of the people who lived there. These places were being (re)formed through the act of walking, bringing the streets to life;

it made you interested in, like, erm who the people were...I was walking past doors and rather than usual you just sort of push on and don’t really think, it made you think about the people who were living behind the doors. There were people drinking on the curb as we went past and I thought it would be quite cool to stop and talk to them, which is something that’d never occur to me before.

Lavery (2005) argues that audio walks disrupt the author/audience binary and demand that both produce place. As the people who walked our walks had to negotiate this messy,

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inconstant, punctuated soundscape, they had to draw on their other senses to make the experience coherent – to make sense of it. Because of being ‘plugged in’, their interaction with the landscape and with those around them is sensually altered, their gaze is being directed, albeit in ways that often were not directive or straightforward in our walks (asking people to look at things they could not see from the vantage point they were at, referring to things that happened before or after the waypoint had been reached).

Conclusion

In general, audio walks aim to highlight the spectacular, the sites that attract visitors and stand out as markers in the social and cultural landscapes. However, there is no meaning ‘awaiting discovery’ or a priori categories of the social world, and so then it follows that for particular types of places to be recognizable and reportable they are constituted, produced, and as such discovered anew each time, through place specific social action. The social meaning of places, buildings, and social settings are produced and negotiated in and through interaction. As such, we must pay attention to the mundane interactions as important for place-making. From this position, it is the everyday ways of interaction with places that produce and sustain the meaning we attach to them. For the young men, their Grangetown was not composed of significant places and externally facing points of interest. Their processual and situated understanding of place was down to their daily negotiations of the streets, the people and the cultures they encountered in their movement in and through them.

In this article, we explored audio walks not as geographical givens or instruments of navigation that give us place ready-made, but as practices of making and doing. We have suggested that by attending to the processes and practices involved in the creation and reception of these walks, we can begin to understand them as windows on the social and

spatial knowledge of their creators and those who have participated in them. Approached in this way, these audio walks produce place not as a smooth and coherent expression, but as a messy happening that occurs in the interstices of the spectacular and the mundane, the ordinary and the noteworthy. This article has looked at the way these tensions were negotiated and represented by the group of young men, and how the audio walks produced opened up a space of engagement and interaction between the creators, participants on the walks and the places they produced. The mundane interactions that were represented and facilitated in and through the walks allowed an appreciation of the everyday and immediateness of place, immersing the participants in a social world where they had to contribute to the story being told by the walks. The experience of the walks meant that the participants had to take a very active part in the construction of a narrative. The one that was supplied was not coherent. It had holes and it left them lost and unsure where to look. As such, they had to draw on other ways of making sense of the places they were moving through. They drew on their own experiences, they looked for ways to supplement their understandings, and they (re)formed their conceptions of what was acceptable to do in these streets. They also drew extensively on their other senses – the soundscape the audio walks provided was punctuated by the sounds of the street; this was not a complete immersion into the sounds of the walk. Instead the aural experiences represented the duality of the encounter, being both plugged in and engaged with the world around them.

From this, we can understand the ways in which people encounter places and how these encounters produce and sustain particular types of representation of the place. The medium through which these encounters are sustained impacts on the very way we understand the emplaced social and cultural engagements that result. By looking beyond the smooth narratives of place produced through various media (touristic, governmental) and

understanding place as a messy, disjointed series of encounters we can understand more the way people, in this case the young men who produced the walk and the various people who participated in the walking of them, critically engage with their places in the world. This returns us to the ideas of critical citizenship that thread through this work. The audio walks that our participants made and undertook proffered an opportunity both for them and for us to think about our place in the world and the manner in which too frequently this place is made and interpreted for us not yet by us.

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Contributors details

Kate Moles is a sociologist interested in place, identity, young people and heritage. Using qualitative methods and particularly mobile methods and methods on the move, Kate's applied research explores ways in which people come to understand, represent and engage with their places in the world. Kate has worked with external groups, notably the BBC, Techniquet and various youth clubs, to produce audio walks about place, offering a means of public engagement and participation.

Angharad Saunders is a Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of South Wales. Her research interests focus around the geographies of knowledge production. This involves questions of how we know and understand place, but also how places and the ideas we hold about them are made and circulate within the world.

Contact:

Kate Moles, Cardiff School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University, King Edward VII Ave., Wales, CF14 3WT, United Kingdom.

E-mail: molesk@cardiff.ac.uk

Angharad Saunders, School of Applied Science, University of South Wales, Pontypridd,

Wales, CF37 4AT, United Kingdom.

E-mail: angharad.saunders@southwales.ac.uk