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Walking interviews in organizational research

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A R T I C L E I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

The aim of this paper is to discuss the benefits of walking interviews in organizational research. We discuss five specific strengths of walking interviews and compare them to sit-down interviews and shadowing. Cognisant of the importance of place within which research is conducted, we analyze the walking interview method of collecting research material, and we put forward socio-spatial methodology for application in organizational research. The key theme running through this paper is that the place where research takes place matters; it matters when the focus of research is on materiality of organizations, but it also yields insights into other (place-sensitive) organizational phenomena. We identify five strengths of walking interviews: co-creation of meaning, reversal of power between interviewer and interviewee, places as prompts, the interview as a sensory experience, and insights into emotions. We discuss limitations of walking interviews, as well as strategies for mitigating these limitations.

1. Introduction

> "*Walking has something that animates and enlivens my ideas: I almost cannot think when I stay in place; my body must be in motion to set my mind in motion.*"

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, quoted in Van den Abbeele (1992).

Walking interviews – otherwise known as 'go-along' interviews (Carpiano, 2009), or 'commentated walks' (Raulet-Croset & Borzeix, 2014) – are a well-established method of collecting data in human geography, social anthropology and urban studies. To date, however, organizational researchers have rarely adopted this technique, continuing to rely on more conventional forms of interviewing. Some recent articles have begun to address walking as a valuable pedagogical practice in management education (e.g. Beyes & Steyaert, 2021), others call for walking interviews in management and organization studies, recognising their contemplative potential (Chiles et al., 2021). Walking interviews are based on the premise that the act of walking and talking provides richer insights into embodied and sensory experiences. As a 'mobile method', walking interviews are especially attuned to time and dynamics, and provide an opportunity for researchers to simultaneously "*move with and be moved by*" (Büscher et al., 2011) people, objects, spaces and places, and become more aware of the interactions occurring between them. While many social scientists have described the application of walking interviews in various projects, few have provided a clear 'take-home' summary which can be of value to organization researchers and which clearly articulates the key benefits and challenges relating to their conduct 'on-the-ground'.

The main premise behind this article is that walking interviews can offer new valuable insights into organizations. Organizational activities are complex phenomena, and they are often difficult to articulate and communicate to others, particularly outsiders of an organization (Czarniawska, 2014a). Hence the methods and techniques researchers choose to adopt will inevitably determine the likelihood of developing more holistic accounts of organizational practice. Following Glassner (2000, p. 590), it is important to be mindful of the fact that "questions that genuinely remain unresolved about the social construction of meaning involve not *whether* meaning is constructed, but rather *where* the constructions take place, and to what effect [emphasis added]." Meaning is not created exclusively through words, rather it is grounded in a material reality that is not so easily expressible.

Most walking interviews have been conducted by human geographers, anthropologists and sociologists, who have greatly expanded and facilitated the analysis of a range of practices including, for example, 'place-making' (Duff, 2010; Lee & Ingold, 2006) and co-construction of meaning (Dinnie et al., 2013; Ratzenböck, 2016). So, it is not surprising that the method lends itself particularly to the study of organizational spaces which has grown increasingly prominent since the "material turn" (e.g. see Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; Clegg & Kornberger, 2006; Taylor & Spicer, 2007; Dale & Burrell, 2008; Van Marrewijk, 2009;

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Petani, 2019). Walking interviews can be effectively applied to research into organizational space, whether in educational, corporate or healthcare settings, which share a focus on imposed, bounded and hierarchical space, spatial arrangements in the workplace, and spatial practices that reflect the subtle realities of organizational life (e.g. Halford, 2004; Siebert et al., 2017; Siebert et al., 2018). Acknowledging the benefits of walking interviews in research on spaces, in this article we wish to move beyond this narrow focus on organizational spaces, and exploring the insights created in the act of walking, discuss the benefits of this method for organizational research in general. For example, walking interviews could be used to research topics such as power in organizations, gender inequality, diversity and inclusion or organization of work.

Cognisant of this importance of place within which research is conducted, we analyze the walking interview method of collecting research material, and put forward socio-spatial methodology for application in organizational research. Drawing on our extensive experience of walking interviews in several projects (Bilsland, 2018; Siebert, 2023; Meakin & Siebert, 2023), we focus here on one research project as an illustration. We critically appraise the benefits of walking interviews conducted in organizational research and discuss the challenges and limitations of the method and how these can be overcome. We argue that walking interviews permit greater consideration of place-sensitive phenomena and elicit detailed, multi-faceted understandings of the meanings individuals ascribe to certain aspects of organizations. We identify five enabling qualities of walking interviews (which we refer to as “strengths”) which offer benefits for organizational research in general. Walking interviews (1) allow for co-creation of meaning, (2) they have potential to reduce power imbalance between the researcher and the interviewee (including potential to alleviate some of the stress placed on the interviewee), (3) using places as prompts, they enable research into hidden organizational phenomena, (4) they allow the researcher an opportunity to share the sensory experience of the organization, and (5) they give insights into people’s emotions. The key theme running through this paper is that the place where research takes place matters. It matters when the focus of research is on materiality of organizations and organizational spaces, but it also yields insights into other organizational phenomena, often out of bounds for researchers. It is not only the place that matters, but also the dynamic nature of walking, hence we accentuate the benefits of walking interviews as a mobile research method.

We start our article by outlining the key “benefits of walking and talking” going back to Ancient Greece and peripatetic philosophy. We then summarize the lessons from walking interviews in other disciplines. In an attempt to take stock of the field of interviewing in organizational research and clarify the boundaries and misconceptions, we compare sit-down interviews, shadowing and walking interviews. Before discussing one research example, we offer a practical guide for walking interviews in organizational research – some key points on how to use the method in the hope of popularizing the method in our field. Drawing on one of our research projects in the main body of the article we discuss the particular benefits that the method brings to organizational research, what theories and topics the method lends itself to, and how the pitfalls of the method can be addressed.

1.1. Walking interviews in social science research

The idea of walking and talking has been celebrated for time immemorial, and many Greek philosophers saw walking as fundamental to creative thought. Aristotle, for one, was particularly enamoured with the practice of walking, thinking and talking, having founded the Peripatetic school of thought – ‘peripatetic’ deriving from the Greek word ‘peripatein’, meaning “to engage in dialogue while walking” (Gross, 2014, p. 130) – emphasising the link between deliberation, decision-making and walking. Indeed, the ancient act of peregrination is typically associated with a long journey or period of wandering, as eloquently captured by Beaumont (2015, p. 210): “a walk that is ‘formless’ but nonetheless pregnant with mystical meaning.” Greek philosophers were often depicted as strolling among their disciples, walking up and down, pausing from time to time. Socrates was said to stroll in the agora, finding people to talk to. The Cynics were forever on the move, shuffling about the streets, but they did their walking not so much to teach but to provoke others to speak (Gross, 2014).

Anthropologists break down the peregrination of objects, people, and ideologies around the globe to create a frame-by-frame array of local realities and interlocal interactions. Evans (1998, p. 205) identifies ‘bimbling’ as aimlessly walking while talking, which has the effect of opening up the senses to aid recall or retrieval of memory. The therapeutic value of walking is frequently reported such that it is regarded as a pleasurable, relaxing, and liberatory activity (Warren, 2016) by virtue of its positive effect on the human psyche. Certainly, the advent of ‘walk-and-talk therapy’, predominantly conducted in outdoor spaces (Doucette, 2004; Revell & McLeod, 2017), is confirmation of the efficacy of this method and its applicability within other fields. In an organizational setting, Chiles et al. (2021) note that walking meditation can be a valuable practice to boost imaginative thought. Oppezzo and Schwartz (2014) in their study of walking found that it substantially enhances creativity. Klotz and Bolino (2021) highlight the potential for “bringing the great outdoors into the workplace”, and it is not surprising that many organizations are now integrating outdoor spaces into workplace design to facilitate walking and employee’s connection with nature during the workday.

In today’s increasingly integrated and global world, information overload has become a significant problem (Wajcman, 2015), and yet our ability to process and ‘make sense’ of information both quickly and accurately has never been more important. Taking time out of our busy, hectic lifestyles to reflect on our immediate surroundings and be more ‘mindful’ of our current situation slows us down and promotes alternative mind-body rhythms. In their research into psychotherapy, Revell and McLeod (2017, p. 35) conclude that walking and talking “can help shift ‘stuckness’ in clients and facilitate psychological processing.” According to Solnit (2001, p. 5), “the rhythm of walking generates a rhythm of thinking, and the passage through a landscape echoes or stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts.” Anderson (2004, p. 245) similarly appreciates that ‘talking whilst walking’ can “harness place as an active trigger to prompt knowledge recollection and production”, supporting the argument that visual research approaches can offer unique and authentic analytic insights into phenomena and processes that may otherwise have been more difficult to uncover. Walking has been shown to aid in recollection and processing of previous or historical events, for example, in the healthcare context with research on dementia (e.g. Kullberg & Odzakovic, 2018; Nygård, 2006), also in geographical research exploring experiences of place in rural (Wheeler, 2014) and urban (Coles et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2017) landscapes.

In brief, the walking interview technique is concerned with *eliciting a narrative* whose nuances, ambiguities and paradoxes allow us to develop a deeper and more detailed understanding of social processes and relations, including aspects that may otherwise have escaped attention. The primary aim is to give due consideration to the contextual factors which influence and shape organizational practices. From a qualitative standpoint, walking interviews are particularly valuable in developing a better understanding of organizational phenomena. Indeed, the fact that Raulet-Croset and Borzeix (2014), among others, have opted for the term ‘commentated walks’ points to the largely informal and ad hoc approach taken in current applications of this method. Moreover, walking interviews are inherently spatial in the sense that they are “not so much organized by questions as by settings” (Popp, 2012, p. 54). Representing a flexible and more dynamic style of interviewing, walking interviews can be used to identify salient themes and patterns emerging from the data, reflecting on these from the perspective of participants, mitigating against the researcher imposing their own analytic categories, preconceived ideas or opinions. It is this unique feature of walking interviews that is conducive to a shift away from

interviewer-led interpretations to interviewee-initiated accounts. A practical guide of how walking interviews are planned and conducted is included in Table 1.

1.2. Comparing walking interviews, sit-down interviews and shadowing

There are some fundamental differences between the walking interview, the sit-down interview, and shadowing, which make for an interesting comparison, allowing for an assessment of which aspects of these techniques are applicable between and across different research contexts and are related to particular research purposes. In order to articulate a clear and compelling contribution to the organizational research methods literature with regards to adopting walking interviews, the specific attributes of each method and their distinctive properties require further elaboration and explanation. This can therefore be considered an attempt to 'take stock' of some features which distinguish the sit-down interview from shadowing and walking interviews respectively; many of which will be elaborated later in the discussion. For the purposes of distilling the key benefits of walking interviews when compared to sit-down interviews and shadowing, Table 2 summarises the main differences between the three approaches.

1.2.1. Sit-down interviews

As a method of data collection, interviews come in different forms and continue to form the basis of many qualitative research inquiries. Although there is a proliferation of different types of interview (see Gubrium & Holstein, 2001) – including, for example, in-depth interviews, biographical interviews, life history and oral history interviews – they can be broadly classified into three distinct categories, namely structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. As Bryman (2012) notes, researchers frequently use the term 'qualitative interview' when referring to the latter two types of interview. Kvale's (1996) useful introduction to qualitative research interviewing in 'InterViews' emphasises the conversational and social transactional aspects of the method. For Mishler (1986/1991), interviews are not simply exchanges of questions and answers by researchers and participants, rather they are a form of discourse in which the co-construction of meaning takes place within a particular type of social relationship. Similarly, if we see interviews as "sites of co-production" (Vaughan, 2008, pp. 223–224) "where both researcher and participants work through experiences, ideas, decisions, issues of identity, and so on, they are more about dialogue than fact-finding" (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013). In referring to 'sit-down' interviews here we reiterate that, despite their varying questioning styles, they are static by their very nature, and are hence confined, usually by necessity, to a specific location (i.e. a particular space, place, and time) with little to no movement involved.

Semi-structured interviews remain the most widespread form of qualitative interviewing (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2020), and involve the researcher developing a standardised set of questions to lead the discussion, while allowing sufficient opportunity for other relevant topics to emerge. Interviews that are semi-structured pose a number of advantages in social science research where, through incorporating open-ended questions, their design encourages respondents to reflect on their own decision-making, as well as that of others. *Unstructured* interviews are evaluated in their capacity to collect information on the meanings and qualities of interviewee experiences in a more conversational manner, facilitating exploration of substantive information pertinent to the research question. The unstructured interview can be said to attend to Bresnen's (2013, p. 46) 'element of opportunism', allowing the researcher "to follow up the leads that emerge, in order to get a more complete understanding and reach a coherent explanation" of events and encounters in the field. Structured interviews seek to ensure consistency in the search for data through pre-planned efforts that standardise both the way questions are asked and the way that answers are recorded.

One obvious disadvantage of a sit-down and somewhat structured

Table 1
Practical guide for walking interviews in organizational research.

Before the walking interview
General points: - Source a map of the walking route or floor plan of the building under study, and make sure you are somewhat familiar with the setting in which the walking interview will take place – this will not only help to establish credibility with interviewees but will facilitate movement through the spaces. - Wear appropriate footwear for walking/standing for long periods of time and also make the participant aware of this i.e. in the initial communications when arranging the interviews and in the Plain Language Statement. - Try and start the walk in a location that is convenient for the participant. - Discuss with your participant the strategies for dealing with others joining the conversation (e.g. whether the recording will be paused, or the "intruders" informed about the interview taking place). **Equipment and recording:** - Use a good digital audio recorder that is hands-free and includes a microphone that can be tucked into a pocket or attached to a lapel. Two recording devices may be necessary to capture the voices of both the interviewer and the interviewee. - Test your recording equipment – consider the microphone range (positioning the microphone as near to the interviewees as possible), also any extraneous background noise which may make recorded speech inaudible. - As well as audio-recording the walking interview, it is important to make some field notes as the interview progresses, therefore a notebook and clipboard may be necessary, providing a flat, hard surface to write on while walking – the notes can also act as a back-up if the audio-recording does not work or is interrupted. **Ethics and safety:** - Consider whether photography and/or videography is allowed. - Make sure you (or the interviewee) obtain the relevant permissions to access certain locations/spaces i.e. offices or organizational units. - It is sometimes not always possible to maintain the confidentiality of all participants which are encountered in the field during walking interviews – remember to highlight the presence of audio/video recording equipment (if used) when others enter the range of the microphone or camera's field of vision. - This particularly applies to taking photographs and videos – remain vigilant to individuals in the background who are unaware of your presence. - Ensure your own and the interviewee's safety (leave information with a colleague about your interview location and timing).
During the walking interview
General points: - Be mindful of the varied mobility and fitness levels of participants and adjust accordingly. - Stay focused and maintain concentration – do not attempt to observe and record everything that is going on as you walk. - Consider what is strictly relevant to the principal themes of the interview, although some digression should be tolerated, taking you to unknown places/spaces. - Note on paper any non-verbal cues and facial expressions (when they are observable) which cannot be picked up with an audio-recording, these can be expressed as words or symbols. - Where allowed and appropriate, taking photographs or videos of material objects and spaces visited can aid recall of information and ideas later. - Note any sensory stimulus e.g. smells, sounds, light, changes in temperature. - If you have a map of the area, plotting a route is likely to be helpful. - At the end of the interview before parting ask for any additional reflections and comments and follow up with questions that you may not have been able to ask while walking.
After the walking interview
General points: - After each walking interview, retire soon after the event to privately note things down, summarising what was said and spaces/objects of interest encountered along the way. - Transcribe the interviews including the prompts which identify the spatial context. **Analysis:** - Analysis is carried out as with any qualitative research, through the identification of codes and themes and overarching theoretical categories. - The route is crucial in the process of analysis (where the interviewees choose where to go and which places they choose to avoid, whether the route is planned or decided on spontaneously). - Linking words and phrases with places in the analytical process involves drawing out contextual insights. It may involve consideration of spaces or objects which triggered certain observations, or whether observations led to deciding about the route – in which case, referring to notes taken during interview can be helpful. - The route, the narrative and the photographs (where appropriate) are not standalone as discrete pieces of data, but rather should be considered together.

Table 2
Comparing 'sit-down' interviews, walking interviews and shadowing.

Research method	'Sit-down' interviews	Shadowing	Walking interviews
Alternative names/types	'Structured interviews'; 'Semi-structured interviews'; 'Unstructured/in-depth interviews'	Observation 'on the move'; 'Structured observation'; 'Direct observation'	'Go-along' interviews; 'Commentated walks'; 'Bimbling'
Definition(s)	– "a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study" (DeMarrais, 2002: 54) – "a face to face verbal interchange in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinions or belief from another person or persons" (Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954: 499)	– "involves a researcher closely following a member of an organization over an extended period of time" (McDonald, 2005, p. 456) – "a way of studying the work and life of people who move often and quickly from place to place" (Czarniawska, 2014: 92)	– involves a researcher walking alongside a participant during an interview in a given location – the interviewer walks alongside the participant who is encouraged to describe what they perceive and experience through the walk (Raulet-Croset & Borzeix, 2014)
Key scholars	Mishler (1986/1991); Kvale (1996); Czarniawska (2001); Wolcott (1973/2003); King (1994); Silverman (2006); Bryman (2008)	Walker et al. (1956); Guest (1956); Capote (1975); Sclavi (1989; 2007); Mintzberg (1970; 1973); Wolcott (1973/2003; 2003); Bonazzi (1998); Miller (1998); McDonald (2005); Czarniawska (2007; 2014a; 2014b)	Kusenbach (2003); Anderson (2004); Carpiano (2009); Clark and Emmel (2010); Evans and Jones (2011); Raulet-Croset and Borzeix (2014); Warren (2016)
Typical applications	Utilised across all disciplines, with varying preferences for them between disciplines, depending on the research methodology i.e.: – In *Exploratory* studies: *unstructured/in-depth interviews* can be useful to find out more information and probe for new insights – In *Descriptive* studies: *structured interviews* can help identify general patterns – In *Explanatory* studies: *semi-structured interviews* can be useful in understanding the relationships/infer causal relationships between variables (Soja, 1989)	– Social anthropology – Consumer studies (e.g. Miller, 1998) – Organization studies (Gill, 2011; McDonald, 2005; Vásquez et al., 2012) – As an educational technique in teaching and nursing (Lindberg & Czarniawska, 2006; Roan & Rooney, 2006) – Also not restricted to following humans – extended to include objects and quasi-objects	– Geography – Anthropology – Urban studies
Advantages	- Can vary on a continuum between structured and non-structured - With the use of varying questioning techniques, researchers can explore research subjects' opinions, behaviour and experiences - Enables the reconstruction of events i.e. how a series of events unfolded (Bell et al., 2019) - Structured interviews allow for direct comparisons between the responses given by interviewees and are easier to replicate	- Mobility is the main advantage when compared to stationary observation - Permits one to preserve an attitude of outsidedness, compared to participant observation and 'going native' - Provides insight into phenomenon situated in time and place - Increases the proportion of participant's reflection on their daily work	- More informal and less structured - Typically time-bound - Reduces power imbalance between the researcher and the researched and establishes rapport (Carpiano, 2009) - Participant has greater control over the research process - Encourages spontaneous conversation - Situates experiences in their wider context - Environment acts as a prompt for discussions (Anderson, 2004)
Disadvantages	- Less naturalistic and disrupts the normal flow of events (Bell et al., 2019) - Intrusion of biases and expectations (see Roulston et al., 2003) - Lack of similarity in unstructured interviews undermines the reliability of the approach - Relies on respondent's ability to accurately and honestly recall information - The location of interviews is rarely considered although it can influence the kinds of data gathered	- Involving long-stays in the field - Cooperation from higher levels in the organization is necessary - Issues of blending in, or 'passing' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983/2007; 2007) i.e. with clothing etc. (see McDowell, 1997) - The difficulties of note-taking while being constantly on the move - Supports analysis of spatial and temporal dimensions, however lacks interactive features - Researcher's presence: possibility of a Hawthorne effect - Danger of a 'rehearsed performance' - "People being shadowed need to transact their business and cannot suspend their activities for the sake of a performance that is specifically addressed to a researcher" (Becker, 1970) - Impression management requires effort and concentration – dedication to keep job performance undisrupted (Goffman, 1959) - Possible negative effects on the person being shadowed e.g. Capote's shadowing ended with a cleaner losing her job	- How to record the walking interview (i.e. small handheld digital recorder/lapel microphone) is an important decision that the researcher needs to consider - Whichever recording method is used, it is unlikely that all of the interview will be captured due to interruptions (e.g. background noises, other people) - If GPS technology is used to capture the route then this can be interpreted negatively as 'Big Brother' surveillance tactics (Jones et al., 2008) - Ethical challenges – confidentiality cannot be assured if the walking interview is conducted in a public place - Safety considerations i.e. particularly when conducting walking interviews outdoors/weather-related problems - Less structured questioning makes it more difficult to analyze the data generated

interview situation which uses a questioning format, is that it conjures up images of an 'interrogative' encounter, whereby an outsider (the interviewer) is said to 'quiz' the interviewee on specific issues in order to glean concrete information about an organization and its practices. This view is not surprising given how interviews are typically portrayed in recruitment, media, and crime settings. A more structured interview can, of course, restrict the kinds of information gleaned and perhaps limit the topics posed for discussion in that they remain pre-determined by the researcher (Czarniawska, 2014a). According to Bell et al. (2019, p. 458): "Interviewing, even when it is at its most informal, disrupts the normal flow of events, and consequently is less naturalistic than methods such as participant observation."

In sit-down interviews, words are the main currency and language is generally viewed as the prime bearer of meaning. The disciplines of geography and sociology both privilege the words of interviewees as the basis for exploration of their attitudes and practices. This emphasis on

the spoken and written word is also evident in organization studies, reinforcing something of a methodological status quo. For Bryman (2012), the success of research interviews is predicated on the interpersonal communication skills of the interviewer. Crawford et al. (2021) have highlighted the value in practising "show-and-tell" in long interviews in organizational research, arguing that they ought to encompass more than simply "speech events" (McCracken, 1988; Spradley, 1979). While there have been attempts to acknowledge the need for alternatives to word-based approaches in data collection, most organization studies tend to concentrate on the spoken word in the retelling of organizational life and work. Kvale (2006) observed the ubiquity of the interview in qualitative social science research, citing Atkinson and Silverman's (1997) poignant critique of the 'interview society', which pointed out that the traditional interview situation does not leave room for uncertainty, tentativeness, or open-endedness. Epstein et al. (2006) criticised traditional interviews that rely solely on linguistic communication, citing Clark's (1999) use of photo-elicitation when interviewing young children, whose limited verbal language reduced the issues and questions that the researcher could explore. Walking interviews can obviate some of the disadvantages of the sit-down interview (i.e. the emphasis on questioning and an over-reliance on words). For example, unnecessary and excessive questioning can be avoided while walking. Also, rather than being confined to a stationary position, the researcher's physical movement through spaces permits observations in parallel with listening to what is said.

More general criticisms of the interview method centre on an inability to account for respondent behaviour. Roulston et al. (2003) specifically document instances in which the novice interviewer must contend with unexpected participant behaviour, expanding on other issues including: the phrasing and negotiation of questions; dealing with sensitive research topics; and transcription problems. Another disadvantage is impression management which is likely to occur in an interview situation (Alvesson, 2011), particularly if this is the first occasion the researcher and participant have met. Some respondents are also guilty of telling the researcher what they think they want to hear (Silverman, 2006) which can further undermine the veracity of accounts and the reliability of the data collected.

Many qualitative scholars have stressed the importance of location when conducting interviews (e.g., Ecker, 2017; Elwood & Martin, 2000; Gagnon et al., 2015; Herzog, 2012), however it is still an aspect of interviewing that is often overlooked. Many studies do not make explicit reference to the setting in which interviews were conducted. Elwood and Martin (2000, p. 650) acknowledge that while "instructional texts" may offer advice to researchers in the practical sense (i.e. appropriate conduct involving selection of participants, devising of interview questions, and recording of information), they fail to critically comprehend the interview 'site'. As the location where information is exchanged between researcher and research participant, "it is crucial to recognise that, far from being removed from social and cultural contexts at other scales, the interview site provides a material space for the enactment and constitution of power relations" (Elwood & Martin, 2000, p. 650). Dundon and Ryan (2010), for example, allude to the significance of interview location in their study on interviewing reluctant respondents, referring to interviews being conducted in "inappropriate environments" such as the "HR manager's plush office" (p. 570), also "a more neutral canteen location" which "offered a reprieve" from suspicions surrounding researcher motives and "general disengagement from the research project", contributing to a "more fluid conversation" and "an improved atmosphere" (p. 571). Following Glassner (2000, p. 590) it is important to be mindful of the fact that "questions that genuinely remain unresolved about the social construction of meaning involve not *whether* meaning is constructed, but rather *where* the constructions take place, and to what effect [emphasis added]." If interview location plays a role in constructing reality, then the significance of space and place in research can be considered pertinent to a holistic understanding of experiences and context.

1.2.2. Shadowing

There have been a number of scholars associated with shadowing through the years, namely Walker et al. (1956), Guest (1956), Mintzberg (1970; 1973), Wolcott (1973/2003; 2003), and Miller (1998), among others. Czarniawska has written extensively on shadowing as a fieldwork technique (Czarniawska, 2007; 2014a; 2014b). Some have since furthered this inquiry (e.g. Gill, 2011; McDonald, 2005; McDonald & Simpson, 2014; Vásquez et al., 2012), focusing on its application within organization studies and its potential to generate new insights into organizational practice.

Shadowing in the simplest terms involves following someone going about their daily business (they could be walking or sitting down). A popular method of data collection, shadowing is a form of non-participant observation and is intended to add an observational element to data collection beyond interviews. However, it is important to note that shadowing is not always combined with interviews; some field researchers just follow the persons they shadow, seeking to avoid any interruptions or comments. While shadowing does represent a form of fieldwork 'on the move', when comparing it with other mobile methods it is important to highlight some key differences in its implementation in practice, also in the kinds of information it elicits.

The shadowing technique normally involves more observations and analysis of behaviour with less interaction between the researcher and the people they observe (Czarniawska, 2014b). This can lead to a different form of field research that is principally reliant on the researcher's interpretations of the data and emergent themes. Hence, with reduced interaction this can inevitably restrict opportunities for providing an embodied and intuitive experience for the research participant under study, therefore limiting the kinds of information shared. Although shadowing does encompass a spatial and temporal dimension beyond that which a sit-down interview can provide, the emphasis on demonstrating everyday activities, practices and interactions for the researcher's benefit means that there is a danger of this approach resulting in a mere performance or 'rehearsal' of work tasks and organizational norms. It is precisely under such conditions that various cognitive biases come most strongly into play with potential to run unchecked, undermining the research's effectiveness, validity, reliability, and trustworthiness. Many shadowing researchers have reported that participants frequently seem hesitant and uneasy about being constantly observed (McDonald, 2005; Quinlan, 2008; Vásquez et al., 2012). Czarniawska (2007, p. 58) deems shadowing to be 'psychologically uncomfortable' for some participants which does not bode well for the researcher seeking to establish rapport and trust, particularly within politically sensitive environments such as organizations.

McDonald (2005) argues that reflexivity on the part of the researcher is a required but often neglected aspect of shadowing. Gill (2011) echoes this concern in her study of entrepreneurs. Taking issue with the connotations of the term "shadowing" itself, i.e. "stealth, invisibility, silence, acquiescence, and non-participation", Gill (2011) proposes the label 'spect-acting' as an alternative, implying that the researcher is as much an actor in this process as the shadowee, (and vice versa). This raises the possibility of a two-way reflexivity for both the researcher as well as the participant, opening up the research process to take into account differences in researcher-participant identities, and acknowledging emotions and power relations. These exceptions notwithstanding, the main limitation of shadowing is that it encourages a strictly observational approach, with an emphasis on recording events and conversations, which offers limited opportunities for interaction and flexible intuitive engagement with the research context.

1.2.3. Walking interviews

Since walking interviews and shadowing both involve an element of observation, they are often confused. In making the case for shadowing in the study of organizations, McDonald and Simpson (2014, p. 3) recognise the need for "a research method that can keep pace with events as they unfold in real-time over the many spaces of organizing."

Of particular interest here is the key difference between observation and shadowing in that the former is more concerned with "place(s) and time (s)", while the latter is more attuned to "actors [and] paths (in time and space)" (McDonald & Simpson, 2014). While bearing some similarities to shadowing in their emphasis on 'moving with' (Czarniawska, 2007; McDonald, 2005) research subjects, walking interviews are sufficiently distinct to warrant separate status given that they are, by their very nature, more spontaneous and interactive in practice. Their ability to shed important light on co-construction of meaning in organizations as people move through spaces is one feature in particular that ultimately sets them apart from their predecessors. As with sit-down interviews and shadowing, there are different types of walking interview which give rise to quite different properties and applications in research. Various formats of the walking interview have been described (Anderson, 2004; Carpiano, 2009; Clark & Emmel, 2010; Kusenbach, 2003).

Walking interviews can be seen as being on a continuum from *researcher*-driven, that is, where the researcher decides on the location and the route to be taken, to the walking interview being *participant*-driven, where the participant selects the location and route for the interview (Evans & Jones, 2011). While it would be misleading to suggest that walking interviews can become entirely participant-led, it is nevertheless possible for this potential to be realised with careful design and execution. Another key question concerns at which point in data collection should the walking interviews be introduced i.e. at the beginning of the study, throughout, or towards the end. Falconer's (2017, p. 203) approach, for example, involved conducting a brief, static interview first, to collect general information about participants, "their lives, histories, and everyday movements". The walking interview comprised the second phase of the research, and involved the researcher accompanying the individual to their chosen location which they felt was important to their everyday lives.

In documenting the wider appeal and utility of walking interviews, it is important to highlight their emancipatory potential, given that this is regarded as one of the main benefits of the method when compared to other types of interview. That is, of course, cognisant of research situations in which power is on the side of the researcher and not the participant. Regardless of where power is held, the idea is that walking interviews can, in the literal sense, allow research interactions to take place on a more equal footing, as it feels less like an interrogation, and more like a friendly exchange. This provides additional opportunities to develop rapport with respondents and gain a deeper understanding of information shared. When the participant determines the route for walking and the narrative is less constrained by questioning (by its nature the walking interview is unstructured), consequently the commentary is more free flowing allowing the interviewee to own the narrative and, in some instances, enabling them to steer the conversation away from points of contention. Walking interviews can also cultivate a greater sensitivity to shifting power relations between interviewer and interviewee which is, in itself, valuable data for the qualitative researcher.

Compared to sit-down interviews and shadowing, a significant advantage of walking interviews is that they allow a sustained and critical engagement with both verbal and visual data in the field concurrently. Linking words and spaces in the analytical process forms the basis of Crawford et al.'s (2021) "show-and-tell" approach, which incorporates a variety of types of interviews, including walking interviews. As Orlikowski (2006, p. 460) notes, "Everyday practices and the knowing generated as a result is deeply bound up in the material forms, artefacts, spaces, and infrastructures through which humans act." Many organizational phenomena are spatially sensitive, and traditional ethnographic methods such as participant observation and sit-down interviews sometimes fail to capture the socio-spatial dynamics of organizational practice. Drawing on the concept of emplaced participation, Soja (1989) emphasise the importance of asking questions *in situ*, and how this can offer insights into research participants' everyday practices. Here, we are concerned with bringing the geographical context to the fore in qualitative research (Anderson, 2004), and organizational research studies specifically. Walking interviews represent a particularly useful tool for investigating the relationship between "*what* people say and *where* they say it [emphasis added]" (Evans & Jones, 2011, p. 849). Elwood and Martin (2000) consider the lack of explicit attention paid to the influence of place on knowledge formation. In order to explore place-sensitive organizational phenomena, this requires a departure from conventional research techniques and methodologies, paving the way for material objects and spaces to become the locus of interaction and dialogue (Crawford et al., 2021). The exceptionality of the walking interview rests in creating opportunities to contextualise words using movement through space by walking as a key enabler of thought.

Hibbert et al. (2014, p. 287) offer some important insights in their article on 'relationally reflexive practice', suggesting that as researchers we ought to "see ourselves as fellow participants with our research 'subjects', seeking to 'walk alongside' them", albeit in the figurative sense, such that "we are engaged enough to support an interpretive approach to the generation of insights about them." In a similar vein, drawing on Fine's (1994) conceptualization of "working the hyphen", Cunliffe and Karunanayake (2013, p. 365) discuss the possibility of 'hyphen-spaces' in ethnographic research as a way of emphasising not the boundaries between researchers and participants, but rather "*the spaces of possibility*". They argue that researchers must 'work the hyphen', which means adopting a reflexive stance to probe how their presence in the field influences and/or changes people and practices, while simultaneously appreciating how research participants' presence also influences their conduct and handling/interpretation of information. Given that this is a two-way process, which involves co-production of meaning from a research standpoint, as such we need research methods which are capable of drawing attention to the identity work of both researchers and participants, positionalities and power relations, and ethical choices, and how this comes to bear on the research project and subsequent reporting of findings (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013; Gill, 2011). Walking interviews serve a crucial function here in that they are inherently reflexive, emphasising an interactive and iterative approach to data generation and analysis and consideration of spatial context.

1.3. *Empirical illustration*[1]

To illustrate the main tenets of our argument, we draw on a research project within the UK Parliament. Walking interviews were used in this study to gain insights into the processes of institutional creation, institutional maintenance and potential institutional disruption. The main conceptual lens was institutional theory and microfoundations of institutions.

The key focus was on the link between an organization representing an institution and the building housing it. An overarching research question was "how do buildings shape organizational practices?". New buildings are erected, old buildings fall into disrepair, and long-standing organizations occasionally are forced to move out, permanently or temporarily, for the duration of repair work. We were interested in the links between organizations and buildings. These links are acknowledged in management literature (Czarniawska, 2009; Hatch, 2013; Lawrence & Dover, 2015), but researchers have found it hard to put their finger on how an 'anchoring effect' happens (Monteiro & Nicolini, 2014). By exploring the hopes and fears of various stakeholders, we attempted to identify the ways in which the Parliament buildings shape social practices within them and contribute to institutional change or lack of thereof (Siebert, 2023).

One of the authors conducted 9 walking interviews and 22 'sit-down'

[1] Both authors have used walking interviews in their research, though in this article we draw on one research project by one of the authors.

interviews. For the purposes of this article, we "zoom in" on walking interviews and below we outline the key observations. We asked the participant to take the researcher for a walk to the places that were important to them, or which they thought were interesting, embarrassing, or revealed something about the problems in the organization's functioning. In contrast to shadowing, which relies on observations of behavior, sequences of activities, and events, our walking interviews were interactive and dynamic in nature, and it was largely the interviewee who directed the walk and the course of discussion. Drawing on the previous applications of walking interviews in social science and our own experiences in organizations (Bilsland, 2018; Siebert, 2023; Meakin & Siebert, 2023), below we outline the key observations, framed in terms of five "strengths" of the walking interview, and explain how they can be of benefit for organizational researchers.

1.3.1. Strength 1: Co-creation of meaning

Walking interviews allow for the co-creation of meaning, with emphasis on developing a more discursive and reflective approach to data collection. The interviewees are encouraged to assume a more active and participatory role vis-à-vis traditional question-based interviews. This not only may assist them in making sense of their experiences, but can also give them a large measure of control and ownership over the research process than would normally be attainable in a more traditional structured, sit-down interview situation. During the walking interviews, parliamentary doorkeepers were volunteering to show us the "behind the scenes" operation of the organization – hidden exits, underground corridors, or secret meeting rooms. As the "carriers of the keys," in the literal sense, they were proud to be able to take us to spaces (usually basements or attic rooms) normally locked to those working in the buildings. These visits revealed a lot about the hidden organization, i.e. the ways in which secrecy works, uncomfortable situations are managed, and conflicts are avoided. The walks behind the scenes created a more immersive situation that positively motivated the interviewees, which led to increased interest and interaction.

Because the interviewees determined the route of the walk, they had a larger measure of control over the conversation than would normally be attainable in a sit-down interview. In most cases, the interviewees played to their strengths; for example, facilities managers showed us faulty designs, security managers highlighted tensions between the need for openness and the threats of terrorist attacks, and catering staff complained about the inadequate provision of storage spaces in the canteens. A simple question about the issues encountered in their working lives in a sit-down interview would have not elicited these observations in the same way that the "show-and-tell" (Crawford et al., 2021) aspect of walking did. Co-creation of meaning was facilitated through walking and talking which encouraged the participants to take a more active role in the research process and, in turn, yielded important insights into work practices and the production of subjectivity in each organization.

This greater ownership of the interview situation produced more spontaneous and richer data than a traditional sit-down interview would, for example, visits to offices in the basement were accompanied by narratives on inadequate working conditions. As Jones et al. (2017: 38) acknowledge "Different people encounter the same built environment in different ways, although with some sharing of experience depending on the subjective position they possess". A basement office for the researcher is a plain, unattractive office, while for the interviewee it brings a whole world of emotions and meanings related to working within such an environment. We found that walking interviews gleaned more concrete information on the experience of work and subjectivity, while in sit-down interviews, participants may have been inclined to stray towards more distantly related associations and data (Collier, 1957), perhaps deviating considerably from the research topic. For example, interviewees commented on the spaces where certain events happened or memorable conversations took place.

1.3.2. Strength 2: Reversal of power

Walking interviews might be auxiliary to an emancipatory agenda in organizational research, whereby participants are afforded the opportunity to take an active and leading role in conveying details about their personal in-place experiences. Thus, beyond the benefits of walking interviews in terms of the data they produce for the researcher, walking interviews can have emancipatory potential for the interviewee. When the interviewee determines the route, the interviews are more empowering for them granting them autonomy and opportunities to digress from the planned questions and explore new avenues of thought. We found that this format also visibly reduced the anxiety of questioning for interviewees. Indeed, as noted above, a criticism often levelled at 'word-based' sit-down interviews is that their effectiveness ultimately depends upon the interpersonal communication skills of the interviewer (Bryman, 2012). In walking interviews with researchers using short, neutral comments to guide interaction and asking questions for clarification, the effect was that interviewees were willing to divulge new knowledge and information. Less emphasis on eye contact in walking interviews also put interviewees (and at times a more nervous interviewer) at ease. This reversal of power led to better rapport and trust (Carpiano, 2009), but also as Jones et al. (2008) acknowledged, it led to a significant effect on the *kinds* of data that were generated, i.e. the data was more spontaneous. Given their informal and flexible nature, walking interviews can, quite literally, take the research in new directions. In Westminster, a spontaneous visit to a windowless, damp office normally used by Parliament staff on a hot-desking basis, gave the researcher valuable insights into the conditions of work, power relations in the workplace and the exceptionalism of the organization where heritage and history are seen to take precedence over ergonomics and health and safety. A sit-down interview would not have produced these insights.

Removing this pressure of questioning shifted the discretion on the direction of interview towards the interviewee. People who were not normally asked about their experiences of work (junior assistants, cleaners, catering staff) were significantly put at ease when they were asked to walk to the places where they normally work and talk about their experiences. When discussing working conditions in the oldest parts of the parliamentary estate in Westminster, interviewees were more confident to show some spaces rather than to talk about them for fear of being quoted and identified. As alluded to earlier, an obvious caveat to this observation is the question whether there was a power imbalance in the relationship in the first place. In management research in particular, power dynamics can be complicated and there are unique challenges associated with, for example, interviewing organizational elites (Odendahl & Shaw, 2001; Ma et al., 2021), also in engaging reluctant respondents (Dundon & Ryan, 2010). In the case of interviewing politicians who are normally used to press interviews, aggressive questioning and publicity, walking interviews did not have these empowering qualities. A major benefit of the walking interview technique is that as researchers, we no longer had to worry as much about power asymmetries and losing control and could be more open to the interviewee's narrative, as compared to traditional sit-down interviews.

1.3.3. Strength 3: Places as prompts

Organizational researchers at times wistfully ask: "if these walls could speak, what would they say about what really goes on in the organization … ?". Walking interviews provide new opportunities to reveal information about hidden organizational phenomena, and we found that narratives by interviewees produced in certain spaces brought us closer to understanding what goes on in these spaces, and allowed us to research hidden organizational phenomena and dynamics, including confidential meetings, secret negotiations, and instances of organizational misconduct.

Going beyond the primary focus on putting the participant at ease, Anderson (2004, p. 254) argues that 'talking whilst walking' can "harness place as an active trigger to prompt knowledge recollection and production." As such, the spaces and places encountered *en route* act as

prompts to the discussions, as opposed to objects or photographs the researcher would normally have had to bring with them into a traditional, sit-down interview (Anderson, 2004; Jones et al., 2008), similar to what Crawford et al. (2021) propose. This also has the added benefit of the researcher being able to look directly at the environment being discussed. In Westminster, a discussion about the role of rituals and ceremonies took on a different meaning when taking place in a grand setting, in front of the royal throne, or in a medieval hall. The spectacular setting evokes an emotional response in the spectators and adds to the pomp and circumstance of the ritual.

Human geographers use the route of walking interviews as research material, for example in studies of urban landscapes (e.g. Coles et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2017). In the Westminster study the route in itself was also valuable research data. The walking interview method did not restrict the participant to the previously defined preconceptions, and the unexpected findings "along the way" opened up new ways of conceptualising, for example on the nature of the ritual in Parliament, visible and invisible boundaries, opaque rules of access to some parts of the organizations. The interviews challenged participants to correct the researcher's original interpretations, acting as a check on consistency of views and ensuring research validity, reliability, and trustworthiness. The route of the walks in Westminster revealed a lot about the interviewees' experience of the organization. When confronted with a vast building complexes and adjacent courtyards, the interviewees had to be selective. Although the participants had been asked in advance to suggest a route, most of them did not seem to have planned one. The spontaneous nature of the walk took the researcher to some unusual places, such as the roof above the House of Commons Chamber and a dark office in the basement. Walking interviews gave us insights into the existing power relations which preserve social structures and the authority of some individuals, for example, interviewees with higher standing in the organizational hierarchies, such as senior clerks and Members of Parliament, were more comfortable walking into some social spaces such as The Strangers' Bar, or Lord's Bar, than their junior colleagues. Their familiarity with the buildings also revealed a lot about status, privilege and the demarcation of roles.

Our interviewees pointed at objects within the organizational spaces and used them as prompts to tell stories about people and events. Such stories added a richness to the interviews and the spaces themselves came to act as prompts and triggers for remembering and eliciting responses. As Jones et al. (2008, p. 7) noted, a location can stimulate "a socio-political narrative which is not related to the actual built form itself." We found that walking interviews began to address the neglect of the so-called 'liminal' spaces in organizations (Tagliaventi, 2020; Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003; Dale & Burrell, 2008; Shortt, 2015) i.e. the spaces without clearly defined purposes emerging at the boundaries of purposefully defined organizational spaces.

The importance of free-flowing narrative prompted by places rather than questions allowed us to learn things that we may have missed or "didn't know to ask about". For example, encounters with other organizational actors during our walks prompted comments about people's role in the organization, their careers, including their rise and fall, their sense of importance, etc. (see also Crawford et al., 2021 on the generative potential of such encounters). They ventured into the realm of gossiping, which gave us insights into what is normally out of bounds for the researcher. As such, walking interviews can provide access to 'liminal' space for the research itself (see Purdy & Walker, 2013; Wood, 2012), where narratives of work have the chance to unfold unimpeded. This allowed us to come closer to defining the 'ghosts of place' – i.e. understand the things that are not there, or which are not so obvious to the casual observer (Bell, 1997). Our participants commented on the sense of connection with the people and the events of the past amplified by the place, and this sense of connection legitimised their status.

1.3.4. Strength 4: Sensory experience of the field

With established roots in anthropology and geography, the walking interview offers various stimuli, including visual stimuli, which generate different *types* of memories, sensations and information than commentary in a static situation (Anderson, 2004; Evans & Jones, 2011; Lee & Ingold, 2006). Samantha Warren was among the first organization scholars to highlight the benefits of sensory methodologies, and has significantly contributed to the advancement of this area of research over the past two decades (e.g. Warren, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2018; Shortt & Warren, 2012; Vince & Warren, 2012). In one of her earlier articles, '*Show me how it feels to work here*', Warren (2002) explores the embodied nature of organization and calls for more 'sensually complete' research methodologies (see also Pink, 2009). Walking interviews provide one answer to this call (Chiles et al., 2021), as they can yield richer descriptions of everyday life in workplaces, creating a possibility to better explain, or even reproduce, other sensory cues such as sight, smell, sound, touch and taste.

Visits to the underground corridors and 'stuffy' windowless offices gave the researcher insights into the experience of work of parliamentary staff, which was largely in contrast with the experiences of those working upstairs in spacious rooms overlooking the city. As researchers we did not base our analysis exclusively on interviewees' verbal accounts. Words with multiple meanings and attributions maintain a sense of ambiguity surrounding their interpretation and application. Moreover, how bodies relate to their physical environments and each other is sometimes beyond verbal expression. Interviewees behaved differently in the Portcullis House café because of the open nature of the space and overwhelming noise which muffled conversations. This space felt more modern and more relaxed in contrast to the traditional Victorian or Edwardian décor in the private, smaller cafés where people spoke in hushed tones. Using Lefebvre's (1974/1991) notion of lived spaces, we were able to "experience" some spaces ourselves firsthand, and witness people inhabiting the Parliament. In contrast to word-based interviews (Epstein et al., 2006), walking interviews can also provide a better frame for the interviewees wishing to convey particular meanings and attributions, beyond which words fail. Studies which call for research participants to *show* what they perceive as important (Crawford et al., 2021) and *show* how it feels to work in a particular environment (Warren, 2002) reinforce the need for a more complete understanding of the sensory experience of the field. These works are useful in helping us envisage the possibilities of linking words, spaces and the senses they stimulate in the research methods we choose to employ.

1.3.5. Strength 5: Researching emotions

Returning to the quote from Rousseau (Van den Abbeele, 1992) at the beginning of this article, it is the act of walking that has the effect of setting the mind in motion. The physical act of walking, and the feeling of oneself in motion, is said to stimulate certain memories, thoughts and feelings, which may not have materialised were it not for a cue or stimulus in the immediate environment. Motion begets emotion in the sense that in changing one's physical state this may necessitate a shift in cognitive or emotional perspective (Solnit, 2001). It is no coincidence that the very word 'emotion' contains the word 'motion', lending credence to the idea that the act of walking can be a powerful tool for mediating the identification and exploration of emotions and attitudes towards particular phenomena and processes. As Daly and Allen (2021) note walking interviews can be useful in uncovering the *significance* of emotions and memories. Walking interviews, in the Westminster study, yielded valuable field material providing insights into the emotions that some places evoked: feelings of frustration with the inadequate facilities, pride in the longstanding history of the institution, also anger at the ways in which Westminster fails to deal with bullying and harassment of staff.

Making the connection between the words and the space is critical if words are to accurately convey and represent thought. Emotion is the connection to real life events and displays of emotion in a specific organizational context, whether positive or negative, verbal or nonverbal, can reveal implicit understandings, expectations, and

conventions. Pointing at places of historic significance in Parliament, participants expressed their views on which traditions were worth preserving and which ones should be eliminated. Several interviewees identified the dent in the table where Winston Churchill ceremoniously banged his signet ring when making passionate speeches. The role the Prime Minister had in inspiring the nation filled some Parliament staff with pride demonstrating that it is crucial to know *what* spaces stimulated *what* stories, and consequently what emotions. Physical artefacts were attributed with magical qualities, with some interviewees commenting on historical imprints left by great politicians from the past. Negative emotions were evident in some interviewees' cynicism about antiquated rituals still practiced in Parliament, or changing assessments of the UK's history. For example, the controversial painting glorifying the colonial past in St Stephen's Hall made one interviewee visibly uncomfortable, as she was embarrassed about the now unacceptable racial connotations. These stories triggered by physical artefacts and spaces encountered on the walks brought about certain emotions and feelings which provided insight into the degree of compliance with institutional prescriptions and expectations (Creed et al., 2014). This demonstrates the effect the location has on storytelling, and the power to evoke emotional responses.

Again, as observed in the social spaces of Westminster and bar example demonstrating power relations, walking interviews also gave us additional insights into how people actually felt about their own status based on the places they visited with the researcher. Some more senior people (either senior in rank, or with longer experience in the building) felt brave in their choice of places to walk through. One interviewee took us to the private offices of highly senior cabinet ministers to discuss the layout of furniture and seating arrangements. Others were more hesitant, unsure whether they themselves were allowed entrance to some rooms. One interviewee, who had worked in the buildings for 20 years, kept getting lost, which suggested an uneven familiarity with the estate, surprisingly related to rank rather than length of service. How comfortably people negotiate spaces during walking interviews therefore also provided insights into the internal hierarchies of organizations.

1.3.6. *Limitations*

The use of walking interviews offered similar benefits in our various research projects, but also similar challenges. Part of the motivation for writing this article was also to gain insights into these challenges/limitations and make suggestions as to how they can possibly be overcome. The technique itself can vary widely in its application and the purpose of reporting these cases and challenges is not to discourage the researcher, on the contrary, we would like to promote the use of walking interviews by sharing our strategies and lessons learned in our approach.

The first challenge that is worth considering, is what constitutes 'data' collected and how data is presented, analyzed and interpreted. Gorelick's (1996) critique of Marxist-feminist inductive research techniques tells us that without such consideration merely 'giving voice' to experiences through methods such as walking interviews, is insufficient. The analysis of this material is only meaningful if information about the location is captured. For many projects, it may be that simply inserting verbal prompts into the transcript (Jones et al., 2008) would suffice to note the location where an interviewee's comments would make limited sense, had the spatial context not been identified. These prompts could then be transcribed and later included in the script. The use of photography or videography to document the route may also be worth considering where it is permissible. It should be noted here that in the case of Westminster neither photography nor videography were allowed.

The second related challenge concerns recording the location in a more mechanistic manner. In larger studies (e.g. of urban design or planning), it would be difficult to identify spatial prompts recurring across a group of separate interviews had the route not been documented in some way. According to Jones et al. (2008, p. 8), "sticking to fixed routes and more prescriptive question sets can quickly generate information about key sites from a range of participants", and this could then be used for comparative purposes. In this study conducted within Parliament buildings, involving mainly 'corridor ethnography', however, recording the route was not an option because of security concerns and confidentiality restrictions. Consequently, alternative ways of recording the route were sought, notably by annotating a printed map of the estate and a floor plan of the building.

Although sophisticated GPS/GIS tracking technologies are increasingly being used in studies of the urban environment and cities to record the route taken, it is our contention that the disadvantages of using such technology in studies of organizations outweigh the benefits of route capture. As Jones et al. (2008, p. 7) remind us, there can be an uncomfortable "Big Brother is watching you" total surveillance quality to GPS which can undermine efforts to promote sharing of tacit knowledge and become a barrier to effecting a more equitable sharing of power between the researcher and participants, vis-à-vis traditional sit-down interviews. Not tracking the route gives the interviewees more courage to go off the beaten track, visiting 'out of bounds' areas, as shown in the Westminster Parliament example, such as dingy parliamentary offices in the basement, or spaces which reflect health and safety failings. There are also the practicalities of GPS technology use within organizational settings, not least the challenges associated with maintaining operation of the device while walking, processing information, and asking questions.

One ethical concern relates to the informed consent process during the recording of the interviews. When walking interviews are not audio-recorded, long and intense periods of concentration are required which, which at times, leaves the researcher feeling rather overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information to process and document. The voices of passers-by and the general hustle and bustle of say a retail or industrial work environment, for example, can make it difficult to capture direct quotes from participants and more detailed descriptions. Furthermore, all participants in walking interviews are normally required to give explicit consent to have their interviews recorded (as in the case of the Westminster study, by means of a microphone attached to the lapel), however this does not take into account other organizational actors who may come within the microphone range. Collins (2010, p. 84) accepts that "Although many visual researchers may not condone covert research, they might question whether it is always necessary to obtain consent from people who are the subject of the photographs". Similarly, Daniels (2008, p. 131) observes that "Embedded in the decision to use visually oriented tools should be the respect for participant autonomy. Such respect implies that we seek consent from participants to photograph them and inform them as to why we are collecting visuals that feature them." In the Westminster study, other individuals came into interaction with the interviewees and engaged in distracting conversations, either unaware of the recording equipment, or otherwise oblivious to the nature of the interaction. This was particularly frequent in Westminster where the culture of internal communication still relies on chance encounters in parliamentary corridors. Since informed consent cannot be continually negotiated with other individuals the interviewees come into contact with, the recording needs to be stopped or paused, and then the situation explained. This can also take up valuable time and individuals interjecting may even compromise the communication, altering the dynamic of the interaction. More commonly however, other people's interactions were captured accidently 'on tape' during the walk, and these had to be categorically removed from the recording to comply with ethical standards.

Special attention should be paid, again, to the use of photography during walking interviews. Cameras can be used during the walk to capture data to be explored in subsequent face-to-face, 'wind-down' interviews (see Chang, 2017). It is relevant to highlight, however, that taking photographs can be also distracting, and it is important that the researcher does not come across as a tourist snapping images, which can disrupt the flow of conversation. Otherwise, as in situations where photography is not possible (in the Westminster study), researchers are

required to rely on memory to recall the spaces, objects and practices they are shown. When walking interviews are not recorded/GPS tracked, using photographs as 'spatial markers' can also be a viable and effective alternative. According to Bell et al. (2019, p. 225), photo-elicitation "involves integrating photographs into the interview by asking respondents questions about photographs that the researcher or the respondent has taken of the research setting." Therefore the walking interview method and photo-elicitation interviewing combined has potential to uncover some of the aspects of work and organization that sometimes can go unnoticed or are overlooked for various reasons.

2. Conclusion

Drawing on our experience of walking interviews, and our review of the ways in which this method is used in other social sciences, we put forward a claim that walking interviews can offer new valuable insights into organizations as they permit greater consideration of place-sensitive phenomena and elicit detailed, multi-faceted understandings of the meanings individuals ascribe to certain aspects of organizations. We identified five strengths which offer benefits for organizational research in general. Walking interviews allow for co-creation of meaning, they have potential to reduce power imbalance between the researcher and the interviewee (including potential to alleviate some of the stress placed on the interviewee), using places as prompts, they enable research into hidden organizational phenomena, they allow the researcher an opportunity to share the sensory experience of the organization, and they give insights into people's emotions.

The act of walking and talking has a long tradition going back to ancient thinkers, and the literature reviewed at the beginning of this article highlighted the main benefits that the method offers. Our empirical studies in which we used walking interviews have allowed us to articulate the benefits of the method for organizational research, which directly addresses our research question, namely 'What are the benefits of walking interviews conducted in an organizational context, and what advantages do they offer over the traditional sit-down interview method?'. The key theme running through this paper is that the place where research takes place matters.

Beyes and Steyaert (2012) and Zhang and Spicer (2014), among others, argue that organizational spaces are far from static, rather they are complex, dynamic, active and performative in nature. With fixed understandings of space, human actors are rendered effectively mute by the belief that they are without agency in their everyday work lives. As has been noted elsewhere (e.g. Bilsland & Cumbers, 2018), a weak conceptualization of space is inevitably followed by a 'weak conceptualization of the subject' (Marks & Chillas, 2014, p. 106). Thus, there is significant potential for walking interviews as they alleviate not only understandings of space imposed by organizational hierarchy, but also the pre-existing analytical frames and unintentional biases of the researcher. Moreover, given that 'space' is an interdisciplinary concept, it is reasonable to argue that only an interdisciplinary methodological approach would be appropriate to fully capture the dynamic and transient experience of space.

While traditional fieldwork techniques, such as interviewing, participant observation and document analysis, have proven effective in researching organizations and their members, there is potential for alternative approaches to offer new perspectives and insights. As has been established in this article, walking interviews have a number of overlapping strengths. The challenge here is not only to identify different aspects of organizational life, but also understand how they come into being through social action and experience. When researching specific topics in organization studies, for example, materiality, which has gained considerable momentum in the last decade, walking interviews can be said to be broadly compatible with the aims and philosophies of these research programs because of their spatial focus, in terms of the kinds of insights they seek to provide, and their contribution to organization theory.

While this study was not specifically conducted to evaluate interview methodologies, it sheds important light on the possibilities and obstacles facing those seeking to conduct research 'on the move' in organizations. Many of the possibilities of walking interviews we mention here have not, to our knowledge, been clearly elucidated elsewhere. The findings we present here from our research reveal that the data generated through walking interviews contributes to new knowledge of organizations, and offers critical insights into the experience of work and the development of practices in different organizational contexts. The argument here is that the value of the walking interview method, in addressing the questions pertinent to these emerging areas of research in organization studies, has not been fully comprehended or articulated in such a way that we are able to see the benefits of its application, or make comparisons with the results obtained from more traditional methodological techniques. Only then can we perhaps overcome the barriers and issues that have confronted research efforts on both fronts. We hope that this article stimulates further discussion and uptake of this technique, encouraging others to recognise its potential to illuminate how organizational members use and understand different spaces and interpret different aspects of their work.

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