Research in Precarious Settings: Topics for Qualitative Research with Mobile Workers

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Outline

- Politics of method
- Context
- Research study
- Results
  - Permissions
  - Co-production of knowledge
  - Fear and trust
- Reflections
The Politics of Method

Different epistemology lens?

- Static methods in a mobile context
  - Observing transfer points
- Mobilizing methods to experience and critique differently
  - May not capture politics and institutional practice that affect mobilities
  - Power exerted through influence over processes and structural impediments
- Need to understand ‘politics of method’
Context of Research

- Mobile method issues
  - Permission
  - Co-production: research design, access, recruitment
  - Fear / trust
- Methodology issues
  - Subjectivity
  - Capacity of researchers / mobile workers
- To situate the credibility, validity, and reliability of findings in broader context
Results

I. Permissions
II. Co-production of knowledge
III. Fear and trust
Permission

- REBs influence on academic freedom
  - Process of obtaining permissions from industry
  - May reinforce powerlessness
- Need industry permission to access work sites / camps
  - Submit proposal, consent form, questions, samples of previous work
- Permission conditions
  - One day access to sites
  - Shorter interviews
Co-production: Research Design

- Industry engagement / input into research design
  - Limited feedback on questions
  - Feedback: shorten interviews
- Impacts:
  - Inquiry into breadth / depth of issues
  - Single static method at key transfer points
Co-production: Access

- Key transfer points
  - Work sites, camps, airports, staging areas
  - Microgeographies / triangulation
- Suitability of meeting spaces
  - Confidentiality / anonymity
- Multiple, mobile methods to broaden ‘access’ not possible
  - One day access, short interviews
- Scheduling
  - Align with shift turnovers
Co-production: Recruitment

- Varied logistical support
- Turnover of personnel
  - Community liaisons, camp staff
  - Interrupts relationships
- Length of shift, rotation, transition period
  - Selection bias from convenience sample
  - Limits questions posed
- Need recruitment across boom AND bust periods
Fear and Trust

- Fear and trust
  - Due to controversy and vulnerability of projects
  - Fear of job losses
  - Non-disclosure agreements

- Strategies to get mobile workers onside
  - Face-to-face recruitment and interviewing
  - Communicating permission from industry
  - Focused on mobile worker experiences
  - Interviewing in groups
Reflections

- Requires better understanding of politicized context
  - Power and structural impediments shape credibility / validity
- Conditions to secure permissions shape co-production of knowledge
  - Restricted access
  - Varied logistical support
  - Non-disclosure agreements
- Impacts breadth of methods / depth of issues
- Critical question: *How the politics of method produces different knowledge*
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