**Queering Cartographic Methods podcast interview**

**SPEAKERS**

Rachel Aldred I Ellis Fannin

**RA**

So today I'm really happy to be speaking to Ellis Fannin, who's a PhD researcher at Manchester University and their research is on ‘Queering Cartographic Methods’, and is also based in Glasgow, which is also exciting because it's one of my favourite cities. So, I'm going to be asking Ellis some questions about their research. And yeah, very, very glad to have you with us today.

**EF**

And glad to be here. Thanks for having me.

**RA**

Brilliant. So I'll just start by asking then why would you say that we need to queer cartographic methods? and just explain for the listeners what what you mean by that.

**EF**

So, I got interested in cartography mapping, through my interest in participatory methods, that was kind of my way into this research was thinking about sort of collaborative arts based methods, and I come from a geography background. So mapping just kind of felt like the right thing. For me, I feel like maps are a really interesting way of relaying information or way of telling spatial stories, I think they're really useful. And they also have become quite popular amongst queer communities, queer activists, queer scholars for mapping out queer geographies, some are more practical, you have the locations of various bars, clubs, book shops, queer own spaces, things like that, some more emotional, some more like with a tourist focus, but they really were this kind of thing that felt quite popular to me. And then the website ‘Queering the Map’, I noticed, and got really into that as well. But I think what I what I noticed about all of these things was, they were using cartographic methods using mapping. But perhaps the queer part only came from the representation that was coming through from the maps themselves, rather than thinking about how to perhaps queer, the mapmaking process itself. So having looked at sort of critical cartography scholarship, that really treats mapping as worthy of its own inquiry, rather than just the final product of a map, you know, used as an example for something or use to visualise something, it's thinking about that whole process of making it, remaking it, and then perhaps what happens after the map baking process. That felt like an opportunity for me, as someone interested in maps and mapping as a method, you know, the sort of active doing methodology part of research, but also an interesting queer theory. Being a queer person, myself, it felt like this real, a real opportunity for a mashing together of things that I really enjoy, so queer theory, geography, maps, so I suppose it came from that kind of personal desire as well for being interested in one of these things, but also for a desire for more of a theoretical engagement between queer theory and critical cartography, where we think about the map-making process as well.

**RA**

Fantastic. And that's so yeah, not just having like representing queer spaces, but clearing the process of the doing the methods from start to finish, which I think is fantastic. I also love the way that your enthusiasm for we'll get on to this later, but sort of just the enthusiastic approach to methods really shines through as well. But could I just ask you a bit about I was struck by the document that you sent me, you mentioned some of your theoretical influences and one of those was Sara Ahmed’s work Queer Phenomenology, which I read quite recently and really enjoyed. So, when did if you could say something about that and maybe other influences if you like, specifically how they've shaped your work?

**EF**

Yeah, absolutely. So reading queer phenomenology was a real sort of turning point for me in the research. I hadn't read it before I started my PhD. So I knew this was something I was interested in. But then reading queer phenomenology really just felt like a kind of wow moment. Like, it's, you know, sort of traditionally a queer theory, philosophy text, but I found it to be like, intensely geographical, you know, Sara Ahmad uses so many kind of directional phrases to describe queerness talking about lines, desire lines, and pushes and pulls, and I just found that to be so intensely spatial, and was really surprised that I hadn't picked up on it before, like I hadn't, I hadn't read it before this point. So I think to me, it just felt like such an obvious opportunity to bring that into working with maps because of this obvious linguistic connection, but also, with the way it's about the feelings, emotions, affect. And I think that's so important to me as well. I think, at the base level, I'm interested in emotional geographies, felt geographies, and intimate geographies. And I think what's our Sara Ahmed does so effectively, is lay out a sort of queer geography or a geographical way of looking at queerness, which I really love as well. I think it's not just a queer approach to geography. It's the sort of the flip side If it's the other way around, if that makes sense that I really liked as well, you know, taking geography and space seriously. And then was also very inspired by Karen Barad's work, I find, I found their work to be very helpful when thinking through the sort of practical technicalities, the logistics of mapping, because while their work is quite maybe abstract and complicated, so it took me a little while to kind of get into it. But eventually, I really saw the usefulness of seeing mapping as this kind of entangled process where it's not just a sort of detached cartographer, making a map object that is then presented to people, you know, thinking about the other people involved in the process, their biases, their opinions, their positionality, thinking about the space in which the map is made, the time of day, the location, you know, all of these kinds of things, the human and the nonhuman effects that all come together when we're doing any kind of research. So I found that really helpful for thinking about a more sort of holistic is maybe not the right word, but complicated, a way of understanding mapping at all, it's kind of complicated messiness. And as that as something that has potential, and I think what I like about both of those theorists is their focus on performativity, which is obviously quite a significant part of queer theory is thinking about queerness as performed and iterative, rather than just as something that someone is from like an essentialist perspective, which I always found to be kind of my own perspective on queerness. And how I felt that it manifested for me. So I think really, what brought those theories together was thinking about performativity, and thinking about how that relates to queerness, and mapping and space, and kind of bringing all of that together.

**RA**

Fantastic. So, I wonder if just if people are not might not be familiar, perhaps with performativity. I wonder if you could just say a little bit more about that, how that works? You know, how you interpret that in relation to queerness? As like, I guess doing rather than being perhaps?

**EF**

Yeah, absolutely. So for me, performativity is about the kind of processes over time that kind of make us queer, or signifiers as queer. So different sexual practices, different forms of expression, different forms of relating to each other different ways of living, it's all of these kinds of things that are against the normative; outside the normative, that structure queerness rather than it being just something that someone is born as, and then it's sort of biologically essential, and I think, you know, that might seem a little bit abstract. I think it can seem a little bit abstract sometimes. But I think for me, what I like about the theoretical work I mentioned was especially Sarah Ahmed's work is the focus on feelings and how even though it is performative, it is still felt and those feelings guide us towards, you know, these forms of expression, these actions that we do that sort of make us queer because they're against the normative. I think that's, that's what I enjoyed about that work really is the kind of felt, I don't know how to like describe it, there are so many like, I wish I could like make up words sometimes to describe these things. But like, the sort of affective part of performativity how our feelings might guide us to a specific place or to a specific action or to other people, as really important for then developing our own queerness’ over time, I think temporality is also really important, right? It's not just static, it's something that changes and also spatially as well. queerness is different depending on where you are, where you're from so many other parts of your identity that are Judith Butler is kind of the main theorist that popularised this way of thinking about queerness. So if anyone's interested, then definitely check out their work.

**RA**

No, I thought that was really helpful in sort of, and clarifying why mapping would be useful for this and also why you might want or need to clear the process of mapping as well, you know, that it's not just about people who are queer, it's about the the, processes, feelings, emotions, specialties, and so on. So no, I thought that was a that was helpful for me. Anyway. And I just want to be a little bit more about the methods which one of the thing I liked that you that you wrote was around following methods that you find enjoyable. And I just thought that was a fantastic principle. And I wondered if you could, but I haven't actually, I don't actually think I've really particularly read anyone saying that before. But it just struck me is great. And I just wondered if you could say why this is important and what it adds to research. Why should we follow these methods that we're passionate about that we find so enjoyable?

**EF**

Yeah, absolutely. I think something that I've become really passionate about over the process of doing the PhD, which for many, I'm sure you can relate is quite a stressful thing to do. It's associated with a lot of negative emotions. And I think researchers more broadly in the context of the current education system in the UK At least but also more broadly elsewhere, research can be and is often very stressful. And there's a lot of pressures on researchers, there's some really, really great work coming from geographers on kind of anxiety during fieldwork. And I can't think of the name off the top of my head, I'll maybe have to tell you tell you that later. Yeah, I think, you know, I found all of this work on emotion in the research process, really, it found that it really resonated with me, you know, feeling my own sense of anxiety about starting research, especially during the pandemic, I saw, I think, when I was coming up with my methods when I was planning what to do, obviously, there were a lot of other factors influencing what I could do, like, keeping safe during COVID, and my own, you know, abilities. But I, I sort of sat down with myself and thought, like, What do I like? What do I like doing? You know, is that sort of it's not, I'm not suggesting that as a kind of antidote to the very valid concerns held by a lot of researchers about anxiety and about stress, I'm not suggesting that, oh, we should just all be more happy and do things we like, you know, that's not, I’m not suggesting that as a broad solution, they're obviously much more serious solutions to be had for the state of academia as a whole. But I think just in terms of it's just, it's just something interesting, for research methods, I think it's more intuitive, which I think we, as researchers in this field anyway, in geography, we are not encouraged to be intuitive. We're encouraged, generally, at least from my own sort of methods, classes, and all these kinds of things are encouraged to like to follow these 10 steps to good qualitative research or good quantitative research. And it all feels kind of laid out in this very structured way. And I don't think that works for a lot of kinds of research. And so I was when I was just sort of experimenting with it, I suppose. And thinking is there a different way of thinking about methods and how we might come to the methods that we use, and that is influenced by a lot of things, as I say, and also by the theory you read and stuff, but thinking about what I enjoyed, also, then I suppose, made me feel like I was going to be better at it. So as a method, you know, if there's something that I really liked doing, I felt more confident in my own abilities to sort of pull it off, I guess, and also felt that I was getting something out of it, that wasn't just this kind of stress and overwhelming feeling of anxiety, which is still there. But I don't know, it gave me confidence, and I think, encouraged me to be more intuitive about more things during the research process. So for example, with analysis, I felt like, because I followed my kind of intuition with the methods, I'm able to then do that with the data that I have, and not just, you know, again, follow the step by step instructions of how to analyse data, but actually think, what do I have? And how do I feel about it? And how are those feelings kind of? How can I use those feelings to influence my analysis? And to reflect on that through the research process? Right, I think we're, we're all really into like positionality and reflexivity, in sort of social sciences, and sort of feminist and queer circles, especially. And I suppose sometimes that can feel a little bit reductive in the way that it's kind of done with research. I think, for me, thinking about my own emotions throughout the research process felt like a real sort of active thing that I could do to be reflexive throughout the whole research process instead of just perhaps at the beginning or the end. And to really take note of how I was feeling how participants were feeling. I think intuition, I suppose is the key thing that I found useful. And I feel like it fosters a real sort of intimacy with the research and might perhaps, I don't know, we can learn a lot from kind of artists and auto-ethnographers, on how to bring in our emotions and how to trust that instead of having to see ourselves as these detached researchers that aren't invested.

**RA**

That's great. And yes, yeah, I mean, all the way along whatever research you're doing, you're making decisions all the time. And yeah, to pretend that there is just some set of steps that you can follow without making all those decisions. Yeah, it's just wrong. So yeah, I think that's, that's, that's really interesting. So just moving on to the context of your research. So you know, one of the things I mentioned that I was one of the many things that I was excited about this research was that it was in Glasgow, which I think is a really fascinating city, but people listening may not know much about Glasgow. So indeed, if you could just tell us a little bit more about Glasgow and a bit more about how that context maybe sort of shapes the research design?

**EF**

Yeah, absolutely. So Glasgow is a post-industrial city in the West of Scotland. I've lived here for almost nine years. I moved here for my undergraduate degree and then haven't left and I find it to be a really interesting place as well, I suppose I can talk in more detail about my experience of Glasgow, perhaps rather than a sort of general history of the city. But to me, Glasgow was an interesting case for this kind of research, because it's not necessarily known as a sort of big queer city, I think, to the people that live here. Yeah, that comes through a lot in the researchers to the people that live here, and have moved here have been drawn to it, because of that sense of community and that presence of queer folks around here, but sort of on the sort of UK stage, I suppose you tend to think of Brighton, London, Manchester, as kind of the big three queer cities, I would say, at least from my own reading, as well, from the academic research is there is a lot of focus on Brighton, London, and Manchester, are very interesting places, you know, with very interesting queer scenes and communities. But I felt like Glasgow had been sort of ignored a little bit. And perhaps it wasn't as obvious for a queer project like this, because it doesn't have that same kind of big presence. But despite that, I noticed from having just lived here, and you know, gone through my own journey to queerness, and with queerness, here, you know, coming out as queer as non-binary while living in Glasgow, and getting more involved in community spaces, just even just meeting people, even just seeing people in the park that sort of looked like me, or, you know, you kind of get that, like, knowledge or you, you kind of no clock someone and you kind of say, oh, yeah, like, I know, you're probably queer, and they probably know, you're currently sort of like, there's a little like, recognition there. You know, it just felt really like a really queer city to me, perhaps not in the kind of traditional terms of like, how many bars it has? Or how many, your whatever what the actual statistics are, you know, I think it my life here paints quite a different picture of Glasgow, to one that is maybe expected. So yeah, it just, to me felt like a good place to explore this, because it didn't have that pressure of being the big queer city. So what are the kinds of ways with queer people kind of making meaning and their own spaces here? So I found it to just be an under researched kind of area here.

**RA**

Yeah, and I think I think kind of also an underappreciated city, maybe like, if you compare with Edinburgh, which is also kind of interesting that and that sort of leads on to what I was gonna ask around you deciding to go for participant guided walks, I guess, because you could have done this in a number of different ways, couldn't you, you could have sort of thought, Okay, I'll set up a walk that goes through these places that are seen as particularly queer or that have this particular queer interest. But instead of that, you asked participants to take you places that they decided to go to so could you say a bit more about why, why you did that? And why that was important?

**EF**

Yeah, absolutely. I think, because I'm interested in emotions, feelings, and subjectivity of all of those things kind of moving beyond a more kind of top-down definition of queerness, to thinking about how it is defined by people in their sort of local area as well, because I'm sure that's different depending on where you live. And I feel like there's a lot of the influence of the place that you are that you inhabit is so vital to how you understand queerness. So that was really important to me. And so then filtering that down to the actual individual participants, I was really interested to kind of see how people self-defined those areas, I didn't ask people to bring me to queer spaces, I just suggested that participants chose a route or a walk or a or a meeting point, even if they didn't want to choose the route in advance, we could choose just where to meet and then go from there. But I just suggested that it was somewhere that was meaningful, or significant to the participant. And I thought a lot about how to word that, because I didn't want to associate it with any particular emotion, I didn't want to say, take me to a place where you're happy or sad. And that's like, a totally valid and really interesting way of doing this kind of research. There are so many different ways of doing it. And I have some great research that takes people around the same roots. And I think that repetition with different people is really fascinating. But for me, even for this project in particular, I was just really interested in how participants would kind of define their own spaces, and yeah, find out how much queerness or how much they feel queerness is relevant to that or not relevant or the different ways in which it comes up for people. So I liked that openness, for sure. And it felt really intimate to be guided by someone on a walk that they chose or a route that they lots of people took me on routes that they did during COVID for example. And, and yeah, that just felt really emotionally rich and intimate. Getting a sense of where people went regularly the kind of ritual was that they undertook in the city, the reasons why they went to those places the stories that they could tell me I've got so many like amazing stories from people and I fit my, my some sense of the city has been totally enriched by, by this and I sort of selfishly been taken to places that I didn't know about. And you know, I suppose there was also a sense of like, I will also want to explore the city as was that goes back to kind of enjoyable methods a little bit, but I've lived here for a really long time. But I suppose when you settle in a place, you do kind of do the same routes, you walk the same way to places or at least I do, you fall into habits and routines. And there's so much of the city that I don't know anything about. And I've never been to even just taking a left instead of a right and finding that little community garden or something that I didn't know existed or, you know, all these little things were really, really enjoyable for me. So yeah, that sense of kind of wonder. And discovery was also a really nice part of asking participants to choose where we went.

**RA**

So. So yeah, it was wondering about the participants that you had. So could you say something about how many you know a bit about the mix of people that you had? And so the kinds of places that they that they took you to?

**EF**

Yeah, absolutely. So I did a total of 25 walks, which I was really pleasantly surprised by, I was a little worried that no one would sign up to this project where you had to kind of walk with this stranger. And it's kind of a non-traditional research method, I suppose. And I felt like I was asking a lot from people a lot of their time and energy, but people seemed to really enjoy it, from what I can gather, I had a really good response to it. And I was pleasantly surprised by the range of locations as well that people chose those that I was sort of expecting, like, okay, even though I'm saying choose wherever basically giving them pretty much complete freedom over where we could go, they knew in advance that the project was about queerness. So I was like, I suppose that could be a tendency for people to yeah, see that and interpret that as let's go to the bars, and let's go to Queens Park, which is kind of locally known as queers Park, it's a park around which a lot of queer folks live in the city. So, and it's also near where I live. So, I was thinking I was just going to be the same, like walk around the park that everyone did during COVID. And everyone was going on dates in the park during COVID. And, you know, it kind of became kind of a joke about how many people you would see that you knew in the park and how many x's you would run into and whatever. But um, and okay, a lot of participants did take me to Queens Park, I think maybe about 11, or some quite high number like that was a lot of them took me there. Actually, there were a lot of participants who took me to Queens Park, you know, which is to be expected. But, and that was a, you know, that was interesting in and of itself. But it was really nice to be taken elsewhere in the city, and to find out there were these little pockets of meaning. And, you know, to be taken around Merchant City, which is where a lot of the gay bars are. The few that remain, there's not many left. But I was taken around there by someone who had worked in a lot of the gay bars in the sort of, noughties and then late 90s. And that was really fascinating to learn about places that used to exist. And the stories that are kind of held in those spaces, despite the fact that those may then not called the same thing anymore. They're a different business, they still hold those stories and those experiences for different people. So that was really lovely. And people, some people had trouble narrowing it down, which I also find interesting. I think if I'd had limited, unlimited time and energy, then I would have loved to have gone for multiple walks with people and had people take me to different places. But obviously, you know, you've got to limit it at some point with research, you've got to stop gathering things at some point, as frustrating as that might be when there feels like there's so much to learn and to hear about and I really enjoyed the walking part of the research. It's been amazing. Yeah, it's been quite, it's been a good range of people. And we've got a lot of different experiences, experiences of people of colour experiences of people who use mobility aids, and I think I tried to leave the recruitment open-ended. In that way, you're the only requirement was being queer or LGBTQ, or however, that's, you know, sort of kind of self-defined, and then technically living in Glasgow, but even then I sort of bent the rules and allowed people who didn't currently live in Glasgow to take part in people who had lived in Glasgow at some point or had a very deep emotional connection to the city. I allowed to take part as well because I find that interesting, you know why people have left or the different journeys to queerness people have had, you know, maybe they lived there when they were younger, and then have come back as an older person as a queer person. and how that relates to their previous experience. So, yeah, I really sort of enjoyed that variety and that depth and sort of allowing different kinds of people to come and take part. I think that's been really fascinating for me.

**RA**

Wow. And it when you're talking about the sort of the bars and the sort of history of you, I mean, it's almost kind of it's oral history, really, I guess, as well, isn't it? And I can imagine, you know, almost making an output as a kind of walk. I don't know if you've ever been on any of the women's Glasgow women's library walks, they have one that's kind of got lots of queer history in it. And it Yeah, just reminded me of that.

**EF**

Yeah, yeah, I've been, as, as the project went on, I realised there was a lot of connection between it and oral history that I hadn't really put my finger on before. But um, yeah, I didn't know I was thinking of it as a kind of oral geography, I guess, like a walking tour is perhaps the wrong kind of word for it. But it's still, you know, I still would, again, if I had unlimited time, and energy, would love to take more people take groups of people on these walks, and have group discussions about the route, and bring along the original participant if they would like to take part and, you know, just kind of keep it going, I suppose keep, keep the walks alive in some way. But again, you know, limitations of research, funding and time, don't necessarily allow for that. There are a lot of really great walking tours in Glasgow like you mentioned, the women's library ones, someone that I bought with LED walking tours in the city, some LGBT ones, but otherwise, just sort of street art ones and architecture. I also learned about the existence of lots of walking groups that I didn't know existed in, there's one that is called ‘Out On Sundays’, that goes out on Sundays, to various parks, and they do sort of different kinds of trips. And there's all these kinds of initiatives and groups that are, you know, bring queer folks together to walk the city or run or cycle or just kind of explore together in different ways. And that was really nice to, to learn about as well.

**RA**

Yes. And I suppose, in with COVID. And so on some of those things. Obviously, some of those things were not possible at some times, but also being outdoors and being socialising outdoors. Probably, new people took that up. I wonder if you could say something about how kind of the COVID context shaped or changed what you were what you were able to do?

**EF**

Yeah, so I only really came to walking as a method because of COVID. So, I started my PhD in September 2020. So you know, we were in the depths of COVID. But I suppose at that point, we still, at least me personally, I say we but me personally was like optimistic about the timeline, I suppose of the pandemic and thinking, okay, like, this will only last a few more months when I get to the data collection stage of my PhD, it'll be gone, it won't be relevant. And then fast forward a year. And it's like, oh, we're still in it. And there's still these restrictions on social research. Meaning there were things you just couldn't do. My original plan when I proposed the PhD had been sort of group workshops. But obviously, that's a lot of people together in a space. That's not possible. So, I this is when I started thinking about sort of enjoyable methods. I was thinking, Okay, I have to change this completely. What do I like? What have I been doing a lot of recently, and I was like, Well, I like walking, like wandering around the city, being in the city is really fun and interesting to me. I like walking with people and having a chat. And a meander together. I don't know, the more that I thought about that, and the ways that that made me feel, the more that I felt like, oh, this could be something so really have COVID. To thank, I'm saying that in inverted commas, I have COVID to thank my methods only became possible because of COVID. But I suppose that happens to a lot of researchers, right? Like things happen, where you things are disrupted, interrupted, things have to change. And I think, you know, it would be awful to see COVID as a silver lining or as a good thing. But I think that encourages us to be more intuitive, with our research, right is to allow for plans to change allow for things to happen, to think, to be reflexive throughout the research process, and to think about how things might change in terms of the works themselves. I think I approach them very much how I would had COVID not be nothing at all, I was really inspired by a lot of my supervisor's work, Saskia Warren, who's written about milk pluralizing walking interviews, and about primarily about how different people from different cultures see walking and different cultural and societal understandings of what a walk is, which is really, really useful, but also encouraged me to think about different ways of walking and different ways of defining walking, which might involve mobility aids for some people, or involve lots of breaks, lots of stops and starts and might involve a lot of being still despite it being a walk, which you might think of as constantly moving, but actually it was like redefining walking as well and thinking about, and that was something I had to think about for myself as well because I got COVID last year, so, sort of just as I was about to begin my data collection, I finally got COVID. And then, shortly after that, I came down with glandular fever, which I got really ill with for a while and had to take quite a lot of time off. And you know, that was really debilitating for a while, but then, since then, I've come to terms with the fact that I've been dealing with long COVID and various post-viral fatigue-related things. So, it was something I had to reflect on about myself as well about my own abilities as a researcher about my own body, and how far I could walk and how many walks I could do, feasibly. And you know, how much I would need to stop? And you know, things like that. So yeah, I think while that kind of approach to pluralizing, walking and understanding the different ways of walking, and sort of allowing people to choose what that means to them as another reason for allowing people to choose the walks as well, right, it's sort of in a practical sense. People can choose walks that are accessible to them. People can choose walks that they know the length of so they know when it's going to finish, you know, some people wandered with me, and we were out for hours. But some people it was like, right, we're going to walk from work to home. And that's that you know, it gives people more control and more agency over their involvement in the research as well. So, you know, I think all of those things I would have been mindful of, If COVID hadn't been a thing, but COVID did encourage me to think more about my own health and about the health of people around me, you know, not wanting to get anyone ill, during the research process. And being very mindful of that, and sort of, no, it was an opportunity to think about different ways of doing research, which I am grateful for.

**RA**

Yeah. And one thing actually, that is, you're talking about the walking expenses that occurred to me, it's one of the things about Glasgow City, it does rain quite a lot. So did you not what role did like the weather in the climate play in the walks?

**EF**

Yes. So I had to really think about this, when planning the research, I knew that I wouldn't be able to do anything outdoors kind of sitting down for too long or you know, things like that and had to think about microphones and how they would cope in the in the weather. But funnily enough, the only times I've had to actually rearrange interviews were for extreme heat, because we had that like heatwave last summer where it got to like, I don't know, in the 30s, or something, and I'm really sensitive to heat. So I was like, though, I can't, I can't be out and about with like, no shade, and you know, things like that for walking for, you know, an hour or so. So funnily enough, yeah, it was actually, the rainy days were actually okay because everyone was quite used to it. If the weather forecast was like, really terrible, I would often ask participants, you know, would you prefer to rearrange? I don't want people to be getting uncomfortable and wet and cold when you know, getting involved in the research. I'd rather people were as comfortable as possible. But most people would just like, yeah, it's fine. I'll bring my umbrella. And we would just huddle under the umbrella while we walked along. And you know, trying to keep the microphones dry and find some strategic trees to sit underneath. And, you know, that also was interesting to me, because the weather also affected how we engage with the city I imagined the walks I'd done on rainy days might have been quite different had they been on a sunny day, and vice versa. And then I tried to see it as something interesting and part of how we feel about the city rather than is too much of a barrier to the research. And yeah, as I say, only had to cancel for, like 35-degree heat, which was not what I was expecting. I think Glaswegians are pretty hardy, and anyone who's lived here, for a significant amount of time is quite used to the weather being a bit terrible. And just having to get on with it. Because if you wait for a sunny day, you could be waiting for weeks. So, it was a yeah, it was actually really great. Really enjoyed getting out in all kinds of weather.

**RA**

Yeah. Excellent. And you mentioned the sort of the microphone side of things. Did you have basically a microphone each and were recording? did you take photos along the way anything for the wealth?

**EF**

Yeah, so we use these little rode wireless microphones. I'm a bit of a technophobe. So the thought of using microphones kind of terrified me, I’m used to kind of a very basic Dictaphone for doing any interviews, but that wasn't going to work for walking. I wanted something that was ideally quite discreet. I suppose that wouldn't draw attention to people. Something I thought about a lot was about some safety. And your public space can be quite scary for for a lot of people but for queer folks. A lot of us have experiences of harassment where that's to do with awkwardness or not can be kind of can be intimidating to exist in public space. So, I wanted to make sure I wasn't drawing too much attention to ourselves as we walked. So, I wanted something small. And yeah, these wireless microphones that I have, there are two transmitters and one receiver. So both me and a participant could have a transmitter on our person, and then it would all be received by the same receiver. Yes, I don't know any technical terms. Um, so yeah, that'll do. But yeah, so that, and they came with little wind, sort of wind buffer, things, again, don't know the name of those. But um, that it seems to have gone really well. I haven't had too many problems with the weather, in terms of recording, but yeah, the, what was said in the interview was only really one part of the data that I wanted to generate with participants, so, I recorded what was said, but also, participants were given a disposable camera to use while we walked. So just sort of said to people, just take pictures of anything you find interesting, anything of note, anything that catches your eye, just kind of let them choose what they wanted to take pictures of, and try to remind them like, this isn't meant to be like an art project, like a lot of people, oh, God, this is gonna be a terrible picture. But try just be like, you know, it's not about that it's, it more became a prompt, to something else to do, I think having something to do with your hands. I don't know, I personally find quite useful, quite a fidgety person, I like having something in my hands. And it gave people the opportunity to stop and think about something that was around them. And that would often prompt conversation as well. So that was like a really useful tool. I think things like games, or photography, or anything like that are also really useful while you're walking because it kind of adds an extra something to do. And I also mapped the walks using Strava. So that was quite simple, really, I just had it on my phone, and click stop, and then it would record it. And then I stop it, or the one time I forgot to stop the Strava recording, and then I got on the subway. And I only realised that I was like a couple of stations away. Oh, no, I haven't stopped the map. Thankfully, because the internet cut out, it didn't record my subway journey as of the walk. You know, there are a few little slip-ups like that when, when using tech, as I've already said, but um, yeah, I just wanted to gather sort of different parts of the route. And I think, you know, you could video record, a lot of people do that, or involve video as part of walks. But I just felt given with the weather restriction as well, I was like, I can't be adding more potentially, like weather losing my words here, I can't add more technology to the mix, when there is a high risk of rain, and things might get damaged. So that was also important to think about and using disposable cameras. Quite simple. Most people know how to use them. And I quite like that there isn't a focus on quality or, you know, you take one shot. And that's it. And you don't really know how it looks. And I found that to be useful as well not thinking about the pressure of taking the perfect composition with your phone camera or something, you know that that made sense for me. So yeah, and I made my own notes as well in a research diary to gather my own feelings about things. So, there was a lot of different, a lot of different ways of gathering going on, I suppose.

**RA**

That's fantastic, both for the analysis, but also for being able to present things, having the photos as well as the other the recordings and the notes. And within the document that you sent me as well, you were mentioning about the role of nature and parks and so on. And obviously, I mean, I guess the green space is important for a lot of city dwellers generally. But it's there's something you could say about specific, you know, portents, for queer people based on the research that you've done?

**EF**

Yeah, as you say, parks are very important for city dwellers in general, Glasgow was a very green city. There are a lot of really great parks here, it was named as sort of a reason why a lot of people chose to move here was because of the accessibility of green spaces, and how easy it is to also get out of the city as well. But I think that's still connected to the city. You know, it's all kind of yeah, where we dwell, and then where we can go from there and then come back home to I think is really interesting. But I think specifically, the importance of nature for queer people was a few different things. I think the thing that came across the most strongly was the sort of lack of judgement that happens in nature. You know, people say the trees don't care what you wear, or who you're holding hands with, or whatever, you know, there's, there was that sense of safety, I suppose a way of perceiving nature as sort of neutral, which I suppose is quite an interesting position to take. But yeah, as seeing as a space where you could be yourself and be authentic and not be judged. And I think through that, there comes a kind of openness and the sense of possibility in spaces of nature, because they're seen as these spaces that sort of lack meaning in In one way, I think I don't think that's necessarily true, I think they hold a lot of meaning. But I think they're not sort of designated as, like, this is where you do this activity, or this is like a queer space in the sort of concrete sense because a lot of people found that spaces like that came with a lot of pressure and anxiety to act a certain way or be a certain way, whereas nature to them was, yeah, more open, more open-ended. We could use the park for lots of different purposes, for dating, for cruising, for seeing friends, for sports, for just walking home a different way, you know, for all these different reasons. So I think, yeah, it was that kind of openness, that allowed people to feel less pressure, in terms of performing their queerness for certain audiences, or people. And I also think the peacefulness and the tranquility of it was really vital. In these things will connect for sure, I think, if you're someone who is nervous about using clear bars, or a bookshop or something, or finds it quite overwhelming, or noisy, you know, the parks can be quite tranquil in comparison, and a lot of people use the parks as a space for a kind of mental health, walk like a mental health break, you're going to sit in a certain spot, look at a certain view to just relax and reflect. So, I think also, it's kind of a, an escape from our usual kind of home spaces that perhaps feel kind of enclosed or for some people are quite unsafe or uncomfortable and allows people to feel more at peace and be sort of in touch with their own thoughts. And I think you know, a lot of queer folks struggle with mental health issues. And I think there's a real connection there with nature that is kind of difficult to foster elsewhere, when you're thinking about other people, and you're getting anxious about what people think of you or how people see you. And like, and then on a more practical level, as I've already mentioned, COVID has made them even more significant than they maybe would have been a few years ago, as I said, people using the park for dating, you know, there's a classic like Tinder or Hinge date, or whatever was like, oh, let's go for a walk in the park. You know, just going for your daily walk around your certain route, being able to be with people, but safely with people was so important for loads of people, not just queer folks, but I think a lot of queer folks have lost their community spaces because of COVID. Lost, we've lost the kind of gathering spaces that we perhaps used to use. So, I think parks then just became like, even more significant and even more important, because of because of the pandemic.

**RA**

Yeah, yeah, thank you. And one of the other things that stood out for me was around this word magic as well. So, sort of linked to the role of play in emotion. And I think you you, you have the phrase, feelings of magic flow through the walks, which I really loved. So, I wondered if you could say a little bit more about that those sorts of feelings of magic, what that was like for, for participants? And for you?

**EF**

Yeah, so the way I guess I use that word magic, because for me, it relates to the kind of unexplainable that I think is something that I thought about a lot in this research is that I think a lot of the time, the ways in which spaces are structured, cities are structured, we're kind of told how to feel we're told how to act in certain places. And I think it's especially because cities are so like intensely structured from such a top-down perspective, it doesn't necessarily encourage play or different understandings of the places that we're in. And so I think, using this word magic to talk about the city felt really kind of radical to me, I suppose, thinking about the city as a magical place, rather than just the kind of boring, you know, skyscrapers and shopping routes, and it's, in spite of all those things, or maybe because of all of those things, cities are really are full of magic are full of moments of play of people doing things differently, or people walking differently of people engaging with the city differently. So yeah, I think for me, that came out really strongly in the walks you know, people would be talking about a space that they enjoyed going to or, and we'd be trying to kind of explain why, why they liked it, why they'd stopped there, why they did that walking route, why they were taking a photo of this thing, and a lot of the time people would say that it felt magical. You know, that was a word that came up a few times. And I just found that really interesting that that was the kind of emotion and feeling that was coming through from various things in the city. And I think it's kind of I don't know I'm quite I honest, I'm quite interested in like folklore. And folktales, and sort of speculative fiction, and all these kinds of things that are about stories and tales and imaginaries. And the ways in which we, as people have understood different phenomena and places and creatures over time. And I think that we kind of think of that, or at least I thought of that as kind of mostly happening in rural spaces. And what this research has really revealed to me is that fact that also happens in the city are also of urban folktales, and urban folk creatures, urban folklore, that kind of structure, how we understand the city, especially when you're kind of trying to make your own space and build your own sense of place in a city that sometimes feels like quite detached from your community or who you are as a person. So I think the ways in which we sort of conjure up different feelings and emotions and spaces felt kind of akin to magic to me to kind of instil a sense of wonder, in a space that might otherwise seem meaningless.

**RA**

Yes. And Glasgow. I mean, this is just my feelings about Glasgow, I guess, for the way that it's been, in a sense, it's a city that suffered a lot with sort of postwar planning and so on, but somehow that doesn't, and can even add to the feelings that you get walking through the city, those kinds of scars and those, you know, motorway bridges.

**EF**

Yeah, absolutely. It can sometimes seem like, you know, it's a city full of kind of ugly buildings, or, you know, there's a lot of negativity about the city. It's not as beautiful as Edinburgh, people say, you know, it's kind of this got this, like, second rate, like stamps in Scotland. And it gets, you know, can be quite maligned, as well, I remember when I was moving up here for university, and people are like, kind of, are you sure you want to move to Glasgow? And, like, I mean, I couldn't understand it, because I love Glasgow, and I felt this really strong connection to it. But it, yeah, it has, a lot of people have quite negative opinions about it. And actually, when you kind of dig down into it, and ask people about, well, what do you like about it? What do you not like about it, and, you know, ask people to kind of show you their Glasgow, then all these little kind of meaningful moments pop out of it, and it becomes much more enchanting.

**RA**

I think it's an enchanting fatigue. degree with degree with that. And, yeah, I was gonna ask as well about the sort of stuff you were doing, as well as the as well as the interviews, working interviews, so the the auto ethnography, and you're also doing or you've done some Co-production workshops. So just wondering if you could say a little bit about about that there are that as well?

**EF**

Yeah, absolutely. I think I always knew that that was something I wanted to involve in the research process. My master's was in gender studies and did a lot of courses on feminist research methods, and that has all been very sort of, instilled in me from the get go was reflexivity and how to think about your own emotions and the research process. So, I knew that was something that would be important to me. But I think, really, it's been so helpful in terms of, like, situating, the data, when I look back on it, now, I look back on the transcripts, the maps, the photographs, and like, when I have my own notes together with them, it just feels I'm able to add information to them that I otherwise wouldn't have gathered, I can add information about how I was feeling that day, or how the weather was doing, what I was wearing, and how that made me feel, and all these kinds of things that seem kind of silly, and but I just tried to write down anything that felt sort of important or notable that day. And yeah, I think it creates a real intimacy with the data, because it feels like I was really part of it. Yeah, I'm not I'm not this detached researcher, I am part of it. We're all part of our research, whether we like it or not. So, we might as well sort of use that, those feelings, to enrich the data that we're collecting to enrich our analysis. And to allow myself a space of reflection as well, that was important to was for me to sit with it and think, Okay, how's this going? How am I feeling in my body? And what are my sort of expectations for myself? How am I feeling? I think that was super important to, to do throughout the research process. Yeah, it meant that I also was quite like intentional about my own involvement. And when I when I needed a break, I think a lot of people face burnout during the research process, it can feel hard to, I don't know, take a break from it. And I think especially for me, this research feels very personal as well. You know, it's about Glasgow, which is a city that I've sort of made home and it's about queerness in Glasgow, which I I'm a queer person in Glasgow, it is very difficult for me to detach myself from the research at all, even when I'm not doing it, I'm still kind of doing it, I'm still thinking about it, it still is there. When I go to club nights when I go for walks, when I meet friends, it's it's always there. You know, that can be, you know, harmful in a way that can mean that it can get quite tiring you don't take a break from it, because it's kind of always there. But I think doing the autoethnography has made has meant I'm more intentional about allowing myself breaks from things and allowing myself to not always think about it. You know, I think that intimacy with the research area with the participants, has been so meaningful and wonderful and enriching, and I wouldn't change it at all. I can't imagine doing research in any other kind of way. To be honest, it just feels right. To me. It just makes sense. But yeah, it does also mean you have to be quite like careful about, you know, taking breaks and making sure you're not overdoing it.

**RA**

Yes, I can imagine it could be quite Yeah, it's sort of emotionally overwhelming, but also potentially practically overwhelming, as well, if you're not careful. And the just the participants as well, were these people who were sort of people you knew before or they can all strangers to you? or have you been Have you kind of kept in touch with them? How's it how are those relationships?

**EF**

Yeah, so there was a mixture of really, again, there's something I worried about when starting the research was, is this just going to be all my friends have, like, taken pity on me? Or like, oh, Ellis is doing some research. So, we should probably do it. Because you know, where, where that friend? No. But and yeah, there was a few people who I knew in advance people that I would consider friends or acquaintances, or people I knew from around, you know, there are plenty people that I knew on social media as well. The online community has been super important over the past few years. So, a lot of connections I made there, but there were plenty of people I'd never met before, which was lovely, too, I think it was a really good mixture. Again, selfishly, it was really nice to just meet loads of people. It's been really good for me socially, the amount of time that I would be on a walk. And then I would see someone else who I'd already done a walk with, and we would wave hello, or stop to chat or something, you know, there was this real kind of an overlap, I could really feel this overlap between each other's walks. And then you have seen people out and about at other events. And yeah, now some people have met up with for coffee or for drinks just as friends not as part of the research, but just as as another social connection. And also, as part of this sort of generation of data, but also as part of data analysis. I've done a couple of workshops with research participants, where we come back together and talk a bit about how the researcher is going check-in. Because people are quite interested to know how it's going. And I you know, I don't expect anyone to read my thesis, that's, I want, I want to share how the research is going in different kinds of ways. And also enroll the participants in this sort of analysis process as well. So I've done a couple of workshops with people where we come back together, and we chat. And we do some sketch mapping. And we talk through those things and talk through emotions about the research talk through what's changed since we walked and anything like that. So that's been really nice to, to revisit the themes with participants. And also to see them again and to check in has been really nice, and really has kind of helped foster those social connections.

**RA**

So a kind of ongoing community building as well there. And the sketch map. So they are going to be sort of part of the sort of spatial analysis that you'll be doing as well, the sketch maps that people produced.

**EF**

Yeah, yeah. So I'm planning to connect the maps that people made with what was said in their interviews, still figuring out how to structure my analysis, but I think I want to focus more on vignettes about specific participants and telling their stories and, you know, looking at them with the other forms of data that I've gathered from specific participants and thinking about them altogether. And we have recorded the workshops, as well as we'll have transcripts from those and various sorts of notes from myself as well. Just to kind of bring it all together and bring some participant agency into the analysis, really wanted to enroll participants in the analysis process in some kind of way. And also, I'm thinking about structuring my analysis at the moment. And I'm really inspired by some PhD students from before me who focused on, who wrote their analysis using vignettes, so you're focused on specific participants and their stories and their experiences with them. Rather than sort of writing broad chapters, generalising everyone together and using coding or something. Yeah, I think for me in this project, given the kind of intimacy that I felt with the participants and their specific experiences, and the connection that I've built with them that's been carried through and various community connections through the workshops, I think it makes sense to really kind of hone in on those in the analysis. And then, you know, make patterns and connections and generalisations from there, but have it structured in that quite personal, subjective way. So, yeah, that's the plan. Hopefully, there'll be, yeah, there'll be some maps and photographs and all kinds of things to illustrate that as well.

**RA**

Yeah, it sounds fantastic. I look forward to reading it. So I think we're coming towards the end of the time. Now, I wondered if, if there was, well, obviously, if there's anything more that you wanted to add, but also like, what, you know, what you would what you're hoping to do next? I mean, obviously, the analysis, but where, you know, where would you like to take your research after this?

**EF**

I would really love to have an exhibition about the project, I think something I've been thinking about a lot throughout this whole process is how to communicate the research, because I think that's such a huge part of my interest in mapping is, you know, maps, I suppose it can seem like fun doing the walking interviews, the mapping part has kind of fallen to the wayside. But actually, I think of mapping, I think of walking as a form of mapping, I think of these walking interviews as a way of performatively, mapping the city through being with people and talking with people and moving or not moving, but just kind of tracking where we've been and things like that, I think I think of that as a form of mapping. A big reason why I'm interested in maps is as a form of communication, because I think they tell spatial stories in a way that other forms of communication can't in the same kind of way, and they're quite accessible as well, in terms of, you know, the very visual. And there's actually quite a lot that, you know, maps can seem like they're very sort of neutral. And you can't really do much with them. There's a very sort of standard way of doing them. But I think actually, there's so many different ways you can use maps, and you can talk about maps as part of the research. So, yeah, I really want to communicate the research to people as I go, and I think, you know, there are different audiences that are interested in this. And I think I would really like to, yeah, again, revisit things with participants and bring other people together that might be interested in the project, that don't want to read a thesis, which I completely understand. That is completely fair. I don't really want to be sending that to my participants, like, here it is, this is this is the result of your work. You know, I want to think about different ways of, of doing that different ways of bringing the research to other people. So yeah, it'd be some kind of exhibition in the works at some point in the in the near future, hopefully. And then yeah, just getting on with writing up my thesis, let's say just as if it's easy. But that's kind of the next step. But the lovely thing about this research being so, personal and social is that it will carry on after the PhD project, you know, this this project in the sense that what it is for the thesis may not exist or may not be continuing. But what I've gained from it, hopefully will continue the social connections that I've gained the community connections and knowledge, the new things I've learned about Glasgow, the new places I found, you know, that will continue on after the project and that's something I really like as well.

**RA**

That sounds great. I mean, I probably am one of the few people who will read a thesis but I can see the exhibition will be your will also be very appealing. And we'll see if hopefully participants might want to be involved in that. So fantastic. Was there anything else that you wanted to add about your work?

**EF**

No, I don't think so. I think we've covered pretty much everything. I've probably rambled on it for long enough once I get started, like go on lots of tangents and come stop, but I think I think that's everything. Yeah, thanks for engaging with my work and for asking such great questions. This has been really interesting.

**RA**

Oh, thank you. Well, it's been really interesting for me, I mean, it's just the kind of enthusiasm that you have for it is so engaging and it makes me want to go out and do a similar project.