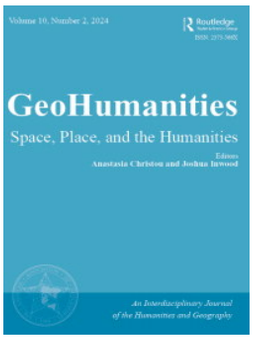

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Using Walking Approaches and Site-Specific Performance to Reveal Layers of Feeling Attached to Place

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This paper aims to meet the desire for dynamic and multi-dimensional aspects of studying feelings attached to places. Starting with a contemporary example of a place in crisis and whose affective history seems linked to the 1984–85 UK miners' strike, this paper argues for methodologies that avoid drawing straight lines from feelings attached to the past into the present-day. Rather than following dominant emotions, this work pursues Kathleen Stewart's approach to ordinary affects: feelings that start and end in social worlds, but which are equally personal and intimate. A case study from Wales, UK, uses the creative mediums of walking tours and site-specific performances to bring the public into the research, which in turn helps to interpret feelings of the past revealed from 13 interviews focused on older people. This writing considers future methodological developments, such as focusing on younger people, encouraging local stakeholders as co-producers, and deepening artist collaborations. **Key Words: affect, methodology, place attachment, site-specific performance, walking tour.**

INTRODUCTION

After years of uncertainty, the closure of the two coal-fired blast furnaces at the Tata steelworks in Port Talbot, South Wales, UK, was announced on 18 January 2024. The steelworks would have a future as a producer of lower carbon steel, but approximately 3,000 jobs would be cut as the plant was shut down and rebuilt. The following morning journalist Nick Robinson introduced the story on BBC Radio 4:

> News that had been feared by so many for so long came yesterday. Tata Steel are to push ahead with plans to cut 3,000 jobs. Most will be lost in Port Talbot, devastating that community in South Wales with painful echoes for many of the pit closures of the 1980s. (Today 2024)

This contemporary situation had been described here using emotive words "fear" and "devastation" and connected to something which happened nearly forty years earlier. There is much evidence that lasting "trauma" (Bright 2016; Emery 2022) has been felt in parts of Britain after the "pits" (or coal mines) closed in the 1980s. Like Port Talbot, places with coal mines were often heavily dependent on these industries for employment and shaped people's identities (Walker 2021; Walkerdine 2016). These latter studies provide reasons for strong emotions to follow deindustrialisation. However, the passing of time means that these previously dominant emotions are layered amongst other feelings.

This paper looks to methodology which tries not to assume what people feel about a given place. Beyond the need to avoid the emotive terms used by Robinson regarding Port Talbot (Today 2024), my desire connects with geographers who call for more dynamic and multi-

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dimensional approaches to explore emotions and feelings associated with places (Diener and Hagen 2022). From a case study centred on South Wales, where I met people who brought forward experiences mostly related to the 1960s and 1970s, I build a methodology which deploys the creative "mediums" (Hawkins 2021) of walking and site-specific performance. Walking is used firstly as an interviewing technique where people returning to certain places allows them to connect with feelings and memories (Barron 2021; Evans and Jones 2011); and secondly through public walking tours (Aoki and Yoshimizu 2015; Huss 2025; Springgay and Truman 2017) which contain site-specific performance (Pearson 2020; Rogers 2012; Smith 2018). These latter walks create spaces for the public to enter the "speculative middle" of research (Springgay and Truman 2018), challenge place-based scripts (Robinson and McClelland 2020) and build the affective context which sometimes leads to important future interviews. In this paper I demonstrate how a four-stage approach, comprising interviews followed by an event are complemented by a second round of interviews and subsequent event, helps to precipitate and recover some of the marginal affects connected to places.

This approach enacts *Ordinary Affects,* namely "public feelings that begin and end in broad circulation, but they're also the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of" (Stewart 2007, 2). In the discussion I consider how this approach allows to see places as scenes of attachment (Anderson 2023) and place attachment theories more widely (Hernández, Hidalgo, and Ruiz 2021). Focusing on creative mediums, I explore the potential for co-produced walking tours and artist collaborations which reveal feelings from the past. I start by exploring ways to understand feelings that people associate with places.

FEELINGS ASSOCIATED WITH PLACES

Examples in this paper demonstrate how feelings associated with places emerge, can sustain over time, and can also subside. Much has been written about long-term feelings associated with the 1984–85 miners' strike in the UK. As mines controlled by the state-run National Coal Board were threatened with closure in the early-1980s, more than 200,000 miners across the UK withheld their labour in 1984. After nearly a year without being paid, they conceded the strike and returned to work. Virtually all of the coal mining industry had vanished by the end of the 1980s. Bright (2016) reflects on the long-term consequences in parts of northern England. He describes the collective trauma – or a "social haunting" – experienced by younger generations long after the strike. Geographers have applied Bright's theories to related themes, such as the "slow death" of social housing in North-East England (Pain 2019) and "collective industrial pasts" associated with coal mining in South Wales (Walker 2021).

Some of the latter understandings seem to be present in the language used in Nick Robinson's interview with Port Talbot steelworker Gavin Moule in 2024. After Moule established that his father and grandfather had been steelworkers, Robison said "I mentioned the closure of the pits. Are there echoes of that for you, for others?" (Today 2024). The respondent explained: "One hundred percent. Certainly!" and cited the examples of his wife – who he called a "very proud Yorkshire woman" – whose father and grandfather lost their jobs when pits closed. Slowly and solemnly, Robinson acknowledged these words and said: "We can hear in your voice, how deep it runs."

As illustrated above feelings associated with one place, particularly traumatic ones, seem to be applied to other ones. I now concentrate on the time dimension, with the focus initially on places whose employment and identity have been dominated by industry.

Feelings Associated with Place over Time

Walkerdine considers time through affective histories and writes that "to understand the present of communities we need to understand how that affective history [of industry] shapes the present and how it is also contained in layers of meaning" (2016, 702). For example, the latter work considers manual labour and masculine identities. In related research Emery (2018) finds how feelings of "pride" in industrial workplaces are hostile to contemporary ways of organising the economy. Marotta (2021) explore this "impasse" from a case study in a much larger geography than the earlier UK examples. From 18 interviews with small craft manufacturers in Detroit, USA, he finds people facing the transition between the "Old" industrial and a "New" neoliberal Detroit.

Marotta acknowledges Berlant's (2011) writing in *Cruel Optimism* about the "impasse" as being in middle of change. The latter's concept also influences Anderson's thinking about decompositional impasses "which rupture and unsettle attachments" (2023, 394). Anderson acknowledges concerns about relational or flat ontologies – the latter described as not distinguishing entities from one another or categorising them (Ash 2020) – and argues that objects of attachments are promissory (notably, not always positive) and relate to enduring trajectories. For example, Anderson describes how scenes of attachments "become part of the foreground of life and thought, becoming central to how everyday life is felt and social action thereafter proceeds" (2023, 404). The latter idea is important to place and could be found in Marotta's research in Detroit, where the "Old gestured toward a space of possibility, a catalytic optimism imbued with the freedom to be experimental" (2021, 387). Other scenes of attachment, undoubtedly connected to place and which are decomposing, could include earlier writing about coal mining (Bright 2016; Emery 2018; Walker 2021; Walkerdine 2016).

The latter argument in defence of relational approaches prompted me to explore place attachment theories and, in doing so, present some flaws of explicitly connecting attachments to fixed objects or specific spaces.

Place Attachment Theories

A much-cited environmental psychology paper (Hidalgo and Hernández 2001) investigates three objects of attachment: namely the house, neighbourhood, and city. A total of 177 participants (aged 18–30, 31–49, and over 50) were surveyed and asked to what extent they agreed with nine statements. It is notable that each question started with the emotive term "I would be sorry if…" (ibid, 275). For example, would they be sorry if neighbours moved away. The results were that the city mattered most for younger people and the home became most important from middle age onwards. Whilst the latter paper provides a useful framework, the same authors wrote a decade later that "the study of bonds between humans and places has not been accompanied enough by advances in the theoretical and empirical aspects" (Hernández, Hidalgo, and Ruiz 2021, 95).

Some geographers would address such gaps with a "focus on the dynamic and multi-dimensional aspects of place and the processes by which attachments form, dissolve, and reform" (Diener and Hagen 2022, 171). This thought gestures towards time and demands methods that attend to the performative and the everyday.

An interesting example of the latter approach combines contemporary archives with auto-ethnography and 17 interviews with people with experiences of cultural practice in miners' welfares buildings (Emery 2022). It is notable that a focus on these latter buildings (social spaces often owned and run by the miners) can reveal the less visible phases of affects taking shape. For example, the trauma of the strike was layered over many feelings of joy and pleasure associated with weddings and parties. Methods that find a balance and range of feelings are important to this paper.

Observing and Writing about Feelings

I have briefly established the importance of revealing layers of feeling. It is important to explore how affects relate to emotions. Pile cautions against "assuming the nature of emotions; objectifying emotions by naming them; presenting superficial accounts, because it is mesmerised by expressed accounts of emotional life" (2010, 8). Time can reform personal and intimate affects so that they "that are retrospectively named as emotions" (Anderson 2006, 737). For example, the interview between Robinson and Moule (Today 2024) seems to concentrate on emotional terms such as "devastation." I return to *Ordinary Affects* as an inspiration to observe and write about affects:

> They're things that happen. They happen in impulses, sensations, expectations, daydreams, encounters, and habits of relating, in strategies and their failures, in forms of persuasion, contagion, and compulsion, in modes of attention, attachment, and agency, and in publics and social worlds of all kinds that catch people up in something that feels like *something*. (Stewart 2007, 2)

Stewart gestures to a relationship between what is felt by the individual and the way that the collective world becomes apparent. In the following observation Closs Stephens cites Stewart's work and shows it helping to sense the everyday and routine: "being 'in' something with others and these 'little experiences' of feeling part of a 'we'" (2016, 188). The latter's wider research offers a useful contrast to previous examples of trauma as it focused on the hopeful time around the 2012 Olympics in London. Stewart's subtle way of showing relationships between the individual and the collective – also favoured by Anderson (2023) – is useful to the method that I develop in this paper.

DEVELOPING A METHOD

The methodology explained here aims to avoid problems identified in earlier examples, such as leading with dominant emotions or categorising attachments. I draw on data collected during 2019, with a related development between 2021 and 2022, which sought to understand feelings about a specific location – sometimes as deep as seven decades. Local provider of home care to

older residents Village Service were a significant partner in the early research and were explicitly mentioned in the ethics application. They helped me to meet and subsequently interview people aged 55 to 92. Ethical approval was gained for all methods detailed. However, the resulting combination as a four-stage approach emerged from the exploration described here.

The first stage in 2019 comprised interviews which initially focused on the interviewee's home (Zonn 2020) and, on average, lasted around an hour. My preference was for one-to-one audio-recorded participatory walking interviews (Evans and Jones 2011), where the interviewee led a stroll to locations of importance to themselves. This less structured approach prompted attachments to earlier stages of the lifecourse (Barron 2021). For those unable to go outside, or who lived away from a place important to their biography, I used sat-down audio-recorded walks of the mind (Ingold 2010). Materials such as maps, objects, books, and old photographs were the prompts which guided the discussion. From both forms of recorded interviews, I wrote vignettes of up to 1,500 words. These were designed to follow the style of *Ordinary Affects* (Stewart 2007): conveying trajectories (Anderson 2023) and explaining the research experience. Though these vignettes were initially designed for participants and Village Services to keep, they also helped to start the process of analysis. Some everyday cultures explored in the interviews were hard for me (indeed anybody younger than the interviewees or from a different culture) to appreciate. I offer thoughts on how to bridge cultural contexts across ages in related writing (Singleton 2024b).

The second stage was designed to help explore context by introducing a one-off participatory walking tours with the general public. Such walks involve leading a group on a planned route designed to "elicit responses to specific, predetermined places" (Evans and Jones 2011, 849) and to challenge place biography (Huss 2025; Yi'En 2014). My desire was to be event-oriented (Springgay and Truman 2017) by including site-specific performance (Smith 2018) developed from the vignettes. Relevant to the desire to avoid prescribed lines of inquiry (Robinson and McClelland 2020) or dominant emotions, such walking tours can facilitate a "speculative middle" (Springgay and Truman 2018) where people feel able to interact with each other and take conversations in unexpected directions.

The third stage used the same interview approaches as deployed before (outdoor walks and walks of the mind) but focused on themes which emerged from the previous event. In the fourth stage there was a stronger commitment to site-specific theatre (Pearson 2020; Rogers 2012; Smith 2018). This later stage helped glimpses of other lifeworlds (Highmore 2017; Vannini 2015) to be revealed. The event was captured with permission from participants in photos (Figures 1 and 2) and a film-maker represented the day in a 3-minute-long film available to the general public. This latter film helped to communicate the work of Village Services and the ESRC Festival of Social Sciences.

As with all the previous examples, such as northern England and Port Talbot, the specific setting would be relevant. I briefly explain this before presenting the results of applying this methodology.

Relevance of Setting

The case study was Newport, a city in south-east Wales of circa 160,000 people (ONS 2023) approximately 60 km east of Port Talbot. A new steelworks employing over 13,000 people

FIGURE 1 Shale lorry on the paper roadway © Jo Haycock, 2019.

FIGURE 2 Stephen reveals his teenage world © Jo Haycock, 2019.

opened near Newport in 1962 (originally called the Spencer Works and later named Llanwern). The Newport blast furnaces closed in 2001 (O'Neill 2020) so that all steelmaking in Wales could be concentrated at Port Talbot. Unlike Port Talbot, which was redeveloped in the 1950s from a

pre-existing plant, planners did not want Newport to be reliant on a single industry. Such economic and social pragmatism is represented in a contemporary early-1960s film – available from South Wales Argus (2012). Thousands of new houses and schools were added to seven existing settlements around Newport's periphery, and not adjacent to the centre itself. One of these settlements, Caerleon, is the focus for my case study.

Caerleon is a neighbourhood of nearly 8,000 people (Newport City Council 2022) and is interesting for the study of attachments as it simultaneously has Newport's highest proportion of people aged 65 and above (25.8% against average of 17%) and the second lowest proportion of 16–44-year-olds (26.7% against average of 37.4%). The built form features many housing estates from the late-1950s, 1960s and 1970s – of which more in this paper. Many research participants were found through the aforementioned relationship with Village Services.

RESULTS

In this section I reflect on the use of the methodology. As shown in Table 1, the research featured 13 recorded interviews with 14 individuals (6 females and 8 males). No one participant gave more than three hours in total. At Stage One Barbara was interviewed twice on separate walks and two people (not explicitly discussed here as their attachment to the place was less significant) were interviewed together in one walk of the mind. Stage Three involved a new group

TABLE 1
Research Timetable

Stage	1. Walking interviews (n = 4) and walks of the mind (n = 3)	2. Public walking tour with outdoor performance	3. Walking interviews (n = 3) and walks of the mind (n = 3)	4. Public walking tour with indoor performance
Months	April to June 2019	July 2019	July to October 2019	November 2019
Focus	Focus on life story and attachments	Performances and spatial hinge	1960s and 1970s, industry, people moving to new homes	Ageing focus Two local guides
Spatial range	Home and neighbourhood	Neighbourhood and city	Home and city	Neighbourhood and city
People	6 participants Barbara. David. Social Worker. NB two males and one female not explicitly discussed here.	40 attendees through Caerleon Arts Festival	8 participants Maria. Former housing officer. Charles and daughter. Michelle and mother. Gerald. Stephen.	35 attendees through Eventbrite, word of mouth and ESRC Festival of Social Science. (NB 15 also attended Stage 2)
Data	Audio recordings, photos 3 vignettes	Photos Notes	Audio recordings, photos 3 vignettes	Feedback forms (n = 23) Photos, film of event, participant interviews (n = 6)

of interviewees. Amongst them Michelle and her mother were interviewed together twice over two walks of the mind. Charles and his daughter were also interviewed together. The two public events involved approximately 60 different people, 15 of whom attended both. Some challenges of managing an event and gathering data are detailed later.

During the first round of interviews, I did not specifically refer to the steelworks near Newport and its role in the biographies. This was not purposefully to avoid emotional responses, but because the plant closed in 2001 (O'Neill 2020). Similar to the Port Talbot case in the present-day, approximately 3,000 employees had been made redundant. As somebody from Newport, who was in my early twenties when the steelworks closed, I felt that Newport had largely moved on emotionally. Indeed, I was surprised at how it resurfaced in the latter stages of this research.

Stage One: Gathering Initial Stories

The accounts discussed in this section largely concern relationships between individuals with their home and their immediate neighbourhood. This level is considered to have the thickest combination of attachments (Diener and Hagen 2022) and fits the environmental psychologists' typology (Hidalgo and Hernández 2001).

The first interviewee was Barbara, a woman in her mid-seventies. She was the only person interviewed more than once at this stage. On the first walk we followed her regular exercise route. She described her rationale for moving to Caerleon with her husband in 1968 as follows: "we decided that we would move to a little village – so that we could start a family." Of note, a secondary school had recently opened in Caerleon. On a second interview we walked towards the estate of sixty houses where she had started a family. Some feelings connected to these locations were intimate and personal (Anderson 2006; Stewart 2007). She showed me that the bus did not go all the way to the new housing estate. After descending the bus she ran home, stopping for a breather under very limited street lighting. Barbara also took me to the specific location where a car had crashed into her garden and described looking after a young injured driver. These place-specific memories seemed to correspond with personal growth – see more in Zonn (2020). David, born in 1961, talked about the same housing estate via a sat-down conversation. In particular, he remembered the feeling of something being taken away, aged around six or seven, as habitats for lapwings were destroyed to accommodate new homes.

Some other interviews from residents who had been there only a few years revealed more about qualities in Caerleon in the present-day. For example, a social worker born in the late-1960s explained the notion that different generations have distinct relationships with their houses. Pointed to the houses where the baby boomers (born 1946–64) lived he identified "fixed" locations or "castles" which give them stability. This latter notion supports theories which put the house at the top of the place attachment scale (Diener and Hagen 2022; Hidalgo and Hernández 2001). From the personal I now describe how the first public walk moved to the wider social.

Stage Two: Public Walk and Site-Specific Performance

As stated earlier, the first public walking tour was designed to find meaning from several interview accounts. The walk was promoted as an event (Springgay and Truman 2017) as part of the

Caerleon Arts Festival. People were made aware both of my research project and of photography. The experience was framed as a walking drift or dérive: techniques informed by missions which can sometimes seem speculative, but which can attune us to ambience and atmosphere (Smith 2018) and are knowingly "ventures into the unknown" (Solnit 2014, 212). In the case of Caerleon, it was important to avoid dominant narratives around heritage (Aoki and Yoshimizu 2015) such as tourist attractions interpreting extensive Roman remains. The mission for this walk was to find a hillfort which may be the subject of *The Hill of Dreams* (Machen 2006), a semi-biographical novel written by Caerleon-born writer Arthur Machen (1865–1947). This book depicts London of the late-nineteenth century and – to a degree – a place which resembles Caerleon. The response to this book will be discussed shortly.

Beyond the mission to find the hillfort, the Caerleon dérive contained two elements designed to bring the attendees into the conversation. The first were site-specific performances (Rogers 2012) developed from the vignettes by artist Marega Palser. For example, Marega produced a dance at the start to hint at what people were about to experience. Other performances interpreted Stage One interviews, such as portraying the car accident recalled by Barbara (Figure 3).

Marega used her body and a toy car (Pearson 2020), rather than relying on specific words. In response attendees talked about how car use had risen very quickly in the 1960s and that many people had poor driving skills. Marega leading sections of the walk also helped me to manage the practicalities of the 40 attendees and to take some brief notes.

The second creative element was the technique that Literary Geographers refer to as the spatial hinge. The latter can "locate extra-literary experiences in actual-world places not associated with the novel but which *feel* [emphasis in original] like they share the same affective environment" (Thurgill and Lovell 2019, 17). I led this stage, making use of the latter elements as Machen describes suburban London having the "ruins of the country, the tracks where sweet

FIGURE 3 Marega playfully represents a car © Jo Haycock, 2019.

lanes had been, gangrened stumps of trees, the relics of hedges" (Machen 2006, 168). This had a remarkably similar affective nature to David's accounts of the nature destroyed in the 1960s. By standing amidst those actual houses, attendees had a chance to reflect on how building these houses in the countryside would have felt. As with Marega's non-verbal dances, this indirect technique was designed to avoid telling people what to feel.

Limited data was gathered from this event due to me being the sole researcher and also having to lead the way. However, photographs (such as Figure 3) and notes written during the event and immediately afterwards helped to sense how these creative mediums (Hawkins 2021) encouraged people to talk and bring feelings forward. I decided to seek financial resource to film a future walking event, which is detailed under Stage Four. Useful insights emerged around people negotiating technologies in the 1960s, such as driving a car or having gas heating. A specific context for Caerleon and Newport in the 1960s and 1970s also surfaced, which centred on new jobs at the steelworks and of people moving to the area. These themes greatly helped to focus Stage Three, the second round of interviews.

Stage Three: Individuals Focus on the Home, City, and a Specific Time

In this stage I met eight more people (see Table 1). Whilst the outside walking interviews (n = 3) were one-to-one, all walks of the mind interviews (n = 3) involved more than two participants. These latter cases involved interviewing adult children alongside parents who were not physically able to leave the home. Of note Michelle and her mother were interviewed twice using this technique. Three interviewees were referred through Village Services and one through David interviewed at Stage One. Four people came directly after attending the public walking tour at Stage Two. In this stage the conversations focused more clearly on the 1960s and 1970s and the wider industrial story of Newport.

I was introduced to Charles through his daughter, who had attended the walk. He was born in the late-1940s and had lived his whole life in Caerleon. As a young man he was employed building houses in Caerleon for a private developer. I asked him who bought such properties. Instead of giving a direct answer he said that "everybody felt good about buying their own house compared to living in a council house." He emphasised this view by saying that "everybody naturally felt that." Though he was not able to take a financial leap into home ownership himself until the 1980s, he speculated that the buyers were probably "slightly better earning" and that "there were a lot of people who were prepared to give up now, for then." The second sentence still intrigues me. We could understand that giving up "now" meant paying for a mortgage, rather than having disposable income for holidays and going out. This case of "then" could be a promissory attachment (Anderson 2023) to a time, and potentially place, when the investment had paid off. The next account illustrates the moment in 1970 when home ownership arrived for one young couple.

Maria is a similar age to Charles. Maria described her family as being "imported to serve" the steelwork in 1962. They had come from a village near the old steelworks in Ebbw Vale. By the age of 20, Maria and her husband had succeeding in taking out a mortgage for the type of house built by Charles. Maria recalled her working in marketing at the steelworks and her husband working at an aluminium factory. In 1973 they took out a larger mortgage and upgraded to a bigger house next to the woods. Stood by that property on a walk, Maria described their

motivations: "the seventies vibe had been the *Good Life*, living in your own bit of land and not being influenced by those around you." For context, the *Good Life* was a popular British TV situation comedy, which ran from 1975–1979. The sitcom featured a middle-aged couple (the Goods) who had quit paid employment to pursue a self-sufficient lifestyle from their suburban home and garden to the bemusement of their more conventional neighbours (the Leadbetters). Maria and her husband did not exactly follow the Goods, but their story resembles other cases of people from industrial backgrounds (Emery 2018) pursuing new aspirations.

Whilst Maria's life seemed to have flowed, there are others whose biographies included impasses (Berlant 2011) or ruptures. Gerald was a contemporary by age, occupation, and birthplace of Maria's father. He had grown up amidst the poverty of an economically-depressed Wales in the 1930s, of which there were feelings of collective trauma which resonate with the 1984–85 miners' strike (Bright 2016; Emery 2022). Gerald talked in terms of trajectories, such as how he and his wife "emigrated down to Caerleon" in the early-1960s and that "we were young, and everything seemed possible." They settled into a new home, made many friendships, and enjoyed going to the social club. Moving forward in time to the 1980s, he recalled threats of job losses and some corresponding steel strikes. His working life ended when [Prime Minister] "Margaret Thatcher gave us a fortune in a sort of backhanded fashion." These riches include a redundancy package from the steelworks as the original workforce reduced by 4,300. The latter story of "struggle in Welsh Steel Town" was even covered by *The New York Times* (Feder 1982). The second fortune was a chance for Gerald and many others to buy rented properties from the local council at a reduced price. He described these as "good times, but bad times." Though the good times were personal – such selling their flat and buying a private detached house a few years later – the bad times related to the industrial fortunes of wider society in Newport and the 1984–85 miners' strike.

There is a convergence in narratives, such as how Gerald and Maria were brought to "serve" the new steelworks. Alongside Charles they describe scenes of attachment (Anderson 2023) around feelings connected with owning houses. During this stage I also interviewed Michelle and Stephen, who were born in the early-1960s. Rather than steelworkers, their fathers were managers: Michelle's in retail and Stephen's in light industry. Their mothers knew each other as significant organisers involved in the church. Both sets of parents stayed in Caerleon and received care though Village Services. Michelle's mother had dementia, which meant that she provided some interesting recollections. For example, she remembered her late husband's stories of railway commuters at Caerleon station carrying formal hats and leather bags. This marked the coming modernity of the early-1960s: a change in the everyday.

In the next section I explore the last stage of the methodology. Here I describe a second public event where I worked again with artist Marega. In this stage a participant, Stephen, led a walking tour and described his teenage experiences during the 1970s.

Stage Four: Second Public Event Reveals More Layers of Feeling

The second event was designed to involve the public once more and, hopefully, reveal other feelings. This free event took place on a Saturday morning in November 2019 and was sponsored and marketed through the UK-wide ESRC Festival of Social Science. A total of 35 people came to the Village Services Community Hub at the heart of the estate where Maria grew up, and in

close "relation to the living communities" (Rogers 2012, 66) where Charles, Gerald and others resided. The space was a former Post Office comprising two small rooms. Only a dozen people could sit down during the event, which meant that the site-specific performance had to be designed around the constraints (Pearson 2020; Smith 2018), such as people stood close together. I now describe how we explored Caerleon during the 1960s and 1970s.

Related to the earlier statistics (Newport City Council 2022), I presented a hypothesis that the large older population in Caerleon could be due to people wanting to stay for a long time. This invited people to think about attachments. After some time Marega interrupted, smiled, and asked: "Are we going to get into the *now*?" She then invited people to stand up and led a relaxation exercise designed to help people connect with their bodies. She then delivered a non-verbal dance sequence based on an earlier vignette, and whose value was to connect back to *then*. This lasted the one minute and 49 seconds of Shirley Bassey's hit record "Big Spender," music played in the background as Marega took a large roll of ticker tape. This tape was stretched and held in people's hands; skilfully making a virtue of the small space and which brought people from both rooms into the experience.

During the final stanza of the song Marega moved a toy tipper truck, full of gravel, along the tape (see Figure 1). At the climax she emptied the tiny stones, "bestowing upon them a signifying power" (Pearson 2020, 724), into the hat belonging to a woman who held the newly laid paper roadway. The audience laughed and clapped. As soon as the music stopped somebody said: "The shale lorries!"

Shale is a by-product of coal mining and was carried through the streets of Caerleon in the early-1960s to create foundations for the steelworks. This was a specific story recalled by Charles in Stage Three. As Marega and I had deliberately given no verbal clues I was delighted that the performance had resonated. As an aside, Charles said that Shirley Bassey was rumoured to have owned some shale lorries. Marega's gesture to construction – and the choice of "Big Spender" – potentially helped people remember a time when they had felt part of something significant. This carefully crafted dramatic intervention prompted further stories, such as how these lorries had caused havoc and sometimes even fatalities. These responses were potentially a case of recovering a scene of attachment; a "rebinding as people are reattached or attached more intensely to objects they had begun to detach from" (Anderson 2023, 405). Though this element of the work requires more analysis, Marega's interventions rewarded this adventurous approach and proved to be a successful experimentation in affect-based research (Dewsbury 2010).

Following Marega's performance 20 people went outside for a group walking tour. The reduced number was partly due to the rain and also because some were unable to walk that distance. Rather than me leading, two people interviewed during Stage Three led segments of the walk. The first part involved a former housing officer who explained the politics of local housing introduced earlier by Gerald (see more in Singleton 2024a). Stephen led the second part and guided us to a specific street corner (Figure 2), between his former home and where his close friends lived.

Stephen described his world of Caerleon and Newport in their pomp as:

> This was a peak time for this area: probably full employment in the early seventies; good jobs, skilled jobs. And a lot of people, I suppose actually, in terms of almost fulfilling their dreams: home ownership and you're reaching that kind of consuming, people getting access to cars, things like tellies.

Stephen's reflection on his teenage "world" includes spatial references to the city. Attachments to identities included "good" and "skilled" jobs – meaning employment in manufacturing and industry (Walker 2021; Walkerdine 2016). There are aspirational feelings associated with homes and access to new technologies. The term "almost fulfilling" has an affective dimension – such as to strategies which do not always succeed (Stewart 2007). Stephen's used of "almost" is explained later when he quickly pivoted and described how this "world of employment" no longer exists. In many ways Stephen's account was a re-attachment to arrangements of promises (Anderson 2023). For example, Maria's story testifies that Newport saw investment in industrial jobs during the 1950s and 1960s (see more in Singleton 2023a). However, we know about the subsequent deindustrialisation around Newport in Gerald's account, elsewhere in the UK during the 1980s (Bright 2016; Emery 2018) and the recent debate around Port Talbot steelworks (Today 2024).

Taking Marega's performance and the walk together, this event was successful in helping others to enter the world of a given place and time. I gained responses from participants at the end of the walk – three of whom feature in a short film produced after the event (available from Singleton 2024a). One person related how the performance and walking tour resonated with his childhood on a council estate near Birmingham, UK: "The first thing is: it takes you back yourself; on a journey; the places you've lived, those packed connections, the people that are potentially still living in those places." His description of the connections as "packed" finds an affective register (Stewart 2007) which conveys excitement, discomfort and much more. The film shows him looking straight at the camera as he breaks down long sentences – almost poetically – into shorter clauses. The absence of objectified or superficial emotions (Pile 2010) suggested that Stephen's walk had brought the public into performative and affect-based research (Dewsbury 2010). From this position of positivity, I now discuss the research and suggest three potential avenues for development.

DISCUSSION

This paper presents a four-stage methodology which is a "collage" (Freeman 2020) made from one-to-one interviews and creative "mediums" (Hawkins 2021) including group walking tours and site-specific performances. The depth of data collection and the sequencing of the four stages are shown in Table 1. In this section I briefly consider what this approach contributes to studies of attachment to place before considering the two creative mediums, such as the potential for local stakeholders to be co-producers and how to deepen collaborations with artists.

Bringing an Affective Dimension into the Study of Place Attachment

This paper has taken up the challenge noted by environmental psychologists to develop theory and empirical case studies (Hernández, Hidalgo, and Ruiz 2021). There is evidence of "hope" (Anderson 2006), "social haunting" (Bright 2016) and "urban trauma" (Emery 2022; Pain 2019) layered within places. As stated earlier, the latter two feelings seemingly influence the Nick Robinson interview with the Port Talbot steelworker (Today 2024). In contrast, my four-stage

methodology tries not to assume what people with deep connections feel about a place. The interviews in Caerleon involved people born in the 1920s (Gerald, Michelle's mother and one other male), people born during World War Two (Barbara, the former housing officer, and one other female), people born in the 1946–64 baby boom period (Charles, Maria, David, Michelle, Stephen and one other) and two born in the 1970s. I used stages of walking tours and performative elements to move iteratively between the individual and the wider "we" (Stewart 2007). This exercise revealed scenes of attachment (Anderson 2023) and connected with the idea of places as palimpsests with surfaces showing traces of what has been rubbed out (Richardson 2017) – such as the industrial story of the 1960s and 1970s. The steelworks story not initially being a dominant narrative in Stage One interviews suggested that Newport had proven not to have overly relied on one industry – see South Wales Argus (2012).

Though this exercise helped to understand forms of attachment for older people in this location, the perspective of younger working age people was missed. Of note statistics suggest that Caerleon has relatively few 16–44-year-olds compared to other neighbourhoods (Newport City Council 2022). This could be an issue of housing affordability, linked to Stephen's notion that the economic stability of the early-1970s did not exist for contemporary people. This chimes with Berlant's thought that "people born into unwelcoming worlds and unreliable environments have a different response to the new precarities than do people who presumed they would be protected" (2011, 20). Geographers have applied some of Berlant's latter theories, couple with a pursuit of affect and feeling, to explore the politics of austerity (Coleman 2016) and relational geographies of family, friendship, and intimacy (Hall 2019). A potential development of this approach could therefore feature people born more recently and touch on issues such as austerity or, indeed, more hopeful affects (Anderson 2006).

Local Stakeholders as Co-Producers in Walking Tours

Related to the latter point about involving younger people, earlier literature has argued for the voices of people with a meaningful stake in places (Bright 2016) and for narratives to be co-produced (Walkerdine 2016). I reflect that Stage Four, as described earlier, involved both the former housing officer and Stephen leading elements of the walking tour. The first person was overtly political in criticising housing policy (see also Gerald's account), whilst a return to these streets potentially helped Stephen make sense of his own biography (Zonn 2020). In both cases they had been on walking interviews a few months before the event, which had potentially allowed them to develop a narrative. Whatever their motivations, their valuable involvement offered the "speculative middle" (Springgay and Truman 2018) to walking tour members. As a result, people talked about politics, shopping habits and shared intimate stories (perhaps ordinary affects) in public spaces. For the future it would be interesting for other participants to lead the walk during Stage Two and to trial them in places where conflict exists (Huss 2025; Robinson and McClelland 2020). Potentially a community steering group could refine the themes ahead of Stage Three and develop learning activities through urban walking (Strohmayer 2023).

Deeper Collaboration with Artists

Marega's earlier site-specific performances included dance, music, and were mostly non-verbal. Her use of the paper road and toy truck (Figure 1) had allowed people to sample a "world least available to being represented as ideas, arguments and thoughtful reflection" (Highmore 2017, 27). Through 2021 and 2022 I varied this approach with a greater amount of artist involvement. This focused on redevelopment in Newport city centre during the 1960s and 1970s. Rather than starting with new interviews, I sought contemporary archival documents (Emery 2022). Newport Reference Library offered press cuttings, maps, photos, minutes from council meetings and a glossy colour brochure from the early-1970s. From this material I created a new walking dérive (Smith 2018; Solnit 2014) though the centre of Newport. Though generally designed to recover hopeful feelings, the line visited the site of houses demolished in the 1960s. The resulting dérive offered similarities to Emery (2022) finding urban trauma at the sites of miners' welfares. From the exercise one participant referred a future interviewee and another become involved later as an artist. For the third stage I used existing oral histories, with permission, and developed the walk of the mind (Ingold 2010) into an online version where participants ($n = 2$) used Google Maps to navigate places. The interview documentation and sample data is available (Singleton 2023b). Such material led to an extended fourth stage, where I commissioned a producer, dramatist and three artists. We created four site-specific performances and made a 22-minute-long film. This second iteration demonstrated that the methodological "collage" (Freeman 2020) could be reformed and rescaled. Moreover, there was scope and freedom for artists to curate and decide which public spaces to use. For a longer account of this work see Singleton (2024a).

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I have developed a hybrid methodology to explore feelings attached to places, with a focus on how feelings endure over time and how they recede. I have questioned the example of connecting a contemporary crisis in steelmaking in South Wales (Today 2024) to strong emotions brought forward in wake of the 1984–85 miners' strike. Though attachments can involve bringing something closer (Anderson 2023), I show how a methodological approach that is open to affects avoids drawing straight lines from feelings in the past to those in the present-day. The iterative four-stage approach makes a collage (Freeman 2020) from one-to-one interviews, which are complemented with two creative mediums (Hawkins 2021): public events featuring group walks and site-specific performances. The resulting methodology has potential for developments in places beyond the case study, such as exploring how younger people form attachments forming in the present day. Future work may benefit by further featuring local stakeholders as co-producers and deeper artist collaborations.

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