

# The ride-along: a journey in qualitative research

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to show why and how the “ride-along” can add great value to qualitative research.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The paper is primarily based on ethnographic research into food systems that the author carried out in Tanzania and draws on other research experience and existing literature on the “go-along” and “walk-along”.

**Findings** – Transport choices are made in all social science research and therefore deserve greater attention in research design. Transport will influence how the researcher is perceived and what they will experience and find. The ride-along, when done well, minimises the risks and adds value to qualitative research.

**Practical implications** – Researchers need to be reflexive about transport choices and give them greater consideration in research design and practice. The examples from field experience and the considerations identified in this paper will assist researchers and their supervisors in this process.

**Originality/value** – Despite the ubiquity of mobility in social science research, there is surprisingly little literature on the subject, especially related to the use of different modes of transport. The originality is in elaborating the importance of the ride-along and the value is in the clearly identified lessons for qualitative research methodology teaching and practice.

**Keywords** Africa, Ethnography, Reflexivity, Transport, Field studies, Qualitative research methods, Go-along, Ride-along

## Introduction

It was a typical hot and humid day in Dar es Salaam, the bustling city of close to 5m people, not far from the equator, on the east coast of Tanzania. We were both soaked with sweat, cycling our way through the chaotic traffic, sometimes down narrow dirt tracks and alleys between houses, stopping at an eating house to pay for the breakfast Samuel had that morning, passing bicycle repair men sitting under trees ready to assist us for a few shillings if needed, visiting the peri-urban chicken farmers where Samuel buys eggs and eventually arriving at his home where I joined Samuel and his family for lunch under a tree. Samuel uses his bicycle to earn a livelihood selling eggs to shops and traders in the city. I was cycling with him as part of my PhD research on the food system that feeds the fast-growing city (Wegerif, 2017).

During preparation for my doctorate (and my masters) research, including in methodology courses attended, no one raised the issue of transport as a methodological consideration. Nor did I come across any papers, or sections in those thick research methodology books, dealing with the issue of transport. Ritchie *et al.* (2013, p. 340) in the 350-page book “Qualitative Research Practice” did mention transport, but only once in a section on “protecting researchers from harm” where they correctly noted that “[i]n public places, this will involve decisions about (and funding for) appropriate modes of transport” (p. 70).

When in the field, I wanted to learn more about the trade in eggs, even just to find where the eggs and the men on bicycles delivering them came from (Wegerif, 2014). It seemed logical to me, as a person who cycles regularly, to get on my bike and ride with them. As Jungnickel (2014) found, “the decision and everyday practice to cycle commute to and from my fieldsites played an unexpected yet critical role in my research” (p. 646). Later in the research I found myself on motorbikes, busses and trucks as well as still cycling and walking. When my field work was almost done, I had time to look for literature on this and

found some papers on the concept of the “go-along” and “walk-along” (Carpiano, 2009; Kusenbach, 2003) and others that shared experiences of walking or cycling in research (Phillips, 2016; Jungnickel, 2014; Jungnickel and Aldred, 2014; Ingold and Vergunst, 2008; Widlok, 2008; Gooch, 2008). As Ingold and Vergunst (2008, p. 2) put it, “[t]hat walking is social may seem obvious, although it is all the more remarkable, in this light, that social scientists have devoted so little attention to it”. From this reading I found a link with the transect walk (Thomas, 2004; Oudwater and Martin, 2003; Chambers, 1992, 1994) and realised that I had previously used the walk-along, without conceptualising it as such or giving it much thought, and found it very effective (Wegerif, 2010). The existing literature helped to clarify and confirm lessons from my own experiences, but still left a gap, especially in relation to travel and the use of transport. This paper contributes to filling that gap by further developing the concept of the “ride-along” as a methodology for addressing transport in qualitative research.

This paper draws primarily on my experience carrying out ethnographic research, in Tanzania, that followed the food (Cook, 2004, 2006) from urban eaters back to fields of the primary producers, taking in the traders, processors, transporters and others on the way (Wegerif, 2017). While one can easily see why transport would be a central factor in such research, the lessons have wider applicability. I struggle to think of any empirical social science research that will not involve transport in some way. Even when research is in a particular site, like a school or hospital, both the researcher and participants have to reach the site; the day of the teacher and their pupils does not start in the classroom. How we as researchers arrive at our field sites profoundly impacts how we view the site and how our knowledge of it is generated; “our mobility decisions are multi-sensory portals through which we make sense of the world” (Jungnickel, 2014, p. 647). Transport is also becoming more important in this globalising world where research, like production of many commodities, is increasingly taking place at multiple sites with implications for research practice (Marcus, 1995).

My research took place in the context of an increasing awareness of the challenge of ensuring food security for a growing and rapidly urbanising world population (UN General Assembly, 2017; UN, 2014; Wiskerke and Viljeon, 2012). Dar es Salaam, as an example of the cities where much of the new population growth is occurring, provided the opportunity to explore how such cities are fed and can be fed in the future. Quickly realising that there was little detailed data on food supplies to the city, most of which was not through formal and corporate structures, I needed to find research methods appropriate to the setting.

Believing that economic transactions are not only about maximising utility, but are also embedded in social relations (Granovetter, 1985; Polanyi, 1957), I applied actor orientated ethnography to gather data in a way that could reveal the heterogeneous everyday practices of the actors involved, how they respond to systemic pressures, how they create their livelihoods and meet their food needs (Long, 2001; Arce and Long, 2000). This fits with a human economy approach that builds on what people are already doing (Hart, 2015b) and “privileges people before abstractions” with research that explores how “[p]eople make and remake their economic lives” (Hart, 2015a, p. 207).

In the rest of this paper, I share experiences and draw out lessons and practical recommendations from them and existing literature for using transport and maximising the ride-along as a research method.

## **Experiences of the ride-along**

### *The sembe trader*

I met David at a wholesale shop he supplies with *sembe* (maize meal flour), in an *uswahilini* (urban informal settlement) area of Dar es Salaam. We were together for the next five hours,

walking the dusty streets to shops he supplies, getting coffee, riding several crowded *daladalas* (medium-size busses used for public transport) about 12 km to Temeke in the south-east of the city, and then walking to the mill that he uses for maize grinding, before having lunch and drinks at a bar with his sister and brother in law. The time with David provided plenty of opportunity for discussion including pointing out and asking about things and people we passed and met. I saw shops David supplied and met shopkeepers and owners. I observed the easy conversation with the coffee seller and other coffee drinkers that knew him and the respectful way someone he met on the *daladala* paid David's fare for him. We also established a bond between us that made it easy to arrange to meet David again for further research.

Many people are reluctant to sit in an interview for any length of time, even more so people like David who are constantly on the move, but we had ample time together. In this example, the walk-along combined with the ride-along and involved following David in his "natural" activities combined with useful "unnatural" activities, such as him showing me additional shops he would not necessarily have visited that day if I was not there.

This was my first meeting with David and I had no idea how much time, if any, he would spend with me. He had suggested meeting at the wholesale shop and only introduced himself after surreptitiously observing me arrive and talk to the owners who he knew. It was important that I had arrived on foot with the flexibility in my schedule to be able to go-along with David for a good part of the day.

#### *Vegetable sellers*

I met with the 16 vegetable traders at 3 a.m. in a dark street of the *uswahilini* part of Mikocheni, Dar es Salaam. They were almost all women selling at the same local market. We boarded a minibus arranged by the group for this daily trip 8.5 km across town to the Ilala market where they buy wholesale. Ilala has become an important hub for fresh vegetable distribution with trucks coming from inland regions and urban and peri-urban farmers bringing their produce. I walked around Ilala market with one of the traders as she bought from various sellers, all of whom she was familiar with. Then I joined her and a different but overlapping group of traders, all with their day's stock, on a *daladala* taking them back to their local market. From where the *daladala* dropped us off we walked again, this time following the food as it was transported by young men with pushcarts. By about 6.30 a.m. the stock was being set out on each trader's stall ready for the early morning customers.

This ride-along was very useful in understanding the acquisition and distribution of food and gave me new contacts and avenues for further research among the wholesale sellers and transporters coming from inland. I saw another part of the lives of the vegetable traders that was not visible from interviews and observation in the market where they sold. Without being there with them, I would not have experienced the level of comradery amongst these traders waiting in a dark street at 3 a.m. for common transport. The high level of collaboration and the overlapping groups involved helped to explain the way these traders related to and assisted each other in the market place.

#### *Bringing maize to the city*

In the early afternoon I was introduced to Aziz by a maize trader whose 33 tons of maize was being loaded onto Aziz's truck. Aziz agreed that I could go with him on the 340 km trip from the inland town of Kibaigwa to Dar es Salaam. From then on, I was on a ride-along with Aziz and the truck until 10 a.m. the following day. This exposed me to, all the preparations and steps involved before, during and after the actual driving.

Completing the loading of maize required weighing, not only the total weight but also the distribution across the truck axels. Then a team of young men were paid to cover the

load with a tarpaulin and tie it down. While this was happening, Aziz found one of the truck tyres had a puncture and had that removed, repaired in the village and returned to the truck. Aziz was also talking on the phone to the mother of his six-year-old daughter, trying to arrange to see her for the first time in years. The truck had to be refuelled at a particular filling station where the truck owner, who lives in the same village, has an account. While Aziz was doing all this, his assistant, who was a friend of the truck owner, was drinking in a nearby bar. By around 8 p.m. the deposit for transport and tax was paid by a transport *dalali* (an agent that sets up deals for a commission) and we set off. Before getting out of town we picked up a passenger who another *dalali* had arranged to ride with us for a small payment.

We had long hours on the road to talk and as time passed our interaction went far beyond the typical researcher respondent relationship. I became part of the conversations with the driver, his assistant and other passenger. We ate together at a road side eating place, I observed the checking of tax receipts and the payment of bribes at one weighbridge and to a policeman. Aziz drove carefully and at some point I lay down on the bunk above the driver. Then at 2 a.m. Aziz was feeling sleepy and asked his assistant to take over, the same assistant who had been drinking and I had learnt did not have a licence. Objecting was not really an option, the driver was tired, we were in the middle of nowhere and they had been generous in accommodating me on their journey. The assistant adopted a gung-ho driving style and the speed of the truck increased substantially. It was not long before shouts of *TUTA!* (bump) from Aziz and the passenger startled me out of half sleep just as the impact of the speeding truck hitting a large speed bump slammed me against the roof of the truck and dumped me on top of the driver. Luckily the truck stayed on the road and did not hit anything else. The speedometer and other parts of the dashboard that had flown out were put back although not working, wire was used to tie on panels that had come loose, there was nothing we could do about the loss of lights, at least we had one headlight still working as we carried on and eventually arrived and unloaded. I got away with bruising on one leg and a shoulder injury that took me to a physiotherapist for several months.

Being on the journey gave me an opportunity to build a relationship with Aziz and his assistant. It also became a good reason to be with them and put me in a position to observe every step of the process including their work and relationships with other actors, such as small businesses and government officials. I happened to get a first-hand experience of the dangers of a ride-along and the need to be committed to the journey once started.

### *Motorbikes, managing risk and getting to places*

I arrived in the late afternoon by bus in the small town of Kilosa, in central Tanzania, and found the last bus to my destination, the village of Zombo, had just left. I sat on a bench at the corner of the dusty square that forms Kilosa's public transport terminal and drank hot ginger while deciding what to do. There were motorbikes all around being used as *bodabodas* (a bicycle or, now more often, motorbike used to provide a taxi service) ready to take me to Zombo, but I had committed to myself that I would not use this common but dangerous form of transport. Another cup of strong hot ginger and I decided to take the risk, moderating that risk by carefully selecting a *bodaboda* and rider that both looked in good condition and insisting on wearing a helmet. The 20-km journey went fine and I stepped off the back of the *bodaboda* in Zombo ready to start a period of research in the village where I stayed with a local family.

Two days later it was mid-afternoon on a hot day in Zombo and I had already spent five hours walking around fields with a helpful local farmer. As we trudged back towards the village a motorbike passed and my companion was quick to flag it down and jump on the back looking at me to follow. Three of us were soon bouncing along a dirt track

with no helmets in sight. My walk-along had become a ride-along and my no motorbikes rule had been firmly crossed out.

There are particularly dangerous forms of transport and I recommend setting boundaries and sticking to them better than I did. At the same time, I had not thought through how important the motorbike is as a means of affordable transport that can reach many places other vehicles do not in Tanzania. I travelled on motorbikes on other occasions where there were no other reasonable options, but still never went on a *bodaboda* in Dar es Salaam.

### *Cycling-along*

I started this paper on a ride-along with an egg trader on a bicycle. Throughout the research I used bicycles to accompany actors using bicycles, like the egg traders, door-to-door fresh vegetable sellers and farmers who use bicycles to get to their fields. The bicycle was also a practical way of getting to research sites. The bicycle covers more ground than walking and is convenient in the narrow streets of *uswahilini* areas of Dar es Salaam and the narrow paths of villages. Unlike a car, the bicycle does not set the researcher apart from the research participants socially or physically. The bicycle enables you to see, smell and hear what is going on. It is easy to greet people and stop and chat if that seems useful. Compared to public transport it gives one the flexibility to go into different areas and stop and change direction in response to new things discovered. One disadvantage of the bicycle is that it is often hard to talk to someone on another bicycle while riding, unlike in public transport or trucks where there is opportunity for lengthy conversation while on the move.

### **Strengths of the ride-along**

I summarise here some key strengths of the ride-along based on my experiences and from existing go-along and transect walk literature, especially the identification by Carpiano (2009, p. 267) of strengths and weaknesses of the “walk-along”.

The ride-along, like the walk-along, is a subgroup of the go-along. These methods, first and foremost, give the researcher the experience of the participants. It can never be completely the same experience, given the researchers different perspective, the impact of their presence and the temporary nature of their involvement, but it is much closer to the experience of the participant than if one was never there. As Carpiano (2009) put it: “The go-along method is a unique means of obtaining contextually based information about how people experience their local worlds” (p. 271). You see, hear and smell what is going on thanks to the direct exposure to situations, processes, people and things that you would not be exposed to without being along for the ride. Zapata-Sepúlveda *et al.* (2016) confirmed how travelling, whether by bus in Guatemala, or flying to a conference in another country, is a practical way of seeing and feeling more of people’s lives and creates opportunity for interaction. The nature of the journey itself is a learning that cannot be fully understood without being there. This also contextualises what you may hear from people in interviews. Arriving at a market with someone, seeing the interactions and hearing how people greet each other, shout across the market, chat and get updates on a sick child is so much more revealing than any description given in an interview conducted out of the context of the place and the moment of arrival.

Riding-along with people is an excellent way to observe their social and working lives. It gives one a reason to be there through a range of situations and interactions and it creates time and opportunity to talk. Many people are reluctant to spend an hour in an interview but are quite happy to talk for hours while going-along with their schedule and travel.

Travelling with people helps build solidarity and a comfortable rapport. It is very natural to talk to someone, especially about what one observes around, when walking or travelling

with them; “Indeed, there seems to be an intuitiveness to the task of showing and discussing one’s neighbourhood with an outsider” (Carpiano, 2009, p. 268). Doyle and McCarthy-Jones (2017, p. 340) noted how as an outsider “I was able to establish rapport with interview participants and during participant observation (such as taking taxis throughout the city and riding on the Metro)”.

Travelling together is a great equaliser and builds the legitimacy of the researcher – we are in the same boat, truck or bus – it is hard not to develop some solidarity with people who share in common experiences on a journey together, especially if the journey is tough. The approach lends itself to learning together as the researcher explores the environment and the issues with the participant as a guide and through *in situ* discussions. In this way the research participants are more engaged with the research and its outcomes.

The ride-along is a good opportunity to find and recruit new research participants as one meets a diversity of people, including those you might not ordinarily meet. On journeys I was frequently introduced to associates of people I was travelling with. Even travelling alone there are numerous opportunities to make useful connections when using the same means of transport as those you research. On one bus ride, I found I was sitting next to an Imam who told me about the challenges local farmers in his village were facing due to land having been allocated to a Chinese company. By the end of the journey I had learnt a lot and had a phone number for the Imam and an invitation to visit.

The richness of the experiences gained when riding-along can ideally be conveyed in the writing up as it provides an opportunity to “narrate our own ‘detective work’” (Cook, 2006, p. 660) in a way that can engage and build the empathy needed to drive change.

### **Exploring important considerations for the ride-along**

To maximise the potential of the ride-along, and reduce risks, I found a range of factors worth considering, some of which are elaborated below.

#### *Reflexivity*

Reflexivity is about being aware that as a researcher you are part of the process and likely to impact on that process and shape the outcomes from it (Green and Thorogood, 2004). It requires critical reflection on one’s own research practice and its impact on the environment and other actors as well as the way we interpret and write up findings (Latour, 2005; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Green and Thorogood, 2004; Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001; Denzin, 2001). Many of the observations I share in this paper, such as the solidarity that develops and changing nature of communication with people during long journeys with them, arise from the practice of reflexivity. The ride-along requires a reflexivity conscious of the particular impacts of transport choices, including choices of transport made for what we may think are purely logistical reasons. I found the way I arrived at a site impacted on how I was perceived and thus what I got to see and hear, it can even determine whether a researcher will be accepted at all. For example, Gooch (2008, p. 76) noted that “one of the reasons why the Van Gujjars accepted me was because I came walking up the rao [stream or river bed], carrying my own rucksack. Dangerous people do not walk; they come by jeep”. The transport used also changes the researcher’s perspective, especially their first impressions. Imagine two scenarios, in both you arrive to meet someone under a tree on a hot day after a long journey on a dusty road. How will the experience of arriving be if you step from behind the tinted windows in an air-conditioned car? How will it feel stepping off a bicycle having ridden there under the blazing sun?

Commenting on the situation in Tsunami devastated areas of Sri Lanka, Naomi Klein wrote of “the ultimate lightning rod for popular rage, the brand-new white sport utility vehicles. All the aid organizations had them [...] All day long they went roaring past the

camps, forcing everyone to eat their dust” (Klein, 2010, p. 403). In villages where I carried out research there are few cars and those that exist tend to be old and in poor condition. The big four-wheel drives, with working air conditioning, used by development agencies, set their users apart from local people in a very pronounced way. Yet, I have observed researchers arriving at research sites in these vehicles owned by NGOs, universities and others. This happens because many researchers are consultants or students funded to do research on development projects and/or linking with NGOs and others who can facilitate access to communities. In my own case I could have arranged rides in Oxfam vehicles and there were a few times when I combined field research with other activities and arrived at a site in my car, a 12-year-old Subaru. At these times I could observe a different response from people compared to when arriving by bus or on the back of someone else’s motorbike; I would be providing lifts, rather than being a fellow passenger or the person being assisted with transport; and I was more often asked for money to help with people’s needs or to invest. It was important for me to deliberately step away from the comfort of the car.

Even when not travelling with research participants, using the form of transport they and their fellow community members use provides valuable insights into their lives. There are sounds, sights and smells that interviewees will not tell you about. Having these experiences put me in a better position to discuss the work and lives of the actors in the system when I talked to them; I had been on the same busses as the maize and rice traders, slept in the same guest houses, been on the same trucks.

These considerations still apply in more site-specific research than my own: “ethnographers do not simply turn up and leave sites as if by magic, rather it is via bodies (and deliberate practical choices) that distributed points are intimately mapped, connected and understood. Although routine and ordinary, these activities are imperative to the doing of ethnographic research” (Jungnickel, 2014, p. 641). Consider again the examples of research in schools or hospitals, the experience of going to hospital does not start for the patient when they are inside the building, nor end when they step out of the door. The day of the nurse or school teacher does not start and end in the hospital ward or classroom. Interactions between teachers and pupils may occur on the way to and from school and may impact the relations in the school. The researcher will also illicit different reactions depending on how they arrive at the school or hospital.

### *The travelling experience*

Travelling is often an emotional and sensory experience that opens the researcher and research participations to a revealing intensity of feeling and different ways of thinking and interacting with people. This is well captured by the “Traveling researcher’s sisterhood”, Zapata-Sepúlveda *et al.* (2016), who shared how “every time I travel I feel the same things: a strange mixture of pride and fear, the anxiety and excitement of knowing, discovering new people” (p. 254). Their research on a variety of subjects in different countries involved common experiences of travel that was “not travel for its own sake. Instead, our cultural, linguistic, disciplinary, and physical crossings have allowed us to learn, to question, and to see from other, from others’, perspectives. Physically moving allows us to open up new intellectual spaces” (Zapata-Sepúlveda *et al.*, 2016, p. 259). Phillips (2016, p. 334) situated her experience of walking in research within the practice of “[s]ensory ethnography [that] brought attention to embodied and situated interrelationality, that excited anticipation of a fuller, deeper and richer story of participant experience, as multisensoriality and mobility fed in data from all directions”. I found riding-along just as much a sensory experience; from the outside a truck and trailer weighing 50 tons looks invincible, but inside the same truck you feel every bump through the rock-hard tyres and suspension, the truck bucks and kicks over bigger bumps that it

cannot quickly swerve or brake to avoid and you understand how important the road surface is. I also saw the world, if not through the same eyes, at least through the same windows as the drivers during long hours on the road.

### *Gender*

Gender relations and gendered roles impact on who the researcher has the opportunity to interact with including who they travel with. This requires combining the ride-along with other research methods and the conscious use of approaches that can bring out the different experiences of women and men. Safety and social factors impact on the access that researchers of different sexes will have to participants and particular situations. For example, given the extent of sexual violence perpetrated against women, spending the night in the cab of a truck with three men one has never met before, as I have done, may not be a good option for a woman researcher. As a male researcher I am also aware that women might engage in different kinds of conversations with me, and withhold certain information seen as women's issues, that they would more easily share with a woman researcher.

### *Eating and spending*

The ride-along often involves costs for transport and related expenses such as for food when eating or drinking with research participants. Eating together, like travelling, is very social, builds solidarity and can reveal a lot about social and economic relations even for non-food-related research. I tried to be sensitive to the ways of eating that are socially and culturally embedded and to handle expenses with sensitivity to the different local norms and conditions in order to not insult or burden the participants. I was often given food, and in some cases, such as in someone's home, it would have been unacceptable for me to pay. A few times people paid transport costs for me and it would have been churlish to refuse. In other circumstances I paid for food and transport for others and was asked for assistance, which I sometimes gave and other times refused. In trying to understand the norms in different cultures, *The Gift* by Mauss (1990) gives a useful perspective on complexity of giving. I generally received with appreciation and tried to find ways to reciprocate through a mutual exchange of gifts.

### *Planning and capturing data*

Having time and being creative and flexible are very important to deal with risks and volatility (Doyle and McCarthy-Jones, 2017) and to be able take advantage of the often-unexpected data gathering opportunities that arise without overly disrupting the lives of research participations. Weather, times of day and seasons will often affect the feasibility and the experience of a ride-along. For example, people may travel differently in different weather (Carpiano, 2009). I tried to be aware of such factors and address them in planning and in analysis of findings.

Recording audio and writing notes can be difficult on a ride-along that involves noise and movement; I often had to make do with writing up notes of what I had seen and heard as soon as possible afterwards, trying to include in these notes observations and contextual information that will not be in an interview even if recorded. The meaning of someone pointing or looking at something when speaking, such as referring to an object to illustrate their point, gets lost without the context.

### *Natural or unnatural outings?*

The examples shared in this paper are based on the ride-along with "natural" outings, that is, accompanying people on trips they do in their normal lives (Kusenbach, 2003). This has clear advantages for getting a first-hand experience of the actors and processes



being studied. The transect walk is almost always an “unnatural” outing, which can miss the everyday practices of the actors involved, it does, however, have the advantage of working in an empowering way with groups (Oudwater and Martin, 2003) and good practices in the use of visual aids to capture data (Thomas, 2004) that could potentially be used with certain forms of transport. While I favour the natural outing, I found it useful at times, as illustrated in some examples above, to incorporate additional not natural activities into the same ride-along.

### *Safety*

Safety and security, both the high risk of road accidents and crime, are important considerations, especially with dangerous modes of transport and in countries or areas affected by violence. In Tanzania and across Africa road accidents are the top cause of death by injury and globally they are the leading cause of death among 15–29 year olds, an age range most students fall into (World Health Organisation, 2014, 2015). These figures include pedestrian deaths, so staying with the walk-along does not remove this danger. Walking or riding-along can also put the researcher and respondents in a range of potentially dangerous situations beyond traffic accidents (Carpiano, 2009). My research on the feeding of Dar es Salaam involved late nights, early mornings and all-night riding-along with the hard-working actors that get food to the city. Gender dimensions of risk need to be included, I know being a man was a factor in my own perception of safety. Not everything can be anticipated, but researchers and those supporting them can think through the risks, including the risk to respondents, and make choices that they are comfortable with (Doyle and McCarthy-Jones, 2017). I found it necessary in setting limits on risks I would take, to realise that it could be impossible, or be very disruptive, to leave a ride-along once begun. Not many research participants will have considered this as the Van Gujjar pastoralists in the Himalayas had when they insisted that researchers promise to “participate fully in the migration” before allowing them to join their walk (Gooch, 2008, p. 68). Any research process involves such risks and choices, but the ride-along exposes the researcher to far more, that is its strength, which unfortunately includes exposure to more potential risks.

### **Conclusion**

The ride-along undoubtedly took me to physical and experiential places other research methods did not. I would therefore encourage researchers to at least consider it and the lessons shared in this paper, in combination with other methods, in the design of almost any social science research. Travel safely and enjoy the ride.

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