Title: Reflections on a Multi-Site Ethnography of Stop and Search in Scotland.

In this presentation I draw on my experiences from my multi-site ethnography: “Stop and Search in Scotland. An Analysis of Police Practice and Culture in a Time of Change”. ‘Multi-site’ ethnographies are now a common approach in the social sciences (Hannerz, 2003), wherein it is acknowledged that patterns and themes may shift across space and place. So too, policing researchers are increasingly aware of the geographical variation in the application and practice of policing, making multi-site studies a useful and attractive way of understanding policing more holistically. There has been significant scrutiny surrounding stop and search in Scotland, and significant reaction from within the police service to changes, which has brought to the fore regional variations and tensions. I am thus undertaking a multi-site ethnography to understand how a national reform is being understood and operationalised locally. In this presentation I reflect on the unusual ethnographic position I find myself in: observing different officers for a shift at a time, then moving on swiftly to the next set of officers. I address how the temporal aspects of my ethnography cut against the grain of more ‘traditional’ ethnographies, and discuss both the positives and negatives of this approach. In addition, policing in Scotland is uniquely shaped by the legal requirement for corroborating evidence, meaning that officers normally operate in pairs. Often these ‘neighbours’ have worked together for a long time, rely on each other for their safety, and know each other very closely. As an ‘outsider’ coming in I am faced with tapping into this intimate relationship between officers. I focus on what ‘immersion’ means for me: immersion within a relationship rather than in a place, and address the challenges I have faced, and how officers have been able to lock me out and how I have been able to tap back in. Being ‘locked out’ can be as much accidental as it can be deliberate, often stemming from the practical limitations of research-on-the move, and so I finish with a discussion about the practicalities of the ethnographic ride-along that forms so much a part of many police studies.