

SESSION FOUR

Using Visual Research Methods in Organisation Studies

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Session Summary

In this session, I shared my experiences of using visual methods, and specifically focussed on the use of participant-led photography and Instagram in organisational field studies. I started the session by offering an overview of the significance of workspace and why visual methods like these might help us understand people's experiences of workspace better. I then briefly examined what benefits and advantages methods like participant-led photography might offer qualitative researchers.

I then shared core findings from three research projects that all use participant-led photography in different ways and in different research contexts. This included my work with hairdressers working in hair salons and how the use of visual methods shines a light on the in-between, liminal spaces the hairdressers use for hiding, escaping and for inspiration. I then talked about a post-occupancy evaluation research project that explored a new open-plan government office and its impact on working practices. Findings here highlighted the significance of sharing food, personalising office space, and the importance of privacy. Finally, I shared a visual study that explored the uses of and feelings about the new Bristol Business School building at UWE. This project used Instagram and showed how visual field studies can use social media platforms to gather large sets of visual data online. Findings here focussed on the complexities of shared, ambiguous spaces and how 'transparency' and 'collaborative spaces' in an HE building can be differently interpreted and understood.

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Throughout this discussion, I drew on my own experiences as a visual researcher and reflected on some of the practicalities surrounding using this method.

Finally, in this session, I presented Grounded Visual Pattern Analysis – a way of making sense of and analysing participant generated photographs gathered as part of a field study. I talked through this five-step process and how it might help qualitative researchers stay ethically committed to the participants ‘voice’, whilst at the same time offering them the opportunity to read the photographs for patterns that ‘say more’ about the context in which they are produced.

I ended with some reflective questions that encourage thoughts around the implications of these methods ‘in practice’, and some key take home points.

Recording

Find the link below to access the recording of the session

<https://vimeo.com/565635862>

Summary

- To consider the significance of organisational space in the everyday lives of workers
- To consider the value of visual methods in researching space and place at work
- To reflect on how participant-led photography can tell us more about worker’s experiences of the spaces and places of work
- Share examples from 3 of my research projects, and associated findings

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Reading List

- Catalani C. and Minkler M. (2010) 'Photovoice: A Review of the Literature in Health and Public Health' *Health Education and Behavior* 37: 424.
- Knowles, C and Sweetman, P. (Eds.) (2004), *Picturing the Social Landscape: Visual Methods and the Sociological Imagination*, Routledge: London.
- Shortt, H. (2015) 'Liminality, space and the importance of 'transitory dwelling places' at work' *Human Relations*, 68 (4) 633 - 658
- Shortt, H. and Warren, S. (2012) 'Fringe benefits - visual narratives: space and identity in an iconic profession' *Visual Studies* 27 (1) 18 – 34
- Shortt, H. (2012) 'Identityscapes of a Hair Salon' *Sociological Research Online* 17(2)
- Shortt, H. and Warren, S. (2019) 'Photographs in organizational field studies: Grounded Visual Pattern Analysis' *Organizational Research Methods* 22(2) 539 – 563
- Van Leeuwen, T. and Jewitt, C. (2001), *Handbook of Visual Analysis*, Sage Publications: London.
- Warren, S. (2002), 'Show me how it feels to work here': Using Photography to Research Organizational Aesthetics, *ephemera*, 2:3, 224 – 245
- Ward, J. and Shortt, H. (2013) 'Projective Drawing as a Method of Evaluation' *Management Learning*, 44 (5) 435 – 452
- Follow this link to download the project report from my recent research on the new Bristol Business School Building at UWE:
<https://myuwebbsview.com/>

Animation

<https://biteable.com/watch/3084220/490e191e6b5777ac631be5e9ad739400>

