



[www.in-visio.org](http://www.in-visio.org)

Visual Methods Conference, Open University, UK  
September 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> 2011

## Postcards from Ethical Practice

---

An International Network for Visual Studies in Organization workshop

Facilitated by: Dr. Harriet Shortt, *University of West of England*  
[harriet.shortt@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:harriet.shortt@uwe.ac.uk)

Prof. Samantha Warren, *University of Essex*  
[swarren@essex.ac.uk](mailto:swarren@essex.ac.uk)

Dr. Caroline Scarles, *University of Surrey*  
[c.scarles@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:c.scarles@surrey.ac.uk)

Using images generated by research participants, or analyzing visuals displayed in print, electronic media, or the world at large, invokes a range of ethical dilemmas for the visual researcher. Anonymity, informed consent and copyright are three of the most visible of these issues (Prosser et al, 2008), but other more subtle concerns such as framing and representation (Shortt and Warren, 2012) and the negotiated, situational ethics of taking photographs in the first place (Scarles, forthcoming) also infuse the visual research process. Furthermore, visual researchers appear to face increasingly more complex and challenging questions from ethics committees, copyright groups and other research related gatekeepers. Complicating this further, the use of the visual (rather than text) is often 'non-standard' and can be applied and handled differently for each project. This workshop will gather such stories and spark discussion about how visual researchers deal with these issues in their own research practice.

The aim of the workshop is to create a 'database of experience' to contribute to the ESRC Researcher Development Initiative (RDI) *Advancing Visual Methods in Business and Management*. During the 90 minute session we will read and discuss each other's postcards (see 'how to take part' below). After the workshop an online repository of best practice around ethics in visual research will be created.

For those in other social science disciplines, it may come as a surprise that management researchers have been very slow to pick up cameras and crayons, or tear out photos and download images as part of their investigations of organizational life (Warren, 2009). This is especially surprising given the role of organizations in generating our visual landscape through brands, corporate aesthetics and so on, even if we leave aside the fact that work and workplaces are social arenas where visual methods can shed light on a whole range of organizational practices, just as in sociology, health studies, tourism, anthropology and any other social science discipline. This RDI project seeks to address this 'blind spot' (Strangleman, 2004) by producing an online resource to train business and management researchers to use visual techniques, and equip them with the materials to teach visual methodologies to their undergraduate and postgraduate students – and we need your help!

### References:

- Prosser, J., Clark, A. & Wiles, R. (2008). Realities: Visual Research Ethics at the Crossroads. Working Paper. Realities Series, ESRC National Centre for Research Methods.
- Scarles, C. (forthcoming)
- Shortt, H. and Warren, S. (2012) Fringe benefits: , *Visual Studies*, Forthcoming.
- Strangleman, T. (2004) 'Ways of (not) seeing: the visual as a blind spot', *Work, Employment and Society*, 18(1): 179-92.
- Warren, S. (2009) 'Visual Methods in Organizational Research' in D. Buchanan and A. Bryman (eds.) *Handbook of Organizational Research Methods*, London: Sage pp. 566 – 582.

### How to take part:

1. Think about the ethical issues you had to deal with in one of your visual research projects. Choose one you think would be interesting/ useful for others to hear about.
2. On the left hand side of the back of a blank postcard briefly *explain* what the issue was and how you *dealt* with it.
3. Write your name, institution, role and email address on the right hand side next to your text.
4. On the front of your postcard please draw something to show how you *felt* about it. If you would prefer to use a photograph, please make sure it is one you have taken yourself. You may want to use the reverse side of the template below.
5. Bring your postcard to the workshop.
6. If you cannot attend, please post it in an envelope, by the 15<sup>th</sup> August 2011, to:

*inVisio* c/o Dr Harriet Shortt,  
Dept. of Organization Studies, Bristol Business School,  
University of the West of England, Frenchay Campus,  
Coldharbour Lane, Bristol. BS16 1QY  
[harriet.shortt@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:harriet.shortt@uwe.ac.uk)