Abstract for the Annual Liverpool Symposium on Current Developments in Ethnographic Research in the Social and Management Sciences.

**Visual vestiges of meaning-making**

This paper aims to contribute, on a conceptual and theoretical level to the progress of photographic analysis in Organisational Ethnography.

In the first part of the paper I engage directly with the theme of the conference by reflecting on the development of ethnographic research using photographic images. By necessity this begins with a history of the role of photography as a feature of sociological and anthropological research, drawing on the theoretical contribution of, amongst others Clarice Stasz (1979) and Penny Tinkler (2013).

In the latter part of the paper I discuss how, although the use of visual methods in ethnographic research is not extraordinary (Pink 2009), my own domain: Organisation Studies has somewhat neglected the use of visual images in business, management and organizational research (Warren 2012). It is because of this, apparent lack of appetite for the visual in organisational research as a way of creating an ethnography, together with the fact that most discussion about the value of adopting a visual approach in the social sciences generally is clustered around (constrained by) a methodological quad mire of arguments about the appropriateness (or not) of using visuals to understand and interpret the social world that I formulate certain contestations.

**My main challenge centres on how interpretatively, visual ethnographers might more effectively utilise the evidence captured by the focussed attention of a photograph (Tinkler 2013) to communicate certain intangible concepts. I illuminate the conceptual and analytical possibilities (Knowles and Sweetman 2004) by returning to a selection of my own visual data set and reflexively ask the question: Is it possible to acquire knowledge from seeing things in pictures that do not (actually) exist? Exploring more the phenomenological characteristics of photography in pursuit of meaning-making in organisational research, I then move to critically discuss the utility of the picture to selectively re-present expressive content (Rose 2002) to reveal more poignant, evocative visual attributes of what the ethnographic researcher, as an agent of visibility (Bassetti 2011) actually experiences in a picture to reveal what is otherwise invisible. In all of this I consider the photographic method as simply the starting point as I strive for more progressive analysis of visual evidence.

My approach is typically Brathesian, whereby I harness the distinctive power of photography (Pettersson 2011) to ‘reflexively’ open up the phenomenological (Harper 1998), questioning the extent to which Organisational Research as a discipline lacks sociological imagination (Wright Mills), and is thus ill-tuned to the circumstances and troubles of the present day (Gane 2012).