CHAPTER FIVE
ELICITING EMBODIED KNOWLEDGES AND RESPONSE: RESPONDENT-LED PHOTOGRAPHY AND VISUAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

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Introduction
This chapter moves from notions of visuals as a means of introducing secondary data to attend to the roles of photographs as producing data. Drawing upon methods of respondent-led photo-elicitation and visual autoethnography, it resituates respondents as the producers, creators and indeed, directors of the visuals encountered during the research process. As Wang & Burris (1992) and Warren (2005) suggest the processes of producing and introducing photographs into the research setting gives respondents “phovoice” as power and control is renegotiated from researchers to respondents. This chapter explores the ways in which visuals (in particular photographs) become central to accessing embodied spaces of encounter as they not only offer respondents comfort and reassurance, but facilitate the ‘connection’ between researcher and respondent as knowledges are transferred and shared. Thus, visuals create spaces of understanding as the potential arises to transcend the limitations of verbal discourse and open spaces for creativity, reflection and comprehension. However, while realising the opportunities such methods afford, the chapter will also consider the limitations that inevitably arise through the use of such techniques.
From Occularcentrism to Embodied Visualities in Tourism Research

Photography and the visual have been fundamental to research on tourism since early studies into the ocularcentric practices of The Grand Tour (Lofgren, 1999). Such practices positioned tourists and their visual techniques as, disengaged, detached beings who experienced places, cultures and people through overarching gazes and practices of observation. Creating a visualisation of the travel experience (Adler, 1989; Craik, 1997; Urry, 2000), intense ocularcentrism pervaded tourist practice and tourists were elevated as all-seeing authorities; colonising others through visual practice. Vision and the visual were secured as the key sense of the tourist encounter as tourists captured and recorded, controlled and categorised destinations. Such primacy continued to permeate understanding as Urry (1990) conceptualised the “tourist gaze” where tourist spaces become understood through the practice of “gazing” as objects are rendered worthy of attention through signposting, signification and meaning interpretation and are fixed both spatially and temporally.

Such positivistic understanding of tourist behaviour and practice is paralleled in well-rehearsed visual methods such as content analysis (see for example: Dann, 1988; Dilley, 1986; Edwards, 1996; Thurot & Thurot, 1983) and semiotic analysis (see for example: Markwick, 2001) of tourism media. However, recent years have witnessed dramatic shifts in theoretical understandings of tourism and what it means to be a tourist. Moving beyond understandings of tourism as dichotomies of work/play and home/abroad, authors such as Franklin & Crang (2001) propose that tourists no longer exist in spatially and temporally fixed locations bound by notions of seeking the ‘authentic’ other (see MacCannell, 1973; Graburn, 1977; Cohen, 1988). They should no longer be thought of as leaving behind their everyday self; moving body, self and being to another location while adopting a different form of being and situatedness that is appropriate to
their new, alien and somewhat rather exotic location. Rather, tourism becomes imbued in a web of complex performative processes and practices (see Rojek & Urry, 1997; Crang, 1997, 1999; Coleman & Crang, 2002; Crouch, 2000a/b, Edensor, 1998, 2000, 2001 and Franklin, 2003). Tourism is a fluid and mobile process of becoming rather than a static state of being as tourists move through a series of spaces and continually reconfigure their selves as they encounter different places and cultures (see also Scarles, 2009). It is a series of wholly multisensual encounters that embraces a plenitude of potential subjectivities and experiences and accesses the lay and popular knowledges of the tourist experience (Crouch, 2000a/b; Crang, 1999).

As attention turns to the embodied performances of touristic encounters, authors such as Bennett (2004), Crang (1997, 2002, 2003) and Rose & Gregson (2000) call for innovative methodological approaches to address the emotional, sensual, embodied and performative nature of social practice. As Bigoux and Myers (2006:46) suggest “we cannot have a complete discussion of the experiences of bodies in place without considering the role of feeling, thoughts and emotion.” Therefore, while the value of methods such as content and semiotic analysis can never be denied, as authors such as Tribe (2004) call for greater intellectual space for ‘new’ research, we must be methodologically equipped to embark on such a journey. Indeed, as Scarles (2010:2) suggests, “alternative methods are required that engage with research participants in ways that move beyond the realms of representation to access the haptic, non-representational spaces of encounter and experience.”

It is therefore important to address the role of the visual as a tool for accessing and mobilising affectual and embodied expressions of self. As Pink (2007:21) suggests: “visual research methods are not purely visual. Rather, they pay particular attention to
visual aspects of culture. Similarly, they cannot be used independently of other methods; neither a purely visual ethnography nor an exclusively visual approach to culture can exist.” It is important to realise therefore that the visual is more-than-can-be-seen. Moving beyond paradigms of ocularcentrism (Jay, 1997), the visual emerges as integral to other sensual modalities. As Bærenholdt et al (2004), Crouch (2000a/b) and Veijola & Jokinen (1994) suggest, in researching tourist practice and performance, we must embrace the plurality of sensual interplays of tourist practice as subjective, reflexive and poetic occurrences and utterances of self and other.

Thus, photographs, as visuals, are no longer “static, distanced and disembodied encounter(s) with the world” (Bærenholdt et al, 2004: 101). Rather, they are both produced by and give rise to, a sensual poesis as the visual finds presence through the materiality and corporeality of the body (see Scarles, 2009). Therefore, while some attend primarily to the embodied performances of the tourist experience (see for example: Bærenholdt et al, 2004; Game, 1991 and Obrador-Pons, 2003, 2007), the visual exists as a series of embodied practices as tourists encounter the world multisensually and multidimensionally (Crouch & Lübbren, 2003). In acknowledging the body as an active agent in the making of knowledge (Crang, 2003), the visual becomes inherently implicated in and reliant upon the ways in which we taste, smell, touch and hear within and amongst our emergent surroundings. Thus, photographs and photography not only become implicit in the ways in which tourists produce and consume places, but also in the way in which they communicate such experiences.

As this book highlights, visuals can be introduced to the research setting through a variety of means whether still images through photography or moving images via methods such as filming and the creation of video documentaries or diaries. Indeed,
referring to Harper (1998), Warren (2005:862) suggests: “on one level all research practice is visual since we are in the business of describing researched worlds to our readers and students so that they can visualise our words.” In order to explore the ways in which the visual can mobilise an embodied expression of self, this chapter first attends to the method of photo-elicitation. Moving beyond the notion of images as providing data (for example via pre-existing archives of advertising literature, brochure images, or archival photographs documenting the development of a tourist destination) attention turns to the notion of images as producing data. Photographs become active agents within the research process as greater emphases lie on subjective meaning and the practices and processes behind the creation of the image; not what is represented, but what is done and why (Crang, 2003). As Ruby (1995, cit. Bignante, 2009) suggests visuals provide the opportunity to explore respondents social and personal meanings and values by their response to images. Interest therefore lies not only in the visual as object or artefact, but in the active, embodied practices and performances that underpin the significance of the visual and created the need for its being (Radley & Taylor, 2003; Scarles, 2009). Visuals are therefore often combined with other techniques such as interviewing, focus groups, researcher or respondent diaries and so forth, as a means of furthering communication and opportunities for respondents to express and explore experiences of particular research phenomenon.

While the use of photographs as a technique of elicitation originated with the work of Collier (1957, 1967), early examples of such techniques in tourism research remained absent until work from authors such as Botterill and Crompton (1987) and Botterill (1988, 1989) where photo-elicitation was employed to understand tourist experience using tourists own photographs to aide discussions. Combining photo-elicitation with repertory grid techniques, Botterill and Crompton elicited deeper discussions of the
destination images held by respondents. Since then, many researchers such as Cederholm (2004), Jenkins (1999), Loeffler (2004), MacKay and Couldwell (2004) and Zainuddin (2009) have adopted such an approach. Originally introduced as native image making by Wagner in 1979, some researchers (see for example MacKay & Couldwell (2004) and Garrod (2006, 2007) now refer to respondent-led photography as volunteer- or visitor-employed photography. Where researcher-led photo-elicitation focuses on introducing respondents to photographs that are pre-selected by researchers according to established research criteria (relating for example to number of photographs, content of photographs, size of photographs, style of presentation and display of photographs, etc), respondent-led approaches provides opportunities for respondents to produce their own images before discussing their significance and meaning with the researcher. While this can of course be influenced by specific requests from researchers (e.g. number of photographs, photographs of specific scenes or contexts, photographing within a particular timeframe, etc) such technique affords relative freedom of respondent selectivity of content inclusion and exclusion, composition and framing enabling them to convey their subjective interpretations and experiences of place. Indeed, the affordability (Brandin, 2003; Garrod, 2007), increasingly user-friendliness of cameras and the ubiquitous nature of photography in tourism (Chalfren, 1987; Sontag, 1979; Haldrup & Larsen, 2003) ensures respondent familiarity, comfort and confidence in photographing personal experiences and encounters for research purposes.

Empowering Respondents and Accessing the Emotional Self via The Visual

Since the emergence of photo-elicitation, the advantages of introducing photographs into interview contexts have been well documented. As MacKay and Couldwell (2004:391) suggest, respondent-led photography offers the “potential for capturing and analyzing people’s perceptions.” Photographs within interviews facilitate rapport
(Collier, 1967; Harper, 2002); generating spaces of comfort and establishing trust (Bignante, 2009) as respondents talk around photographs showing content they themselves have selected (Radley & Taylor, 2003). It mobilises opportunities for increasing the clarity of cultural meaningfulness and significance of research (Harper, 1984) and sharpens respondents’ observation skills (Garrod, 2008). Visuals can be used to prompt respondents for deeper and richer responses (Garrod, 2007, 2008), thus eliciting additional information and stimulating discussion as both respondent and researcher may bring different interpretations of image-content to the conversation (MacKay & Couldwell, 2004). Indeed, it is the opportunities for respondent reflexivity that photo-elicitation affords that not only facilitates rapport between respondent and researcher, but provides security and comfort as respondents reach out to touch or hold onto the images that are present within the conversation (Oliffe & Bortoff, 2007).

Such methods invariably demand collaboration and cooperation between respondent and researcher. The performative nature of photo-elicitation embraces the ability of photographs to facilitate the enlivening of respondent/researcher encounters via dynamic performances that mobilise the co-construction of knowledge imparting and exchange as respondents, researchers and visuals come together to ignite deeper, more meaningful conversational exchange. However, it is in the transference of ‘control’ to respondents that mobilises increased significance and commitment of self and subjective experience. As Stedman et al (2004) suggest, as respondents construct their own photographs they can reflect upon their experience, thus opening spaces of reflexivity within which the potential for accessing the embodied knowledges of self and other emerges. In renegotiating control away from researchers, respondents are repositioned as producers and directors as photographs are taken without the presence of the researchers and in spaces that the researched choose and hence convey as important.
Respondent-led photography therefore introduces a multiplicity of subjective interpretations. Indeed, it is the plurality of subjectivities within tourist encounters (MacKay & Couldwell, 2004) as conveyed through a variety of respondent lenses that offers researchers an insight into the range of creative, innovative practices within the tourist experience.

Wang & Burris (1992) and Warren (2005) refer to such transference of power as giving “photovoice” to respondents. When accessing embodied spaces of touristic experience it is not merely the transference of power that is of significance, but also the effect this has as respondents are able to construct accounts of their experiences and lives in their own terms (Holloway & Valentine, 2000), thus offering an insight into aspects of the research arena from which researchers would otherwise remain excluded (Bijoux & Myers, 2006; Oliffe & Botoff, 2007). Photographing becomes a means of personalising knowledge exchange as photographs are brought into existence through respondent subjectivity and engagement with the research environment as lived. Indeed, just as photographs become imbued within the context of the research, respondents become imbued within the photographs that are taken as they commit their self as an entirely embodied, emotional and sensual agent within the research arena. As Garrod (2007:17) suggests, “such approaches are concerned with a more holistic account of the human-environment relationships, including both visual and cognitive elements...people are not merely viewers of landscape but are situated experientially in it.” Such embodied connections to, and performances of, their surroundings directly unite respondents to the research arena as a space of lived encounters, establishing confidence in communicating experiences at a range of different levels as photographs become embodied extensions of self in the research arena.
**Practical tips**

- Any instructions to respondents have to be clear and you must clearly explain the research aims and objectives and what photographs respondents are required to take/share. This can be highly specific and relate to the number of photographs or to content (e.g. particular landscapes, objects or places), or alternatively, you may only wish to explain the context of the research and leave the rest up to the respondent. Whatever you decide, it must be fully understood!

- Be clear on the timeframe from introducing the research to respondents, to them taking the photographs before conducting the interviews. Will this happen all in one day or over a longer period of time as it can be up to a few weeks later in some cases? It is important that respondents know what the commitments are that they are making.

- Be prepared to supply the cameras for respondents. You may also wish to provide a copy of the photographs for respondents to retain.

**Mobilising spaces of embodied reflexivity and reflexive performance**

In order to realise the potential of photographs as providing access to embodied knowledges and experience, it is vital to consider the role of respondent reflexivity within the space of the interview (see MacKay & Couldwell, 2004). The importance of the respondent does not diminish once the photographs have been taken. Rather, their presence and voice continues to be empowered in the interview. As Lury (1998) suggests, photographs become culturally fashioned extensions of the senses. Thus, photography becomes a technique through which respondents are encouraged to “fashion their feelings and thoughts...and make them visible” (Radley & Taylor, 2003:...
While many authors acknowledge the role of photographs as prompts or triggers for memory (Cronin & Gale, 1996; Harper, 2002), it is the role of photographs as “beacons of personal memory” (Cloke and Pawson, 2008: 16) that mobilises embodied expression according to contextualised encounters as photographed. Within elicitation, photographs become co-performers as knowledge are reproduced, shared and reflected upon through active, embodied reflexive performances (Scarles, 2009). Photographs reignite the immediacy of experiences and become an arena for negotiation and play as they offer respondents the opportunity to reflect and “access previously hidden behaviours, senses, and engagements” (ibid: 466).

The comfort photographs offer to respondents extends beyond diverting attention away from the researcher and their questions to the familiar space of, and feelings evoked by, the image presented. Rather, comfort extends to facilitating increased self-disclosure and expression of potentially more sensitive issues around sentiments, senses, emotions, feelings, values, and beliefs. Indeed, photographs may also enable respondents to share lay, unwritten and unspoken knowledges that at times evade consciousness (Meyer, 1991). As Langer (1957) suggests: “everybody knows that language is a very poor medium for expressing our emotional nature. It merely names certain vaguely and crudely conceived states, but fails miserably in any attempt to convey the ever-moving patterns, the ambivalences and intricacies of inner experience, the interplay of feelings with thoughts and impressions, memories and echoes of memories” (p. 100-101, cit. Warren, 2002: 229). In dwelling in a world of words (Prosser, 1998), our bodies and emotions are inherently framed within language, signifiers and discourses. Yet, as Bennett (2004) realises, bodies simultaneously mediate emotions and connections between subjectivities and social worlds.
Photographs therefore provide opportunity to ignite embodied reflections that extend beyond the materiality or description of the photograph. As Sontag (1979:23) suggests, “the ultimate wisdom of the [photograph]...is to say: there is the surface. Now...feel, intuit – what is beyond it.” It is the personal connection to the photograph that draws respondents into the body of the image and facilitates communication of underlying narratives and embodied performances. As they reconnect with that which is photographed, embodied reflexive performances reignite that which photographs cannot show and corporeal vision cannot see (Scarles, 2009). Through the ‘vanishing point’ (Phelan, 1997), respondents reignite the interior of the image as they penetrate its interiority and once again sense what the subject feels like. Therefore, as illustrated in Scarles’ (2009) study on tourists’ use of photography on holiday, Olivia referred to one of her photographs to convey the “utter silence” and “total isolation” of the Peruvian altiplano, while Sarah reflected upon the “sound of them (porters) in the camp, the laughing and the joking” from her trek to Ausengate (see Figures 1 and 2). Importance therefore lies with the supporting narratives, gestural clues, tendencies and orientations that are subsequently brought into being and expressed. Photographs become more than mere aides to conversation; they exemplify, revivify and allow expression of that which respondents feel is important to the research as reflective of their subjective experiences.

PLEASE INSERT FIGURES 1 & 2 HERE
Practical tips

- Always talk using the photographs. Refer to them and point to them or pick them up as this will also reassure respondents that they can do the same.

- Remember that conversation will move beyond that which is depicted in the photograph. While it is useful to engage respondents in a discussion of what is pictured, your conversation should not stop there and you should use the photographs as a starting point. Remember, as with interviewing new and interesting avenues of conversation will emerge that are of interest to your research. Often what is of interest is not what is directly shown in the photograph, but the supporting narratives as to why particular views or objects or people, etc were chosen to be photographed. It is very important to encourage respondents to not only describe their pictures, but to engage in conversation in the issues imbued within them.

- Allow respondents time to think and remember how they were feeling during a particular experience. Remember, everyone thinks and expresses themselves differently so it is important not only to listen, but also to observe how respondents react to particular photographs and the supporting reflexive narratives.

Including the Researcher as Self: Mobilising intersubjective exchange via the Visual

Finally, attention turns to the opportunities visuals afford for mobilising an intersubjective togetherness between respondent and researcher via visual autoethnography (Scarles, 2010). Visual autoethnography “exists as a fusion of visual elicitation and autoethnographic encounter; an opportunity for accessing and
mobilising deeper, nuanced insights into embodied performances, practices and processes of the tourist experience....It is no longer enough to listen and respond to respondents’ narratives as they emerge via elicited visuals” (ibid: 5). Where photo-elicitation solicits a dynamic, co-constructive collaboration between respondent and researcher, within visual autoethnography the researcher becomes more deeply situated within the research as they themselves also become researched. For example, during my own research I spent two weeks following the ‘tourist trail’ around Peru: visiting the key tourist sites, eating the cuisine that tourists would be eating alongside other tourists in restaurants, talking with the local people from tour guides to villagers we met along the way. Likewise, I also took photographs like other tourists in order to document my travels. In addition to photo-documentation, research methods complementing visual autoethnography include: reflexive field-diaries, constructing video extracts, drawing, painting, collecting of souvenirs (including postcards), etc in order to further engage with and understand the research environment and how, in my case, it feels to be a tourist. While such data may not be directly introduced to the later interview setting while talking to respondents, it is the emergent autoethnographic knowledges created throughout such experiences that mobilises a connectedness to both the research environment but importantly, also to the respondent. Researcher subjectivity is therefore embraced as a co-constructive force of agency as the situated knowledges of both researcher and respondent as “active agents” (Spry, 2001) are enlivened as both engage in a series of active doings as each experience the research environment firsthand.

In embracing the multiplicities of self and other, visual autoethnography mobilises interviews as co-constructions that “move beyond discursive productions, productions of power and the propagation of knowledge that potentially limit expressions of self and other” (Scarles, 2010: 6). The presence of visuals and the subsequent discussions
emanating from that-which-is-seen, mobilises a togetherness as both researcher and respondent share experiences and establish common-ground upon which conversations emerge through mutually intelligible meanings of subjective encounters (Reed-Danahay, 1997). Thus, visuals “offer gateways for merging reflexive subjectivities; the bridge that connects researcher’s and respondent’s experiences as they emerge within the space of the interview” (Scarles, 2010: 8). As Scarles & Sanderson (2007) realise, intersubjectivity mobilises a ‘sharing of speech’ as respondents are able to articulate the intensities of embodied performances through the visuals presented thus, “expressing a deeper appreciation of the multiplicity of attitudes, habits, sentiments, emotions, sensibilities and preferences of tourists’ experiences” (Scarles, 2010: 10). Thus, as research seeks to understand the tacit, tactile and embodied remembrances of experiences as lived (Crang, 2003), researchers are able to respond to and subsequently support and understand respondents’ encounters via mutual appreciation.

As the visual grounds conversation, opportunities arise to explore not only respondents’ positive or desirable experiences, but also that which causes, amongst other responses, sadness, pain, banality, regret or discomfort. However, mutuality through visual autoethnography should “not assume agreement between subjectivities as disjunction can also arise as moments of researcher and respondent commonality are pervaded by difference as both come to the interview space with potential disparities in worldviews and belief systems” (Scarles, 2010: 7). Yet, such clashes should not be feared or actively avoided. Rather, in harnessing the visual as a point of mutuality, nuances and subjective differences become open to discussion and can enrich the research exchange as respondent and researcher realise a shared commonality (e.g. the desire to travel, a love of nature, fascination with cultural differences across communities, etc). Consequently, conversations emerge as “a rich negotiation, sharing and mutual
understanding of experience” (Scarles, 2010: 13). The visual becomes the point of shared experience; facilitating commonality while simultaneously providing individual moments of subjective reflection as both respondent and researcher reflect upon their own personal experiences that stretch beyond that which is pictured. Therefore, during a recent project exploring the ways in which tourists utilise the visual during their tourist experience, as Maggie shared her elation at reaching the mountain summit or Angela commented that “it’s not just the visual side of it, it’s the smells, it’s the sounds, it’s the sensations of sitting on that bloody boat going up and down”, I too was able to recall my own similar experiences of achievement and likewise, seasickness having too experienced similar encounters.

PLEASE INSERT FIGURES 3 & 4 HERE

Yet, the very nature of embodied and affectual connection to, and performances of, place demands spaces are created within the research environment where words become redundant and “sounds of silence” emerge (Scarles, 2010). Within visual autoethnography the visual can move to occupy a space that transcends the realm of representation and narrative as respondent and researcher reflexivities extend to reveal emotions and open intimacies of self as exchange moves to embrace the realms of sensate life (Smith, 2001; Thrift, 1999). However, during such moments, discursive discrepancies can arise as respondents become unable to express themselves using verbal or textual dialogue. Thus, “as words fail, visual autoethnography opens the possibility of sounds of silence as visuals allow respondents to reflect upon and imaginatively reignite their embodied practices and performances of place” (Scarles, 2010: 14). Orobitg-Canal (2004) too attends to the ultimate failure of words as respondents become frustrated and imprisoned by vocabulary. Indeed, on reflecting her
experiences of seeing and photographing Machu Picchu for the first time, Paula commented:

“I just thought wow I am up here...this is mine because I am here and I can see it, wow (laughs)...unless you are there you just cant believe it...they can’t capture it because its just do big and it’s so vast and it’s just amazing, yeah...it’s just like the awe I guess, you just think wow, you know and you think I know I cant really capture this but I feel I have got to take it”.

While some continue in their attempts to verbally convey the intensities of experience, it is the inevitable limitations of articulation that confines expression. As Harrison (2008:19) suggests: “we come to ourselves already entwined in the unfolding historicity of many such regimes that our intentions...our desires, action and words will never have been quite our own.” Sounds therefore arise in what is not said as “silences should not be assumed as absolute quietness as respondents sit devoid of expression or communication. Rather...non-verbal communication generates sounds of silence as expression resonates through the visual” (Scarles, 2010: 14).

Yet, moments also arise where ramblings stop and respondents become withdrawn; the reflexive remembrances and subsequent re-enlivening of haptic, affectual spaces of experience take over. Indeed, while such silences may create disjuncture and fractures in conversation, the mutuality of visual autoethnography mobilises spaces of comfort and understanding as an unspoken ‘knowing’ emerges between respondent and researcher as those-who-have-experienced. Body language and gestural clues come to lend meaning and significance (Angrosino & Mays Perez, 2000). Thus, as aforementioned, visuals become co-performers in the space of the interview (Holm, 2008; Scarles, 2009); a pathway to understanding experiences “not just as a physical setting, but an orientation, a feeling, a tendency” (Radley & Taylor, 2003: 24). Indeed,
the visual can mobilise reflexive performances that can launch expressions of corporeal uniqueness as emotions exceed expression in language and erupt into gesture (Elkins, 1998; Mulvey, 1986). Indeed, as Sarah reflected on her experiences of meeting local children in rural Peru, her emotions took over as referring to Figure 5, she explained:

“these guys are laughing because they are getting balloons, fruit, pencils. He is singing me a song, they stood there and...they got things, they did another one, they got things, there’s another picture I have with kids running down the street and I am thinking “oh, Jesus do I have enough?”...but so many kids that we gave things to, I mean when we got right out into the country and we were giving them sweeties we had to show them how to unwrap that, anyway....(gets very upset and stops talking)”

Thus, both researcher and respondent share a vulnerability of self (Scarles, 2010); manifest as a corporeality of vulnerability that “describes the inherent and continuous susceptibility of corporeal life to the unchosen and the unforeseen” (Harrison, 2008: 5).

Thus, as Scarles (2010:17) suggests, “the ultimate failure of verbal expression should not be misinterpreted as the end of communication: a hopeless dead-end from which researchers and respondents must retreat. Rather, by combining visuals with autoethnography, where words fail, visuals ignite and communication continues....(as) visual autoethnography facilitates poetic continuations that bridge the gap between the represented and the non-representable.”

PLEASE INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE
Practical tips

- If using visual autoethnography it is important that you share your own experiences. However, remember, this does not mean that your experiences must match with those of the respondent. Likewise, where differences in experiences arise this should not be interpreted as one being right and the other wrong. You must realise the importance of difference and use this to prompt further discussion and insight.

- Do not always try to fill silences with words. While they can sometimes feel uncomfortable, remember that silences tell us as much and at times more about how respondents are feeling. It is important then to provide space for gesture and expression through emotion or body language. You can later reflect upon these moments and write detailed notes in your field diary once the interview has finished.

- Don’t limit discussion to that which can be seen. Remember, the content of the photograph serves to prompt and trigger different directions in conversation and it is often what is not pictured that can be of particular interest!

Potential Limitations & Ethical Considerations

As with all methods, there are not only opportunities afforded by the use of visuals to access embodied spaces of the tourist experience and it is inevitable that limitations exist in adopting such techniques. First, respondent-led photographs introduced to interviews are inevitably context-specific; illustrating particular practices and experiences in moments abstracted both spatially and temporally. Secondly, in raising respondent consciousness about their environment, the potential exists for artificially raising not only the voice of the respondent but also generating false memories. Respondents can therefore perform and share experiences according to selective
memories as they revisit memories and experiences to suit their current identities (Gillis, 1994). Thirdly, responses can be influenced by what respondents believe researchers want to hear, or can alter responses in order to present themselves in their best light. However, relating specifically to the presence of the visual within interviews, photographs can mobilise a popularisation of memory (Edensor, 1998) as reflexive performances can call forth idealised imaginings. Thus, despite being constructed by respondents, supporting narratives triggered by photographs can become caricatured as ‘true’ memories are replaced, or remain hidden, as realities are replaced and respondents convey affinities with that pictured according to preferred imaginings and remembrances. Fourthly, upon being asked to express feelings, emotions or sentiments, some respondents may also feel unsure in their ability to fully convey that which has been experienced. As aforementioned, responses can become unfocused and rambling as visuals become implicated by language and inherently bound by text. Therefore, as Bijoux & Myers (2006:51) suggest, such practice can create content that is “highly variable and individualistic as well as being less detailed, or different from, what the researcher might have been most interested in.” This in turn therefore raises questions about “the status of the image and about the reasons for the selection of the subjects pictured” (Radley & Taylor, 2003: 79).

Several issues may also arise with regard to respondents’ willingness to photograph. First, while the chapter emphasises the importance of the practices, experiences and performances behind the photograph, as Bijoux & Myers (2006) suggest, some respondents may not have the skills required to participate or alternatively may not be willing to commit the time and effort required to produce the photographs as well as take part in an interview. Secondly, some respondents can feel uncomfortable sharing their photographs and at times can become self-conscious; making excuses and
apologising for the quality of the images. Indeed, as one of the author’s past respondents commented: “are you sure you want to see my photographs? I am an expert at taking pictures of my own thumb and have been causing widespread mirth and derision at my photos showing the waters of Lake Titicaca have quiet a severe slope...” (Peter). Feelings of inadequacy and failure to ‘live up to expectation’ are not uncommon and respondents often seek researcher’s approval in the misperception that their photographic skills may be judged. It is therefore important that the researcher is entirely clear about what is expected of respondents not only in terms of research-specific context, content, and the number of photographs to be taken (or brought to the interview where respondents are perhaps selecting from personal pre-existing photographs), but also in terms of the level of skill required and the emphasis on capturing personal experience rather than producing professional, aesthetically pleasing images. Indeed, in many cases it is not the stereotypical, aesthetically pleasing classic views of places that are of interest, but rather the nuanced quirks of encounter that are often omitted from popular discourse and collective interpretations of place.

However, where respondent-led photographs are used, it is very important to incorporate several key ethical considerations. The issue of image ethics has received limited attention (see Prosser, 2000; Prosser et al, 2008) and while there are a series of ethical guidelines that can be followed, the lack of a specific universal ethical measure for the use of images in research generates a range of interpretations and opinions of the nature and effectiveness of such measures. However, as Prosser et al (2008:18) suggest, “where visual data is being used purely for elicitation purposes then issues of content are relatively unproblematic. However, if researchers wish to include these photos in dissemination of the research then some particular issues of consent emerge.” Generally, the issue of obtaining copyright for the use of images is easily overcome by
either asking respondents to sign an image consent form where they are identifiable in images taken for the project, or alternatively asking them to provide written permission in the form of a letter where they hold copyright. However, where respondent photographs identify individuals not known to the respondent or researcher, a universally accepted ethical standpoint becomes less clear. Indeed, while privacy laws exist to protect against intrusion into an individuals personal space, it remains legal to photograph someone in a public space (see Gross et al, 1988; Lester, 1996). Nevertheless, the ambiguity of such legality compounds confusion over rights of privacy; where and whom it is appropriate to photograph. Therefore, where respondents photograph general public scenes that do not explicitly identify individuals, researchers may choose to simply present the photograph in its original format. However, where image content is potentially sensitive researchers may wish to conceal identities (where informed consent has not been obtained) by blurring peoples faces using pixilation techniques or blackening identifiable features. It is therefore vital that researchers consider: “the implications of what images they might be presented with by study participants and brief them about seeking permission and explaining the purpose prior to taking images of others. In some cases this may be all that is required but researchers are advised to be circumspect in the use of images of identifiable others and to consider whether or not someone might be at risk of harm or moral criticism as a result of the use of the image” (Prosser, et al, 2008: 19).
Practical tips

- Be sure respondents know exactly what is being asked of them. What photographs are they taking and why? How many should they be taking?, etc. Make sure your instructions are clear and that respondents have the opportunity to ask questions to clarify any misunderstandings they may have.

- To alleviate possible doubts, reassure respondents that the aesthetic and compositional quality of the photographs is not what is important but rather the reasons for taking the photographs.

- When talking to respondents about their photographs and experiences, remember to talk about that which is not pictured. Reassure respondents that there are no right or wrong answers, but that you are interested in hearing their own experiences.

- You should always obtain copyright permission from the respondents before using the images they generate in any published media.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has addressed the role of the visual, in particular the introduction of respondent-led photographs to the interview setting, as a means of accessing embodied, performative spaces of the tourist experience. The following key conclusions can be drawn from this chapter:

- The visual can become more than a mere aide memoire that elicits responses. By understanding respondent-led photography as directly implicated in, and constructed through the ways in which we taste, smell, touch, hear as well as see the world, photographs become implicit in the ways in which respondents (as
tourists) both produce and consume place. The visual can therefore access the nuanced moments of the tourist experience that come to exist within the embodied, haptic and affective spaces of encounter between self and other.

- **Visuals become active agents and co-performers in the research process.** As Crang (2003) and Radley & Taylor (2003) realise, unlike content or semiotic analysis, importance lies not with the content of the photograph per se, but rather the circumstances that have created the need for its being.

- **Empowering respondents in the research process is vital to the successful application of the visual in research methods.** Unlike researcher-led photography, respondent-led photography transfers control to respondents, spaces are opened for respondent reflexivity as they are repositioned as producers, creators and directors of the experiences to be communicated.

- **Through visual autoethnography deeper intersubjectivity between respondent and researcher emerges.** Visuals act as bridges between respondent and researcher experiences (Scarles, 2010); mobilising togetherness as researcher and respondent establish common ground and conversations emerge through mutually intelligible meanings of subjective experiences (Reed-Danahay, 1997).

- **Through empathy and understanding, spaces of mutuality emerge.** Where words fail, visuals ignite conversations as a sharing of speech and sounds of silence emerge (Scarles, 2010). The visual should therefore not only be understood as that which can be seen, but rather as that which is *lived*; expressed via a fusion
of all our senses as researcher and respondent come together through spaces of understanding and a desire to know.

Annotated Further Reading

This text offers a comprehensive insight into the range of visual methods available to researchers. Although not specifically aimed at tourism, this text outlines a series of visual methods as forms of interpretation and analysis. Additionally, it provides a critical contextualisation of the visual as a research tool and method.

Sarah Pink reconceptualises our understanding of the visual in this text as she readdresses the visual as a sensual medium through which researchers can engage with the world. In doing so, she presents a range of conceptual understandings of the visual from sensual engagement to social intervention and accessing research spaces through hypermedia.

This publication discusses the importance of understanding the visual as a series of practices and performances that extend beyond ocularcentrism and embrace the visual as entirely embodied and affectual in nature. As a multisensual encounter, the visual (in
particular photography) is presented as a series of complex performative spaces that permeate the entire tourist experience.


These two articles both offer informative studies that not only address the theory of visuals in interviewing, but offer an applied insight into the ways in which photographs can be used to access the sensual spaces of organisational life.


This newly published article by Caroline Scarles offers an exploration of the opportunities of visual autoethnography in tourism research. The article extends thinking to embrace the opportunities of mobilising intersubjectivity between both researcher and respondent as a means of accessing the embodied spaces of tourism research.

References


