



13-15 September 2011 The Open University UK

## ‘LIVING PLACES’

### Our village our life: Made in Nepal – Sikles in Focus

Sara Parker



Since 2009 Dr Sara Parker has been involved in facilitating a community based participatory photography project in the remote mountain village of Sikles in the Annapurna Conservation Area Project Nepal. For most

people, perceptions of Nepal are dominated by images of Shangri La (Heaven on Earth) with Mount Everest dominating the geographical imagination. A plethora of images and photography books exist about Nepal which in the main are presented to us through a western gaze. But what of the people who live there? What are their visions, their experiences and their reality?

‘Sikles in Canvas’ is a local community participatory photography project that has provided both an opportunity for local people to capture their reality through the lens of a camera and represent their own world to a wider audience as well as enable Sara to continue to work with the communities in Sikles following on from her PhD research. The project is based on the ethos of participation and brings together a number of local organisations who are working to improve life in and around Sikles. This paper, along with a supporting photographic exhibition and photography book, reflects on the successes and challenges of this project and shares with the audience the key lessons learnt.

### Em Mipla, Na Yu? (This is us, what about you?)

Verena Thomas



This is a photo exhibition that consists of 16 photographs and relating stories of people living with HIV or AIDS, some of their family members and counsellors. The photographs are the result of a 3-day workshop held at a care centre in Goroka where basic use of cameras

and concepts around visual stories were taught to participants. The photos provide a way for self-expression of experiences around HIV. They are an opportunity for an audience to shift perspective and see things from the perspective of those directly affected by the virus. The photographs carry new meaning with people’s personal narratives that are creative, honest and deeply touching.

The photo workshop, held in July 2010, is part of Komuniti Tok Piksa (KTP), an action research project currently undertaken at the University of Goroka in collaboration with the University of Technology Sydney. The project is funded by the PNG National AIDS Council and AusAID for a duration of 18 months. KTP seeks to train students and staff at the University of Goroka in visual research techniques in order to both record communities’ narratives around HIV and AIDS and produce effective educational material. This photo workshop was facilitated by project coordinator Ms Verena Thomas. The workshop opened up a new creative space for participants to tell their stories and express their feelings around their experiences with HIV. The engagement with audiences through the exhibition will provide, we hope, a new space for a public dialogue about issues around HIV and AIDS.

## Small Is Beautiful? Visual and Material Cultures of Mending and Repair

Caitlin DeSilvey & James Ryan



The Small is Beautiful? Project—a collaboration between a photographer and two cultural geographers—is assembling a record of workplaces in the South West where the repair and mending of everyday objects forms a core activity (such as

cobblers, tailors, centred interviews to investigate both the public encounter with these sites and the relations between workers and their materials. The research builds on an expanded sense of the aesthetic, to encompass the way people respond to and value the materials, textures, and objects that they encounter in their daily lives. To this end, the photographic aspect of the project makes no claims to comprehensive documentation or exhaustive visual inventory. Photographic practice focuses on close-up framing and selective representation, treating the image as invitation, rather than evidence, and exploring the potential for photographs to capture the multi-sensory experience of place. The project material is being presented in a variety of public contexts to open up conversations about cultural value, social materiality and everyday aesthetics. We present an exhibition of photographs and accompanying texts, selected from material generated in the first year of this two-year AHRC-funded research project.

## ‘Nursery Family, Home Family’

Liz Hingley

The exhibition has two strands:

1. A series of images taken by children in a multi-cultural nursery setting show how they use the camera to express perceptions of each other. The children’s images of other nursery children and staff document the nursery family. The resulting imagery is printed onto a fabric banner and is primarily the creative product of the children.



2. A photographic portrayal of domestic life in a family with four boys and three girls. The mother and father are devoted to looking after the children but they face severe economic pressures. When the children are not at school they rarely leave the confines of the three bedroom urban council house, as there is

no money to invest in activities. The images focus on the intimate loving relationships between the family members and the children’s high aspirations for their futures. (This project was inspired by the charity Save the Children in order to raise awareness for the overlooked extent families living in Britain who are stuck in a perpetual cycle of poverty.)

## Personal development through visual methods

Nóra L. Ritók



Children's needs for self-expression are at the heart of the alternative pedagogic methods that we have developed. We educate (the true meaning of which is to 'draw out') in different ways to those used in traditional art teaching. Each child is supported to develop their own

depictive world, through individualized exercises, sensitively matched with the child's sex, age, interests, development and social status. This maximizes the child's interest and motivation.

Our educative-art approach is basically a form of personal development, applicable to all children, whether they are poor, rich, Roma or have special needs. The positive effects of fostering creativity in children assist development across other areas as well, and experiencing success enhances self-esteem and, most importantly, hope. The children's paintings and drawings show how even in the most disadvantaged situations children can still have feelings of optimism, creativity and joy, which shine through their lucid work.

We have partners in our work in Romania, Finland, Portugal, India, Serbia, Indonesia and Slovakia.

## 'Living spaces of Roma children in Hungary'

John Oates



This series of objects offers a critical exploration of the value of visual methods for social science research issues concerned with children's lived experiences at home and in institutional settings. It includes a series of clasped and hinged 'black boxes', each

holding a photographic diptych showing an aspect of children's lives in their home settings alongside a related aspect in an early years setting. The images were gathered systematically during documentary filming and in a series of assignments in different areas of Hungary linked with the establishment of a series of 'children's houses' in the Biztos Kezdet (Sure Start) EU-funded programme. They question notions of 'poor' and 'rich', and of tensions between Roma and other conceptions of living space.

## Life behind the image

Sanna Nissinen



This exhibition aims to highlight complexity of making photographs particularly within the development aid context, in which subjects tend to be most often children, from vulnerable groups in the majority world taken for mainly Western audiences to raise support and funding. It showcases images taken during fieldwork in Bangladesh as part of my PhD dissertation on the Production of the Ethical Development Aid Image. The photographs are combined with excerpts of field notes, commissioning documents and

quotes with the purpose of attempting to raise awareness and question the past lives of photographs often not visible in the final image. It aims to display the latent tensions, the fleeting ethical decisions and the preferred representations of poverty in the South.

## Transitions in Kitchen Living

Sheila Peace



Social gerontologists and ergonomists have studied people's lives in relation to the kitchen. Interviews, drawings, pictures and videos have been developed with 48 older participants (61 to 91 years) living in Bristol and Loughborough. This exhibition will

use both oral histories and features of the contemporary kitchen to consider the past, present and future.

## 'Bringing the spaces and places of community life into view' \*

Janet Fink and Helen Lomax



This will draw on three visual projects undertaken with residents on an estate in Milton Keynes (participatory video with children; a photography walking tour; and photography workshop) in order to explore what the visual might bring to understandings of community, neighbourhood and what makes place a good place to live.

[www.visualdialogues.co.uk](http://www.visualdialogues.co.uk)

\*This exhibit is installed in the Berrill Theatre foyer