

Visualising Fieldwork:

Encounters, Convivialities, and Semiotics of Visual Ethnography in Tokyo

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Room 301, 3F, Building 10, Sophia University

How might visual practices better inform fieldwork? This presentation discusses how visual approaches afford novel analytical and descriptive opportunities in fieldwork based research. Building on two years visual ethnographic research in social spaces frequented by non-normative people in Tokyo, particularly Chinese migrants in Ikebukuro, I show how visually focused participant observation reshapes fieldwork encounters and renews the need for semiotic approaches to social life. From the intertextuality of performances and online interactions to the convivialities, gestures and language of playful social encounters, I show how visual research produces a way of archiving the everyday that both moves beyond the written word while also providing data that allows greater rigour in written ethnographic work.

Jamie Coates investigates how new communities emerge in both urban and transnational contexts. He has researched how migration, media, and play shape young Chinese efforts to re-imagine co-ethnic and regional ideas of commonality in the Sino-Japanese context. From ethnography, videography and photography to analyses of historical documents, media-texts and various digital technologies, Dr. Coates' research connects an interest in fieldwork methods to several broader fields of sociocultural inquiry. He completed his PhD in anthropology at the Australian National University, and has since worked at the University of Sheffield and Waseda University. He is currently a Visiting Collaborative Fellow at Sophia University, Tokyo.

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