
'THE FIELD OF THE 'PHOTOGRAPHABLE'- "The Effects Of Working Conditions On Health Among Tea Workers In Nandi Tea Estates"

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Abstract

The first anthropologists, Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead started using cameras to film in cultural studies to document life in the 1940s. This is the time when visual anthropology spread widely. Over time, photography has been used in research all over the world although very little has been done in Africa especially in tea plantations. Research on tea plantations is sometimes not very accessible because of the set structures by the management. One of the well-known approaches to participatory photography is photovoice, popularized by Wang and Burris (1997) as a participatory action research tool, which uses participants' photographs as a catalyst to engage participants and policy-makers in group dialogue for social change (Wang, 2005, in Castleden et al., 2008). The approach draws heavily on Freirian critical education and feminist theory, as well as work on documentary photography and the use of storytelling through photographs (Wang, 2000). It aims at enabling people to record and reflect on their community's strengths and concerns. It also promotes critical dialogue and knowledge about community issues through group discussions of photographs; and to reach policymakers (Ho et al., 2010).

Visual anthropology is important as it captures the attention of the reader, tells a story as well as conveys a message as it is. Photographs aid in capturing what someone or something looked like at a particular time. Photographs of work account for the social realities, it gives great insights that bring observational research to its full potential. Images can be used to identify the position of the researcher using both the insider and outsider approaches in social science research. It is also important to review the differences between the emic and etic approaches using visual art in the field of anthropology. Researchers can decide which angle their work takes based on the kind of images they choose to show.

As a Master of Arts student of Medical Anthropology (Moi University) currently researching on the topic, "*The Effects Of Working Conditions On Health Among Tea Workers In Nandi Tea Estates*", photography in the research is of key importance. This is in the sense that photographs show the realities as they are without manipulation. Photography is a way of gaining insight into the photographer's or the researcher's interpretation of the image depicting work. It is useful in communicating ideas and concepts through images. In my area of research, I employed photography in order to bring out visual realities on the working conditions that the tea workers face. This is because photography is one of the best tools to communicate the research, capture the reader's attention. It is a system of communication between research data, researchers, and the research community. It contains very rich and clear data that could not have been obtained through just words. This includes the nature

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of work, housing, and sanitation as well as the nutritional aspects. The images also depict how these conditions affect their health and their coping strategies. The design for this research is descriptive. The data collection methods include observation in which I intend to use pictures to describe realities concerning tea workers in Nandi Hills. The study, based on accrued findings will recommend ways on how the employers and the workers can improve the working conditions in Nandi Tea Zones.

The file of the presentation is available on the website