Challenges and possibilities with participatory visual research methods in health promotion

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The aim of this workshop is to discuss pros and cons using participatory visual methods in health promotion research. The interest of visual research is growing and it is time to look more critical to this increasingly popular research focus. The first part of the session, we shortly introduce visual methods in health promotion by giving examples and experiences from our research. In the second part of the session, we will discuss experiences and reflections about, e.g. vulnerable groups, power relations, ethical problems and the use of photographs together with the participants. The goals for the session are to expand the dialogue about the need for high ethical standards when using visual methods in health promotion research, to share experiences and to create contact between researchers within this field.

There is growing body of research about visual methods in health promotion and the presenting researchers have, together and separately, used participatory visual methods for data collection and participatory action research. The authors have all experience with the PhotoVoice method, developed by Wang and Burris in the late 90th, as well as other visual methods, like cell philm and drawings and participatory research. Examples from different research projects are; non verbal language of drawings and photographs in participatory visual methods when aiming at understanding children’s life worlds, young girls' experiences of daily life at school and girls' views of sexual harassment. However alongside the many opportunities there are equal number of challenges when using non-verbal arts-based research methods in order to go beyond the limits of language to capture the meaning of lived experience in a multimodal and holistic way.