

## EXERCISE 11.1

### PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AND PHOTOGRAPHY

This exercise wants you to think about the tourism environment of your nearest tourist town or city. You should record information in the form of notes and photographs about: the physical surroundings; the movements and actions of people; displays; images, signs and logos; facilities offered for visitors; and your own thoughts or feelings.

#### Focus

It is impossible to observe everything and, so you need to structure your observations to get the most out of the available time. This initial visit will guide your later observations by allowing you to pilot the method.

#### Researcher role

Think through whether you will be participating, observing or somewhere in between. Does this have any implications for your data? Reflect on this in your diary extract.

#### Recording data in a research diary

Your diary entries should consist of: (a) observations; (b) attempts to make sense of them; and (c) your feelings in relation to your research experiences and observations.

#### Recording data in photographs

Use a camera (digital would be ideal) in order to collect some visual data. What images, icons, symbols, forms of behaviour, etc. are most important in understanding the site of your research? Write down what each photograph was taken for, what it is intended to illustrate and where it was taken.

Participant observation is interested in peoples' everyday lives and lived experience. When using participant observation, we try to take part in the world as it is, without unnecessarily influencing the way that things are. Many sites are easy enough to gain access to, but not necessarily simple to understand.

**Open or public settings:** Places to which researchers can freely gain access without any special qualifications or permissions.

**Closed settings:** Places that require the researcher to seek consent for entry/research.

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Is the setting for your research project open or closed?

Are there other parts that are closed to you?

Who are the people that you are observing?

Are you able to fully participate?

How is your experience different to that of other visitors?

Profile one individual or group of individuals.

What assumptions would you make about them?

How would you verify these assumptions?

Use your photographs and observations to produce a computer slideshow that you can present to your class or post onto the relevant learning-support website for your colleagues to look at.