

# Podcast Series: Let me just share my screen

**Episode Title:** Designing Participatory Visual Methods for Online Spaces: A conversation with Katie MacEntee, Olivier Ferlatte, and Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco

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## Introduction: The what and why of participatory visual methods (0:00–5:36)

### Teaser

*“We undervalue pleasure in research.”*

- Olivier Ferlatte

*“You know, I think a lot of people struggle with perfectionism. Yeah, we're not Steven Spielberg or Quentin Tarantino.”*

- Katie MacEntee

*“If technology can fail, it may fail.”*

- Olivier Ferlatte

### Podcast narrator

Welcome to *Let Me Just Share My Screen*, a podcast where we dive into conversations with seasoned and up-and-coming researchers about new directions in online, participatory visual methods research. Each episode is packed with fresh ideas, practical tips and ethical considerations to help you plan, create, and exhibit your visual research projects. This podcast is inspired by a CIHR-funded research project that gathered experiences of health researchers conducting photovoice and digital storytelling projects online with diverse communities. It is produced in partnership between the Center for Community Based Research and the Arts Informed Methods team at Trillium Health partners, listen in for more.

### Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco

Hi everyone. Welcome, listeners. We're so excited to have you tune in today for an exciting conversation on designing and planning for online Photovoice and digital storytelling projects. My name is Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco, and I'm at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, and I'll be your podcast host for today. I'm sitting here in the Land of the Haudenosaunee, the Mississaugas of the Credit and many other nations that are the stewards of the land. So, I'm happy to start this conversation

with two amazing folks, one of whom, Dr. Katie MacEntee, I've heard of you a lot. And as I said to you, I went and looked at your stuff, fascinating. And Dr. Olivier Ferlatte, with whom we've established, we've known each other from community work for over 10 years. I'm going to leave it in over 10 years, so it's not embarrassing for anyone online.

### **Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco**

So, let's start the conversation. And let me put this very basic question to you right away. Katie, if you have to explain what you do, and how you do it, in relation to digital storytelling, to someone very young from the community, someone who's not in a university, someone who's just walking down the street, and you want to make them excited about this, what do you tell them?

### **Katie MacEntee**

I would probably say that I work with different folks, and communities all over the world to use cell phones, usually, or any other technology that they have on hand to make videos and take photographs about a topic that's important to them. That we can then use those photographs and those videos to advocate for change and hopefully make their world, their community, and their life a little bit better.

### **Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco**

Do people still tell you, well, poor people don't have cell phones, or they don't have access to tech? I'm just curious.

### **Katie MacEntee**

I do still feel the need to sometimes say that to people for sure, and also say like, actually, there's lots of evidence to show that a lot of people have access to cell phones, especially if they don't own one themselves, then they can get one or borrow one from a friend or family. But also recognizing that there are cell phone and tech access issues like here in North America, and there are lots of folks here that also might have trouble accessing tech. So, trying not to assume that it's like people over there, which is sort of the South, or whatever you want to call it, and so there's always going to be tech access issues. But one of the reasons why I really like using cell phones is because they are so accessible globally, generally.

### **Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco**

Olivier, I'm going to make the same question a bit more difficult for you with a bit of stereotyping, to begin with, as you work with gay men and issues like substance use and stuff like that, and you propose to do participatory visual methods or podcasting. How do you tell a layperson, a newbie, what it is that you do and how you do it?

### **Olivier Ferlatte**

Yeah. So, I work mostly with the LGBTQ community to document their life, their experience and their perspective on mental health and substance use. And basically, that's, you know, what I say to people when I describe my work to kind of encourage and work with people so that they can document their own experience. And I think people are pretty excited about that, because people have, like, a huge misconception of research. You know, they expect that research is extremely rigid, that they're going to meet someone in this white coat and that they're going to ask, you know, a question that will feel

extremely, like, intrusive, and that they will participate in something more of an interrogation. So often, when people participate in a project, they're like, wow, I didn't realize that can be research. And I have to say, I'm in a school of public health, and my colleagues also always look at my stuff and say, "*hmm, how is that research?*" And that's what's very cool about that kind of methodology, is that we're really kind of disturbing "what is research", and making it relevant, and also kind of fun. Like thinking that people that participate in a project, and I'm sure Katie would agree, you know, they have a lot of fun doing that, because it's creative, it's different. You know, and people are excited to share, you know, their experience through creative means.

### Imperfection as part of the creative process (5:36–11:01)

#### Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco

I want to follow up on this with Katie, and there is an expectation, I think, created by popular culture and rich corporate media, that some things need to be just really perfect. Is this one of the challenges you encounter when you start to like it needs to be, there need to be no mistakes in the videoing, the editing, and the colours. What's your take on that?

#### Katie MacEntee

Oh my gosh, I do face this all the time working with people and myself too. I mean, we like to make things that look good, and we want to, you know, I think a lot of people struggle with perfectionism, and it's such a good question. I feel like we watch so much media every day that it looks so slick, right? And like, if you're on TikTok, or if you're on Instagram or watching videos anywhere on YouTube. There's a lot of people there that spend a lot of time making really, really good-looking videos. That's great, and some people have a knack for it too. You know, I've done workshops with folks, and some people produce these super slick videos, and they're great. They're wonderful. But I think that that's really important to recognize that sometimes, even if something that someone produces isn't necessarily the slickest, most highly edited piece, it can still be one really powerful. Sometimes even I don't want to pit them against each other, but like equally powerful it is, can be really powerful, very impactful, because sometimes that rawness shows like it's reality, you know, and it shows, it reveals a little bit something about who made it as well, right? And so, because, like all our work is very centered around activism and social change at the same time as producing data and new knowledge from the academic sense.

I think the way these videos are received, like, so people encounter they're scared that they're not going to produce something that's going to look good, and thus people aren't going to, like, take it seriously. But, yeah, my experience has been that that's not the case at all, and that people are sometimes really, you know, it that what people take away from what they see, what people make, even the sort of most basic of basic, like one shot, someone just turned, pressed record and recorded something and said something and, you know, and then finished the recording, and that was it. Sometimes those are the most revealing and most touching or honest videos and cell films, digital stories that that people could make. So, I also often will remind participants, one, yeah, we're not Steven Spielberg or Quentin Tarantino or whoever is the director that I think the audience, like the group that I'm working with, might know. And also, when I'm doing, like in the workshops, when we're sort of when people are in the making process, I try to get folks to focus on just getting through a first draft. And then that first draft be really surprised about what how good it is actually, once they turn

around and actually see it on the screen, if we watch it as a group, and they see how other people react to it, and suddenly some of those fears, I think, kind of subside a little bit, and they recognize actually what they've done and why it's so important to celebrate those accomplishments along the way, also, when we're doing this work. And there's time, you know you could, we can always make time when we probably should make time to, you know, allow folks to redo things or fix things or, you know, and edit, for sure.

## Designing for online spaces: Engagement, trust, and ethical considerations (11:02–22:42)

### Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco

I want to stay with you, Kate, because we're talking really about challenges. Some of these challenges may seem very philosophical to people, but they translate into actual challenges in the moment of doing stuff right, like what you've mentioned, after looking at the first draft, or looking at the first storyboard or something like that. What other challenges at the ground level may be inspired by these larger philosophical challenges do you encounter?

### Katie MacEntee

Every project has its own unique challenges, right? I mean, if I want to, if I'm thinking about what it means to do this work online, and the challenges of doing this type of work online. I would say some of the biggest ones that I struggle with is, well, firstly, you know, a lot of this work is that I like to do when I'm working in groups. I don't always work in groups. Sometimes I'm working one-on-one with people. But if I'm working in groups, and we're in, like, the online space, especially, I mean facilitating discussions can be difficult. I mean, we've experienced just amongst ourselves today, it's really hard to..., like, have an... it's not easy to kind of interrupt, and I mean that in a generative way, right? Because the speaker only picks, like the microphones only pick up one person at a time. If you're recording it, it gets messy so that it's a bit like halted sometimes the conversation, it doesn't flow as well as what I like to see in in-person work, and I find that challenging as someone who gets really excited and, you know, wants to kind of even just say a one word, like, "yeah", that's great kind of a thing. Or, you know, so that I find, I find really difficult, sometimes online. And I would see, the other thing that I struggle with when I'm doing this work online, especially, is it's harder, again, more in the group work than the one on one to work alongside someone who's making it, right. Like, how do you support somebody who is, you know, taking photographs or making a cellphilm or a digital storytelling when they, you know, you kind of have to get up and go do those things, right? You have to sort of walk away from the computer, sometimes, not always. And versus when you're in-person, and if you do that work, you know, during a workshop or during your time together, you can be really you're very present and there for it, you know. So, I work, I try to do workarounds, like, I'll sit on Zoom for like hours, sometimes as people go off and if they might come back with a question, or, you know, that sort of a thing, or more check ins. More like, okay, you're gonna go and do that for you have, like, two days or a week, or whatever works in terms of timeframe, you can email me. We can set up. I could do Zoom office hours, type setup. Or we'll just do, like, how to kind of keep contact with people in the making, both to her, like, often that's to help with technical stuff, but also conceptually, you know, like, we can get really overwhelmed with our thoughts and our ideas and things like that. We're asking hard questions, and we're asking, you know, and sort of saying, okay, like, go make a video about it. And people sometimes are like, what.

### **Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco**

I get in it. So, I'll move to... this is great! Thank you, Katie! And Olivier, what's your experience about this? And I want to mix it a little bit with the idea that we are always again between a rock and a hard place. We all want fame, and then we all want privacy. That seems to me the ethos of particularly young people, right? I want to be an influencer famous, but I don't want you to touch my private life, but I want to tell you about my private life. What's your take on this as one of the challenges of doing this kind of work with communities?

### **Olivier Ferlatte**

Yeah, well, I think you know, you're touching on something that's kind of like one of the big ethical issue that we're facing, you know, we're doing this work. And I've done some of this work during COVID, right, where people were doing this, were coming to workshops online, talking to other people and then suddenly, not everyone could be alone in their house, you know, because other people live there. So, there's privacy in terms of, you know, what other people in the house will hear, you know, and maybe they don't want their roommate or their parents or their spouse to know some stuff. So, there's ethical issues around that you need to inform people, and then that they should wear headphones so that people in the house don't hear the stories of others, you know. And all the sharing online is very important, and we get to try to get people to think a lot about if things will be shared, whether it's cellfilm or digital story or photos. Once it's put online, it's impossible to completely erase it. Yes, we can take it down from YouTube. Yes, we can take it from a website, but it can, it can be there forever. And we, you know, people may want it there forever.

But also, and, you know, we need to... we don't want to have a paternalistic approach to this, but at the same time, we need to kind of really get people to think about those consequences. You know, would a youth who smokes cannabis want to have a photo of him or a video of him smoking cannabis there in five years when, you know, when he's perhaps at a different place, looking for employment. So, I think we need to think about those issues. And also, because one of the challenges, things can be easily replicated, you know, in the online world, like everyone knows how to take a screen caption, take a photo, take an image, put it on another website, you know. So how do you kind of, like, educate people around that so they're aware of those issues? And also, in-person, because someone can take a photo of a photo, of a photo and then share it. So, we need to, kind of, you know, and we kind of lose a bit of control over that. But it's about, you know, I think one of some of the things is we need to kind of make sure that people kind of understand the risk, but also kind of create a sense of safety.

And, you know, especially when we're doing groups, you know, so people have trust in other participants. And I think this is difficult, you know, to kind of do, when you're seeing people that are just a little screen online, and keeping kind of people also engaged. So, I have like, so one of the solutions, for example, that we found, you know, around that for online, is that we have to get smaller-sized groups. You know, we cannot bring the same amount of people online, then we are in person, you know, because I think it gets too chaotic, you know, especially, it's hard to get cues about when can I jump in, you know, when it's online? Katie was alluding to that earlier. But also, I think it's easy to disengage. And we all know that. You know that, as soon as I'm in a meeting with more than five people, I'm doing my email, you know, and I've been in groups where I see people doing completely

other things or just shutting down their cameras. So, this is something that needs to be negotiated, because I think if one person turns off their camera, most people will want to turn off their camera. So, do you tell that in advance to people? Because it's hard to build trust. And if everyone has their camera off, if you don't see who is there, you know? And so those are things that we need to think ahead.

### **Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco**

So, trust and engagement, I mean, the magic words, right? So, because, for me, it's always one of the biggest challenges is to have people take seriously what we do. o, I'm a little bit curious, very curious about that. Tell, tell us a little bit of where that comes from.

### **Olivier Ferlatte**

Well, I think, you know, for me, like, I'm in the School of Public Health, mostly with epidemiologists. And I don't believe people, you know, my colleagues or kind of reject the work that I do, or I think, they sometimes are kind of, actually, more and more curious about that. You know, they understand that if we want to bring, you know, community and community that have not been included in research that we may need to change the approach that we're taking. And I think people are like, wow, how is that research? Is this question? And we can explain, you know, I think it's not a complete rejection, like "Oh what is this," you know? But people are seeing like, oh, how was that research? Like, what is the object that you're studying? And, and the question I get all the time is like, how do you get these things funded? And so, I think this is something that surprised colleagues, that, you know, yes, we can request money to do this, you know. And I think, there's been a lot of advancement to push those methods. And there's a solid argument for using those methods, you know, they challenge power dynamics. They put the participant in the center. They allow people to express complex issues and emotions, you know, without their words alone, it kind of gives us something. It permits some time exploration of intersectional issues that are not always possible in interviews. So, the potential is there now in literature. So, I think we have a very good case that we can make to funders, but also to our colleagues to understand that. And I think it is taken more seriously. But I think for people who are not used to those research methods, for them from the outside, they're kind of like, "wow", and perhaps, maybe they're jealous. They're like, wow, maybe I should be doing this.

### **Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco**

There might be some of that, because it's fun.

### **Olivier Ferlatte**

Because I, yes, exactly what you're saying. It's fun. And I think we undervalue pleasure in research. And I think if we ask boring questions, and if our participants are bored during an interview, we'll probably get boring answers. So, I think, you know, this is what we're doing. We're kind of like; we're having more- I think I'm having more fun using those methods. But I know people who are doing those projects are also often having more fun, feeling that they're contributing to something that's more than a research paper that they won't have access to because it's going to be behind a paywall. And they're contributing to sharing their image, their stories, to their community. And I think that's very powerful, and people take a lot of pride in what they often produce in the context of those research.

## Navigating funding, managing expectations, and staying joyful in the process (22:31–27:45)

### Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco

So, Katie on the same line, right? What Olivier is saying, how do you manage, how do you get funding? How do you have fun? And also, at the same time, without a stomach ache, because we're carrying the expectations of our communities. They said, Well, you know how to get money, and doesn't always go our way. So how do you manage all of that?

### Katie MacEntee

Yeah, I feel like the work is getting funded. I feel like there that this, especially, you know, especially when you're working with communities that aren't often engaged, which is usually my focus, and the folks that I get to work with, I'm so grateful for that. But in general, I feel like there's more and more interest in having this, having participatory, visual research, generally incorporated into research. I think that articulating how it fits with other more quote, unquote, traditional methods is also for funding purposes, important. So, you know, we'll be doing cellphilm. We will also be doing one on one interviews or focus groups, or, you know, maybe integrate a survey, if that's something that you like to do and is, you know, and have experience with so these things don't have to work in isolation, and that they work actually really, really well together.

And so, I think that that's a piece to keep in mind. And I think that, especially when I'm working with colleagues or at conferences, for example, or, you know, I was just at a conference earlier this week on by making the shift on youth homelessness, and I was presenting on a cellphilm project that I worked with, with youth here in in London, in Toronto, where I'm based, as well as York Region and London, Ontario, around their experiences being to 2SLGBTQ+, and experiences of hidden homelessness. And there was a lot of talk at this conference around, you know, how do we talk to policy makers? How do we make sure that you know that youth homelessness is at the forefront of, you know, policy making and government funding, etc, which is all real. Really important questions, and very much needed. And there were a lot of sorts of people saying, oh, we need the numbers. We need the numbers.

Well, we've been collecting the numbers on this for years, right? Homelessness is still a problem, and the on all the intersections that go along with it, right? And, you know? And, and a little bit more recently, we've been collecting numbers on, you know, people who are 2SLGBTQ+, and their experiences and being overrepresented in the homeless population, but youth in that regard. And I do, you know, keep collecting the numbers Absolutely. We need to do point in time counts. We need to do these things however, we can also incorporate these methods, visual methods, which, as you said, will sort of recenter some of this work onto our participants experiences, and the folks that have lived experience and making sure that they're included in this, in these discussions and in this policy making. As well, as you know, sometimes I've also was really tempted to flip it around sometimes in these conversations and going well, how is your research impacting your participants and the directly, the community that you're working with, right? You know, and I can turn to a cellphilm that someone made for this project. It was a Get Ready With Me cellphilm that she made. She's a young trans woman, and she's talking about the importance of facial feminization surgery as healthcare as a human right, and how that would impact her ability to get a job and to find a house and to find more security in her life. So, she made this cell phone as part of the project, but then she was also able to take her cell phone

and use it on her GoFundMe page to raise money for her facial feminization surgery, which is so important for her. So, you know, we can turn around, that is an immediate outcome of this work, right?

And similarly, we were able to take those cellfilms that people made during this project, we made them into a composite video, and we brought them directly back to service providers in each of our study site, and we had conversations to say, how can you as a service provider, helping and supporting youth who are experiencing homelessness? How are you addressing hidden homelessness? How are you? What are the systems that you have in place that are working, what's not, what needs to change, and those are immediate conversations that we were able to have. And so, you know, do we see governmental policy coming out of this work? Probably, well maybe, but not immediately, but we were immediately able to do this work and talk to people and have these conversations. And I think that that's also really meaningful and important.

### **Advice and lessons learned: Reflections and practical tips for designing participatory visual methods in online spaces (27:46–35:11)**

#### **Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco**

That's a very powerful story. Thanks for sharing that one. Olivier, if I may, come to you for some final advice. It can be very philosophical or very mundane, like again, don't forget to turn on your recorders. Seriously.

#### **Olivier Ferlatte**

Well... I think..., about that, if technology can fail, it may fail. So, I think you need to be ready. And still, despite Zoom recording, I still use a recorder, just in case. You know, we lost the recording. So, there's very basic advice like this, but I think also, you know, there's two pieces of advice that I would like to really know your audience and really try to use the tool that will be the easiest for your audience and that they're using in their everyday life. Email, like youth, don't use email. You know, they don't communicate through email. They're not like us, professors, we spend our whole day responding to emails and monitoring emails. So, they may be more comfortable using messengers, you know, or they're using or using, you know, WhatsApp, for example. Also thinking about, Zoom. I think I did a project with older adults. They're most likely to use a tablet, the functions on Zoom on the computer in the tablet, are not in the same way.

So, if someone is not able to open their camera and you want to tell them how to you need to know what platform they're using. And when I worked with older adults, we kept track of what platforms people were using, because we could help make troubleshooting easier. You know, because the camera buttons are not at the same place. So, I think you need to kind of really try to use the tools that people are familiar with and, you know, or that might be part of your project. You might have to help people learn how to use those tools when we work with older adults. When we're having groups on Zoom. None of them had ever used Zoom, so we had to spend a lot of time, including, like, troubleshooting on the phone, about them downloading Zoom. So, you need to kind of know your audience and use the tool that they want.

And, I think, and the one thing that I think is very important, is to build self-care, both for the people participating and the participant, and that depends, perhaps, on the research project that you're doing. But, you know, on a lot of the projects that I'm working on, you know, I work on very sensitive topics, you know, mental health, substance use, and addiction. And I think you have to make sure that participants have access to the appropriate support. And that needs to go sometimes beyond just providing. Give them a list of the resources that you have. So, ideally, on my project, I would have, you know, I would hire someone that can be there for people like this is a number, but that would be there for the participant if they need to debrief, but also the team, because sometimes, you know, we forget to take care of ourself when we do research and the team that we work on. So, this person can be there also to debrief. And I think this is a big issue that I'm seeing emerging in qualitative research, and I think we'll need to be aware of that, and I've never faced it in the context of digital storytelling or art-based method. But it's fraud. You know, we can be more victims of fraud.

You know, as a researcher, so, and that's a big issue that's emerging in qualitative research. I've experienced it on non-art-based method, but on traditional qualitative research people, you know, it's easier to pretend you are someone else online. So, I think, you know, and that's becoming a huge issue in qualitative literature, and we'll have to be aware of that. So, I don't have all the answers about this, but I see that as emerging as an issue that we'll probably face at some point on our art-based project.

### **Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco**

For sure, that's fascinating. Katie, the same question for you.

### **Katie MacEntee**

So, I would agree with everything that Olivier just said, for sure. And I think that, yeah, I think moving this work online. I've noticed how important it is for me to have two people facilitating, because it becomes, it's much more multi what's the word? Like, you have the chat, you have the video, you have, you know, all of these, the reactions, like, there's so many different ways that people can communicate when you're on an online space that I really you can't take it in if you're also facilitating and trying to get through, you know, the instructions and supporting people and answering questions that it's very difficult to monitor all of that on your own. So having another set of eyes, someone who's on the chat, who can respond or link relevant links, etc., documents, to people as you speak is, I think, really, really important. I find it very helpful, especially if you're dealing with a bigger group.

And I think the other thing I would add is that sometimes, especially because we love this, these methods, and you know, it could spend, I could spend, I find it very fulfilling. I find it energizing in many ways, to do this work and to facilitate this work and to work with people that sometimes I forget that people need breaks. I always forget that people need breaks, and this is true whether you're working online or offline. But you know thinking about accessibility and how difficult it is, I think now more than ever, like post-lockdowns and COVID-19 were really burnt out of the online space in some ways, and suspending, you know, to, you know, for example, I tend to pitch, you know, a three to four hour cellphilm workshop originally, that's, you know, you can't ask people to be online for three to four hours to, you know, to do this work. So, you know, it's in a way, it's slowing it down, or figuring out, like bite-sized chunks that we can, we can come together and work on what needs to happen together, what

can happen asynchronously, you know, and then also, what, what needs to happen offline, what needs to happen in-person, for example, and how and have more of a hybrid design.

**Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco**

Super advice from both of you. Again, I'm Francisco Ibanez-Carrasco from the Dalla Lama School of Public Health, and I need to thank Katie MacEntee and Olivier Ferlatte, for being with us today. You've given us lots of things to learn and to think about. It's much appreciated. Thank you.

**Katie MacEntee**

Thank you, Francisco, thank you, Olivier.

**Olivier Ferlatte**

Yeah, this was a lot of fun. Thank you so much for this conversation.

**Podcast narrator**

Thanks for tuning in to let me just share my screen see the show notes for links to readings and resources mentioned during the episode. We hope you'll join us for our next episode.