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The project is co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme with the support of the European Union. However, the views and opinions expressed are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Agency for International Programs for Youth. Neither the European Union nor the Agency for International Programs for Youth can be held responsible for them.

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Co-funded by
the European Union



Agency for International
Programs for Youth
Republic of Latvia

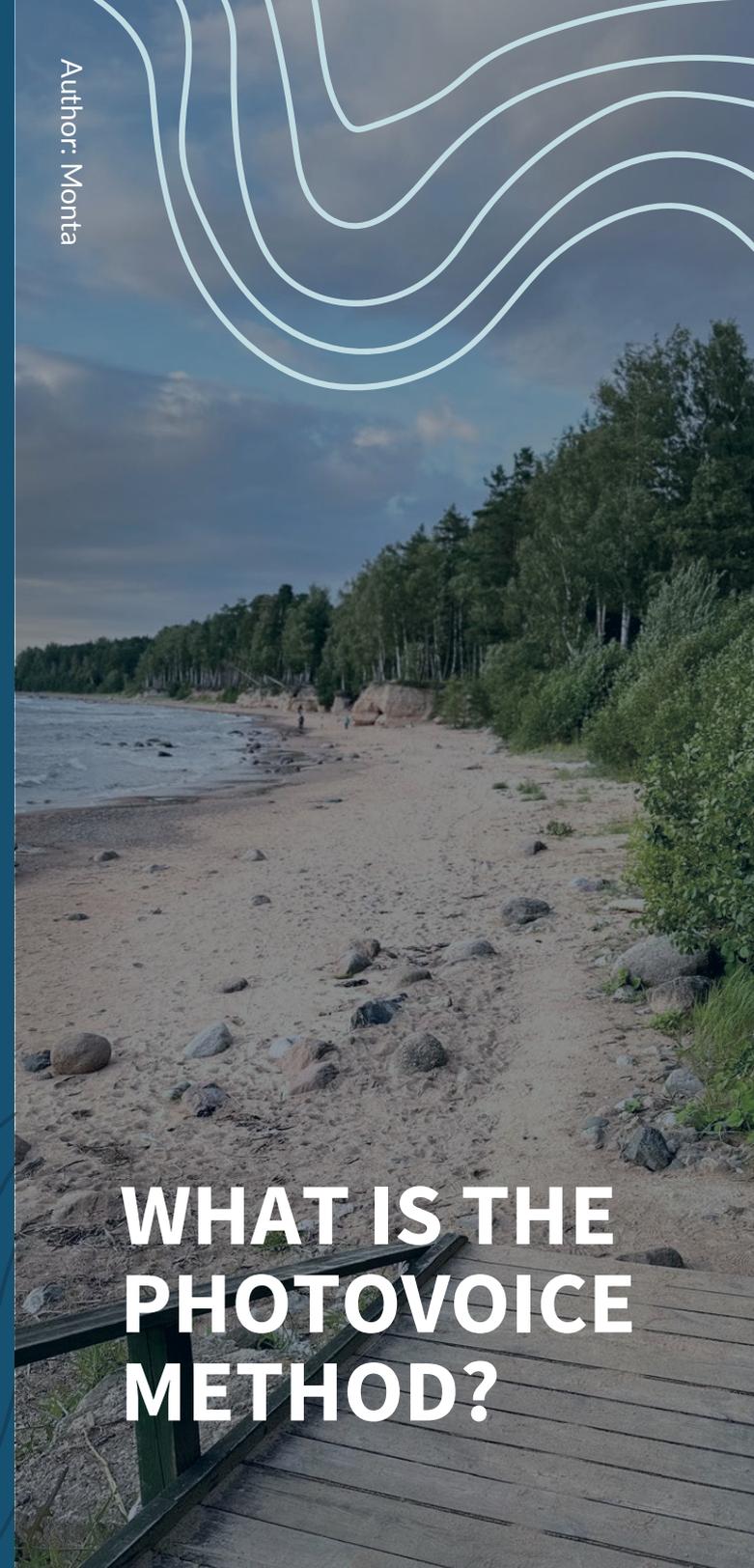


anthropos



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WHAT IS THE PHOTOVOICE METHOD?

ABOUT THE METHOD

The project uses the Photovoice method. It is one of the participatory action research methods for social change. The research is conducted in close cooperation between the researchers and the research participants, jointly learning and participating in the process of knowledge creation, as well as empowering research participants to advocate for their needs and rights.¹ While it is generally assumed that researchers ask the questions, determine the data and their interpretation, and participants provide them with the information, participatory action research methods involve participants in the formulation of the research topic, the data collection and analysis process, and the preparation of the report. Participants are also referred to as co-researchers.

The photovoice method involves documenting the experiences of the participants by taking photographs. The method is easily adaptable to the needs of a social group or community², so there is no single methodology. Typically, research using the photovoice method has 5 stages:

- 1 A meeting in which the researchers explain the photovoice method and the research ethics,
- 2 Taking the photographs,
- 3 Discussing the photographs individually or in a group discussion,
- 4 Processing the photographs,
- 5 Preparation of an exhibition, research report and other activities to promote social change.

The method has the following strengths: it can promote participant autonomy and authority, provide more nuanced and richer data, give participants time to get to know and build relationships with the researchers, and make

participation in the research enjoyable and even exciting, as photography is familiar to many.³

Photographs can analyse material objects such as urban environments, the values and norms associated with them, and they can also express emotions and experiences that are difficult to put into words.⁴ Importantly, the photovoice method can be used to work with communities and groups that are socially vulnerable or disadvantaged, including young people,⁵ whose voices are often overlooked in policymaking.

However, there are some drawbacks: the method is time-consuming and may limit the ability of participants to participate actively in the study for long periods of time due to their daily responsibilities or other life circumstances.⁶ As the photographs may also show others, the challenge is to respect people's anonymity and other ethical considerations.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

“Without restrictions” is a project of the Latvian foundation “Fonds “Tavs Atbalsts” and the Lithuanian Applied Anthropology organization “Anthropos”, in which young people with mobility disabilities participate in an anthropological study. The aim is to find out how young people with mobility disabilities in Latvia and Lithuania feel, what their needs really are, and to identify stereotypes that hinder their inclusion in society.

The project participants have become co-researchers, together with a team of anthropologists, exploring their own experiences with the photovoice method. The photographs

taken and featured in this booklet reflect young people's everyday lives, challenges or places that affect their lives. The photographs, together with their stories and reflections from the research discussions, have been exhibited in several cities across Latvia.

The study results show that the experiences of young people with disabilities are not necessarily the same, even if the challenges they face are similar. The discrimination experienced by co-researchers is rarely overt or direct, but rather something that they see as inevitable, such as a lack of investment in accessible infrastructure. However, the co-researchers show remarkable resilience in the face of difficulties and the ability to critically and realistically assess the data.

This project shows how the participation of young people with disabilities can be achieved and its importance for public education. It also improves the skills of the young people involved and fosters their desire to participate in democratic processes in the future.



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¹ Anderson et al., 2023

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Vinogradova, 2023

⁵ Anderson et al., 2023

⁶ Ibid.