Film-Making: Researching and Learning Through Pocket Film-Making

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Introduction

This chapter considers how filming—specifically the creation of pocket films—might stimulate research and learning. This is not, however, a film-making masterclass. I do not teach in a film school. My students are not nascent directors, producers or cinematographers. Rather, I am a management scholar interested in inculcating students of business, management, marketing, accounting, administration and finance into the practice of critically engaging with the world around them. In what follows, I consider how and why filming can encourage the reconceptualisation of management, business and organising.

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Why should we reconceptualise management, business and organising? In part because of the 2007 financial crisis. This was a crisis that spanned the globe, reaching into the pockets and arresting the hopes of the poorest individuals and the wealthiest nations. Measured in job losses, sovereign debt, fiscal austerity and welfare state retrenchment, the crisis stemmed not from flood, earthquake or other natural disaster (De Cock et al. 2011) but in the locally enacted and internationally communicated actions, interactions, regulations, models, instruments and systems of the financial community. It stemmed from the actions of managers, many of whom left universities with management degrees and MBAs. Why does this matter? It matters because there is a suspicion that our schools of management and business have contributed to the crisis by creating unreflective and unethical managers who were spoon-fed a priori categories and ill-conceived models which were then unthinkingly inflicted upon the wider world (Vaill 1983; Chia 1999; Shaw 2016). It matters because those of us who teach in such schools stand accused of producing the graduates who brought the global economy to its knees (Alajoutsijärvi 2012; Parker 2018b). It matters because managers (whether they are technically our graduates or not) are implicated in a never-ending slew of corporate scandals (e.g. Enron, Arthur Anderson, News of the World, Parmalat, Lehman Brothers, AIG, British Petroleum, Volkswagen, Carillion, Oxfam). It matters because we are suspected of contributing to an educational system dedicated to the promotion of poor management and institutionalised avarice (Croft and Binham 2012; *The Economist* 2012; Rhodes 2015).

Equally worrying is the suggestion that degrees in management, finance and business have no intrinsic worth. It is suggested that students do not attend such courses because they are excited by the principles and practice of organising, management or business, but rather, as an investment wherein escalation personal debts stand as a hedge against future status and income (Vernon 2011; *Huffington Post* 2012). Consequently, there is a 'perception of management as a field of study for young people [that] is entirely instrumental—an effective stepping-stone to launch a career; but one devoid of either intrinsic interest or social value' (Gabriel 2009: 379). Similarly, host universities appear to value schools of management and

business more for their revenue-raising capacity than their potential contribution to the academy (Parker 2018a). No wonder such schools have been described as 'cash cows' that 'serve the one percent' while 'reproducing the values, skills and mind-set of much of what is wrong with contemporary capitalism' (Contu 2017).

Responding to these claims, and drawing on the work of Whitehead (1929), I look at how we might realise that which the best social science research and teaching has always afforded, namely, pedagogic spaces that connect faculty and students in the 'imaginative consideration of learning… to construct an intellectual vision of a new world' (Whitehead 1929: 93). Specifically, I explore how the smartphone camera can be recruited as a tool for promoting new 'ways of seeing' (Berger 1972) as part of student-led research that encourages learners to question, interrogate, investigate, recombine, challenge, problematise and represent the taken-for-granted in the world around them. The focus of this chapter is primarily on the use of film with students—with those who are about to embark on research for the first time. Even so, many of the lessons hold for the use of pocket film by doctoral students and seasoned academics who might consider new ways of seeing and communicating classic research problems. Moreover, the chapter speaks to the ways in which we might encourage stakeholders to investigate their own worlds as a part of visually informed participatory research methods. In this sense, the focus on teaching allows us to concentrate on a single consistent application. The challenge to you, the reader, is to consider how you might adapt such methods to your own research and learning needs.

The chapter opens with a consideration of the challenges inherent in engaging contemporary learners, focusing on Whitehead's (1929) notion of a 'romance for ideas'. The potential for film to engender romance is then considered, as part of a consideration of the nature of pocket films and the research potential of smartphones. In so doing, I draw on feedback from my own students to illustrate key points (note, there is no claim to systematic collection or probabilistic generalisation in respect of these comments, they are collected at the end of lectures in a cardboard box with a view to improving my own practice on an on-going basis—they are included as illustrations of the feedback that has informed my own practice over two decades). The paper then outlines Whitehead's rhythms

of learning—and the place of romance therein—as a template over which a 9-step approach to encouraging ethically informed research and learning through the production of pocket films is outlined. The chapter ends with a reflection on the process and its value.

Romance for Ideas

Contu (2017) argues that the answer to the challenges of instrumental, narrow and stilted management education and research lies in harnessing the power of ideas. This is not a new call to arms. Writing on the *Aims of Education* (1929) Alfred North-Whitehead argued that 'unless the pupils are continually sustained by the evocation of interest, the acquirement of technique, and excitement of success, they can never make progress, and will certainly loose heart' (Whitehead 1929: 38). Whitehead was concerned that 'above all things we must beware of what I will call "inert ideas"—that is to say, ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilized, or tested or thrown into fresh combination' (Whitehead 1929: 1). His was a vision of education that explicitly resisted the drip-feeding of a priori categories and ill-conceived models (Vaill 1983; Chia 1999; Shaw 2016). To this end, Whitehead notes that:

> What education has to impart is an intimate sense of the power of ideas, for the beauty of ideas, and for the structure of ideas, together with a particular body of knowledge which has peculiar reference to the life of the being possessing it. (Whitehead 1929: 12)

What is at stake is the possibility of demonstrating to learners and researchers how the various disciplines that inform the practice of management hold specific interest and use by 'promoting the imaginative consideration of the various general principles underlying the career' (Whitehead 1929: 96). Such consideration may imply critical reflection on: what it means to relate to others as a member of an occupational grouping, the principles of effective managing, different theoretical perspectives on organising, or the place of business in the wider world. Whitehead's focus on imagination parallels Wright-Mills' (1959) assertion that we need to

free sociologically imaginative modes of thinking that encourage the student 'to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and external career of a variety of individuals' (Wright-Mills 1959: 11). Again, Wright-Mills was not speaking of some narrow vocational self-interest, but a playfulness of mind that allows for the (often unexpected) combining of ideas 'as well as a truly fierce desire to make sense of the world' (Wright-Mills 1959: 233).

Move forward another half-century and there are calls for education and research capable of identifying 'structural and economic inequalities, systems of power relations and modes of domination' (Cunliffe and Linstead 2009: 5) with a mind to considering or even enacting alternative modes of organising predicated on more inclusive, responsible, humanistic or emancipatory principles. In Whitehead's terms this translates into an education system that 'preserves the connection between knowledge and a zest for life, by uniting the young and the old … to construct an intellectual vision of a new world' (Whitehead 1929: 93). I want to consider the ways in which film, specifically 'pocket-films', might serve as a research tool that enables us to see the world anew.

What Is a Pocket Film and Why Make Them?

Pocket film describes the practice of capturing and disseminating audio-visual images via mobile devices such as the internet-enabled smartphone. Such films tend to be of short duration—30 seconds to 20 minutes—and are aimed at communicating an artistic or intellectual vision. Pocket films are thus consciously created/constructed (rather than momentary snaps or outtakes) and may include animation, stop-motion, reportage, documentary, drama, surrealism and live action. A useful early source of such films is to be found in the link to the Festival Pocket Films—Création avec téléphone mobile (http://www.festivalpocketfilms.fr/spip.php?article700).

The rise of pocket films has paralleled a growth of mobile technology that has effectively democratised the reproduction of still and moving image. It has also accompanied what has been described as the 'visual' or 'pictoral' turn (Mitchell 1984) within social science that serves to question

our ability to understand the world around us in solely linguistic (textual) terms and points to the increasing importance of images in describing, shaping and transforming both identities and social reality. Reference to shaping and transforming indicates that the visual does not just describe a mode of representation and dissemination but also of 'knowing'. Indeed, there is a growing emphasis on employing photography and film as modes of inquiry through which we collect data on, and make sense of our worlds (Mitchell 2011). To this end, the special value of film has been identified as filling an epistemological gap in text-based language-centred science in aesthetic terms (Miko et al. 2018). Specifically, film usefully provokes new thoughts as an aesthetic mode of expression that 'disrupts the relationship between, researcher, subject and user' (Wood et al. 2018). Indeed, director Mike Figgis notes that looking though a camera lens makes you 'suddenly realise this is a whole different way of looking at things' (Figgis 2007: 3). In this sense, film-making is very much about research and knowing as well as teaching and learning.

The presence of the lens changes the way in which the person views and interacts with the world around them, moving-with rather than independently from the would-be researcher: affecting their modes of engagement with, and embodied experience of, the environment they are in and representing (Pink 2009). Moreover, the nature of the pocket-lens is transformed according to the techniques—cinematic, documentary, vérité, reportage—that are brought to bear by the researcher. In these ways the deployment of smartphone lens has the potential to change—to usefully disrupt—our taken for granted ways of seeing.

Effectively, the camera places the researcher/film-maker at the scene and invites the viewer to follow, to see as the film-maker does and to frame their own interpretation of the encounter. This allows the viewer's own affective reactions and sense-making to become 'part of the investigative process' (Hassard et al. 2017: 11). In this way film goes beyond the bounds of management texts to afford a different type of immersive audio-visual encounter that is both denotative (e.g. literally defines or describes an item, time or place in cultural, social and sociological terms) and connotative (e.g. going beyond the primary description or definition to convey the personal meanings, stories or feelings attached to a particular item, time, process or place) in nature (Mitchell 2011). Imagery and sound combine

to give a sense of the tacit, embodied and processual nature of being and organising. Film and filming can therefore be considered as multisensory modes of knowing, researching and learning (Bell et al. 2014).

While the process of film-making is itself a mode of research, it also tends to be underpinned by 'traditional' research techniques. Film-making, and social science films in particular, are underpinned by extensive research, and are often informed by in-depth observation, interviews and conceptual rigour that '*enacts* rather than merely *records*' (Wood et al. 2018: 5) the arguments, positions, questions or theories of interest. It is a participator mode of researching that is often deeply reflective and reflexive. Film-making is, in short, an unfolding process of planning, producing, collaborating, storying, editing, presenting, viewing, reinterpreting and sense-making. It is, to put it bluntly, a form of research and learning in its own right (Miko et al. 2018; Wood et al. 2018). As such, it is an entirely appropriate means through which to enact research and learning in the fields of management, business and organising.

Smartphones and Pocket Films

Most of us own, or are at least familiar with, a smartphone. As fully fledged citizens of the YouTube generation, new entrants to academia are not only comfortable with the invitation to *broadcast yourself*, but also to broadcast their wider life in terms of: online gaming exploits (Twitch), hobbies and fashion (Pintrest), news and politics (Twitter), moments (Instagram), work profiles (LinkedIn) and humour (Vine), not to mention streams of information on friendships, thoughts, concerns, anger, intimidation and hope (Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, WeChat, Snapchat, Sina Weibo), all with the aid of a device that sits within the palm of the hand. They are part of a generation well versed in seeing the world in visual terms and picturing—placing—themselves in that world (Fig. 1).

Of course, a concern with the smartphone and the visual goes well beyond the YouTube Generation. As Bell et al. (2014: 2) note 'Organizations and individuals inhabit (and generate) a visually saturated culture'. Branding, marketing, advertising, desktop icons, multimedia communication, annual reports, picture identification and power point presentations

Fig. 1 Selfie generation (*Source* ©R. McMurray, http://robertmcmurray.blogspot.co.uk/2015/04/blog-post.html)

all proclaim the ubiquity of images within business, management and organisation. The CEO and MBA candidate are just as familiar with the workings of the smartphone as the undergraduate. For those in business the smartphone is a tool for flexible working, communicating, networking, planning, coordinating and monitoring as part of the hyper-connectivity that, for better or worse, characterises organisational life (Obushenkova and Pelster 2018).

The smartphone is then a point of connection—of familiarity—between the world of the undergraduate/MBA student and an academic concern with encouraging new ways of seeing and researching. Indeed, Mitchell (2011) suggests that such novel visual tools can help novice researchers explore the possibilities for eliciting critical and engaged commentary as part of a more inclusive exploration of that which constitutes 'data'. It is then a logical step to extend our familiarity with the smartphone 'as communication tool' to an academic emphasis on the potential of the smartphone as 'research tool'.

The next section formalises my approach to employing the smartphone as a research tool in student learning. Drawing on examples from my teaching with first-year undergraduates (groups sizes, *n*~100–180) and MBA students (groups sizes, *n*~25–60) the approach is presented as a 9-step process for researching and learning through pocket film (see Fig. 3). The approach aligns with that which Whitehead (1929) identifies as the rhythm of education: a three-part cycle described by the stages of romance, precision and generalisation. I briefly describe these stages before considering the associated 9-step process.

Romance, Rhythms and Pocket Films

For Whitehead, imparting knowledge and constructing a vision of the world through research and learning occur through a three-part learning cycle (see Fig. 2). The three parts are described as romance, precision and generalisation.

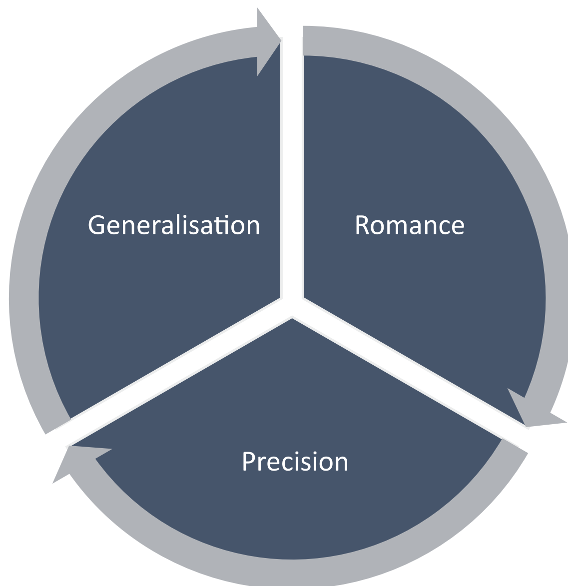


Fig. 2 Whitehead's Rhythm of Education (1929)

Romance points to the importance of introductions, excitement, broad theory, inexact and disorganised intellectual discovery and adventure. During this stage, students should be free to explore a new subject area surrounded by materials that can stimulate the imagination and not dull the sense of adventure and wonder (Garland 2005). This is 'the' crucial stage as 'There can be no mental development without interest. Interest is the *sine qua non* for attention and apprehension… without interest there will be no progress' (Whitehead 1929: 31). Indeed, Whitehead goes as far as to state that 'It is my strong belief that the cause of so much failure in the past has been due to the lack of careful study of the due place of romance. Without the adventure of romance, at best you get inert knowledge without initiative, and at worst you get contempt of ideas–without knowledge' (Whitehead 1929: 33). It is only once enthusiasm for the subject has been firmly established, that research and learning can move to the precision stage.

In the *precision* stage, we are invited to impose order on the relatively free and disorganised understanding that was encouraged in the romance stage. It is a stage of careful analysis, specification and classification and is 'dominated by the inescapable fact that there are right ways and wrong ways, and definite truths to be known' (Whitehead 1929: 34). Within management education and research the notion of 'definitive truths' is highly problematic (particularly within critical management studies). There are however tried and tested methods for obtaining and critiquing extant knowledge, as well as pre-existing theories, concepts and processes that need to be studied and understood in-depth. In this sense, precision is about considering ideas already apprehended but in greater detail.

The final stage is that of *generalisation*. Whitehead characterises it as a point of Hegelian synthesis in which there is a return to romance with the added advantage of classified ideas and relevant technique. Many of the necessary details acquired in the precision stage are set aside (dropped in Weick's [2007] terms) in favour of broad principles that are applied to and tested in the real world. At this point simple knowledge is operationalised as part of a developing wisdom, where the latter 'concerns the handling of knowledge, its selection for the determination of relevant issues, its employment to add value to our immediate experience… [to attain] the most intimate freedom obtainable' (Whitehead 1929: 30).

When I ask my own students 'what three things de-motivate you when it comes to studying' the most readily cited factor is boredom. In particular, 'boring lectures', 'a poor lecturer who doesn't motivate you to be interested in the module' and 'lack of relevance' (see also Money et al. 2017). My students note that boredom can be compounded by 'lack of clear course objectives', 'confusing tasks and unclear structures', 'bad presentation' and 'poor teaching methods'. Of course, we are well aware of the tendency for people to externalise difficulties, but even allowing for this, students confirm the general belief that what we do as research active educators can have a significant impact on learning (Dahlgren 1984; Marton and Säljö 1984; Ramsden 1984; Hand et al. 1996; Biggs 1999; Lizzio et al. 2002). This relates in part to how we organise our learning environments (Sander et al. 2000) but crucially, I would argue, also our ability to evoke romance, encourage precision and then afford chances for meaningful generalisation. As one of my students noted, what they want 'On the one hand [is to] to understand the merits of theory. On the other hand, to apply theories to a real world'.

This need to address boredom through imaginative research and learning brings us full circle to the concern—to the accusation—that all too often management graduates have been spoon-fed a priori categories and ill-conceived models which are then unthinkingly inflicted upon the wider world (Chia 1999; Shaw 2016): that those who attend schools of business are potentially bored by the very idea of managing (Vaill 1983). It reinforces Whitehead's assertion that the role of university is to consider the general principles that underpin a career and that the role of ideas is to re-imagine worlds. Researching the world through pocket films can help us meet these demands, providing an antidote to boredom and stale ideas.

9-Step Process for Researching & Learning Through Pocket Film

It will be clear by now that I am in agreement with Whitehead's (1929) contention that there can be no learning without interest. Where Whitehead spoke of 'romance' we now talk of 'motivation', recognising that the

success of research and teaching endeavours is dependent on the commitment of individuals in terms of intrinsic, extrinsic and strategic impetus (Gibb et al. 1984; Griffith 2003; Newstead and Hoskins 2003). Whitehead framed this in terms of the problem of keeping knowledge alive for the learner/researcher, noting that 'the best procedure will depend on several factors, none of which can be neglected, namely, the genius of the teacher, the intellectual type of the pupils, their prospects in life, the opportunities offered by the immediate surroundings of the school and allied factors of this sort' (Whitehead 1929: 5). Mode of delivery (Dahlgren 1984; Ramsden 1984; Lizzio et al. 2002) perceived workload (Ramsden 1984; Lizzio et al. 2002) clarity of goals and structure (Lizzio et al. 2002) control and independence (Ramsden 1984; Lizzio et al. 2002) managing anxiety and threat (Marton and Säljö 1984; Ramsden 1984) how the work is to be judged (Entwistle 1984; Ramsden 1984; Hand et al. 1996; Biggs 1999; Lizzio et al. 2002) and the aims of those involved (Pearson and Chatterjee 2004; Woodhouse 2005) all impinge on motivation to learn and research.

In terms of the production of pocket films, I have conceptualised this task as a 9-step process. It will be noted that the steps broadly correspond to different stages of Whitehead's (1929) rhythm of learning. Steps one through to three equate the with stage of romance; four to six equate to the precision stage; and seven through to nine to the stage of generalisation. Most focus is placed on steps 1–3 (romance) below as 'without interest there will be no progress' (Whitehead 1929: 31) (Fig. 3).

Step 1—Challenge

Step 1 is to challenge. It requires some 'freshness in the knowledge dealt, or some novelty of application to the new world of new times' (Whitehead 1929: 98) or both. This may take the form of outlining a problem, specifying a goal, or actively seeking to disrupt the taken-for-granted assumptions of learners such that the need for further research becomes clear.

With all students, but particularly first-year undergraduates, I seek to emphasise that not everyone sees the way that you do. Opening lectures stress that there is more than one way of 'seeing' (drawing on the work of

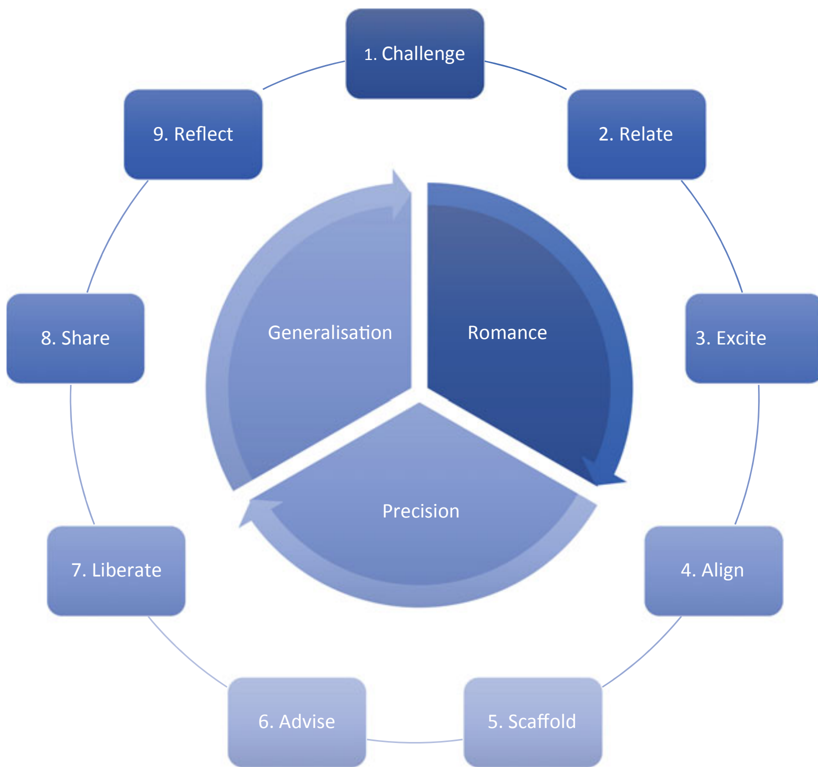


Fig. 3 9-Step process for research and learning through pocket-film making ('Video 4.1: Kickstarter Films' https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUc6HGJZ8AFbLtRp09lNlu7r__Z-HDUL8)

Berger 1972). Moreover, I stress that how and what we see fundamentally influences approaches to enacting and 'being' in the world. On a first-year research methods course this is couched in terms of a discussion of the different implications of competing research paradigms (Burrell and Morgan 1979) and the possibility that there are different ways of seeing the worlds of work, managing and organising. Follow-up workshops involve exercises designed to encourage students to explore how our senses may be deceived (e.g. Ames room, Rubin's vase, paintings of Salvador Dali), how different cultures respond to risk (e.g. Douglas 1966, 1978) as well the manner in which business practices such as advertising may be critiqued

(e.g. Berger 1972). Effectively, students are invited to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about what they think they know, how they obtain knowledge, and indeed the usefulness or otherwise of unconventional ways of seeing.

Effectively, I am seeking to disrupt their world view so that they might begin to think of the world anew (Whitehead 1929). This disruption includes making it clear that a major part of their module mark will depend on a group produced pocket film. They are informed that the 2–4-minute film will require them to research and explain a management concept (e.g. rationalisation, commodification, externalities) to a lay audience in a manner that is informative and engaging. At one level making such a film requires the use of classic research skills based on literature searching, critical reading, in-depth observation, interviews and conceptual rigour (Woodet al. 2018: 5). Yet it is simultaneously disrupting and challenging because, while most of the students I teach are well versed in the production of essays and the closed exam, they are new to viewing the world through a lens. The production and dissemination of knowledge in the form of social science film (Miko et al. 2018; Wood et al. 2018) is in and of itself a challenge.

The effect is similar on MBA students, particularly those returning to higher education, for whom the very notion of producing a film challenges them to reconsider how they communicate with an audience, and indeed who the intended audience is. For these students the challenge is different, more applied, as they are asked to work in groups to develop a business idea or opportunity that is to be presented as a 'Kickstarter' style film (see https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUc6HGJZ8AFbLtRp09lNlu7r__Z-HDUL8). For MBAs and undergraduates alike, the response is a mix of enthusiasm, puzzlement and, for some, anxiety. At this point, the key is to remind them that you are not expecting something to rival a film by Spielberg. The social science film is about producing and transmitting knowledge. I note that such films are judged by different criteria, and that the work required to meet those criteria will be covered during the course (see below).

Step 2—Relate

Having challenged learners to think again about how they see the world, Step 2 seeks to link lectures and film to the interests and experiences of the student-researcher. Put simply, the task is to convince them that producing a pocket film is worthwhile as part of the 'imaginative consideration of the various general principles underlying the career' (Whitehead 1929: 96). This is the task of any researcher. Whether we are submitting a grant application to a funder or a paper to a peer-reviewed journal we are required to demonstrate how and why our research relates to the life of the other.

For MBAs the production of a Kickstarter style film relates easily to the emerging world of business. For many it offers a chance to build on a business idea that they already have. For others, it is the culmination of their learning in respect of exploring, costing and pitching new ideas to a global audience.

For undergraduates 'relating' is a looser and more varied process. For some the subject of the film is of inherent interest (e.g. the effects of rationalisation on modern life, or the costs associated with pollution as an externality). Added to this are a range of pragmatic, instrumental and strategic concerns arising from the assessment of the film (generally 30–40% of the overall course mark). While it is essential to attend to instrumental motivations of students, it is equally important to recognise that learners often have an accompanying intrinsic desire to 'understand the subject', which my students express in terms of the wish to 'learn something about the way organisations work' to 'gain a deeper understanding, especially of human behaviour in business' or to 'understand theories more and apply them to the social world'. Accordingly, I explain to students how producing a film on a given topic will demonstrate their ability to define, research and apply key management topics to the real world. Presenting this understanding in the form of a group film will also help to develop the kinds of soft skills regularly identified in popular media (see Leighton 2018) as desired by employers and, therefore, of value to students. This includes team working, collaborating, communicating, leading, listening and time management.

The importance of relating the process of film-making to the lives and interests of those involved should not be underestimated. Whether the

process relates to students, a research funder or action research collaborators, the enterprise is unlikely to succeed unless there is buy-in. Those involved need to understand how a pocket film can be produced, what it will and will not involve, how it will align with their interests, and why it is better than other modes of researching and communicating. In each context the specifics (and message) will be different. For a research funder the emphasis may be on the ways in which film has been identified as filling certain epistemological and aesthetic gaps left by text-based social science (see Miko et al. 2018) while for participatory action research it may centre on reaching and working with audiences who are more comfortable with producing and/or viewing YouTube content than a formal report that must be written and read.

Step 3—Excite

Step three is the culmination of the initial stage of romance and speaks to a 'subject matter that has the vividness of novelty; it holds within itself unexplored connexions with possibilities half-disclosed by glimpses and half-concealed by a wealth of material' (Whitehead 1929: 17).

To this point (about a fifth of the way into a given course) I will have worked to disrupt base assumptions, present alternatives, outline the broad sweep of key concepts or theories and propose that visual research can serve as a tool for understanding and interacting with the wider world. This is achieved partly through lectures, one of which will introduce the topic around which the film is to be made (e.g. rationalisation). The lecture broadly describes key concepts, theorists and reading that relate to the topic. It seeks to excite student interest into the pervasiveness of a phenomenon and get them to consider how it relates to their life and the wider world.

Lectures are supplemented by workshops and exercises designed to excite interest in visual methods. Here the emphasis is on learning-by-doing. For example, a couple of weeks into my undergraduate course I challenge my students to work in their groups to create a photo essay. The photo essay combines image and text with a view to conveying something more of the context, culture, emotion and experience of a scene in an

attempt to provoke a response in the viewer (Mitchell 2011; Rose 2012). Among the various exponents of this art were the photojournalists of Life Magazine (see http://time.com/tag/life-photo-essay/).

Working in teams, students are briefed to 'take five pictures to form a photo essay on "routines of student life"'. They are given 40 minutes to consider what they have already learnt in terms of the purpose, potential, limits and ethics of employing visual methods in research; and informed that they are required to present their essays to the workshop (as a PowerPoint presentation) followed by a brief reflection on approach and message. In this way students are being required to move intellectually from consideration of presented images, to representations of their own experiences through visual imagery in a way that relates (step 2) to their own lives (see Fig. 4 for an example).

The results are photo essays on routine, learning, independence, similarity, difference, exchanging cultures, collectively, isolation, debt and alcohol. Students position themselves in front of as well as behind the lens as part of deliberate accounts of the embodied experience of routines with regards to stress, relaxation and excess. This is achieved while playing with the anonymity of body parts (Mitchell 2011; Petersen and Østergaard 2003) as hands, groups of arranged feet, turned faces and the obscuring of distinguishing marks are all employed as symbolic representations of a larger whole. In part this reflected a growing concern with the ethics of representation in terms of consent, anonymity and an ethical responsibility (see below, step 5 Scaffolding). It also speaks to attempts to see more deeply, as objects and body parts are presented for their connotative as well as denotative meanings. Thus, in Fig. 4 the first image was said to represent the new routine of having to stand on your own-two-feet while also forming new relations. Image 2 spoke to student debt, and relatively easy life for others—image 3. The shared experience of study and socialising conclude the essay (images 4 and 5).

The point of the photo essay is to encourage a shift in students away from the search for concrete answers and definitive solutions to the presentation of images of their own lives as linked to the wider theme of 'routines'. Students take up the challenge of turning the smartphone camera lens safely upon themselves as part of a first tentative attempt to identify, understand and represent the lived experience of the everyday and mundane, shifting

Fig. 4 Photo essay on the 'routines of student life'

from 'one perspective to another' to begin to 'build up an adequate view of a total society and its components' (Wright-Mills 1959: 232).

Just as importantly, experience of successful completing, presenting and discussing these essays serves to excite an appetite for the construction of a pocket film. This is important because, as Whitehead points out, unless learners are continually sustained by the 'excitement of success, they can never make progress, and will certainly lose heart' (Whitehead 1929: 38).

Step 4—Align

Alignment is concerned with establishing in the mind of the student the link between concepts, activities, film-making, researching, learning and success. We are moving now into the *precision* stage (Whitehead 1929) wherein students are invited to impose order on the relatively free and disorganised understanding that was encouraged in the romance stage. Central to this clear and constructive alignment of teaching, learning and assessment.

The importance of constructive alignment in effective learning and teaching is well established (Entwistle 1984; Ramsden 1984; Hand et al. 1996; Biggs 1999; Lizzio et al. 2002). Suffice to say that I repeatedly explain to undergraduates and MBAs how: the concepts in lectures are developed in hands-on workshops, the activities in workshops nurture the knowledge and skills required for success in the summative assessment, and how all of the above can inform the world of management, business and organising. This is reinforced by regular formative feedback in class.

Inherent within this is a very clear statement on what constitutes an excellent, good, satisfactory fair or failing film. Examples of the criteria made available to students are (Table 1) based on Bigg's (1999) SOLO taxonomy.

Note there is no prescribed content or cinematic style. The emphasis is on conceptual understanding, application and creativity. Of course, students need clear guidance in meeting the criteria for excellence.

Table 1 Film assessment criteria

70+	The film shows evidence of excellent understanding with respect to connecting, applying and extending ideas and images on rationalisation. There is evidence of deep and thorough understanding of different meanings associated with rationalisation, along with the different forms that rationalisation may take. This includes an appreciation of the ways in which individual rationalised actions link to, represent and reproduce wider rationalising trends within work business or society as a whole and how these may be inter-linked. There is also evidence of an ability to link this understanding to other relevant concepts and ideas from outside the course which suggests some originality of thought. The framework underpinning the film is clear, as are the theoretical or research perspectives from which the framework is derived. Detailed knowledge of the topic is combined with evidence of critical judgement in selection and analysis of relevant material. The work is characterised be careful and thoughtful observation. Visually, the images are very well presented and connected into a coherent whole with evidence of good scripting and editing. The film is highly engaging and informative and likely to make a good connection with the intended audience. Overall, the film would be defined as '**extended abstract**': the students are making connections not only within the given subject area, but also beyond it, able to generalise and transfer the principles and ideas underlying the specific instance.
Fail >40	The film gives the sense of having simply acquired and compiled bits of unconnected information, which have little organisation or meaningful sense. There is little or no theoretical framing of or underpinning to the film. In places the film and its representation of rationalisation appears confused, even mistaken. The work shows little or no evidence of thoughtful observation in respect of concepts, work, business or society. The film itself is poorly presented, in terms of image use, shooting, scripting and editing. There may also be concerns with respect to adherence to ethical guidelines. Overall, the film would be defined as 'pre-structural': here students are simply acquiring bits of unconnected information, which have no organisation and make little or no sense.

Step 5—Scaffold

Scaffolding refers to the practice of providing a range of supports designed to facilitate working, research and learning, where the level of external assistance reduces as student competence increases. Scaffolding is a 'dynamic intervention provided to facilitate and be responsive to students' learning progress. The idea is to give support based on students' needs and with a

clear purpose of fading out the assistance in line with students' learning progress (van de Pol et al. 2010, 2012; Howe 2013; Cappetta and Paolino 2015)' (Stratling and McMurray 2018: 2).

My concern here is to ensure that students: (1) understand the principles of group working, (2) appreciate how to search and critique literature—so as to collate the content to construct the film, (3) have an appreciation of the principles of pocket film-making, and (4) attend to the ethical principles of the university. Instruction and exercises are provided in all respects as part of a commitment to greater precision in enquiry. In the early weeks I play a much more directive role, as different models of group-working are discussed at the beginning of the course and students sign collective contracts describing how groups will work, who leads on particular activities and how group disputes are to be resolved. I am heavily involved in the setting up of groups, comparing models and developing contracts.

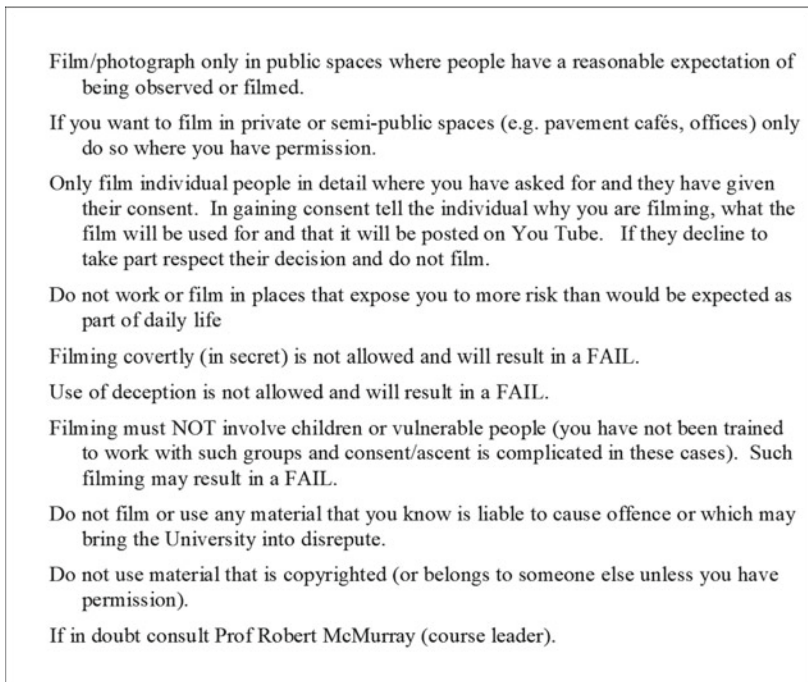
It is in this phase where I also attend to ethics, dedicating a session to ethics in general and filming in particular. Working with image and film opens issues that might not always have been considered before, whether by student, experienced researcher, host institution or professional body. Issues might include who can be filmed, under what circumstances and when, or where, is it reasonable to obtain consent in public spaces. For example, in the UK there are no specific privacy laws and no laws against filming in public (Trotter 2010) while the British Psychological Society (BPS 2009: 13) advise to 'restrict research based upon observations of public behaviour to those situations in which persons being studied would reasonably expect to be observed by strangers, with reference to local cultural values and to the privacy of persons'. Context, culture and local laws are thus key issues (it is perhaps worth noting that, not surprisingly given the marginality of visual methods to the area, the British and American Academies of Management make no reference to filming, while reference to public observation is also removed from the 2018 version of the BPS code).

Building on university ethics requirements, nascent film-makers are tutored in issues of honest reporting, fair dealing, integrity and avoiding treating others as means, all of which is reinforced by assessment rubrics stating that transgression of ethical guidelines will result in a zero mark.

YouTube's rules on copyright are co-opted to reinforce academic concern with ethicality, while students are reminded that the use of objects and anonymised bodies can be employed as symbolic representations of a larger whole (Mitchell 2011; Petersen and Østergaard 2003). In practical terms, students are issued with a set of ethical principles for film-making (Fig. 5) based on the below:

> Of course, no list of principles can force a film-maker to be ethical. The aim is to inculcate students with an appreciation of the need to treat others as special, while also understanding what might be implied by an ethics of care. (Gabriel 2009)

During this phase I also provide detailed instruction in the proper methods of literature searching and critique. I spend time going through the



Film/photograph only in public spaces where people have a reasonable expectation of being observed or filmed.

If you want to film in private or semi-public spaces (e.g. pavement cafés, offices) only do so where you have permission.

Only film individual people in detail where you have asked for and they have given their consent. In gaining consent tell the individual why you are filming, what the film will be used for and that it will be posted on You Tube. If they decline to take part respect their decision and do not film.

Do not work or film in places that expose you to more risk than would be expected as part of daily life

Filming covertly (in secret) is not allowed and will result in a FAIL.

Use of deception is not allowed and will result in a FAIL.

Filming must NOT involve children or vulnerable people (you have not been trained to work with such groups and consent/ascent is complicated in these cases). Such filming may result in a FAIL.

Do not film or use any material that you know is liable to cause offence or which may bring the University into disrepute.

Do not use material that is copyrighted (or belongs to someone else unless you have permission).

If in doubt consult Prof Robert McMurray (course leader).

Fig. 5 Ethical principles for film-making

3 Ps of film production (Table 2) while also examining examples from different genre and sites. Useful resources here include the BBC film network (http://www.bbc.co.uk/filmnetwork/filmmaking/guide/) and Festival Pocket Films (http://www.festivalpocketfilms.fr/) and tips for pocket film-making (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oljt8IU0Npk).

Table 2 A rough guide to the 3 Ps of film production

Pre-production	• Idea, concept definition, library research & reading • Perspective • Planning • Intended audience • Location scouting • Obtaining permissions/consents • Detail observation & note-taking prior to filming • Scripting/story boarding • Shot plan • Choosing your equipment & software packages
Production	• Setting • Equipment: all charged, understand all settings and features • Shooting skills: e.g. avoid very bright light (try softer indirect light when interviewing), not too much camera movement • Pieces to camera? • Acted sequences? • Animation? • Look after your equipment and footage • Back-up copies
Post-production	• Editing, slicing together • Adding titles, music, voice-overs and graphics • Quotations or references? • Credits & authors (e.g. full names of members of the team being assessed) • Exporting/sharing (YouTube) • PILOT viewing/audience testing? • Final edit • Meeting deadlines • Allow time for upload • Allow time for format conversion • Allow time for technical difficulties/failures • Email full details (links, names) to Prof McMurray

As the weeks progress my hands-on involvement is reduced to the point where I am consulted if needed or called in where dispute resolution is problematic. In this way, scaffolding is removed as I switch from detailed instruction to advice giving.

Step 6—Advise

Step 6 is an extension of the previous step and reflects the need for the lecturer to move from centre stage. Rather than instructing on specific concepts, methods or processes, attention switches to responding to question initiated by learners. Within my courses more time is directed to lectures and workshops in the first half of the module. These are replaced in the second half by drop-in sessions and advice clinics. Within these, I clarify assessment queries, discuss interpretations of theories, consider the validity of sources and review initial ideas for film-making. Here, then, attention moves to encouraging students who are '*uncovering* the topics in our course rather than listening to us *cover* them' (Whetten 2007: 349) as they are guided to construct and own understandings of the world and their place within it (Dahlgren 1984).

Step 7—Liberate

As the films are being made and students seek to determine whether they are 'getting it right' or 'what the best approach is' my role is to stress that there is more than one path to the production of a good (and well graded) film. A catalogue of films from previous cohorts can serve to demonstrate diversity of approach, while constantly changing the subject of films reduces the likelihood of copy-cat production. Never revealing the marks of prior films also helps in this sense. For MBA students a look through the official Kickstarter site quickly reveals a diverse range of approaches to attracting an audience and funders.

In practical terms, the above means reiterating that there is no preferred genre or mode of film-making. It means making it clear that they are freed from the structures of the classical academic essay, and it is up to them whether they include text and references on the screen or choose to include

them in comments. This is the stage at which learner and lecturer alike need to hold their nerve as simple knowledge is operationalised as part of a developing wisdom, where the latter 'concerns the handling of knowledge, its selection for the determination of relevant issues, its employment to add value to our immediate experience… [to attain] the most intimate freedom obtainable' (Whitehead 1929: 30). Film forces the learner to let go of the detail of the precision stage in favour of the broad lessons that are to be readied for generalisation (long quotes, heavy text and laboured references will not work in a film). The only restrictions at this stage include length, hand in date, compliance with the university's ethical guidelines, and adherence to YouTube's terms and conditions. The latter is important because all films will be posted on YouTube ready for assessment and sharing.

Step 8—Share

Within my courses, sharing takes two forms. First, films are submitted to my YouTube site for marking: Management Learning Channel (https://www.youtube.com/user/ARBSchannel) (Fig. 6).

This has the advantage of ensuring that the films are shared with the wider world and that students consider an audience beyond the classroom when constructing their films (it is not unusual for the films to be view hundreds of times, some approaching 7000 views—see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Ly6grTZgxU&index=14&list=PL52A0BB5EA2D477D3). It also imposes the added challenge of not infringing copyright (if the films are taken down by YouTube on copyright grounds the assessment is failed).

Second, a selection of the films is shown in the last lecture of the term/semester. They are selected for their variety and inventiveness not on the basis of the mark awarded. The purpose here is to celebrate our collective research and learning. Large screen format, snacks and conversations all speak to a shared event. It also allows learners to see the different ways in which the same subject can be variously researched, interpreted and presented by others. In presentational terms this variety encompasses the documentary, claymation, mime, reportage, drawing, stop motion,

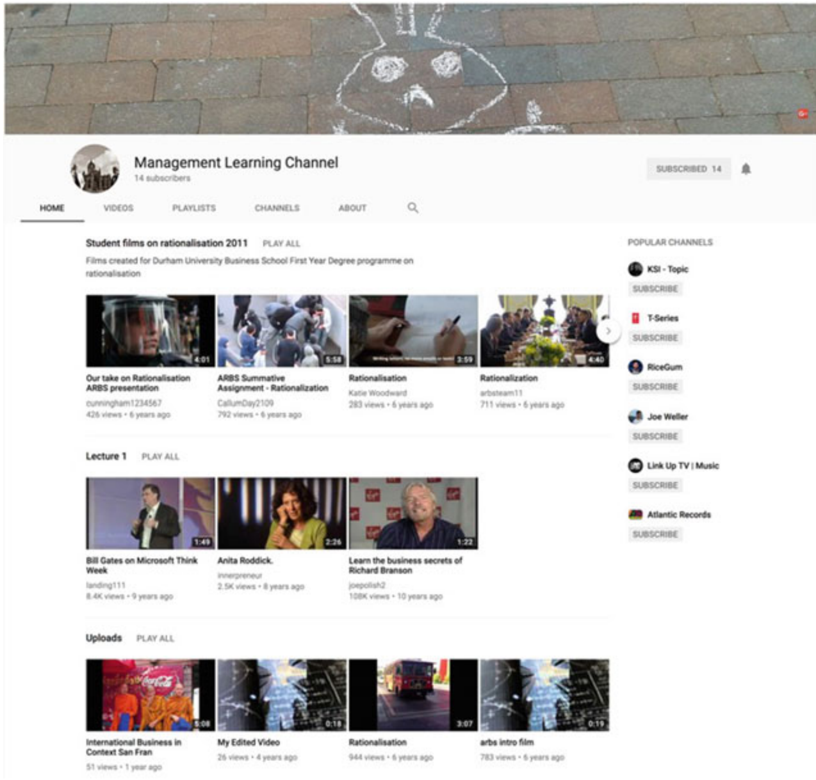


Fig. 6 Management Learning Channel for student films

silent film, pieces to camera, poetry and acted-out. In conceptual terms theory is realised in relation to individuals, businesses, countries, processes, world events, social problems, possible solutions and new questions. This variety brings us back to step 1 in the process as students come to understand that not everyone sees and enacts the world the same way as they do.

What the shared visual language of film does afford is a levelling of the playing field for those whose first language is not English. Imagery can convey meaning where words may be lacking, while time to plan and edit affords a chance to be heard before others jump in. Finally, the audience 'hear and see' those who may be silent or silenced in other contexts. This is

also true in the case of social science films more broadly. Katharina Miko et al. (2018) social science film 'Warm Feelings' explores the experience of being gay and lesbian in the post-war period where to love or be intimate with someone of the same sex was often unspoken and hidden. The film serves to reconstruct, represent and voice those experiences decades later. Both the process of making and presenting allow new voices and perspectives to be disseminated. The impact of such films is to: challenge ideas, challenge the status quo of academic work as written work and, connect with public audiences that the closed world of academic journals simply does not reach (Wood et al. 2018).

Step 9—Reflect

By reflection I have in mind two separate but linked processes: student assessment and learning effectiveness.

Using the assessment guide (see Table 1) I tend to mark all of the films within a few days and feedback to students within a week. Moderation depends on specific institutional requirements but discussion between markers is of course key (especially when marking and feedback may be across multiple staff and hundreds of students). I return marks within a few days because I want students to reflect on the learning outcomes and processes while they are still fresh in their minds. The feedback is face-to-face so that the groups of students can ask questions and understand the grade. In this way students are invited to reflect on their individual process of research and learning.

The second form of reflection is on the usefulness of the course generally and of pocket films in particular. In terms of outcome, the grades awarded to films give some indication as to the extent to which students have come to understand and apply theory. In terms of process, I once again ask students how they found the course and film-making. Broadly, students report finding the task of producing a pocket film challenging in terms of time, organisation and the necessity of 'being there' in order to produce images. The act of having to look at and re-present a world beyond books is generally said to heighten their understanding of concepts such as rationalisation, commodification, power or externalities (all

film topics over the years) in terms of their effect and pervasiveness in the observable world. This echoes Wright-Mills's (1959: 232) observation that once you are really into a subject you see it everywhere once you are sensitive to its themes.

Students reported having to engaging more deeply with concepts in readiness to present them clearly through visual media to a wider audience. Moreover, the very act of presenting was perceived by students to have embedded their understanding of the subject more deeply than exam or essay. Students noted that interviewing and observing others as part of filming opened them up to alternative viewpoints and perspectives, while also increasing their awareness that others may interpret the finished films in different ways. This was felt to be enhanced by the possibilities offered by sound, soundtrack and poetry as supplements to the creative process which helped convey meaning and elicit emotion. Finally, students stated that the process had generally been rewarding and fun. This chimes with claims that one of the benefits of utilising film in learning and research is the sheer joy and sense of fun that accompanies the process (Mitchell 2011) thus 'enhancing the aesthetic dimension of the research itself for all concerned' (Warren 2002: 243).

Not all remarks are positive. There is a minority who would prefer the written examination and essay for which they have been trained and displayed excellence. Others resent working in a group, particularly where said group struggles to cohere or engage effectively. MBAs find the challenge of coordinating more difficult when combining such an assignment with full-time work. Even so, overall there is a sense in which the smartphone camera affords students the necessary freedom to consider new ways of seeing, and developing their sociological imaginations. The films stand as evidence of their ability to grasp complex concepts, study them in-depth and then generalise them as part of an engaged consideration of the wider world. Many show them to family, friends, work colleagues and old school teachers as evidence of their university learning.

For my part, I review the films to incrementally improve my courses year on year. This has tended to lead to more structured scaffolding, more attention to the three Ps, and an emphasis on assessing the films as evidence of learning and creative engagement with the world—all the while stressing to students that we are engaging with images because they are increasingly

important in management business and organising (not because we are a film school).

What lessons do I take from the above? First and foremost, go out and get your hands dirty! Make your own film as I did (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n–0INNVLbQ) so as to better understand the process, problems and possibilities. Getting your hands dirty will help overcome any technological concerns you might have and allow you to teach students, other researchers or participative stakeholders from your own experience. It will also let you consider the ethics of seeing and representing others first-hand. How you apply the process outlined here will of course depend on your context. It will be markedly different for the individual working with a few research participants compared to a lecturer leading a course of 800. There are no one-size-fits- all solutions, but good planning and support are often key.

Conclusions

Encouraging research and learning through the use of pocket film has resulted in some of the most enjoyable and engaging teaching (and marking!) of my career. When you combine an academic's intrinsic enthusiasm for their subject, with the excitement of research and learning through film production, it is easy to invoke a romance for ideas in those we teach. Employing Whitehead (1929) I have contended that romance is a necessary prerequisite to research and learning: the precursor to developing precise understanding and generalisable knowledge. Furthermore, I have set out a case for, and a process of, working with film as an arts-based method for research and learning. Specifically, I have argued that film encourages a different mode of engagement with the world based on a participatory mode of researching that is often deeply reflective and reflexive. It goes beyond the bounds of management texts to afford a different type of immersive audio-visual encounter that is multisensory in nature (Pink 2009; Bell et al. 2014) as part of an unfolding process of planning, producing, collaborating, storying, editing, presenting, viewing, reinterpreting and sense-making that can be seen as a form of research and learning in its own right (Miko et al. 2018; Wood et al. 2018). This

form of research and learning has been made increasingly accessible by the ubiquity of the smartphone: a device that bridges and facilitates the social lives of undergraduates, the work of managers and the research practices of academics.

Finally, I value the smartphone enabled creation of pocket research films because it encourages different ways of seeing and communicating (Berger 1972) that push back against the often-unfounded claims that schools of management and business peddle a priori categories and ill-conceived models which are unthinkingly inflicted upon the wider world by alumni bored with the very idea of management (Vaill 1983; Chia 1999; Shaw 2016). I am not suggesting that all education and assessment should be channelled through film. Rather, as an arts-based method I would argue that it offers another way of seeing, engagement with, and being in the world that can be added to the very best modes of research and learning that we already provide.

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