

The Nonclusive Photo Workshop

The lens my research works through, aimed at situations: you photograph what is going on, and read how the design meets it.

WHAT IT IS

A photographic field exercise about situations. **Photograph what is going on, and how the design meets everyone in it.** A situation (arriving with full hands, resting, finding your way, sitting down together, waiting) covers everyone who is in it, whatever their body. Then gather and look at what everyone found.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A SITUATION

1. **What does the design address: the situation, or kinds of people?** A design that answers what is going on meets everyone in it. One that answers “what category do you belong to?” sorts people before it serves them.
2. **Who can take part in what is going on?** Watch the situation move: who flows with it, and who must break off: wait, ask, announce themselves, or take another route.
3. **Where does the situation split into an “us” and a “them”?** Catch the exact moment two kinds of arrivals appear: the main entrance and the way around the back, the ordinary route and the marked one.
4. **Is variation met with variation?** Several ways of doing the same thing, side by side in the same situation: heights, routes, formats, none of them marked as the special one.
5. **Photograph the situations that simply flow.** No one singled out, nothing marked, everything working for whoever is there. The hardest photograph to take, and the one that shows the most.

EASY FIRST FINDS: CONCRETE FORMS TO HUNT

1. **An open circle:** a round table or bench with one gap left open. The place that is nobody's marked place.
2. **A varying form:** the same thing at two heights or in two shapes. Push plates, coat hooks, counters, seats.
3. **A gap that welcomes wheels:** an open space built into the standard furniture, not added beside it.
4. **One route for everyone:** a smooth strip through the cobblestones, a ramp that is the main path.
5. **A sign that shows the room, not a person.**

HOW TO RUN IT

1. **Set the frame** with the task sentence and the list above.
2. **Walk:** wherever the exercise is set. A workshop venue works, and so do your everyday environments: where you live, where you shop, the routes you already know. Give it enough time to get past the obvious.
3. **Gather and show:** each photograph is presented as a situation: what was going on here, and how did the design meet it?
4. **Close,** from inside any photographed situation: **Is this built as if I am already here? Does it express that I belong?** And last: **what do you take with you?**

The nonclusive frame, in brief

Nonclusion. Nonclusive design refuses the premise that someone stands outside and must be brought in. Belonging is not a future state for a system to provide. It is already true of the person standing there, and design either recognises that or denies it. The task is recognition.

From person to situation. A situation (arriving with full hands, resting, finding your way, waiting) covers everyone who is in it, whatever their body. Design that answers what is going on meets everyone in it. Design that answers “what category do you belong to?” sorts people before it serves them. Designing for situations is how the sorting is avoided.

Three components to read for. Situation (does the design address what is going on?), non-categorisation (does it work without sorting people into kinds?), and variation (are there several ways of doing the same thing, none marked as the special one?). The five look-fors on page 1 apply these three components in the field.

The two closing questions. Asked from inside any photographed situation: Is this built as if I am already here? Does it express that I belong?

REFERENCES

- Hedvall, P.-O., Price, M., Keller, J., & Ericsson, S. (2022). Towards 3rd generation universal design: Exploring nonclusive design. In **Transforming our world through universal design for human development** (Studies in Health Technology and Informatics). IOS Press. <https://doi.org/10.3233/SHTI220824>
- Ericsson, S., & Hedvall, P.-O. (2024). Situation, non-categorisation and variation: Conveying nonclusion through text and image. **Design for All, India**, 19(6), 30–51.