

# Observation Best Practice

Intensive I Living Labs 2023 @St. Pölten UAS

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## Ethnographic research: observation protocol:

Ort: Barista Cats, Kandlgasse 35, 1070 Wien

Zeit: 13.05.23, 10:32–12:54 Uhr

### Field notes:

First, I noticed how well attended the café was despite the relatively early time on a Saturday morning. Me and my companion had to wait a few minutes until we were assigned a seat. Despite the fact that the café has only been open since the first of May this year, it already seems to be well received by the Viennese. The combination of drinking coffee and being able to pet cats puts a smile on the face of every visitor and the mood seems to be generally cheerful.

Most people seem to be more focused on getting attention from one of the four furry noses wandering from one seat to another in the café than on their breakfast, which is only served until 11:00.

I estimate the café's visitors to be around 20–30 years old, but a family with a child also enjoys the cats, which approach people tamely and familiarly or crawl into one of the many cat trees.

After the Instagram account @1000thingsinvienna posted a reel on the social media platform on April 27 for the café's new opening, the café's own Instagram account accumulated almost 3,000 followers already within the first weeks since the opening. That's why I'm not surprised that I noticed how many visitors were taking pictures or videos with the fluffy cats right from the beginning of our stay.

In general, it seems to me that almost all of the visitors present have their cell phones within easy reach, either next to them on their seat, on the table, or directly in their hand.

In addition, I notice that some café visitors, especially female-read people, such as two seemingly friendly people sitting two tables away, especially take pictures with the fluffy pals and are especially often photographed with the cats.

It is also striking how almost every person seeks contact with the four-legged friends, either to photograph or film them, but then turns to their cell phones as soon as the cats move on.

Even from outside the small café, the furry noses attract the attention of passers-by. An older couple stops behind us at the glazing and points delightedly at the cats while we are served a coffee.

The family with a child seems to be particularly fond of the cats, as all three smile delightedly from time to time and the child gets up every now and then in the hope of stroking one of the cats.

Otherwise, however, it is quite quiet in the café. Each person seems to be enchanted by the four-legged friends in their own way and turns back to their breakfast or cell phone in silence as soon as the cats wander to another person.

### **Observed behavior of individuals:**

I particularly notice one person at the adjacent table who seems to be the only one alone in the café. Now and then she looks up from her table in the direction of the door, otherwise she is absorbed in the book lying on the table in front of her. After a while, she starts to get restless and looks more and more at her cell phone, probably expecting another guest.

Another couple of apparently friendly people sitting across from us is very engrossed in conversation, taking turns petting a black cat on the chair between them. Every now and then they both reach for their cell phones lying on the table and either film or photograph themselves with or without the cats. Since the people are particularly styled and in high-priced looking clothes almost professionally looking into the also expensive cameras of their iPhones, it seems to me as if their visit to this café was planned and they are recording memory for social media.

A young couple (I assume) enters the café a short time later and sighs in delight almost in sync as a white cat struts towards them. Before the two are assigned a seat, however, the female-read of the couple pulls out her cell phone and seemingly begins filming the ambience and the cats around her.

### Head notes:

In general, while the café seems comfortable to me and the idea unique, it's still striking how fixated the people present are on recording the cats, or their moments with them, in some way to (presumably) share their presence with the world via social media.

In general, the visitors seem almost more fixated on their cell phones than on the cats, which should be the actual stars of the café.

Our seat neighbors as well as the described friends stop petting the cats or trying to get in contact with them a few times to turn to their cell phones and interrupt their conversations as soon as a notification seems to appear on their home screen.

Only the family with a child seems to pay less attention to their cell phones, at least I notice only once how a parent pulls out her cell phone, presumably to take a picture of her child, while he continues to walk blithely through the café and tries to pet the one or other cat.