

Visual Challenges in an Unequal World

Visual Sociology Working Group, International Sociological Association

13-19 July 2014, Yokohama, Japan

CALL FOR PAPERS

Abstract submission

3 June - 30 September 2013

Working under the International Sociological Association (ISA), the Visual Sociology Working Group (WG03) will hold its biennial conference in ISA's XVIII World Congress of Sociology, **13-19 July 2014, in Yokohama, Japan** and will focus its sessions on **Visual Challenges in an Unequal World**, with a subset of sessions focusing on **Environmental Visibilities**.

General instructions for participation in WG03 Sessions

- Anyone interested in presenting a paper should submit an abstract on-line to a centralized website which will be operational from 3 June through 30 September 2013 (24:00 GMT). To upload your abstract please visit <https://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/wc2014/cfp.cgi> (Only abstracts submitted on-line can be incorporated in the sessions).
- Abstracts should be of no more than **300 words** in English.
- Notification letters will be sent by **November 30th 2013**.
- Each session will last 110 minutes and will accommodate 4-5 papers of **15-20 minutes** each as well as comments by a discussant, and a collective discussion.
- Language(s) of WG03 presentation: papers may be presented in English, French or Spanish (the official languages of the ISA for academic matters). In addition, WG03 can accept a limited number of paper proposals in Japanese. **However, to be considered, the title and abstract of all papers must be submitted through on-line abstract submission platform in English.** Due to budget constraints we will unfortunately be unable to provide formal simultaneous or sequential translation.
- Presenters will be asked to send a draft of their full papers (of 6000 words, including references) to session organizers by 12 June 2014 (one month prior to the conference).
- All participants **MUST** register for the World Congress by the early registration deadline of **April 1, 2014** in order for their names to appear in the Program Book or in the Abstracts Book. Failure to do so will automatically result in being deleted from the program. For more information on Congress Registration, please visit: http://www.isa-sociology.org/congress2014/congress_registration.htm.
- In accordance with ISA World Congress regulations, a person may not present in a session of which s/he is chair, and no one may be in the World Congress program more than twice – as author, co-author, discussant, plenary speaker, session (co-)chair, critic, roundtable presenter, and/or poster presenter.
- One cannot present a paper in the same session that one is chairing.

Visual Challenges in an Unequal World

Globalization; Mediatization and Urban Development: Visually Exploring the Geographic, Social and Democratic Divide

Today's world is characterized by an unprecedented urbanization as well as an ever increasing development and use of digital information and communication technologies. However, the exact ways in which the increasing digitization and mediatization of human activities takes form in the contemporary urban environment are still under-researched, while they are in fact central to our understanding of contemporary processes of social, cultural, political, economic and technological change. Modernist celebrations of the city (lauding its social tolerance, mobility, pace and quality of life, architectural bliss, technological wonders) and subsequently of Information and Communication Technologies gradually have been complemented by more critical accounts and observations of the city and of technology as agents of globalization and sites of competing social, cultural, economic and political forces. Direct urban experiences and 'mediated' ones have become intricately connected and together 'produce' the city and life within the city in radical but as yet hardly documented new ways.

Contributions addressing one or more of the following interconnecting strands of research would be welcomed:

1. The study of directly observable mediated and non-mediated enactments of urban culture in public space (behavior and material culture). This includes visually recording of visual behavior and material culture in urban public and semi-public spaces (streets, squares, buildings, parks, parking lots, shopping malls, train stations...)
2. The study of the complex intersections of digital media technologies and urban life (both in private and public urban environments). This includes the study of social media and on-line worlds in private and public space (tourism websites, institutional web sites, activist websites, personal websites, Web 2.0 websites, geomedia, smartphones).

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The Visual Culture of Migration: Private and Public Negotiations

Migration is triggered by social inequality and at the same time migration produces new inequalities. Visual figurations of migration or of migrants are used – in official and public or individual perspectives – to challenge inequality or to make it a topic of discussion, to constitute communality anew and to position the individual in an everyday life shaped by migration. In doing so, migration is usually staged either as a problem or as a spectacle. In both cases the figure of the migrant, however, acts as a projection figure, in order to explain processes of change (for example as scapegoats), to advertise and guide “integration” and to position one’s own self and replenish it with qualities of the other.

Nevertheless, migration is not only a central figuration in the framework of a discourse about the societal, cultural other. It is also subject in discourses by the other, which take account of the perspective of this other. To this effect immigrants use visual culture in order to achieve socialisation and in order to claim public presence – for example in the form of “ethnic” festivals, public parades and manifestations or in the form of more enduring urban inscriptions such as cultural centres. And in the private realm, too, visual culture (Skype, cell-phone videos, Internet blogs) is used in order to cope with a family and communal life that is marked by transformation. In this way new communities are constituted and family is practised over wide spatial and temporal distances in transformed ways.

The panel discusses such relations between representations of migration in visual culture and a tactical use of visual media in order to master change in connection with migration. Representation from outside and self-representation are confronted with one another and become perceptible in their differences as well as in their mutual borrowings.

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The Use of Visual Methods in Ageing Research

(joint session with Sociology of Aging, RC11)

In recent years there have been significant developments in our understandings and explorations about age and ageing, with new theorising, new methodologies and new topics evident. One of these developments has been the use of visual methodologies to elicit insights into age and ageing. Exploring the visual is seen as a means to uncover significant insights into how micro processes of daily life are linked to wider socio-cultural discourses; performative aspects of culture often hidden within the everyday; to make visible the mundane and taken-for-granted; to stimulate debate; and to reveal meanings and understandings in context. Whilst the use of visual methods can be experienced as empowering and participatory by older people, the development of visual research has also presented researchers with new complexities and challenges in relation to ethical, theoretical, analytical and methodological issues. The aim of this panel is to bring together researchers who are using a wide variety of different visual methods to study social aspects of age and ageing. We welcome abstracts that explore and debate different theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches and empirical findings when using visual methods in ageing research. In particular we plan to explore and debate the possibilities and difficulties when developing visual methodologies.

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Too Much and Too Little: Urban Landscapes of Homelessness and

Gentrification (joint session with Sociology of Urban and Regional Development, RC21)

This session visually focuses on the intersections of inequalities in urban worlds where the competition for living space has had perverse visual effects. Sociologists have long described how as a consequence of different life chances, groups are distributed differently in space such as in segregation and gentrification. Inequality and social justice are made visible by spatial processes of change. Whether luxurious or humble, dwellings serve important symbolic and practical functions for residents of all social classes and cultural backgrounds. In this regard Ernest Burgess's classical urban ecological paradigm of neighborhood invasion and succession has served almost a century (1925). Contemporarily, for Sassen and many others it is contradictions of the globalization of capital that concentrate both the more and less disadvantaged in cities where even the marginalized make claims on "contested terrain" (2001). It is also ironic that the concentrations of mobile capital in global cities have simultaneously enhanced "the potential mobility of some, while detracting from the mobility potential of others" (Sheller 2011). In a way we can say the rich get not only richer but also more mobile as the poor get poorer and relatively less so. This session seeks submissions that critically examine, through the use of innovative visual approaches, urban vernacular panoramas that range from homelessness to gentrification. Immediate contrasts, such as the displaced or the homeless in gentrified or upscale areas, the "slumming" or "poverty tourism" phenomena, and comparative analyses are especially welcome to critically dramatize issues of Social Justice and the City (Harvey 2010).

Names of session organizers	Lidia Manzo	Jerome Krase
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Post-Conflict Visual Imaginations

Visuals of conflicts and social conditions of inequalities became part of gender, class, ethnic, racial and national relations around the globe. Researchers have widely analyzed how such visuals can intervene in the social relations of conflict as their representations, their reproductions, their reinforcements, or as contributing to their problematization or to their mollifying mechanisms.

The emerging focus on social conditions of Post-Conflict now requires our attention to what could be regarded as visuals of post-conflict, and to the conditions, challenges, and opportunities of their appearance and intervention.

To critically engage in these questions, we invite presentations of original researches focusing on sociological analysis of empirical data on post-conflict visual imaginations. These could draw on visuals of already existing situations of post-conflict, or of yet to be established post-conflict situations.

Papers could focus on production, circulation and/or reception of the visuals, on the relations between visual imaginations and other art forms (or other sensual dimensions), on memory and forgetting, on legal systems and other formal/informal organizations, on policymaking, etc.

Papers focusing on an analysis of film productions may be able to show footage of maximum 45 minutes (pending on availability of extra time slots).

Names of session organizers	Regev Nathansohn	Ruthie Ginsburg
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Institutional affiliations	University of Michigan, Ann-Arbor, USA	Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem, Israel

Visualizing Social Disparities

The session seeks to address the challenges and advantages of using visual approach to studying socially constructed disparities or differences, which can be associated with 1. Different levels of underlying social advantage or position in a social hierarchy. 2. Social advantage or position reflected by economic resources, occupation, education, racial/ethnic group, gender, sexual orientation, and other characteristics associated with greater access to resources, influence, prestige, and social inclusion.

We are interested in studies that attempt to visually interrogate the matters of enhancement and reduction of social disparities in various fields of human interaction and in various geographic locations. We invite submissions that can be either methodology-focused, or theoretically informed empirical papers.

How can we study social disparities visually and in different sociopolitical contexts? What can visual methods help to reveal about the nature of inequalities and social hierarchies?

Name of session organizer	Dennis Zuev
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Environmental Visibilities

Perceiving, Understanding and Envisioning the Environment

(joint session with Environment and Society, RC24)

More than twenty years ago, Ulrich Beck wrote:

“the latency phase of risk threats is coming to an end. The invisible hazards are becoming visible. Damage to and destruction of nature no longer occur outside our personal experience in the sphere of chemical, physical or biological chains of effects; instead they strike more and more clearly our eyes, ears and noses (...). The end of latency has two sides, the risk itself and public perception of it. It is not clear whether it is the risks that have intensified, or our view of them. Both sides converge (...) and because risks are risks in knowledge, perceptions of risks and risks are not different things, but one and the same” (*Risk Society*, 1986).

This session intend to reflect on the augmented and diffused visibility of the environment and more specifically on how visual information contributes to the social construction of environment and environmental issues (not necessarily just those related to risks), to their perception and understanding and then to their representation and envisioning.

We welcome interdisciplinary contributions spreading from the analysis of contemporary global issues and dynamics, such as social and collective action (i.e. from policy making to active citizenship, including that of artists and intellectuals) confronting with the emergence of environmental risks and conflicts or the management of resources, as well as the attitudes towards the environment in different cultural and geographical contexts, or the challenges opened by the introduction of new categories of interpretations and paradigm (such as that of sustainability).

Therefore, we encourage submissions that: 1. address the specific function visual methods, techniques and tools can play, at almost any stage of the research process, to tackle, theoretically and methodologically the above issues, and 2. reflect on the kind of audiovisual data and sources (from photography to maps, videos, movies, ICT tools and online applications) which may, on the one hand, foster environmental awareness, knowledge and literacy and, on the other, support policy making as well as citizen engagement and participation.

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The Shapes of Society; Material, Environmental and Situational Constraints of Interpersonal Space (The Cross-cultural Perspective)

Most of our everyday life is spent among and *vis-a-vis* other people, within interpersonal space. Apart from all our "higher" human features we are also material, bodily creatures, and therefore the types and qualities of relations we enter with others depend to some extent on the character of material, environmental and situational "containers" within which we act. They provide constraints, limitations as well as opportunities, facilitations for specific actions. The examples would include: landscape, urban or rural design, networks of roads, architecture of houses and apartments, setup of offices and factories, design of malls, restaurants and cafes, lecture halls and auditoriums, stadiums and arenas, parks and gardens, cars and train carriages, shape of furniture, but also the presence of other bodies - density of actors within the limited space, character of collective event taking place, closeness or openness of the situation allowing or preventing exit etc.. These material, environmental, and situational "containers" differ across cultures and civilizations. Perhaps they also differ across occupational communities, age groups, gender etc.

We expect photographic projects which will grasp this cross-cultural variety, accompanied by interpretation of the underlying, culturally specific axio-normative rules which underlie the nature of "containers" and through that medium regulate and coordinate human action in interpersonal space.

The intention is to follow the inspirations of two classical authors: Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective (e.g. *Relations in Public* 1971) and Edward Hall's proxemics (e.g. *The Hidden Dimension*, 1966), and by linking them *via* visual method provide new theoretical insights.

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General Visual Sociology Topics

(In)Visible Design, the Surface and Everything Beneath: Researching Design as a Challenge for Visual Sociology

“When you see an object, you make so many assumptions on it” – says the narrator of ‘Objectified’ (the documentary film about industrial design). Indeed there is a story embedded in every object. It is true that the first contact is usually the visual one. As sociologists we see and read from object: how was it made, what was it made from, who would buy it, for how much and why?

But, what’s more important is that the object speaks to us using other, than visual, language. It’s not only about its color or shape. There are other senses involved but often omitted in our research, like taste, smell or temperature. We not only see an object, we feel it and interact with it.

Design has long ceased to be a realm of still objects. Nowadays design is interactive, multisensory and based on process. Therefore we call it invisible design highlighting other than just visual aspects.

The invisibility of design has also deeper meaning. It aims to grasp everything beneath the visual surface: technology, process of thinking, prototyping and interaction with users and to expand the meaning of design so it includes also services and models of thinking, not only material products.

These are important issues that must be considered if researching design. And as such it is the huge challenge for visual sociology and a good starting point for the discussion about its limitations or possible ways of expanding its field.

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Film Making, Photography, and Performative Understandings of Method

This session reflects on the intra-twinning of method, theory, ontology and epistemology in filmmaking and photography within scholarly research projects and/or projects that blend scholarly and activist research. The session is informed by our positioning within 'new materialism', and 'feminist materialism' and entanglements with several on-going philosophical and practice 'turns' that are: material, post-constructionist, post humanist, affective, ontological, and performative. We invite papers that are located in one or more of these 'turns' and which reflect on performative understandings of visual methods. We are interested in generating conversation about what it might mean to produce visual sociologies that "generate not only representations of reality, but also the realities those representations depict" (Law, 2009). We are also keen to engage with what it means to move from representationalist to performative approaches to method while reflecting on the ethical and political dimensions of visual research aimed at "making a difference" (Bhavnani, 2008), "becom(ing) answerable for what we learn how to see" (Haraway, 1991), and holding "responsibility for the reconfigurings of which we are part" (Barad, 2007).

Papers submitted to this session can include these and other themes:

- Filmmaking and photography as ethnographic encounters that entangle, for example: subject-object, visual objects and 'agencies of observation', material-discursive processes, 'naturecultures';
- The role of 'affect' in film-making and film-reception;
- The overlaps and resonances between film editing/producing and qualitative data analysis (Bhavnani, 2008);
- Onto-epistemological, ethical and political dimensions of filmmaking and photography.

Names of session organizers	Andrea Doucet	Natasha Mauthner
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Institutional affiliations	Canada Research Chair in Gender, Work, & Care; Professor of Sociology/Women's and Gender Studies, Brock University, Canada	Reader, University of Aberdeen, Business School Scotland

Exploring Visual Sphere of Youth

The panel seeks papers dedicated to the application of visual sociological methods in youth studies. We are inviting papers in two broad lines: the use of visual by youth and the use of visual methodologies for studying youth.

We address the following questions related to the use of images by young people: How young people produce and circulate images? How do young people use images online and offline, what are the practices of visual production in the Social Networking Sites? How do they navigate in the visual sphere in different cultural and political contexts. How do images help in the self-transformation and transition to adulthood stages? How do emerging visual worlds radicalize and politicize youth? What is the meaning of visual activism and political performance for youth? What are the iconic images of modern youth?

The second line of exploration is the challenges and hidden nuances of visual methods in youth studies. Here we invite papers reflecting on techniques of collecting, producing and analyzing visual data relevant for youth studies. What issues can be best addressed by using the visual methods? What challenges are in using visual methods when researching youth? What added value can visual data give for youth sociologists? What techniques of visual sociology help to capture and elucidate acute youth problems? Do participatory video and photo-documentation techniques help to delve deeper in understanding youth?

We especially welcome theoretically rich and empirically-based papers.

Name of session organizer	Dennis Zuev
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Using Visual Material for Knowledge Creation: The Process of Analysis and Interpretation.

(joint session with Sociology of Art, RC37)

Visual methods are becoming more common within scholarly research and provide a wide range of creative and innovative forms of data collection. But what happens after the visual material has been collected? This session seeks papers that outline the epistemological and analytical frameworks used to interpret visual material in the process of producing scholarship.

Particularly, this session looks for papers that detail the analytical process used to draw knowledge from visual material. This includes consideration of the theories that inform the analytical process, and the actual tools and techniques used to treat visual materials. Papers could address, but need not be limited to, the following questions: Do researchers use coding software, video editing techniques, or interpretive strategies? Are visual materials used to identify discrete behaviors by informants, to record sensory material, or are they considered cultural artifacts? Once researchers have analyzed the material, how do they present their findings? Are visual and textual materials integrated or are they presented separately and independently? This could also include considerations of addressing both academic and non-academic audiences.

Ultimately, this session seeks to consider the consequences of using different frameworks for analyzing visual material and how these produce different forms of knowledge. Therefore, this session invites papers from a broad range of approaches towards the analysis and presentation of visual materials in order to encourage discussion among presenters and audiences, and also to deeply explore our understanding of the role of visual material in scholarship.

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Program coordinator for WG03

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