

CFP for a special issue of Forum Qualitative Research/Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung (FQS):
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Visibilities. Multiple Orders and Practices through Visual Discourse Analysis and Beyond

In contemporary societies, visual media and related visual practices are ubiquitous. Digitalisation has enabled new communicative and aesthetic practices of 'vernacular image' production. Knowledge about symbolic and iconic techniques is refined in professional as well as amateur contexts. Technologies of storage, computation and distribution have rendered image, sound and text mobile and drawing them into what has become known as 'big data'. This ubiquity, accessibility and speed of information creation and sharing via polymedia channels means, the visible, along with the audible and the touchable, becomes an increasingly important interface between meanings, milieus, organisations and technologies. At this stage fields such as visual studies and visual sociology have seen that hermeneutic and ethnographic approaches have been of somewhat limited value in understanding these new mediations, institutions and economic formations. Many scholars have noted that the situation has challenged the analytical and methodological frames they have used in the past.

In the special issue, we welcome papers that address visibilities in relation to social, cultural and material orderings and their principles. Methodological approaches might reflexively provide keys to understanding the social, technological and economic flows of our time. Contemporary visibilities draw together, space, time, things, and the social. They produce and make intelligible differences and similarities. They sensitize and desensitize people to other people, animals and things. The binary opposition between the discursive and non-discursive has thus not become obsolete, but lost much of its explanatory force. Just as cultural text in a broader sense is not only produced by language, visibility can be produced through, images, texts, sounds, or other materialities and non-materialities.

The texts in this volume will be dedicated to understanding the practices, the types of power relations and the technological infrastructures in which practices of visualising and orders of visibilities unfold. While most discourse analyses rely on the notion that everything which is *said* is dependent on what is sayable, we invite contributors to imagine how we might analyze visual practices in relation to the visible.

In visual research, the relation between the social and the visual has been generally studied from two perspectives: either the image merely indicates a state of the social and becomes reduced to it, or it uses optical instruments as tools for registering the social and thus confounds the visual with the social itself, granting direct access to its reality. We believe it is might be more appropriate to speak of studying social and cultural realities *with* the image. *With* in the sense of entering into dialogue and argument with the image, all the while not attempting to understand the image on its own, but how image, sound and materiality are deployed reflexively in social arenas – with their own specific power or potential to render visible or invisible.

Doing research *with* the image as we propose for this special issue supposes that social reality thickens through the emergence of visibilities, which manifest in images, texts, infrastructures etc. We would like to invite contributions that acknowledge representation is increasingly replaced by recursivity. Papers are also welcome that take the position that neither language nor the visual nor the spatial nor the temporal registers are any longer privileged modes of world-making, but that visibilities, or even sensualities (as sensibilities of bodies to others bodies) can materialize in all of these domains.

Thinking *with* the image (and the sensible) and the study of visibilities in these ways will allow researchers to address a number of important issues of contemporary social, political and economic life. Following this critical perspective, we invite contributions that consider but are not limited to the following related themes:

1. How are boundaries drawn (or erased) visually between nature and culture, between the social and the non-social, the human and non-human and between different categories of people: Which individuals and associations become included as subjects worth interpreting and understanding?
2. What is the nature of the relationship between the development of visual practices, cultures, and technologies and certain knowledge regimes or economic regimes? Which forms of subjectivation are advanced in regimes of the visible and sayable, do they inform individualisation or dividualisation or other?
3. In which ways might the distribution of knowledge be formed or informed differently within the context of a general aesthetization and informatization of 'networked' societies? What might the roles of experts and amateurs and their relationships be in the development of cultural skills such as visualization and illustration?
4. How far do visibilities and legibilities have the capacity to influence social and cultural orders through technologies, practices, and activism. Which kinds of competences and agencies are afforded by visual practices and visual discourse and what kind of limitations might be found?
5. How can methodological considerations also evolve to reflect our reflexive positions in a visually saturated world? What part can images be said to play in research phases such as data collection, analysis and rendering of results? Are these still appropriate or do we need new ways of thinking with visualities?

The collection of papers in this special issue will bring together and into dialogue authors from German, French and English speaking academia. For the sake of accessibility, we kindly ask for contributions to be submitted in English.

Please submit abstracts of not more than 800 words by January 30th 2015 to:

Mathias Blanc: mathias.blanc@univ-lille3.fr

Maria-Carolina Cambre: mcambre@ualberta.ca

Boris Traue: boris.traue@posteo.de