

## Call for Papers

### **Crossing Boundaries in Visual Communication Research**

#### **ICA Young Scholars Preconference**

24 May 2019

Visuals are an integral part of everyday interactions, political communication and news coverage. They can evoke strong emotions, frame information or even become powerful icons. Visual communication practices, visual representations and visual rhetorics are thus central components for understanding how boundaries in politics, culture and society are defined, transgressed or shifted.

In recent years, for example the role of visuals for (re)defining boundaries of solidarity (Mortensen & Trezn, 2016) or of in- and outgroups in political protests or far-right transnational publics has been explored (Doerr, Mattoni, & Teune, 2013; Doerr, 2017). Visuals also create new challenges and opportunities to transgress boundaries of what can and what should be expressed. They can be used to articulate critique and to fool and bypass censorship (Mina, 2014). But the vagueness and polysemy of visuals can also be used as a defense strategy political actors employ against reproaches of having transgressed boundaries of acceptable political campaign communication (Brantner & Lobinger, 2014). Allan and Peters (2015) addressed boundaries from a different point of view; they discussed questions of visual truth in citizen reportage and interstices of professional-amateur boundaries.

Given the ubiquity of visuals and visual practices in contemporary societies it is timely to bring together these approaches and to further discuss how interpersonal and social, cultural, national, linguistic, or moral boundaries are established, eliminated, crossed or transgressed with visual communication. This involves various questions such as:

- *boundary crossings with/through visual practices*: What do different actors do with visuals (be it photographs, GIFs, memes or video)? What kind of symbolical and material uses of visual media are employed for/in boundary crossings?
- *visual representations*: Which visual representations of social, cultural, political boundary crossings do we encounter in different media environments? How can we characterize these visuals? How are they *produced* and how are they *perceived by which audiences*?
- *historical perspectives*: What can we learn from historical perspectives and the role of visual communication in boundary crossings in the past?
- *the role of visuals in re-defining the boundaries between fact and misinformation, in politics of knowledge*: What can visual communication research contribute to the current debates about “alternative facts”, misinformation and disinformation?

Visual communication studies is a field of research interest that by tradition has always crossed the boundaries of research fields and disciplines. Hence, thinking about aspects of boundaries and boundary crossings in the field also relates to questions of

- *crossing methodological, theoretical and conceptual boundaries*: How can visual communication research inform, provide specific expertise and be informed, both theoretically and methodologically, by other disciplines and fields? Where are potentials, where are possible pitfalls for visual communication research?
- *ethical boundaries*: Which ethical challenges do occur with new techniques of data collection, analysis, storage and publication? How do we have to (re)define boundaries of good ethical research practice?

Possible topics of submissions can include but are of course not limited to the listed research topics and desiderata.

The preconference brings together young researchers (current Ph.D. students and early career postdoctoral researchers) and senior scholars. It is open to participants from all different sub-fields in media and communication studies, ICA divisions and interest groups who focus on mediated images and visual practices in their completed or ongoing research projects. It aims to be an opportunity especially for young scholars to discuss their work and the role of visuals for defining/crossing boundaries in society and to receive substantial feedback by peers and senior experts. Moreover, it is meant to be a forum to jointly discuss current challenges and future directions regarding methodological, theoretical, and ethical boundary crossings in the interdisciplinary field of visual communication research. In this regard, the preconference also seeks to stimulate exchange on ways of overcoming divisional and disciplinary boundaries and to further provide “visual expertise” to other disciplines, fields and also actors beyond academia.

### **Formats**

The preconference will consist of several formats: an opening keynote, a presentation session, workshop groups and a closing plenary.

First, in the *opening keynote*, Luc Pauwels will address aspects and challenges of crossing boundaries in visual communication research. Second, in a *presentation session that combines brief oral and poster presentations*, young scholars will present their research projects. Individually assigned senior experts and peer respondents will then give in-depth feedback on the presentations and projects. Moreover, participants will have the possibility to network and to discuss challenges and best-practice options. Third, young scholars and senior experts split into smaller *workshop groups*. In these parallel sessions, young scholars and senior scholars with thematically and/or methodologically related research projects will be grouped together. The small groups will then further discuss research projects as well as current

challenges and future directions for visual communication research. Finally, in a *closing plenary* with all participants, key insights and findings of the workshops will be summarized. Moreover, we will discuss ideas and plans for future networking, collaboration and research events.

### **Submissions**

We invite young scholars (current Ph.D. students and early career postdoctoral researchers) from all ICA divisions and interest groups to submit extended abstracts on both completed or ongoing projects which focus on mediated images and visual practices. We welcome submissions on all aspects of the visual communication process and research methods.

Extended abstracts should be limited to a maximum of **1,000 words** (double-spaced; illustrations, tables and references excluded). Please submit your abstract as pdf-file and remove all identifying information from the document. A separate title page indicating the name(s) of the author(s), the affiliation(s) of the author(s), the title of the project, and the status of the project (e.g. completed project, work in progress) must be included.

Send your submissions no later than **1 February 2019 via e-mail to [rebecca.venema@usi.ch](mailto:rebecca.venema@usi.ch)**. Notifications of acceptance will be sent out in the 3rd week of February 2019.

Participants will be selected based on the quality of their extended abstracts. In the review process, we will also ensure that a manageable range of topics is included, in order to enable the creation of working groups of participants with thematically and/or methodologically related research projects. In the run-up of the conference participants will be matched as peer respondents; participants will thus be asked to read a colleague's extended abstract and prepare feedback.

We are looking forward to your submission!

### **Organizers & Contact**

Please do not hesitate to contact us in case you have any questions regarding the preconference.

primary contact:

*Rebecca Venema*, Università della Svizzera italiana, Lugano, Switzerland, [rebecca.venema@usi.ch](mailto:rebecca.venema@usi.ch)

Contact for the division:

*Catherine Preston*, U of Kansas, [cpreston@ku.edu](mailto:cpreston@ku.edu)

*Jelle Mast*, Free University of Brussels, [jelle.mast@vub.be](mailto:jelle.mast@vub.be)

## **Organization & Fee**

The preconference will be held on 24 May 2019 from 9 am to 5 pm, with a coffee break and a lunch snack.

There will be a fee for preconference participants to cover room and equipment rental, and catering costs.

Please visit the accompanying website <https://www.visualcommunicationstudies.net> for any updates and further information on the preconference. Information regarding the conference venue will be published on the website and send out via e-mail.