

Call for Papers for a special issue of tripleC (<http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/index>) on the general topic of

Critical Visual Theory

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The overall task of this special issue is to combine critical insights into current economic, technical, political, cultural, and ecological dimensions of transnational and global visual communication. The papers to be included in this issue should make use of critical theories to advance a better understanding of visual information technologies in general and of strategies of veiling financial, military, economic, religious interests in particular. A special focus will be on current forms of surveillance of public and private life (cp., e.g., Fuchs et al. 2012 and Santaella 2011).

For half a millennium, the print media have been predominant social vehicles in the circulation of ideas. Verbal and written modes of argumentation have predominated. As Castells has shown (*The Information Age*, vol. 1, 1996/2000), image making has become power making during the past decades and images constitute the basic thread of contemporary network societies. Nye (*The Future of Power*) has more recently specified that visual narratives contribute to “the public determination of legitimacy, good and evil – and the shaping of the preferences of one’s opponents” (2011: Xiii). Critical visual theory should offer insights into culture specific and trans-cultural strategies of concealing or even strategically veiling ideas in media narratives and reveal the major determinants and universal types of media discourse, such as superiority and inferiority. Can critical visual theory render complex social relations “observable” and “transparent”? In contrast to earlier iconic or pictorial turns in the arts and media studies, our special issue will focus on visualizing public, private, and intermediate spheres, i.e., the increasing mass and network mediated coverage of ever more activities as well as the passive interdependencies from more and more zoomed in perspectives.

As Nicholas Mirzoeff argued in his “Introduction: For Critical Visuality Studies” (2013: XXXV) to the third edition of “The Visual Culture Reader”: “critical visibility studies needs to be the place of intersection for the analysis of techniques of visibility, media studies new and old, postcolonial studies, gender studies and queer theory ... it needs to explore affinities with critical ethnic studies, critical legal studies, and other such iterations of the paradigm.” Recent information and communication technologies even broke up established strategies and conventions concerning time and space. Since the last decade, e.g., the US military “allows Google, Digital Globe and Space Imagining to conduct an international business that turns Afghani and Iraqi territories (as well as those of other countries) into intellectual property produced, owned and distributed by US corporations.” (Parks 2013: 202)

Visual Hegemonies (Ludes 2005), e.g., tries to offer an approach to transcending the long-term preponderance of oral and textual discourse in political spheres of interest, economies, cultures, and the sciences. Globally, the influence of US-American, European, and Japanese media has prevailed. It has determined the ways of

representing the world according to their particular perspectives and interests in their exercise and accumulation of power as well as in the defense of their own privileges.

Transgressing the traditional limitations of foci on still and moving images of a few national visual cultures will require new multimedia content management and coding systems and publication sites. These visual information and communication technologies and forums will enhance the development of new types of visual analyses (cp., e.g., Ludes 2011, Manovich 2012, Rose 2012). This challenge of creating and presenting visual theories shows beyond a "re-turn" to or of the "Iconic Turn" (Boehm 1994 and 2007) or "Pictorial Turn" (W.J.T. Mitchell 1994 and 2007). We do not re-consider traditions of the fine arts or media studies, but learn more from the sociological traditions of, e.g., Norbert Elias (1939/2012), Leonard Henny (1986), or John Grady (2008) and from recent turns to visual semiotics and audio-visual metaphors.

Critical visual theory can reveal hidden dimensions of hegemonies, power constellations, or exploitations, veiled social conditions – and emancipative potentials (cp., e.g., Stumberger 2007 and 2010 or Dogra 2012). New visual information and communication technologies, forums, and formats are put to use in order to cover up social facts and realities, which they pretend to unveil. Increasingly intelligent devices exceed by far the media of traditional webcams and video surveillance.

Media studies and discourse analysis as well as sociological imagination (Mills 1959) can profit from the current trends in and methods of visual analysis to be presented in this special issue. The online format of the journal allows the integration of links to textual and audio-visual data (bases) to present more convincing evidence of the topics to be investigated. "Critical" theory implies a continuous critique of power, exploitation, and manipulation. Fundamental criticism uncovering hidden patterns of developments can offer alternatives to traditional approaches to the study of social actions, processes, or structures. In particular, it is necessary to break out of partisan national or class views into a multicultural and multi-perspective mode of seeing, interpreting, and explaining global transformations.

The editors invite contributions to topics such as:

- Visual humanities and social sciences: concepts, methods, and theories
- Visual data and semiotics: networks and analyses
- Visual hegemonies: image- and profit-making
- Veiling: Key Invisibles
- Visual culture zones: Africa, Arabic countries, China, Europe, India, Japan, Latin and North America

Preliminary time schedule

- **June 15, 2013:** Abstract submission, via email to p.ludes@jacobs-university.de, kathrin.fahlenbrach@uni-hamburg.de, and noeth@uni-kassel.de .
- **July 15, 2013:** Feedback to authors about acceptance or rejection of abstract
- **September 15, 2013:** Submission of full papers to the editors via <http://www.triple-c.at> via the electronic submission system: <http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/about/submissions#onlineSubmissions> .

- **Guidelines for formatting and style:** <http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/about/submissions#authorGuidelines>
http://fuchs.uti.at/wp-content/tripleC_2013.dot

tripleC – Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society is a journal that is specialising in publishing articles that focus on critical studies of media, communication and digital media in the context of the information society. It is indexed in Scopus and Communication & Mass Media Complete.

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