



SWEDISH
COLLEGIUM
for ADVANCED STUDY

REGULAR SESSION INFORMATION

Session: Connecting Visual Sociology and Visual Geography II: Spectacles and Spectacular in Modern Asian Societies

Session Convener(s): Dennis Zuev, CIES-ISCTE, Lisbon

Chair: TBA

Comments: This session is organized by ISA TG 05

I) *Culture, Perceptual Processing, and Artistic Visualisation: A Comparative Study of Children Drawing in Three Siberian Ecocultural Groups*

Jaroslava Bagdasarova, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

II) *The Afghan Ways of Seeing: A Focus on Herat City. The Case Study of the March of Simeen Barakzai's Supporters*

Matteo Vergani, Catholic University of Milan

III) *Self-immolation and the Use of Fire in Protest Action: Examining the Spectacle of the Flaming Objects*

Dennis Zuev, CIES-ISCTE, Lisbon

ABSTRACTS

Session description

This section is devoted to the analysis of particular cases of public events as spectacles representing Asian societies – festivals, nationalist rallies, protest marches, holiday celebrations. The focus is on the spectacles as acts of self-presentations in different cultures and acts of constituting collectivity. What constitutes a “visual event”? What are the oriental ways of seeing?

Papers

I) *Culture, Perceptual Processing, and Artistic Visualisation: A Comparative Study of Children Drawing in Three Siberian Ecocultural Groups*

Jaroslava Bagdasarova, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

In the study of three indigenous and non-indigenous ecocultural groups of Northwestern and Northeastern Siberia, framed-line test and a landscape drawing task were used to examine the hypothesis that holistic perceptual processing positively correlates with the amount of contextual information in the visual representations for instance drawings, as it is particularly reflected in such visual elements as the position of the horizon line and the size of objects. The results supported this hypothesis. Moreover, the findings suggest that the variation of visualisation style across cultural groups is likely to be related to the uneven distribution of individuals with different levels of perceptual holism across these groups. The differences in the mean levels of perceptual holism/analytism between cultural groups may, therefore, play an important role in explaining the formation of culturally specific artistic traditions. In addition, the higher perceptual analytism (field independence) of more nomadic Nenets in comparison to more settled Chukchi/Yupik children suggests that although eco-cultural factors do indeed have an impact on the formation of perceptual holism vs. analytism and/or field dependence vs. independence, the differences in perceptual processing between the groups could not be explained by eco-cultural factors alone.

II) *The Afghan Ways of Seeing: A Focus on Herat City. The Case Study of the March of Simeen Barakzai's Supporters*

Matteo Vergani, Catholic University of Milan

Political marches are visualized in many different ways according to the cultural pattern of each society. While eastern and western European marches present the showing-off and the hyper-spectacularization of the body (e.g. the case of FEMEN, the female Ukrainian protest group organizing topless protests), Afghan protests present a visualization of the self that is strongly determined by the cultural and the traditional bonds. More specifically, the self-presentation of the women and the boundaries between men and women during the demonstrations clash with the images coming from western imagery. The case study presented in the article is the one of a march in Herat City of the supporters of the hunger strike of Simeen Barakzai: a female Afghan politician expelled from parliament for alleged voter fraud.

III) *Self-immolation and the Use of Fire in Protest Action: Examining the Spectacle of the Flaming Objects*

Dennis Zuev, CIES-ISCTE, Lisbon

In this work I wish to analyze self-immolation as a political tool and consider its rhetorical power in terms of spectularity and morality. I refer to the theory of spectacular and spectacle of Guy Debord. As empirical data I refer to the cases of burning body as a spectacular form of protest and consider the self-immolation as a form of individual's protest (singular form of protest), contrary to the collective forms of spectacular protest. Self-

immolation is becoming a transnational protest tool and has a communicative power of a concentrated spectacle. It is an interesting case that allows to examine complex relationship between the singularity of the body and its protest potential in the protest movement, the phenomenon of the modern day martyrdom can be seen through perspective of spectacular self-destruction.