

Panel 2

IVSA Conference 2009

Appreciating the views: How we're looking at the social and visual landscape

Panel Title	
Globalization and Localization: Visually Contested Terrains	
Description	
<p>As noted by Sassen, cities are sites for the contradictions of the globalization of capital. Both the powerful and the more and less disadvantaged are concentrated in them. In the city variously marginalized people however also find their voices and often make claims on the city as "contested terrain." In the global city diversity is heightened and concentrated by migration and immigration. Despite the fact that the dominant, corporate culture, "inscribes noncorporate cultures and identities with 'otherness', thereby devaluing them, they are present everywhere." Immigrant communities and their informal economies are common examples of this process and there are many ways by which one can study these phenomena. This panel will explore how the meanings of urban spaces are created and changed by their new and old inhabitants. Global cities are paradigmatic sites for visual and symbolic competition between once dominant groups and those which are challenging them for local hegemony. There are many ways to document and illustrate contrasting and changing demography such as attention to commercial vernacular landscapes, "ethnic" graffiti, or other visual expressions of culture.</p> <p>Visual Sociology of contested spaces is not a mere aesthetic exercise. Today's cities on every continent are deluged by people from cultures distinct from native-born residents. Much can be learned by looking closely at small places and using what might be called a visual "glocal" perspective. Although diverse people frequently live within the same large-scale political boundaries, the real test of community takes place during the course of everyday life on the streets, shops, and public spaces of neighborhoods. Because of modern technology and world systems, increasingly, "cultural strangers" share common environments. Therefore exploring the question of how visual interactions might influence the possible of community in diversity becomes even more important.</p>	
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Final Selected Papers

Name:	Alicia Blum-Ross
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Paper Title	Re-envisioning Space: Place-making within youth filmmaking projects in London
Description	<p>Drawn from two years of anthropological fieldwork with filmmaking projects for 'disadvantaged' young people in London, this paper explores the ways in which collaborative video allows for the re-imagination of space and place within the context of the city's 'super-diversity' (Vertovec 2006). Space (as indeterminate locatedness) and place (as a specific location) are seen as central elements in ordering social relations and in fostering a sense of identity. As Tilley (1994) comments, space is "contextually constituted, providing particular settings for involvement and the creation of meanings" (11).</p> <p>In this paper, I use ethnographic material to understand young people's relationship to their physical surroundings, and the ways in which filmmaking projects intercede in or reinforce a sense of belonging or engagement. These projects, funded by state sources, are often conceived in response to the positioning of young peoples' spatial relationships in terms of deviance. From reports on 'territoriality' to fear of 'post-code gangs,' young peoples' movements are prescribed by visible and invisible boundaries which are self-proclaimed, media-fostered and legally enforced, and have inherent consequences for perceptions of safety.</p> <p>To illustrate, I use the example of the 'Lea Valley' project, which was initiated by a filmmaker in 2007. The project took a group of 12-14 year olds into areas of East London where they had never been, though relatively short distances from their homes, teaching them camera and sound-recording skills to create two short films. Yet, while their experiences of place in London were relatively circumscribed, many of the young people retained connections to family overseas, and as such the 'village mentality' of London is contrasted with the international traveling of these young 'cosmopolitans'. In this sense, the process of creating a historically informed collaborative video imbued generalized space with a set of meanings and experiences that informed the young peoples' own senses of both place and self.</p>

Name:	Nicole Doerr
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Paper Title	Glocalised protest, contested discourses on labor, citizenship and migration: Visual culture in the EuroMayday Parade against precarity
Description	<p>This paper is interested in the visual culture of a trans-glocal activist movement network that brings together precarious workers, left activism and undocumented migrants in common protests against social precarity and racism in Europe's global cities. The paper studies the visual diffusion of protest ideas and practices across countries in the Euro Mayday Parades against precarity. Euro Mayday was first launched in Milan, Barcelona and Paris and spread to over 20 cities inside and outside the EU to mobilize left activists, marginalised "flexible" workers and migrants in joint struggles to make visible precarity.</p> <p>In an analysis of visual campaign strategies in online and offline spaces and ethnographic research, I explore the ongoing networking of activist groups in Milan, Madrid, Malaga, Maribor, Hamburg, Berlin and a dozen other cities who since 2004 try to construct a shared transglocalist visual culture to protest and build solidarity around precarious working and living conditions within neoliberal European integration. I will address the following questions: How do activists decode dominant images of EU citizens as flexible mobile market citizens, for example in creating their own alternative visual counter culture in public performances, sticker albums? Who do they use public pride parades on First of May in and of urban public places to shape and reshape the political discourse on labor flexibility, migration and citizenship in the "new Europe"? To what extent do interactions between the local in different global cities and struggles change activists' perceptions of their own precarious working position and create solidarity to effectively include groups who usually do not form parts of social movements? By which visual strategies and tactics do activists succeed in creating a shared transglocal language of protest at the macro-regional European level? How does visual analysis of migrant protests contribute to our understanding of social and cultural change? Taking a comparative perspective, the paper is based on solid ethnographic fieldwork, and visual analysis combined with qualitative approaches to decoding the social construction of discourse, and visual, mediated and performed representations of transnational identities in protest.</p>

Name:	Patrizia Faccioli, University of Bologna Giuseppe Losacco, University of Bologna
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Paper Title	Identities on movement
Description	<p>In this presentation we will expose the results of a research project focused on the processes and the paths of teenagers' individual and collective identity construction provided by the visual dimension of globalization, through mass communication as well as migrations and international flows of goods and fashions. We will start considering the globalization as a "seen" phenomenon. According to the statements of some leading scholars of globalization, the image in the post-modern urban context is the favoured channel to build and negotiate meanings, identities, and cultural belonging, so that it is now possible to foresee an "imagined community" whose technological medium is visual communication.</p> <p>Following the Grounded Theory approach the research group first started with a photographic observation of global, local and glocal visual signs in the urban context. We considered the visual dimensions of the social world as the visual indicators to use in around 100 photo-elicitation interviews with Italian and migrant teenagers, focused on different settings of identity construction: the body, the attitude toward migrations, the home, the work, the spaces of the city, as well as study, leisure and consumption and the virtual spaces offered by the new media.</p> <p>Main outcomes</p> <p>The territorial dimension transversely interacts with the other dimensions (belonging, consumption, migration). The perspective seems to be the multi-belonging, that means the possibility to have multiple references – even not hierarchic – to the places of the town, the nation, the Europe and the world. We may speak about complex, not always integrated, ambivalent, conflictual and never definitive multi-belongings.</p> <p>The new spaces and media (as internet or the cell phones) redefine new social territories. The communication space becomes the terrain in which sharing experiences and realities not directly lived. Such virtual territories create "real" relationships, contributing to the construction of the identity. The teenagers recognize more quickly an image placed out and far from the local space than, i.e., the main square of their own town. In so doing, they produce new imaginaries about the Other and the Elsewhere. The visual dimensions of the space and territory seem to surpass the Local, expressing and affirming Global, or plural, mixed and uncertain visions.</p> <p>In such a context where the (real, virtual and symbolic) territorial multi-belonging represents the crucial dimension in the identity construction process, it should be better to put beside the traditional question "who are you?" the less explored question "where are you?". In such a way, it is possible to understand the territorial multi-belonging as well as the ambivalence of many answers and the placing on the "borders" of the (real, virtual and symbolic) territories.</p> <p>Visual indicator: effectiveness and the efficiency</p> <p>Finally, we will show the results of the comparison between the pictures expected coding (the meaning attributed by the researchers to the images) and the actual coding made by the interviewed, considering the percentage of coding coverage (provided by Nvivo7 processing).</p>

Name:	Timothy Shortell
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Description	
Brooklyn and Belleville: a Case Study of the Visual Semiotics of Ethnic Identity in Two Diverse Urban Neighborhoods	
Description	
<p>Because of globalization, increasingly, "cultural strangers" share common environments. How different, and sometimes hostile, groups live together in urban neighborhood environments is key to understanding contemporary urban culture. The semiotics of Jakobson can help make sense of the ways in which people incorporate the multitude of meanings of social differences into their own identity as well as the ways in which these meanings are sometimes ascribed to particular social agents. The markers of ethnic identity are in a constant state of tension among alternative interpretations of self and other. Jakobson identified three functions of signs that can help disentangle the competing meanings applied to visual representations of identity in urban neighborhoods: the 'expressive,' the 'conative,' and the 'phatic.' Expressive signs give the subject a voice; they are an important component of social agency. In the context of urban neighborhoods, people create expressive signs in the course of their everyday practices when they enact rituals of identity. Conative signs attempt to influence others' behavior. One important type of these signs are markers of exclusion. In the end, signs that facilitate social relations, the phatic signs, might be the most common signifier of the ethnic and class vernaculars. These signs are artifacts of ordinary social interaction that become markers of settlement space. Using researcher instigated photographic data, I will present a spatial semiotic comparison of Coney Island Avenue and Rue du Faubourg du Temple in Belleville, Paris. Both are rapidly changing areas of multi-ethnic neighborhoods in global cities. The effects of the global circulation of people and their cultural practices are revealed in consistent ways in the spatial semiotics of these places.</p>	