

VISUAL METHODOLOGIES: BEYOND THE WRITTEN AND TOWARDS THE SENSORY

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT
APRIL 15-24, 2011

The last two decades have witnessed the proliferation of the rhetoric and deployment of a wide range of techniques and methods variously lumped under the rubric of the visual and/or the sensory. This acceleration has been reflected in social science research (e.g. MA and PhD dissertations) as well as in the fields of development-oriented engagements by NGOs, and in human rights/activists agenda. These techniques include, but are not limited to, recourse to documentary film, video recordings, photographic imaging, and voice recordings, among others. A host of assumptions ranging from “being alternative” or aiming to “capture authentic” voice and experience, to liberatory, democratizing, and radical, have underpinned this trend. Meanwhile, and despite such proliferation, there is an unequal geography of training, resources and capacity in the field of the visual, particularly in many contexts of the Global South where such tools have also witnessed expansion in use. Yet, what underlies this movement beyond the written and what relationships to the word are assumed in such processes of knowledge production and strategies for promoting social change?

This workshop hopes to address the following questions in the form of training and dialogue with young scholars in the Global South:

- ▶ What epistemological questions and assumptions are embedded in the move towards the visual and/or the sensory?
- ▶ What methodological concerns are at stake?
- ▶ What constitutes the visual and the sensory and what relationships prevail between them? What can visual knowledge tell us about particular facades of social realities?
- ▶ What is the historicity of visual knowledge and its deployment in social science and among members of civil society
- ▶ What are the social conditions of production that inform the recourse to the visual and what political economies shape its production?

This workshop aims to address these questions by offering a 10-day training and reflection workshop to a group of 12-15 young scholars and intellectuals of social movements (activists)

from different parts of the Global South. Three experts in the field of visual methodologies from the South will guide the workshop sessions and work with selected candidates in refining their projects.

Prior to the workshop, supporting material (a reading packet) will be distributed among selected candidates, who will be asked to engage the readings in relationship to their particular interests and proposed projects. This will take the form of a short essay to be emailed to the trainers and organizers prior to the workshop. During the workshop sessions, questions arising from the readings will be discussed in light of the projects, concerns, experiences and challenges participants bring to the debate. Hands-on experience and trials with technical aspects of using visual methods will constitute part of the training. The last two days will be devoted to refining the proposals based on the knowledge and experience gained from the workshop. The workshop and all reading material will be in English.

SEPHIS will cover travel and accommodation expenses of selected candidates and provide access to workshop supporting material. SEPHIS has been engaged in networking among researchers across the Global South since 1994. The fundamental goal of the programme is to encourage researchers located in the South to expand their scholarly horizons and to cultivate links with their colleagues in other parts of the South. The objective of the SEPHIS programme is to support dialogue and collaboration between researchers from the South with their respective visions of development and history, to encourage comparative research, and to strengthen research capacity in the South.

Participants will be drawn from 1) students enrolled in MA and/or PhD programs in the Global South; and 2) researchers engaged in local NGOs and social movements who aim to utilize visual methods in their program of research and action.

Those interested in participating are invited to submit their applications by email to the workshop organizers listed below no later than February 7, 2011. Notification of successful applications will be emailed to candidates by the first week of March 2011.

To apply please send the following material:

- 1) Updated CV
- 2) 2000 word description of project/proposal outlining:
 - the main questions of inquiry
 - how and why visual methods and techniques are pertinent to the project
 - which texts/interlocutors have been central in shaping the use of visual approaches in the project

Please email your application material no later than FEBRUARY 7, 2011 to:

Hanan Sabea, hsabea@aucegypt.edu

Mark Westmoreland, mrw@aucegypt.edu

