

Chapter 1

Introduction to Visual Politics in the Global South

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Politics is interminably interwoven with the visual, but with the diffusion of digital technologies and the ubiquity of social media the role of the visual has been augmented in all aspects of everyday life. As several studies have shown, this new communication ecosystem is replete with images of politicians and civic leaders that compete for the gaze of audiences (Lilleker, Veneti, Jackson, 2019; Cartwright & Mandiberg, 2009). While governments, politicians, and NGOs increasingly use visual forms of communication to promote themselves through traditional- and digital-media, the significance of the visual in political communication is also evidenced in citizens' sharing of images and memes to make political statements, and in activists' creative use of images and stylised artefacts to communicate and connect with wider audiences (Rovisco, 2017; Rovisco and Veneti, 2017). New media technologies have brought about additional means of interaction between politicians, activists, and citizens, as well as novel modes of content production, dissemination, and reception. To get a better understanding of the mechanisms underlying such processes, several scholars have argued that more attention needs to be paid to the societal specificity of different cultures (Pauwels, 2019; Barnhurst, Vari, and Rodríguez, 2004). However, while there is a growing body of scholarship in the field of visual politics, most of this research has a strong empirical focus on North America and Europe and neglects forms of visual politics that can be found in different sites across the Global South.

Some scholars have recently raised their voices to call for the de-Westernisation of critical media studies (Milan and Treré, 2019) and to raise the issues of #CommunicationSoWhite (Chakravarty, Kuo, Grubbs, and McIlwain, 2018) and the decolonization of media and communication studies (Moyo and Mutsvairo, 2018; Mohammed, 2021). Yet, efforts to de-westernise the study of communication can be found as early as 1988, in the experimental research programme that the renowned philosopher and semiotician Umberto Eco created at the University of Bologna, Italy, entitled *Anthropology of the West*. A collaboration between Eco, French anthropologist Alain le Pichon, and a group of African and Chinese researchers, was devised so as to discuss ‘the West’ from the perspectives and criteria of its *Other*. It remains indicative of the international collaboration developed through Eco and le Pichon’s founding of the *Institut International Transcultural*, whose principal objective has been “to promote reciprocal anthropology to renew the conceptual field of the human sciences, limited by the context of Western cultures where it has developed to this day. For this, the institute develops methodologies and methods of transcultural communication” (Transcultural, 2022). Calls to de-westernise critical media studies go in tandem with efforts to decolonize curricula, which involve amongst other things questioning dominant Western epistemologies and the harmful legacies of colonialism in some British Universities (Batty, 2020). Against this backdrop, it is important to ask whether and how scholarship studying the production, dissemination, and consumption of visual products originating in the Global South is constrained by the geo-politics of knowledge (Connel, 2007). Perhaps not surprisingly, scant attention has been paid in the field of visual politics to theoretical, methodological, and empirically-grounded approaches to visual politics produced by scholars working in institutions in the Global South. We do not know enough, for example, about whether and in what ways

scholarship in the Global South interacts with Northern approaches to the study of the visual. Hence, the aims of this volume are two-fold: firstly, it aims to respond to pressing calls for the de-Westernisation of communication studies and, secondly, it aims to present a range of original, theoretically driven, and empirically grounded case studies that are specifically concerned with visual politics and communication in the Global South.

The field of visual politics

Despite the anti-visual bias that was a stronghold in Western thought, as evidenced by the prolonged predominance of text over image (Bicket & Packer, 2004, cited in Thompson, 2021: 2), Visual Studies emerged as scholars from many fields began to pay attention to visuality in culture (Barnhurst, Vari, and Rodríguez, 2004). Among the pioneers in the field, Barthes (1957) brought the semiotic structures of imagery to public attention, historian Daniel Boorstin (1962) developed his treatise on *The Image*, and Guy Debord (1967) proclaimed that the world had turned into a society of the spectacle. In 1972, John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* television series introduced art theory into public analysis of advertising, which brought about mass communication as a core area of examination in visual studies. In the following years, scholars from different disciplines further developed the field with advancements in theories and methods (Eco, 1979) and attended to the centrality and role of the visual in this period (Jay, 1988, 1993; Virilio, 1988; Mitchell, 1992). It is in the course of such discussions that scholarly communities focusing on the study of the visual in the humanities and social sciences emerged. Such were the Society for Visual Anthropology (SVA), the International Visual Sociology Association (IVSA), and the International Visual Literacy Association (IVLA) (Barnhurst, Vari & Rodríguez, 2004). With a clearer concentration on communication, the Visual Communication Division of the Association for Education in

Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) was founded in the 1970s. Later, under the initiative of Larry Gross, Kevin Barnhurst, and Michael Griffin, the Visual Communication Interest Group of the International Communication Association (ICA) was established in 1993 (Barnhurst et al., 2004), followed by the Visual Culture Working Group of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR). The establishment of the field was further strengthened with the emergence of various journals specifically concerned with the visual. Such include, the *Visual Sociology* [now *Visual Studies*], *Visual Anthropology*, the *Journal of Visual Literacy*, the *Visual Communication Quarterly* (founded in 1994) and *Visual Communication* (founded in 2002) (Thompson, 2021). A recent addition has been the *Journal of Visual Political Communication* (previously titled *The Poster*).

The study of visual communication is both multi-disciplinary – with scholars spread across the arts and humanities, as well as the social sciences and technology – and multi-dimensional – in that, all possible visual formats have the potential to convey specific content, which extends across distinctive conditions of production and reception (Moriarty and Kenney, 1995; Barnhurst et al., 2004; Thompson, 2021). As Barnhurst and Quinn (2012, p.276) argue in their review of the field: “a substantial body of work has grown around the visual in political communication scholarship, and a smaller body has emerged around the political in visual communication studies as well.” They contend that as multimedia communication proliferates, scholars should pay more attention to the intersection of politics and the visual. Unsurprisingly, the so-called area of visual political communication draws upon a broad range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, such as history, art and aesthetics, sociology, anthropology, urban studies, political science,

neuroscience, psychology, cultural studies, photography and film studies, semiotics and media and communication studies (see also Gerodimos, 2019; Barnhurst et al., 2004).

A substantial body of work has been produced, ranging from monographs to edited collections and journal articles, that reflects the growth of the field and its multi-disciplinary nature. Handbooks on theories and visual methods (e.g., Mirzoeff, 1999; Chandler, 2001; van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2011; Sartwell, 2010; Margolis & Pauwels, 2011; Machin and Mayr, 2012; Machin, 2014; Fahmy, Bock and Wanta, 2014; Rose, 2016; Bleiker, 2017; Pauwels and Mannay, 2020 among others) shed light on epistemological, ontological, methodological, and ethical implications of conducting visual research. Three recent additions, the edited collections by Lilleker and Veneti (2023), Veneti, Jackson, and Lilleker (2019) and the monograph by Aiello and Parry (2020) cover a broad area of theories and methods used to analyse contemporary case studies ranging across campaigning, governance, and citizen-led forms of political communication.

Election campaigns, political candidates' visual self-representation, and television news have long been at the core of visual political communication research. Studies have demonstrated the potent role of images in political communication and campaigning, whereby campaign materials – such as posters and flyers, TV debates, and candidates' disposition and appearance – have played a critical role in how political actors try to increase their favourable influence with the electorate and news agenda (Wanta, 1988; Haßler et al., 2021; Holtz-Bacha & Johansson, 2017; Holtz-Bacha, Novelli & Rafter, 2017; Farkas and Bene, 2020; Farkas et al., 2022). The study of TV images, in respect of framing, priming, and agenda setting, has long dominated this field of research. Among the most notable works are those of Iyengar's (1991) experiments to explore visual framing of

political issues on TV and its effects on public opinion, and Bucy and Grabe's (2007) examination of the coverage of different US presidential elections by network news, demonstrating the prevalence of image-bites in election coverage (see also: Grabe & Bucy, 2009). Within this context, impression management and the role of the visuals in the shaping of a candidate's image have been the foci of a considerable number of studies (Corner & Pels, 2003; Stanyer, 2013; De Vries, and De Landtsheer, 2013; Holtz-Bacha, Langer & Merkle, 2014). With the development of new media technologies and the widespread use of image-based platforms, such as Instagram, more scholars have concentrated on examining the ways in which political images are constructed in this hypermedia system (Archetti, 2014; Filimonov, Russmann, & Svensson, 2016; Towner, & Muñoz, 2017).

Besides the production of images, a considerable body of work has explored the persuasive capabilities of the visual and expounded on image-consumption mechanisms (Lang, 1991). Doris Graber was a pioneer in audience research whose work and legacy spans a broader ambit, having concentrated on viewers' perceptions of political candidates in TV news (Graber, 1987) as well as the potency of audiovisual material for better recall of information and viewers' emotional involvement in politics through exposure to certain types of images (Graber, 1996). In this larger body of studies, significant scholarship has been developed concerning how visuals activate emotional responses (Fahmy et al., 2007; Hariman & Lucaites, 2007; Hutchison & Bleiker, 2014).

Social science research regarding audience responses to media depictions of conflict has identified links between forms of emotionality, the visual information being facilitated, and processes of political communication. Since 2000, a new wave of research has drawn upon psychological

triggers and semiotic structures to examine themes in the political realm (Barnhurst and Quinn, 2012). Such research has investigated how the non-verbal cues from political leaders elicit emotional reactions (Bucy, 2000). As Lilleker (2019, p.41) argues regarding the use of visuals in politics from a cognitive psychology perspective, “affect resonance can occur almost instantaneously and cause an individual to engage emotionally with a piece of communication independent of their prior interest in the topic.” In a recent study, Madrigal and Soroka (2021), use the theoretical lens of fear and person positivity to examine how news coverage of refugees affected attitudes towards immigration in the US. They found that images of groups of migrants, in contrast to images of individuals, tended to decrease support for immigration amongst some respondents. Despite these developments, visual rhetoric analysis has dominated most of the literature related to the persuasive power of the visual. Dating back to the 1950s (Barnhurst et al., 2004), visual rhetoric has long been at the heart of the study of political caricatures and cartoons (Medhurst & DeSousa, 1981; Plumb, 2004) (for a fuller review of the visual rhetoric literature, see Kenney & Scott, 2003).

Research on visual politics exceeds political campaigning and top-down politics to embrace street politics, grassroots activities, and the politicization of everyday life. Studies on visual politics encompass works on the framing of war and terror (Perlmutter, 1992; 1999; Saleh & Knieper, 2017), climate change (Nocke & Schneider, 2014), gender and race (Smith, 1999; Stange, 2003; Valentino, Hutchings & White, 2002) together with issues of visibility and visibility in humanitarian communication (Chouliaraki, 2006; 2013). A stirring body of research can also be found in the field of contentious politics, ranging from audience research (Arpan et al., 2006), the use of attention-grabbing imagery by activists to reach a wider audience (Rovisco, 2017;

Patsiaouras, Veneti & Green, 2017; Olesen, 2015; DeLuca, 1999), news framing of protests and demonstrations (DeLuca & Peeples, 2002), and protest aesthetics (McGarry, et al., 2020).

Moreover, since the early 1960s and Boorstin's (1961) concerns regarding the production of visuals derived from political happenings staged for news media – expressly, pseudo-events – researchers have not ceased researching the manipulation practices in image creation (Messaris, 1992; 2019) and their effects on viewers (Kaid, Keener & Chanslor, 2005; Scheufele, Kim & Brossard, 2007). Thompson's (2019) monograph offers valuable insights into the multiple factors that shape the production of news images as well as how these processes may affect their reception by audiences. Photojournalism and issues of truth and objectivity are growing areas of research (see for example, Mäenpää, 2014; Allan, 2015; Machin & Polzer, 2015; Veneti, 2017; Veneti, Lilleker and Reilly, 2018) in the digital era of deepfakes and disinformation (namely, the purposefully misleading use of false information to achieve political goals) (Dobber et. al., 2021).

It is also important to note that the latest technological advances have given rise to new avenues of research that reveal new visual languages, with researchers being attentive to contemporary visual forms, interfaces, and operations, such as work on selfies (Kuntsman, 2017; Karadimitriou and Veneti, 2016), memes (Denisova, 2019), and drones (Serafinelli, 2022) among others. Such new objects of study have accelerated the innovation of research methodologies that can be applied to rapidly evolving modes of vision (e.g., virtual reality, augmented reality) and forms of interaction. Such methods should be able to analyze composite meanings in the hypermedia ecosystem. Eye tracking methods, having a long tradition in medical research and biology, have now gained assent in political and communication research (Marquart, 2023), and experimental

research methods based on computational analysis are able to process large-scale visual data (Peng and Lu, 2023).

Despite recent developments, studies have indicated a proclivity towards some methodological approaches over others. Barnhurst et al. (2004) in their 5-year review of the field of visual studies in communication contended that rhetorical approaches predominated in the field, and, while declining somewhat, still dominate in areas of research such as the mass media, popular culture, and feminist studies. They report ongoing schisms over the assumption that visual rhetoric facilitates the revelation of efficacious meanings that are seen as crucial to our understanding of the relationship between imagery and viewer. They also observed that scholars combine semantic and rhetorical approaches to examine the persuasive power of visuals in, for example, advertising and news photography. Last but not least, they identified that the growth of research on digital media has given further purpose to visual semantics and paved the way for research on novel forms of interaction and multimodality (Barnhurst et al., 2004, p.630, see also Iedema, 2003; Hocks, & Kendrick, 2003). Other scholars like Ruby (2005) and Schill (2012) endeavored to map the field and identify trends. More recently, Thomson (2021) provided a systematic review of the scholarship published in two prominent visual communication journals, *Visual Communication* (VC) and *Visual Communication Quarterly* (VCQ). Overall, finding that in both journals qualitative research methods were more frequently used. More specifically, of the articles published in VCQ that used empirical methods, 62.61% used qualitative methods and the remaining 37.39% of them used quantitative methods (p.12). With regard to VC, of the articles that used empirical methods, 89.51% used qualitative approaches and the remaining 10.49% used quantitative methods (p.16). Across both journals, discourse analysis was the most popular method

with 17.5% of all published research, followed by textual analysis (15.7%), content analysis (9.4%), experiments (7.9%), surveys (6.4%), articles proposing new research methods (3.8%), observations (3.3%), and historical approaches (2.6%) (p.17). While this section aims to provide a brief overview of the main themes covered in visual politics, given the multidisciplinary nature of the field and the growing number of publications in the English language, it is not the intention to offer a full account of all the themes examined in this area of study. Rather, the impetus is to offer an overview of the state-of-the art of the field of visual politics.

Visual politics research and the Global South

While there is a growing body of scholarship in the field of visual politics, most of this research has a strong empirical focus on North America and Europe and neglects forms of visual politics originating from sites across the Global South. Various scholars have criticized visual communication for being a discipline that is particularly Eurocentric (Dissanayake, 1989; Miike, 2006). Much scholarship on the visual originating from Latin America and Asia remains unrecognised by peers in the Global North, in part, due to the use of English as the *lingua franca* in academia. As Suzina (2021) argues the dominance of the English language places barriers on a more equitable participation and diversity of perspectives in scientific publications (Suzina, A. C., 2020). Even when we consider the geographical scope of the research in articles published in the English language, there is a clear dominance of articles relating to the U.S., the UK and Europe. Thomson's review (2021) found that two-thirds (76.7%) of all articles with an identifiable geographic scope published in *VCQ* addressed the US, followed by the UK (2.4%). In a similar vein, 19.1% of country-specific articles published in *VC* related to the US, 15.4% to the UK, and

8.8% to Australia. At the macro continental/regional level Thomson found that, across both journals, 52% of all articles focused on North America, 23.4% on Europe, 16% on Asia, 5.5% on Oceania, and 1.7% on Africa. As Thomson (2021, p. 10) asserts, despite the journals being international in name, “it becomes apparent that scholarship focused on the global north has dominated both publications”.

The aim of this section is to offer an indication of the growing body of research published in the English language on visual politics focused on the Global South. Research extends from the examination of traditional media, such as Guano’s (2002) study of presidential tele-politics in Argentina, to the exploration of new forms of political campaigning such as the role of selfies in India’s 2014 General Election (Baishya, 2015). Moreover, a great body of work has focused on far rights ideologies. Such is the work by Moreno-Almeida and Gerbaudo (2021) using multimodal discourse analysis to examine the ultranationalist Facebook memes shared across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Right-wing populism has also been an area of investigation for scholars with respect to Brazil. Drawing on the Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro’s Instagram account, Mendonça and Caetano (2021) offered valuable insights into his visual self-representation strategies in the course of right-wing populism.

Another flourishing area of research revolves around female images and media representations. Santia and Bauer (2022), through an analysis of campaign advertising data and survey experiment, examined whether Latina political candidates in the US face biases due to the intersection of their identities as women and as ethnic minorities, finding no automatic disadvantage but potential benefit among female minority voters. Moreover, the theme of stereotypical imagery has long been

a core area of investigation that has offered new insightful ways to approach popular representations of gender. Studies vary from the examination of stereotypical imagery used to sexualise Indigenous Americans under the White gaze (Bird, 1999) to codes of masculinity being challenged in Japan through a celebrity actor-singer's contradictory image-construction (Darling-Wolf, 2003).

As with the research mentioned in the previous sections, rhetorical studies of visual communication make for a substantial part of visual research overall. Iconic images rooted in the Global South have been the main unit of analysis for various published research (Hariman and Lucaites, 2002, 2003; Hoskins, 2003; Hughes, 2003). In particular, the image of Neda Agha-Soltan, the philosophy student who was shot and killed during Iran's 2009 election protests (Olesen, 2014) as well as the images of the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in 2010 which triggered the Arab Spring protests in Tunisia (Howard and Muzammil, 2013) have been widely scrutinised. The political role ascribed to visual processes in oppositional struggle in the Middle East is a dynamic area of investigation. As Lina Khatib (2013, p.1) aptly argues in the introduction of her book 'Image Politics in the Middle East', "the image, and the media, especially the visual media, are not only mediators in this context, they are also political actors, deliberately using images to exert political influence. The image is at the heart of political struggle, which has become an endless process of images battling, reversing, erasing and replacing other images". The examination of images has therefore been central to the study of contentious politics in the region, ranging from social media-focused studies (Medrado, do Vale, Cabral, 2019; Kharroub and Bas, 2015) to the creative production of graffiti, puppetry, videos, and satire (Kraidy, 2016), and protest aesthetics (Webner, Webb and Spellman-Poots, 2014).

Research on contentious politics has also explored the use of imagery on social media platforms as interventions to rectify unfair or biased governance. Ameh James and Omobola Sule (2021) examined the images and texts posted by young Nigerians on Facebook as a counter-narrative to President Buhari's adverse framing of young people as being lazy (60% of the population is below the age of 30), and Subramanian (2021) analysed Bahujan girls' use of TikTok for the creation of anti-caste content. Bosch and Mutsvairo (2017) surveyed strategic online communication by drawing on images shared by Twitter users during the national Fees Must Fall (FMF) student protests in South Africa. Recent research in the field has offered new ways of thinking about the role of social media in the politics of dissent as well as to the impact of protest on a contested national image, such as Jiménez-Martínez's (2020) book on the 2013 protests in Brazil exploring how they affected the mediated communication of the nation.

Research on media production spans from work on cinematic production analysing contested representations of Tibetan women in both Western and Chinese film (Li, 2021) and cultural governance meaning-making processes of popular Chinese TV drama series (Schneider, 2012) to the democratic robustness of Chilean news production in the complex relationship between infotainment and political reporting (Hallin and Mellado, 2018). Publications have also looked at issues of journalistic autonomy, such as the work of Hattingh and Gaede (2011) on photographers capturing images of resistance in South Africa during the 1980s, and comparisons between mainstream media photographers and community photographers covering life in Brazil's favelas (Baroni, 2015). Moreover, the study of editorial cartoons and caricatures has attracted considerable scholarly attention with work ranged across the cultural and social sciences, including study of

images of Taiwanese politics (Hsiao, 1996), post war Japanese cartoons depicting rejection of US hegemony (Gerteis, 2007), satirised African political leaders in the wake of press liberalisation (Eko, 2007), Palestinian refugee identity (Najjar, 2007)) and political cartoons in Arab and Muslim newspapers of the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, New York, which in contrast to US responses employed humor, irony, and satire (Diamond, 2002).

Visual politics and the geopolitics of knowledge

In *Southern Theory* (2007), Connell compellingly shows how social theory emerging from the global south is diverse and distinct from social theory that is part of the canon of sociology in the Global North. She argues (Connell, website) there is not one global-South point of view and ‘there is tremendous diversity among ideas and intellectuals from the periphery. The concept “Southern theory” is simply one that names the geopolitics of knowledge. It invites readers to pay attention to conceptual work produced under colonialism or in the post-colonial periphery’. The underlying assumption here is that giving visibility to theories and concepts from the South will pave the way for a better scientific knowledge. Connell’s ideas offer a good springboard to think about the geopolitics of knowledge in relation to visual politics. They offer a lens for thinking about whether there is a distinctive global-south approach to the study of visual politics, but also invite us to pay attention to how the methodologies, theories and concepts mobilized by visual scholars from the Global South interact with those Northern approaches, concepts and methodologies that constitute the canon of visual politics research.

This book showcases not only methodological approaches, theoretical lenses, concepts, and empirical findings of research developed by scholars working in institutions in the Global South,

but also the work of scholars that, albeit working in the Global North, focus on the study of visual politics in the Global South. Drawing on Boaventura Sousa Santos' influential conceptualization of epistemologies of the South (2014, 2018), we understand Global South as being both a geographical region (Dados and Connel, 2012), and an epistemic South that produces alternative ways of knowing and studying the visual. Showcasing distinctly Southern approaches to the study of visual culture and politics, as we do in this volume, requires us to acknowledge the conditions of production of knowledge. But it also demands that we pay attention to the ways in which researchers based in the Global South interact, adopt, and resist those theoretical and methodological approaches that are now considered part of the canon of visual politics by North American and European academia. In his highly influential book *The End of Cognitive Empire* (2018), Boaventura Sousa Santos' call for cognitive justice is a formidable attempt to unmask the narcissism and hegemony of epistemologies of the North, which look down at other epistemologies (Santos, 2018: p. 125). Building on his previous work (2014), he convincingly shows how epistemologies of the South are intimately linked to the social struggles against capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. He goes on to argue that 'the greatest challenge facing the epistemologies of the South is to render credible and urgent the need to recognize the epistemological diversity of the world in order to enlarge and deepen world experience and conversation. (...) The possibility of mutual enrichment among knowledges and among cultures is the *raison d'être* of the epistemologies of the South' (p. 125). This book is a modest step in this direction in that it seeks to increase the visibility and recognition of approaches and studies on visual politics, with a geographical and epistemic focus on the Global South, in Global North academic contexts. We acknowledge, nonetheless, that one of the major barriers to building bridges between different forms of knowledge and achieving cognitive diversity in academia is the

use of English as a lingua franca. Scholars who have not been educated in institutions in English-speaking academia (UK, North America and Australia) struggle to participate in international networks and publish in international academic publications. As Suzina (2021) has convincingly argued publishing in English is not a matter of choice for the researcher. Career progression depends on competing for space in international journals where non-Native English speakers have much less chances of having articles accepted for publication. Suzina notes that the culprit seems to be lacking eloquence in the English language, but also not having the required standard of English. These constitute major barriers for non-White and non-Western scholars, many of them coming from environments where English is rarely spoken (Suzina, 2021, p. 175). This is not mention, as Suzina notes, ‘the inequalities imposed on those who neither have an international experience nor afford translations or language proofread’ (Suzina, 2021: p. 75).

Taken as a whole, the chapters included in this book suggest that there is a variety of what we could call ‘global-south approaches’ to the study of visual politics. There are chapters that demonstrate productive interaction, but also creative resistance to Northern theories and visual methodologies (for example, chapters by Serafini, Virgilio, Estrada, Yeung), but it is fair to argue that a considerable number of chapters, especially those in Part One, mobilise distinctly European and North American theories and methodologies (e.g., CDA, semiotics, multimodality) and apply them to objects of study in the Global South. This state of affairs shows the power of the symbolic and cultural capital of Northern academic institutions (particularly English-speaking ones such as those located in the UK, the United States, Canada and Australia), which allows them to facilitate the flow of theories, concepts (e.g., populism, hegemony), and methods (e.g., CDA, semiotics, multimodality) from the North to the South. This is not surprising given the dominance of Northern epistemologies, and the ways in which certain forms of knowledge and histories have been

marginalized, discredited and ignored by dominant cultures in the Global North (Santos, 2018; see also Bhambra, 2007, 2014). Yet, this is also indicative of the ways in which capitalist, extractive and colonial dynamics operate to ensure the successful transfer of canonic concepts and methodological approaches from the North to the South. In this regard, the Bolivian sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2020) has noted that ideas and concepts produced by scholars from the South are sometimes appropriated and regurgitated in the academic centers of North America, and that there is a continuous flow of students of African and indigenous descent from South America to North America. Yet, as she puts it, ‘the North American Academy does not follow the pace of our discussions; it does not interact with the Andean social sciences in any meaningful way (except by providing scholarships and invitations to seminars and symposia) (...)’ (Cusicanqui, 2020: 59). Hence, a crucial challenge for the field of visual politics is the creation of spaces of academic dialogue and publication where scholars from the North and the South can engage in truly productive intellectual exchanges.

Book structure

This volume is divided in two Parts. The first part focuses on the way political parties and politicians in the Global South employ visuals to develop visual communication strategies for particular media platforms. The section also explores the role of the visual in forms of governance at nation-state level and beyond. Here, the focus is on how actors such national governments and the media develop a distinctive visual politics to shape public opinion in pursuit of various socio-political goals. The second part focuses on how social movements and other civil society initiatives

use visual forms of communication to pursue social change. It pays particular attention to the role of visual culture, creativity and aesthetics in social movements and grassroots forms of public communication. The various chapters explore how political and creative activities carried by activists, photo-journalists and citizen-led initiatives lead to a distinctive visual politics ‘from below’ that is capable of challenging oppression and injustices in the Global South.

In part one, Riskedahl’s chapter looks at the Lebanese Khede Kasra advertising campaign to examine an effort at active language reform as a means for changing the masculine default categories for key political aims. Through interviews with members of the advertising team as well as multimodal engagement with the campaign itself both on the streets of Beirut and on social media, Riskedahl mobilises an anthropological lens to examine the workings of the gender inequality awareness campaign and its uptake in Lebanon in 2009. She situates this advertising campaign within the context of long-term fieldwork on Arabic script in public commercial and political signage she has conducted in Beirut from 2005 to 2016, and goes on to show how the advertising campaign supported efforts to actively construct engagement in the notion of participatory democracy and ongoing social debate regarding women’s status and rights in Lebanese society.

Banerjee’s chapter examines how political parties depicted women candidates and, in turn, how women themselves presented themselves on social media during the 2021 Assembly election phase in West Bengal in India. Through the lens of gender and by employing a multimodal analytical approach, Banerjee interrogates how visual political communication of these women candidates transgresses the boundaries between what is political and personal. By foregrounding identity

construction through online spaces, the study draws on epistemologies grounded in the socio-cultural context of South Asia.

Xiang's chapter explores the process of how the discourses of hegemony and resistance are achieved from recontextualization and resemiotization. To do so, she focuses on two opposing figures, that of the Chinese whistle-blower Dr. Li Wenliang and Dr. Zhong Nanshan, the government-endorsed heroic figure who became the official spokesman of the anti-epidemic campaign in China.

Juárez-Gámiz and Celecia Pérez's chapter looks into the visual construction of Andrés Manuel López Obrador's populist communication on Facebook. Through a multimodal semiotic analysis, posts from the Mexican president's Facebook account were analysed to establish a series of categories that appeal to the central axes of a generic populist political communication and to the presentation of a particular style of communication that seeks to highlight those qualities of AMLO who are both charismatic and philanthropic in their role as head of state.

The next chapter by Jiménez del Val examines two contrasting uses of Los Pinos, the official presidential residence of Mexico, as a symbolic political space. The author argues that Los Pinos, as the seat of power, has become a signifier of two very different ways of doing governmental politics. On the one hand, Los Pinos was used as a symbol for Peña Nieto's spectacular media-based presidency, amidst frequent allegations of corruption. On the other, the presidential residence became a visible symbol for López Obrador's self-proclaimed austere new republic. The chapter draws on visual politics scholarship, Moffitt's work on populism as a political style, and

two varying modalities of populism as style which the author calls *farándula* populism and populism 2.0.

In the following chapter, Matus and Echeverría examine the visual representations of television advertising campaigns for the Constitutional Plebiscite of 2020 in Chile. The study is based on an initial content analysis that allowed researchers to identify each campaign's thematic and visual strategies, followed by a semiotic analysis on a series of campaign videos to describe their referential and figurative schemas. Findings show that the main issue raised by the Approve campaign (the winning option in the plebiscite) was 'Social justice.' That argument consisted primarily of citizens' expectations about the outcome of the process and the creation of a new Constitution. In that context, the visual strategy used by this campaign favored the natural image, and most of the argument was articulated audiovisually through what is referred to as Testimony-Opinion. This format was anchored in diversity and the figure of ordinary people represented by an objective camera.

Mensah, Tayman, and Musah's chapter demonstrate how political campaigns in Ghana are predominantly symbols oriented, characterised by socio-cultural objects. Symbols are embedded with proverbial and attitudinal meanings that position the symbol bearer within a reification of cultural oration. For the purpose of this study, the authors used the political campaign materials of the December 2020 polls in Ghana and a total of 35 posters were coded. The findings show that political parties in Ghana use formalised symbols to communicate competence, social appeal, dominance, power, and bravery.

In part two, Estrada's chapter looks at the appropriation of the capucha by current Chilean feminist activist and artistic groups. By mapping and reconstructing its use in a range of dances, performances and direct action, Estrada shows how the Chilean balaclava has become a performative object and a symbol for feminist movements in their struggle to challenge neoliberal politics in Chile and beyond. Estrada does not only map and analyze some of the most creative and original contemporary strategies of aesthetic and political empowerment in Chilean feminist movements. She also convincingly shows how the capucha is in political dialogue with a long transnational tradition of feminist symbols of protest such as the pro-abortion green scarfs in Argentina and the purple ribbons in Spain.

Yang Yeung draws on interviews and a critical analysis of three works by Hong Kong-based artist Luke Ching Chin-wai to critically engage the conditions of oppression and subjugation of the citizens of Hong Kong. Yeung is interested in capturing how the artist think and acts visually by focusing the analysis on three works that involve the artist's body in performance as well as the artist making and un-making images that connote the lack of freedom and agency of citizens in contemporary Hong Kong.

Serafini's chapter looks at the ways in which Argentinian artists and activists engaged in movements against extractivism and for postextractivist futures expose the effects of extractivism on humans, non-human beings and ecosystems. In so doing, she goes on to examine of these artistic projects challenge the ontological bases of the Northern extractivist model while also envisaging alternative ontologies for postextractivist worlds, which include other ways of understanding nature, territory, sustainability, and development. Serafini argues that the extractivist model in Latin America is underpinned by an ontology that sees nature as separate from humans and as a resource for human consumption. Drawing on the work of other Latin American scholars, she

encourages scholars engaged in the study to visual politics to engage more seriously with ontological issues in future research on the visual politics of extractive societies.

Baroni and Mayr focus on the impact of a set of defining photojournalistic images taken during the mass protests that gripped Brazil's cities in 2013. These images of the death of a TV cameraman during a demonstration marked a decisive turn in the protest dynamics, resulting in conflicting readings of the protests. These were captured in the documentary film *Abaixando a Máquina 2* ('Lowering the Camera 2'), which as the authors argue offers views of these images and of the wider events that amount to a 'countervisuality' that interrogates dominant visual strategies used to marginalise the protest movement. The authors conducted a semiotic analysis of one image that suggests that although its compositional choices satisfy mainstream news values that served hegemonic media discourses about the protests, it at the same time displays a potential for a countervisuality that condemns the precarious working conditions of photojournalists in Brazil.

Tasseron is concerned with the reporting of conflict in South African media. Using a social semiotic approach, Tasseron's chapter discusses how protests during the 2014 Gaza war were depicted visually by several print news outlets. In so doing, he shows how certain historical events in the South African context shape and consolidate opposition to Israel's actions against the Palestinians. He argues that the choice by certain media outlets to frame the protests by drawing on iconic images, and other cultural symbols associated with the fight against Apartheid, gave implicit recognition to the Palestinian cause.

Virgílio's chapter offers a historical account of how photos, films and videos of the Laklãñõ people have been used by the colonial and postcolonial Brazilian state to create the image of the Laklãñõ as a wild, fierce, dangerous and violent people through the lens of colonial events that almost led to

the extermination of this population. It also offers a critical account of the scientific construction of Laklãnõ as a vulnerable and miserable people. Virgílio argues that recent visual campaign on social media platforms, such as Facebook and YouTube, show how the Laklãnõ subverted and appropriated the visual and representational devices of the colonizers to raise awareness of the social and political conditions of indigenous populations in Brazil and continuous threats to their existence. Amongst other things, the Laklãnõ successfully created a task force to recover their sacred tree and deployed visual campaigns on social media to seek support for conservation actions.

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