
CRIMINOLOGY OF THE VISUAL

ORDERS OF SEEING AND VISIBILITY IN THE CONTEXT OF CRIME CONTROL AND SECURITY POLICIES

Kriminologie des Visuellen.
Ordnungen des Sehens und der Sichtbarkeit im Kontext von
Kriminalitätskontrolle und Sicherheitspolitiken

CONFERENCE ON the 22nd / 23rd of March 2018
Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Forschung (ZiF), Universität Bielefeld

Call for Papers

Visualisations give a reference to what is of relevance. Only when something is made visible, are we able to create an image of it, to structure it, to interpret and frame it. This is also possible the other way around. By interpreting discursive phenomena, are we able to create visibilities with their own effects and offers of meaning and structure. This is true for criminological discourses of crime and control throughout its history as examples since at least the 19th century show. This is all seen in the role of photography in Bertillions identification system, the drawings of the born criminal of Lombroso, Galtons composite pictures, graphics of classic theories of delinquency, their curves and infographs or the modern mappings of urban ‚problem areas‘, the digital images of ‚delinquent brains‘ as well as the pictures of surveillance cameras and recordings of amateurs displayed on the internet. Visuality, visualisation and visibility are touching the core of criminological discourses.

Despite the omnipresence of visibility and its influence on knowledge production as well as on control practices, we only see a marginal discussion on this within criminology. But the arising questions are manifold: How, when and for which purposes are pictures and other forms of visualisation produced? How have they changed in the course of time? What role do visualisation technologies have in this context? Which effects do visibility and visualisation have in criminal and security policy relevant practices? What is their role in societal control contexts and what in the production of knowledge in this field?

The conference strives to collect and structure theoretical approaches and empirical case studies within the criminological realms. Also it would like to stimulate a long lasting, historically informed debate.

Three fields are at the center of this approach:

(1) The production of societal images of crime and control in the communication of the public and the media

Images of threat to societal order and security do not just affect discourses on crime and security policies. At the same time, they enable the development of counter discourses on human rights (e.g. pictures from the Abu-Ghuraib prison in Guantanamo showing amateur videos of police violence). But how are discourses affected by these pictures? And can we explain the transformation of ‚images of evilness‘? What forms of communication are directed through visual statements? How does criminology work with these visual statements? And

how are criminological contents picked up by the media? On a more fundamental level, we must ask how the exercise of (state based, economical etc.) power is legitimised and even controlled through visual representations. What meanings do different genres of visualisation generate and can we observe relations between rather fictional problem discourses (film, series, artistic productions) of crime and security threats? How are visualisations of suffering exploited? How can visualisations be used to strengthen societal critique on state control?

(2) Technologies of Visualisation in Crime Control and Security Practice

For quite a while now, the police has been working with technologies of visualisation. This is not only about the production of knowledge and the securing of evidence (e.g. through technologies for identification), but also about surveillance and the organisation of preventive actions (e.g. Predictive Policing, Geo-Policing). But which role exactly do visuality and their transformations play in fields (areas) that are of criminological interest? Which new priorities come to play when looking at the recourse on visual media and technologies? Are control authorities like the police gaining new legitimation through the use of seemingly objectifying visual methods? What and who is made visible by whom and why? What and who stays or is made invisible? Which 'affects' can we observe through the use of visually based measures by criminal prosecution?

(3) Criminological Knowledge Production through Visual Means

As a discipline, criminology produces scientific knowledge and also works with visualisations in order to support the enactment of relevance. But how is criminology using visual media to disseminate its knowledge? Is there a shift in the relevance of visuality within criminology? And how is criminology changing through the use of visualisation devices and methods (digital images, algorithmic visualisations) and their transformations? How have orders of visibility historically changed? Which rationale of visualisation can we observe today? How do scientific and public visibility and visualisation relate to each other? Last but not least, what are the methodological implications of working with and through a visual lens within criminology (using approaches like photoelicitation, visual discourse analysis, arts informed / based research etc.)?

The topic of the conference has been deliberately widely sketched in order to encourage everybody that works along visuality and visualisations and who reflects these within a criminological frame to take part in this conference. We hope to attract theoretical and methodological reflections as well as historical and empirical oriented pieces of work.

The key conference language is German, but part of the panels and key notes will be in English. We therefore welcome and strongly encourage abstracts (and then of course presentations) to be held in English.

Organizing committee: Axel Groenemeyer, Bettina Paul, Bernd Dollinger, Birgit Menzel, Dorothea Rzepka, Henning Schmidt-Semisich and Klaus Weinbauer.

Please send your one-page summary with title for a suggested presentation until latest

20th January 2017 to:

Axel Groenemeyer [axel.groenemeyer@tu-dortmund.de] and Bettina Paul [bettina.paul@uni-hamburg.de]