CALL FOR PAPERS

International Conference on

VISUAL SOUTH ASIA:
Anthropological Explorations of Media and Culture

Co-organized by

Department of Anthropology, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
&
Department of Sociology, South Asian University, New Delhi, India

On 10 – 11, MAY, 2017
At Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban,
University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Could a visual be deemed a category without underpinning its complexities? Does visual-ness not amount to a constellation of myriad technical and discursive factors? The proposed conference envisages possibilities of developing a complex anthropological notion of visual-ness by locating it on an inclusive turf. Visualness of a region juxtaposes culture, politics, media and performances. There has been an exceedingly tangible realization amongst scholars of media and performance that culture and politics have assumed performative significance in the contemporary world. The performative entails (repeated) underlining, (hyper) emphasizing, (over) projecting, and to an extent, exaggerating. Bridging the divide between real and unreal performativity is the mantra of the new age culture industry and political machineries. The mediated nature of performative culture and politics manifests every now and then, in electoral fanfare, political campaigns, diplomatic discourses, and various sites of exhibitionism. An instance that appeared in the elections in the United Kingdom was curious testimonial of the universality of the phenomenon. The outgoing Prime Minister, David Cameron succinctly put it: *Phir se ekbaar Cameron Sarkar* (One more time elects Cameroon government)[1]! This was aptly put in a video, which went viral all over the world and presented Cameron's United Kingdom as a pasture of opportunities.[2] This is widespread in the history of politics in South Asia as well. Every now and then, provocative images from across region float around the virtual domains. The visuals work as the trigger of wide range of responses: subversive humor, violent reactions, or conformist propaganda! Moreover, the recent development in the fields of visual arts, performance and cinemas enrich the areas of visuals. The thickness of visuals in circulation summons non-linear approaches and enquiries. And thereby it is worth exploring the visual-ness of South Asia to systematically explore performative politics in the region.

The significance of the conference is further indicated when juxtaposed with some crucial but misplaced tendencies in visual and media anthropology. For instance, visual and media anthropology tend to appear as sub-disciplines with exclusiveness in theory and method. But more interesting questions should be: why would one need to be cornered within the limits of sub-discipline in the first place? Why can't the visual be dealt with in mainstream anthropology itself? Amidst these kinds of questions in contemporary anthropological research, we note the mutually shared intellectual interests among disciplines like sociology, anthropology, media, culture and communication studies, art and art history, drama, film-cinema and performance studies. To agree with the proposition that, mastery of visual technology is not mandatory to become a successful researcher in social sciences in the field of visual research, we seek to move towards a nuanced multidisciplinary approach in this conference. Needless to say, overcoming the

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1. Phir se ekbaar Cameron Sarkar, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_xVDh1M5cs

2. NeelaHaiaasma, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Ep36luEld8

fear of crossing boundaries is a timely a call that never undermines any conceptual strengths or core discourses of a specific discipline. Rather, this approach explores new possibilities while looking for further negotiation with theories and methods from different disciplines. With the popular interest in domains such as politics of visual production, representation and reception, research topics like new media, jewelry-adornment, cave painting; selfies, cartoons and different kinds of art and performances become a core concern in visual and media anthropology. Furthermore, the visual methods and practices of socio-cultural anthropology aim to transgress traditional conventions. This opens up a widespread dialogic ground while dealing with visuals in an interdisciplinary framework. Hence, the questions of significance need to address: (a) what theoretical and methodological tools can be helpful in social science research within a "visual frame"? (b) What are the epistemological debates and controversies one needs to aware of in engaging social science research? (c) To investigate "visual forms" as sites for reproducing and representing culture as well as knowledge, what are the intellectual, critical, ethical and aesthetical issues, which need to be dealt with?

This conference envisages to bring together an international group of established researchers, as well as young scholars, cultural critiques and artists who could explore the pictorial, audio-visual, performative, artistic and in general, visual methods in socio-cultural research. As sub themes, the conference includes:

- o Anthropology of Media and Television
- o Visuals in Politics and Politics in Visuals
- o Politics of Visual Representation in Media
- o New Media
- o Internet and Photo-Based Meme
- o Visual History and Historiography
- o Digital Media and Cyber-Culture
- o Social Media, 'True'/'False' Photos, Propaganda and Social Movements
- o Visual Communication and Politics
- o Anthropology of News and Journalism
- o Cultural Politics of Art, Material Culture and Performance
- o Audience, Viewership and Media Consumption
- o Photography as a Research Method
- o Film and Documentary as Visual Ethnography
- o Virtual and Visual: Digital Media Culture

ELIGIBILITY:

Papers are invited from scholars across disciplinary backgrounds including the arts, social sciences and humanities. Professionals and practitioners engaged in areas of visuality are also welcome to submit their work (visual arts, audio-visual materials for exhibition and screening along with written notes). Young scholars enrolled in Mphil /PhD and MA programs with research components at recognized universities and research organizations are invited to submit abstract too. We also welcome contributions from individuals who are currently not enrolled in any university provided not more than one year has passed since their graduation from at least an MA programme.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

Initially, by 15 February 2017, an abstract of no more than 500 words has to be forwarded by email as an attachment to: The Coordinators, Visual South Asia Conference, Department of Anthropology, DU and Department of Sociology, SAU, Email address: vsa2017@du.ac.bd

Authors of selected abstracts will be informed via email by 30 February 2017, and complete papers have

to be submitted for peer and plagiarism review by 30 March 2017 and the final/presentable versions of papers shall be submitted by 30 April 2017. As part of the programme, we will have one screening session and one panel devoted to digital media forms produced by young practitioners. Applicants interested in submitting their media forms (short films, video installations, podcasts, photography, websites/blogs etc.) should include a sample of their work, along with a written abstract, by the above deadlines.

SUBMISSION FORMAT:

o   Abstract: 500 words; font should be Calibri point 11; 1.5-line spacing; no references and no footnotes;
o   Papers: no more than 7,000 words including footnotes and references; font should be Calibri point 11; 1.5-linespacing.
o   For referencing and style guidelines please visit: http://www.sau.ac.in/pdf/SAU-SOCJournalStyleGuide.pdf
o   Abstracts and papers must be submitted as MS Word documents via email;
o   The name of the file should be: Your Name + Institutional Affiliation + Date;
o   Thesubjectoftheemailshouldbe:VisualSouthAsiaConference2017.
o   For those interested in submitting media-based work, along with the abstract, please send a synopsis of the work, along with a media sample and/or 5-minute trailer.
o   All abstracts/ synopsis and samples should be sent to the Coordinators –Visual South Asia Conference:vsa2017@du.ac.bd.

INQUIRIES:

All inquiries should be addressed to the Coordinators–Visual South Asia Conference: vsa2017@du.ac.bd.

ACCOMMODATION AND FUNDING:

Only a selected number of paper presenters will be provided travel grants. Accommodation will be provided in shared dorm/ room to the paper presenters unless deemed otherwise by the organizing committee in selected cases.

IMPORTANT DEADLINES:

o   Deadline for abstract: 15 February 2017.
o   Finalization of selected abstracts: 30 February 2017.
o   Submission of the pre-conference draft of the paper for peer-review: 30 March 2017.
o   Submission of the revised draft of the paper for discussion in the conference: 30 April 2017.
o   Dates of conference: 10-11May 2017.
o   Submission of revised and final papers for publication: 30 May 2017.

ORGANIZING AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

The committee will comprise faculty members from Department of Sociology and will utilize the expertise available with the journal *Society and Culture in South Asia.* The committee will perform the double-review of the submitted papers before final selection.

TEAM MEMBERS FROM THE SOUTH ASIAN UNIVERSITY

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CONVENERS

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