

Call for Abstracts for the International Symposium

## Building the Frame(work)

Discussing Methodological Challenges of Applying Content Analysis in Visual Framing Research

Hosted by the Hans-Bredow-Institute for Media Research  
at the University of Hamburg, Germany

October 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, 2013

### Purpose of the Symposium

The concept of visual framing is often considered as “one of the life lines for visual research” (Coleman, 2010, p. 233). It relates to the accentuation of certain aspects of reality over others in media by means of visual communication, thereby suggesting certain patterns of interpretation which may then influence information processing and interpretation (comp. Brantner, Lobinger & Wetzstein, 2011; Coleman, 2010). The concept is therefore crucial to our understanding of how the images framing an issue in the media influence people’s interpretation of the issue. And in fact, there is a growing body of content-analytical studies using visual framing as a theoretical reference (e.g. Borah, 2009; Coleman & Banning, 2006; Griffin, 2004; Fahmy, 2004; Huang & Fahmy, 2011; Parry, 2010; Schwalbe, Silcock & Keith, 2008).

However, upon having a second look on the concept and its application, lines tend to become a little blurry, particularly when it comes to methodological aspects. In the establishing process of the concept no shared common-sense-approach has been developed so far. Instead, a multitude of fragmented and sometimes disparate approaches of visual framing analysis have evolved parallel to each other. While a unified procedure of frame analysis surely cannot be considered adequate for the analysis of images, there is a substantial need to systemize existing approaches of analysis, to highlight definitional and methodological similarities and discrepancies, and to clarify key terms.

For this purpose, the symposium focuses on the core question: How can visual frames be analyzed by means of content analysis? This question is preceded by several subordinate questions: What may be understood as a visual frame in the first place? What prerequisites must be met to speak of a visual frame? What kinds of different approaches to the content-analytical identification of visual frames are there? What are the challenges and open methodological questions of content-analytical visual framing research and how may they be encountered?

Following these questions, the symposium intends to contribute to the following aims:

- structuring and discussing different understandings of visual frames
- systemizing methodological approaches of frame identification and analysis
- working up content-analytical challenges and open methodological questions
- developing possible solutions and formulating methodological desiderata

## Concept of the Symposium

In order to ensure a productive and goal-oriented event, the symposium will mainly focus on three research fields of visual framing, each of which provides particular methodological challenges: visual framing within photographs (e.g. within press or news agency photographs), visual framing within multimodal contexts (e.g. within photographs accompanied by captions and/or news texts in newspaper articles or within multimodal websites), and visual framing within audiovisual material (e.g. within television news). The symposium aims to bring together established scholars with substantial expertise within these particular fields of visual framing research and academics that have already conducted content-analytical research on visual framing or are planning to do so. Therefore, (particularly young) academics will have a chance to present their research and for each of the fields, one established visual framing scholar will complement the presentations by a keynote and responses. In three thematically focused workshops, there will then be space to discuss open methodological challenges arising from the presentations. To meet these intentions, the symposium is laid out as a two-day meeting.

### **Day One: Keynotes and Impulse Presentations of Content-Analytical Research Projects**

On the first day (Friday), there will be impulse presentations by academics who have already theoretically and/or empirically worked on the content-analytical identification of visual frames in research projects within one of the three research fields mentioned above. Presentations will briefly outline the respective research project and strongly focus on the applied methodological procedure. Presentations on each of the three research fields will be introduced by a keynote speaker outlining the respective field and its challenges, and also providing responses to the methodological input given in the presentations. All events on day one will be open to an interested broader public.

### **Day Two: Workshops on Methodological Challenges**

On the second day (Saturday), there will be three workshops with all presenters and keynote speakers focusing on the methodological challenges that were identified within the impulse presentations on the three research fields. To prepare for the workshops, participants will be asked to answer a small set of methodological questions prior to the symposium. These statements will then be used as kick-offs for the workshops. In moderated and documented discussions, we will then aim to systematize the state of research and to find answers to open methodological questions. Workshops will be reserved for presenters and keynote speakers only to ensure a productive size of the discussion group.

As a result of the symposium, a joint publication by the participants is intended and will be financially supported. It is supposed to systemize the methodological state of the art of content-analytical visual framing research and to document the results of the workshops.

The symposium is also intended to foster an international research network on visual framing and to provide a space to arrange for joint projects, especially focusing on the methodological desiderata identified during the presentations and workshops.

## Keynote Speakers

We are happy to announce that three of the most outstanding scholars in the field of visual framing research have confirmed their participation as keynote speakers in the symposium:

- **Shahira Fahmy** (University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ)
- **Katy Parry** (University of Leeds, UK)
- **Michael Griffin** (Macalester College, Saint Paul, MN)

## Participant Information

The scope of the symposium is international and we encourage participants from different countries to attend, present and participate. Particularly young scholars are welcome to submit their work. We especially invite research on the following areas of interest which are often highlighted as providing particular methodological challenges (however, other methodological aspects of applying content analysis in visual framing research may also be suggested):

- visual framing within photographs (e.g. within press or news agency photographs)
- visual framing within multimodal contexts (e.g. within photographs accompanied by captions and/or news texts in newspaper articles or within multimodal websites)
- visual framing within audiovisual material (e.g. within television news)

Researchers who would like to participate in the symposium are asked to submit an extended abstract (2-3 pages) that strongly focuses on the methodological aspects of their research. Abstracts should answer the following questions:

- What is the overall purpose of the research project?
- What kind of visual and/or multimodal material is subjected to analysis within the project?
- What is the definition of a visual frame within the research project?
- What is the content-analytical methodological approach to the analysis of visual frames?
- What are the theoretical considerations that the methodological approach is based upon?
- What is new about the methodological approach that is applied and how does it add to existing approaches within the research field?
- What are the challenges and open questions arising from the methodological approach that is used within the project?

Submissions will be reviewed with regard to the following criteria:

- contribution to the research field
- theoretical foundation of the applied approach
- methodological innovation of the applied approach
- clearness and conciseness of the presentation

Extended abstracts should be send to **m.grimm@hans-bredow-institut.de** and **eva.boller@wiso.uni-hamburg.de** by **August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013**. Decisions will be made shortly thereafter.

## Organizational Information

The symposium will be hosted by the Hans-Bredow-Institute for Media Research at the University of Hamburg. Participants will not be charged a registration fee, but must arrange for their travel and accommodation themselves. We would be glad to answer participants' questions regarding travel and accommodation. All updates regarding the symposium will be posted on the accompanying website: [www.visualframing.org](http://www.visualframing.org).

## Contact Information



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