The Cycle of Knowledge Through Visuals

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In the Visual Commons (VICOMM) project different aspects of visual communication have been explored in a multidisciplinary way. The project partners embrace various fields of research: journalism, media technology, work psychology and media production processes. Each partner contributes distinct research culture, methods, knowledge, and networks of research and industry partners to the consortium. The research interests of participating researchers can be represented as a cycle of visual knowledge production, communication and reception.

We start the cycle with professional photojournalism, knowledge production that follows ethical codes of its core. Especially the changing codes of objectivity and the professional identity of photojournalists are under scrutiny. Digital photo editing is seen as a strategic ritual which follows certain conventions in order to allow photojournalism to maintain its role as an objective mediator of the visual messages (Fig. 1). Furthermore, these rituals are needed for controlling the parasitical tension between truth and interpretation that is currently a re-heated issue in the digital age of photojournalism.

Satu Lehto researches visual knowledge from the recipient’s perspective and explores the different cognitive abilities and preferences people have for visual images. One of the key hypothesis in Satu’s work is that the processes of acquiring, exploring and exploiting visual knowledge differ from those practices of habitual, visual knowledge work. We have individual differences in our recall of visuals and in our visual literacy in general. The results of this work can be applied in various fields, e.g. leadership, teaching and arts.

Sina Westman and Raija Holmén have mobilised visual knowledge for enhanced management of visual content. Three case studies have examined image and video concepts important in journalistic visual knowledge processes. A magazine image categorisation model was created to account for function- and content-based categories (Fig. 4) used by domain experts. The concepts of image naturalness (Table 1) and interessness were elaborated through a novel quality evaluation method. Measures for comparing approaches to visual video summarization (Fig. 5) were also developed in a user-led manner.

Esa Sirkkunen brings the visual artefacts - or photos - back into the sphere of production and consumption of visual culture. He writes about the asymmetries of power in the area of visual narratives on social media services and platforms. Although the visual media often curate the photos that are the users are the new kings (Fig. 6) in the mainstream media, this process is actually very consuming for the digital commons. The copyright is then in fact very seldom controlled the conditions of the production. e.g. the visual media also controls the copyright or the way the user knowledge is sold to advertisers. Consulting, real visual commons are rare.

Table 1: Factors of image naturalness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Visual Representation</th>
<th>Naturalness</th>
<th>Interessness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indoor</td>
<td>studio</td>
<td>photos</td>
<td>indoor lighting, good color balance</td>
<td>realistic, good quality, interesting</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor</td>
<td>natural</td>
<td>light</td>
<td>natural lighting, good color balance</td>
<td>realistic, good quality, interesting</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio</td>
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<td>objects</td>
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Project Publications