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| 3

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# De-Westernizing Visual Communication and Cultures

## Perspectives from the Global South

Nomos

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Volume 3

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# Content

# On the Need for de-Westernization of Visual Communication and Culture in the Global South

*Thomas Herdin, Maria Faust and Guo-Ming Chen*

## *1. Introducing and Justifying the New Research Agenda*

Visual communication and culture have been under extensive study in the past decades (Lobinger, 2018), even more so these days with a focus on digitally mediated online content (Reißmann, 2018). This volume continues this line of research with a main concern on visual communication and culture from non-Western perspectives. Questioning the hegemony of the West mainly finds its reasoning in the increasing rise of, e.g., BRICS countries or such of the Global South in general. This is particularly pertinent from an economic perspective which sees the BRICS and other emerging countries as key players as soon as 2050 (Hawksworth & Cookson, 2019). However, scholars seldom took such a stance from the perspective of the Global South. Thus, this volume attempts to address the problem by advocating a more comprehensive perspective and questions the hegemony of the West in this research area.

Chen has concerned the relationship between culture and communication since three decades ago (e.g., Chen, 1989, 1995; Chen & Starosta, 1998). While communication is a universal practice of human beings, as "We cannot not communicate" stated by Walzlawick (1967), Chen and Starosta (1998) argued that communication and culture as the two sides of the coin of human society are interdependent with each other. Culture serves as the web of negotiated and shared meanings of a group is displayed in the process of communication, and communication as the carrier of culture reflects and shapes the structure of culture. Thus, a successful intercultural interaction demands the understanding of cultural similarities and working together to tackle cultural differences (Chen, 2015).

The dialectical relationship between culture and communication manifests not only in the behavioral aspect of human interaction, but also in the process of visual communication. In other words, the visual structure and the modeling of visual systems show diversity in different cultural contexts (St. Clair & Jia, 2006). For example, Chuang and Chen (2003) pointed out that the distrust of human language due to the influence of Zen

Buddhism in China led to the pursuit of brevity, subtlety, and naturalness both in communication and in arts. St. Clair (n.d.) further demonstrated the differences of visual culture in Chinese landscape art, Japanese painting, Nordic Yggdrasil, Mayan calendar, and ancient Egyptian art. "Visual literacy" is therefore an important element for people to understand each other intraculturally and interculturally. St. Clair emphasized that because visual arts are perceived by members rather than individuals of a specific culture, the differences of visual communication often sharply appear in the process of intercultural interaction.

Dondis (1973) indicated that visual literacy is embedded in the learning of the basic grammar of visual communication. Those basic morphological elements of visual grammar include dot, line, shape, space, color, texture, value, and form. With the prescription of a group's culture, these basic elements of visual grammar are further integrated and developed into the visual syntax through the principles of unity/harmony, variety, balance, emphasis, rhythm, movement, pattern, graduation, and proportion. Dondis claimed that visual literacy can help people see what they see and to know what they know. This seems to infer that visual literacy helps to shape one's cultural identity.

Unfortunately, the scholarly study of culture and communication, including visual culture and communication, continues to suffer from two major problems, namely, Westernization and dichotomy (e.g., Chen, 2009; Miike, 2003, 2007; Wang, 2010a). As Chen (2009, p. 399) stated,

> According to Asante (2006), the main problem of a Eurocentric domination is due to the attitude of Western triumphalism, which is reflected in three aspects: aggressive individualism, chauvinistic rationalism, and ruthless culturalism. The aggressive individualism embedded in the Eurocentric paradigm celebrates self reliance, autonomy, independence and individual liberty, and all these tend to threaten the idea of human cooperation; the chauvinistic rationalism assumes that only Europeans have the right to define what and how to approach reality; and the ruthless culturalism promotes the European-US-American idea as the most correct form of human societies. This dominance of Eurocentrism eventually led to the marginalization, suppression, silence, denigration, and exclusion of other non-European paradigms. Therefore, in order to correct this problem, a culture specific approach should be adopted for the study of human communication.

Moreover, Chen (2009) criticized that dichotomized thinking in the process of knowledge production is like a tumor, which in the long run may not only prevent the growth of intellectual inquiry, but also lead to the de-

cline of a culture. While the dichotomy of concepts, methods, or cultures may simplify the complexity of culture and help learners easily catch up the basic differences of various subjects, it has been used to marginalize or exclude other groups. Hence, how to uphold and implement the principle of multi-contextual or multi-cultural co-existence has become crucial for correcting the dichotomy problem in order to reach a productive and successful global community (Chen, 2004, 2015).

The problems of Westernization and dichotomy in the study of visual communication and cultures discussed above lead to the first research question to be explored in this volume:

> RQ 1: How can we discuss visual communication and culture embracing a more comprehensive perspective?

In addition, as the Western theoretical and methodological framework of visual communication and culture could only serve as the starting point, the second research question remains to be asked:

> RQ 2: Along which lines can a comprehensive, de-Westernized perspective be achieved to reduce discursive inequalities when theorizing visual communication and culture across the world?

The hegemony of the West – socially, economically, and certainly culturally – reflected in scientific research and the current state of the global order is not only on the decline (Hawksworth & Cookson, 2019), but also requires a paradigm shift. Moreover, by recognizing the shift in global power, inequality studies come to the fore. Such inequality studies are not solely focused on economic terms, but to arts and culture central to sustainable living (Dean & Platt, 2016; UCLG, 2019; United Nations, 2019).

In order to answer both research questions, this chapter first discusses the concept of de-Westernization in order to re-frame the research agenda, followed by the delineation of the terminological clarifications of both visual communication and culture, and the Global South, as a new approach to situate the research endeavors undertaken throughout the volume, then brief findings of the chapters are introduced. Lastly, we discuss the two research questions on the backdrop of inequality studies and sustainable living.

## 2. *The Concept of de-Westernization*

Virtually the whole academic canon of the social sciences is based on Western philosophy and has been "Eurocentric throughout its institutional his-

tory" (Wallerstein, 1999, p. 168). The reason lies in Western supremacy. The expansionist policies of European countries especially in the late 15th century onwards led to a massive growth of the West's sphere of influence at many levels. Indeed, after Vasco da Gama opened up a sea route to India, the economic and geopolitical power potential of the West grew to become almost limitless (Kennedy, 2005, pp. 238; Fieldhouse 1966, p. 178). At the beginning of the 19th century, Europeans occupied or controlled 35 percent of the world, which rose to 67 percent in 1878 and 84 percent in 1914. After the Second World War, the United States of America further expanded its leading role in world politics. This economic hegemony of the West went hand in hand with scientific supremacy and is reflected in the social sciences and in communication studies as well, a situation which is criticized by scientists from around the globe, including the West (e.g., Alatas, 2006; Asante, 1998; Chang, Holt, & Luo, 2006; Chen, G. 2006; Chen, M. 2002; Chu, 1985; Curran & Park, 2000a; Dissanayake, 2009; Goonasekera & Kuo, 2000; Gordon, 1998; Gunaratne, 2010; Heisey, 2000; Ishii, 2007a; Hu & Ji, 2013; Jia, 2000; Kim, 2009; Kim & Hubbard, 2007; Kincaid, 1987; McQuail, 2000; Miike, 2014; Servaes, 2000; Shi-xu, 2009; Sun, 2002; Thussu, 2013; Triandis, 1980; Waisbord, 2013; Waisbord & Mellado, 2014; Wang, 2011a, 2011b; Yin, 2009).

A strong call for a critical evaluation of the social sciences was made at the end of the last century. Since the millennium, efforts towards critical reflection on the Western paradigm have been subsumed under the term "de-Westernization". Such reflection became prominent in the Asian region especially and gained importance in numerous fields of communication studies, for example, Media Studies (e.g., Curran & Park, 2000; Feng, 1998; Gunaratne, 2005b; Hu, 2007; McQuail, 2000; Wang, 2011), Journalism (e.g., Gunaratne, 2007, 2009; Hu & Ji, 2014), Organizational Communication (e.g., Holt, 2011; Liu, 2011), Intercultural Communication and Competence (e.g., Chen, Z., 2014; Kulich & Prosser, 2007; Xiao & Chen, 2009), Gender Studies (e.g., Yin, 2009), Public Relations (e.g., Chung, 2009), Communication Management (e.g., Chen & Lee, 2010; Winter, 2002), Mediatization (e.g., Waisbord, 2013), Conflict and Emotional Work (e.g., Chuang, 2002), Transnational Communication (e.g., Wessler & Brüggemann, 2012), Corporate Communication Management (e.g., Zhang et al., 2008), Communication and Ethics (e.g., Chuang & Chen, 2003), and Ideology and Soft Power (e.g., Hu, Zhang, & Ji, 2013).

Even if Waisbord and Mellado (2014) claimed that de-Westernization has become a central theme in communication studies, it is debatable whether efforts are sufficient, because treatment of the theme concerns just a very limited number of publications among the vast array of publication

activities, and these themselves follow Western paradigms, even when they are authored by non-Western academics. This leads to a problem, because in an interconnected world we need new approaches to overcome an ethnocentric view, and to enhance and deepen our understanding of social sciences in general and communication studies in particular. If we continue exactly as we have always done, we face stagnation. As Wallerstein (1999, pp. 168-169) argued, "[T]here is no question that, if social science is to make any progress in the twenty-first century, it must overcome the Eurocentric heritage which has distorted its analyses and its capacity to deal with the problems of the contemporary world".

Using different cultural paradigms in research has a twofold advantage. It is not only an ethical matter regarding the inclusion of "the Other/s", but also entails reflecting critically on Western hegemony. Critical reflection from another perspective (e.g., from that of the Global South) helps us understand the cultural scientific background of Western academia, which leads us to reach a meta-level perspective on Western culture generally and see ourselves differently. Concepts from different cultures function like mirrors allowing us to gain a deeper understanding of ourselves.

### *2.1. Interculturality as a method*

The importance of de-Westernizing is obvious, but the question is how to implement a de-Westernizing approach. Interculturality should not simply be understood as a concept; it should be applied, according to the French philosopher and sinologist François Jullien (2000, 2002, 2009), as a method as well. Jullien made a detour via Chinese philosophy to shed light on the role of Greek thinking in Western civilizations. This detour is helpful to illuminate blind spots in one's own knowledge system and facilitates new perspectives and lines of thought. Jullien's approach does not construct separate worlds in which China would serve the role of Other. Rather, he used a consideration of Chinese philosophy as "an opportunity and as a means to return to the unthought" (Jullien 2009, xvi). In other words, he sees this kind of detour not as an exotic journey, but as a methodological approach (Jullien 2002, p. 171).

Dai and Chen (2015, p. 99) conceptualized interculturality as "multiple connections between cultures, in which culturally different individuals endeavor to reduce cultural distance, negotiate shared meanings and mutually desired identities, and produce reciprocal relationships in order to achieve communication goals". This conception of interculturality assumes that first, intercultural communication is a dialogical process, in

which participants have desire to talk, to learn, and to build connections with others for the purpose of self-growth and transformation of relationship and communication patterns; second, participants in the process of interculturality are willing to accept mutual adaptation and negotiate their identities; and third, participants are making efforts to achieve intercultural agreement and productive relationship. In other words, interculturality functions to penetrate cultural boundary and promote intercultural relations, to broaden participants' perspective and enhance the fusion of horizons and intercultural understanding, and to help manage and solve intercultural conflicts for reaching a state of harmonious equilibrium of intercultural relationship (Dai, 2010; Dai & Chen, 2015).

Three steps are necessary to put academic reflection on interculturality into effect. In the first step, we typically start by looking at cultural differences. In the second step, a meta-theoretical perspective is required for a profound examination of diverse cultural paradigms. Finally, it is necessary to construct an in-between-world, which is an intersection between the home world and the alien world.

### *2.2. Step 1: Differences as a starting point*

If we are confronted with something alien, e.g., people, artefacts, meanings or ideas, we first naturally notice the difference. This lies within human nature. From birth, humans start to differentiate between familiar and alien. According to the ethnopsychologist Mario Erdheim (1988, 1992, 1993), the infant has a symbiotic relationship with his/her mother and creates an image of what is familiar. Simultaneously, the infant develops an idea of the so-called non-mother, or everything which is strange, unknown and unfamiliar. This evokes fear, is threatening, and can lead later to xenophobia. In the adolescence stage of development, the young person tries to put distance between themselves and their parents (the known), looking for new experiences outside the family (the unknown), which can lead later to exoticism. From the beginning, we differentiate between "ourselves" and "the Other", whether the Other is perceived as something positive or as something negative. Erdheim (1988) conceptualized both terms from the realm of psychoanalytic theory, and although xenophobia and exoticism may appear to be opposites, they are similar in that they are both cultural avoidance strategies. Whereas xenophobia leads to avoiding strangeness because it is perceived as something threatening, exoticism overvalues strange cultures in order to avoid changes at home.

But recognizing differences should only be our starting point as reflective human beings in dealing with the Other. A problem arises if cultural differences are seen as the final result, but unfortunately this is the approach that is often applied in the field of intercultural and cross-cultural communication. One of the most prominent representatives of this line of thought is Geert Hofstede (1980, 2001). He developed cultural dimensions in order to compare cultures on a dualistic scale based on national identities and his typologies are still omnipresent in intercultural research. Without doubt, typological abstractions can reduce complexity to manageable dimensions, but they are arbitrary, implying only a model character, and they may lead to stereotyping (Herdin, 2006). Bipolar dimensions do not meet the requirements of a deep-going discussion, and nations are not homogeneous entities.

Cultural differences should be seen as sources for further development, as starting points to facilitate new perspectives, and they should help us to recognize the as-yet "unthought". To understand ourselves, we always need a counterpart. This prepares the way for uncovering our own way of thinking, and for being sensitive to our differences that are being reflected back to us in a constant oscillation between "Self" and "Other".

The challenge in the first step is to avoid methodological nationalism, which is understood as "the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world" (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002, p. 302), and equates societies with nation-states (Beck, 2007). If cultural differences are discussed, they are mostly based on national identities or geographical regions on a greater scale (e.g., West versus East), but neither states nor regions are homogeneous entities, and nor are they completely separated from each other.

### *2.3. Step 2: Meta-theoretical perspective*

In the second step to de-Westernize current academic paradigms, cultural differences should help us develop empathy and acquire greater awareness of ourselves. Ulrich Beck (2012, pp. 1-2) postulated: "[W]e Europeans can understand ourselves only if we 'deprovincialize' – in other words, if we learn to see through the eyes of others as a matter of sociological method." To gain a meta-theoretical perspective, we must take a step outside of our own frame of cultural or philosophical reference, because it is virtually impossible to understand our own culture from within. This can be achieved by introducing an ontological, epistemological and methodological discussion which enhances cultural sensitivity and can function as a catalyst for a

profound discussion about de-Westernization. Here the Global South comes into play. The current world order is in transition, not only from an economic and geopolitical perspective, but also from a scientific point of view. The heterogeneity of the Global South in particular (i.e. conceptualized through a plurality of notions) could function as a catalyst both to enhance introspection and for a better understanding of other cultural conceptualizations. Through a process of indigenization and localization, a less Western bias could be achieved. This form of inclusion provides a more holistic approach, allowing the inclusion of non-Western paradigms developed in the Global South. This is not just a matter of fairness and a means to construct a more holistic picture about cultural approaches; it should follow an intrinsic motivation, because self-reflection is almost impossible from within a single culture.

The challenges in this step lie in avoiding the poles of over-simplification and incomprehensible complexity. Over-simplification means that single indigenous ideas are introduced to provide the discussion with an exotic flair. For example, single Chinese concepts like *mianzi* (face), *guanxi* (social networking, mutual obligations, interrelationships), *renqing* (interpersonal sentiment), *ren* (cohumanity), *yi* (cultivated sense of morality) and *li* (rites of property)[1] are applied in isolation from each other (like the importance of *guanxi* in public relations) to provide a cultural notion for a theoretical discussion. At other times, the concepts are strung together without explaining the whole cultural context in which they are embedded. This strategy can be described as "concept hopping and context dropping" (Herdin, 2012, p. 606; Herdin, 2018, p. 176). It is a strategy that reduces culture to simple concepts in an atomistic way (over-simplification).

The antipode of over-simplification is the attempt to embed a theoretical discourse (e.g., concepts from Buddhism, Taoism or Confucianism) in a whole "Other" cultural and philosophical context – an attempt to provide a deeper cultural layer of worldviews and other values in order to provide an understanding of the whole complexity of culture on a much broader scale. Applying a comprehensive philosophical corpus in a theoretical context (like communication studies) is a difficult task for the theoretician, while the complexity of philosophical foundations is difficult to access (theoretically, intellectually, emotionally), especially for those people who have virtually no personal direct experience of these cultures. It is almost impossible to acquire this experience purely cognitively; one needs

1 For a more detailed discussion of indigenous concepts see Kulich/Zhang (2010, p. 247).

to be at least partially socialized in this cultural space. Another challenge is that such philosophies as Taoism, Buddhism or Confucianism do not exist – as they are often described – as monolithic (pure) thought systems and ideas. They comprise different schools and branches that have evolved over time; they are not rigid constructs. And this further complicates access and understanding.

### *2.4. Step 3: Constructing an in-between world*

Without doubt, theory is always embedded in a broader philosophical context. As socialized humans, it would be impossible for us to develop a culture-free approach, because our thinking is always culturally entangled. Culture is inevitable and enriches the discussion. But modern societies are multi-faceted entities, and the boundaries between the self and the foreign are fluid and therefore blurred. The unity of culture and place is dissolving more and more if it ever existed at all. At the same time, although we move and act within a global framework, we are nevertheless physically present in a particular locality. The process of deterritorialization is not simply the end of locality, but is better understood as a transformation into a more complex cultural space (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 149). Globalization must not be equated simply with geographically defined spaces, but with a thematic as well. Appadurai (1996) used the suffix "-scapes" – following the concept of land*scapes* – to form his analytical categories. He defined five spaces (or "scapes") in which globalization takes place, but which are not bound to a physical space: financescapes (global flows of capital and the financial world); technoscapes (technological spaces with their configurations for technologies; in the field of communication, for example, the new information and communication technologies play an important role); mediascapes (the landscape of globally active and networked media); ideoscapes (ideological spaces of ideas such as democracy), and ethnoscapes (the non-deterritorial spaces shaped by the migration of people across political and cultural borders).

Globalization has led to exchanges of ideologies, ideas and worldviews that affect cultural modifications and change in people's living environments. These exchanges or flows are reflected in many terms, such as "spaces of flow" (Castells, 1996, 2001), "global fluids" and "global networks" (Urry, 2003, 2005), "global cultural flows" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33) and "complex connectivity" (Tomlinson, 1999).

Today's world is characterized by an increasing "time-space compression" (Harvey, 1989, p. 240), a phenomenon that describes the acceleration

of global processes in a seemingly ever-smaller world. But these developments do not lead to homogenization. Global generations cannot be treated as "a single, universal generation with common symbols and a unique consciousness" (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2008, p. 25). Shmuel Eisenstadt (2000) argued the development of multiple modernities: there is no variation of a single global modernity and nor does it make sense to explicitly refer to a European or Chinese or Indian or other forms of modernity, because this just leads both to a fragmentation and essentialization of cultural differences and to losing sight of the relationships between cultures (Schwinn, 2010, p. 116).

To de-Westernize current research paradigms, then, does not mean to carry out research into other cultures and compare underlying concepts. In this third step, the Other (e.g., the Global South) is no longer an external object which can be studied but becomes an active and equal counterpart. This modus operandi – establishing a respectful confrontation – should lead to a dialogue amongst equals. Only by constructing this kind of an in-between world (*Zwischenwelt*) does the Self become unfamiliar and the Other approachable. This *Zwischenwelt*, according to Waldenfels (2007), is an intersection between the home world (*Heimwelt*) and the alien world (*Fremdwelt*). Waldenfels (2007, p. 36) argued that "a dimension of otherness" pervades our inner world, stating that "the 'alien' begins at home". If we can develop a tolerance for ambiguity (exposing ourselves to unfamiliar theoretical approaches), then we can initiate a discussion with equal partners and stimulate a dialogue with an open outcome. This is the only way to ensure that we are sufficiently flexible to develop new and innovative approaches in social sciences and especially in communication studies.

## 3. *The Concepts of Global South, Visual Communication and Culture from a Perspective of Power*

The concept of the Global South underwent a historical transition. Originally, it stemmed from the "colonized" or "neo-colonized" world (Dados & Connell, 2012; Global South Studies Center, 2012). Such a geographical focus opened up for new dichotomies, which, as highlighted in the previous section, we seek to overcome. When De Sousa Santos (2016, p. 18) spoke of the Global South as "a metaphor for the human suffering caused by capitalism and colonialism on the global level, as well as for the resistance to overcoming or minimizing such suffering", he implicitly mentioned the "the Other" we have been referring to in the previous part. Dados and Connell (2012, p. 13) explicitly highlighted that the Global South

cannot be seen as just a pure metaphor and contextualize the terminological origins of the concept:

> North-South terminology, then, like core-periphery, arose from an allegorical application of categories to name patterns of wealth, privilege, and development across broad regions. The term Global South functions as more than a metaphor for underdevelopment. It references an entire history of colonialism, neo-imperialism, and differential economic and social change through which large inequalities in living standards, life expectancy, and access to resources are maintained.

The talk between equals is exactly the aim of our approach to establish a new research agenda. Milan and Trere (2017) and Arun (2019) highlighted the character of the Global South as a plural entity. Thus, the Global South refers to "the different, the underprivileged, the alternative, the resistant, the invisible, and the subversive" (Milan & Trere, 2017, p. 321). Such recent conceptions address the explicit power imbalances, yet simultaneously acknowledging that there must be ways to overcome this by making the invisible seen and having it addressed. Recognizing the existence of power imbalances and the underprivileged, plus addressing "marginal, disenfranchised populations", has led Arun (2019) come to conclude to speak of Global Souths. The plurality in the concept, as we will see later when visual cultures are addressed, is by no means just a linguistic trick, but a matter of raising awareness in shaping the socio-cultural world through context sensitive language (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Stocker (2012, p. 386) emphasized that "many conceptualizations observed in language have also been found to exist in mental representations that are more basic than language itself". These mental models are not static, but neural networks or schema can be learned, trained and altered.

In the same realm falls the discussion of visual communication and culture. Visual communication refers to a scientific field that deals with "media images and their communicative power, i.e. images transmitted through technical communication means and their production, transformation, reception and adoption processes" (Lobinger 2012, p. 270, translated by Faust). As Lobinger (2012) excluded art imagery, three-dimensional visual artifacts or non-material visual phenomena such as metaphors, hallucinations, reflections or dreams as well as moving images, we wish to move past this by introducing the term of visual culture. We chose to refer to visual culture as a more comprehensive term here, as it first exceeds image studies, and second refers to the practice of examining "complex figural artifacts or the stimulants to visual experience" (Jay, 2005, p. 88). Visual

culture therefore embraces representation of these artifacts, including encoding and decoding as well as display and presentation. In a similar fashion, visual cultures as a plural concept refer to the same way of looking at submission and under privilege as we did with the Global South (Corona-Berkin, 2020).

Reflecting on the three terms, i.e., Global South, visual communication and visual culture, we uncover the common underlying theme of power which has been touched upon with the reflections on de-Westernization. Side by side with power relations goes resistance and the recurring theme of multiple possibilities of being and resisting. This implies to understand "how forces that seek to impose exploitative and hegemonic economic and political forms have been and can be resisted, both in discrete geopolitical spaces and through broader collaborative networks" (Global South Studies Center, 2012). Moreover, power hierarchies established through gender, sex, race, class, dis/ability, national identity, economic wealth and regions must be entangled and uncovered. Morra and Smith (2006, pp. 10-11) see the discussion of visual culture as a political movement with an inherent self-conception as

> thematic individual or community-based concerns around the ways in which politically motivated images are produced, circulated and consumed to both construct and reinforce and resist and overthrow articulations of sexual or racial ontologies, identities and subjectivities – such as black visual culture or feminist visual culture or lesbian and gay visual culture.

The notion of power that is inherent in the discussion of all three key terms can also be understood through Foucault's works (2005). The French philosopher does not limit his understandings of power to politics, yet it transcends it as every day, socialized and embodied experience. He stated that power is inherent in norms and values of communication and culture, and its mechanisms need to be uncovered as they might be subconscious, embedded and not perceptional that we are disciplined without any coercion from others. Such normative processes imply that Western perspectives are inherent, and by far subconscious, which then urges the researcher to take a stance from an outside perspective to uncover these relations.

Moreover, besides power, issues of identity and representation come to the fore not only for visual culture (Glossar der Bildphilosophie, 2019), but for all three terms. Identity as a negotiated notion between the self and the other is not only important in visual communication and culture, e.g., the white needs the black to come into existence visually, but also has been

discussed earlier in this chapter on de-Westernization. Simultaneously, issues of representation are by far these days such of increasingly digital visual content. He and Wang (2019) showed that almost 80% of digital chat communication in China are accompanied by visual communication and culture i.e. emojis and stickers. This implies not only an increase in quantity, but also in quality as non-visual content increasingly becomes visually represented. Such alterations in representations can be found in picturing the West and/or the Global South. Social science research has investigated these issues with an ever growing output in publications on and within the Global South, and a simultaneous reach outside of academia (Tijssen & Winnink, 2018). This quantitative representational enlargement implies, with a non-Weberian yet normative notion, that the discussion shifts from mere geographic issues back to power and identity through representation, as the concepts are intertwined.

Finally, the notions of de-Westernization, the Global South and visual communication and culture show greater interrelations that could be set out here briefly. For the purpose of clarification, we next uncover the topics of the individual chapters of the *book*.

## *4. Theoretical Reflections and Case Studies of This Book*

This *book* sets out to uncover such de-Westernized visual communication and culture approaches from the Global South perspective. While the first two chapters (Herdin, Faust, & Chen and Berkin) intend to theorize the terminology and methodology, the third chapter (Breninger/Kaltenbacher) builds the transition between a more theoretically oriented focus based on an experimental study. The remaining chapters take us on a journey to understand how visuality in the Global South can be approached.

### Sarah Corona-Berkin: Towards the Pluralization of a Singular Visual Culture

While globalization has been characterized by an extension of the visual to virtually every domain of communication, the ability to make sense of visual content cannot be conceived of as universal. Sarah Corona Berkin clarifies the importance of the term visual culture in its plural form – visual cultures – to approach the multiple constructions of "the real" that are crystallized in images in diverse social contexts. Thinking in the plural allows us to see that there are multiple visual productions and an asymmetric distribution of power between the supposed globalized cultures coming from the West and those diverse images that are created in multiple

contexts. Used in the singular, the concept reduces our understanding of visual productions to a single homogeneous condition. The author considers that visual cultures belong to cultural formations, located geopolitically and historically. She examines three moments in the construction of the concept visual cultures in its plural form. First, Sarah Corona Berkin discusses the concept of visual culture in the singular form, emphasizing that the plural has meant an extension of the studies of images themselves, towards the subjects that make them and consume them. Secondly, she presents and compares a number of studies carried out in Latin America that have been critical of the traditional visual culture studies, and have focused on visual images produced by, or "read" from non-hegemonic contexts. Lastly, the author presents various concepts and methods that have their origin in dialogic research on visual cultures in Latin America.

Birgit Breninger and Thomas Kaltenbacher: De-Westernization as an Impossible Epistemic Shift? Visual Research Avenues for a Genuine Paradigm Shift in Communication Studies

In their chapter on de-Westernization as an impossible epistemic shift, Birgit Breninger and Thomas Kaltenbacher introduce novel, visual research avenues to document the necessity of perceptual change, which they claim to be essential for a genuine paradigm shift. They argue for the need to bridge the gap between various academic disciplines and analyse the individual, culturalized mind in interrelated ways with reference to manifold socio-cultural levels. They further suggest that individual perceptions have to change in order to effect de-Westernization in academia. Since perceptions are already entrenched because experiences bias the individual mind and hence the respective communities, it is essential for academics to establish the relevant perceptual architecture to be able to initiate a genuine epistemic shift, i.e. to come up with ‘new ways of seeing’. This perceptual architecture is outlined and discussed using data from the authors’ perceptuo-cognitive experiment.

Maria Amália Façanha and Ana Karina Nascimento: Rethinking Visual Culture in Brazil through the Problematization of Images in English Textbooks

Research on visual culture and multimodality in Brazil has recently increased; so has the presence of images in English textbooks used in public-sector schools since 2011, when English teaching became part of the National Textbook Program. The aim of this chapter is to share results from qualitative research conducted with English teachers from Brazilian public schools in order to expand how we read within critical and visual litera-

cies, understanding literacy and language as social practices. The results suggest that contact with those theories helped teachers to rethink and expand their perspectives on "reading" visual texts. Consideration of the roles that English teaching can play in education as related to visual culture can contribute to the de-Westernization of knowledge in the Global South.

Jan Bajec, Ivana Beveridge, Simeona Petkova and Radmila Radojevic: Visual Culture on the Semi-Periphery: Reading the Global/Local in Google Image Results
The authors apply digital methods as a relatively novel approach to analyze and compare online images in global and local Google domains, focusing on a socio-political controversy which is characteristic of countries on the "semi-periphery". The study explores the dynamic interplay between the global and local image results and maps the visual framings employed in this controversy. Findings suggest that we can gain a better understanding of local visual cultures by analyzing and mapping digital images found on the local Web, including visual content, source category, source distance, context/topic, and publication time. Furthermore, comparing images from local and global Google domains could help us to gain a better understanding of the complex socio-political landscapes in countries on the "semi-periphery", many of which share challenges and tensions similar to those that are inherent in 'transitional' societies.

C.S.H.N.Murthy: Negotiating Semiotics of *Mise en Scene* is the Real Challenge of Indian Cinema: A de-Westernizing Approach to Visual Culture
The author argues that a Westernized approach has so far failed to offer a holistic image of Indian cinema. Hindi and Telugu cinemas together constitute the greater part of the Indian film industry. Since the dawn of the talkie era (1931), both these cinemas have reflected a pan-Indian culture largely drawn from an ancient Indian heritage, including fine arts. However, approaching Indian cinema through the Western theories of psychoanalysis and Marxism since 1980s has resulted in underrating of early Indian cinema and, further, overlooked the contributions of Indian classic cinema to world cinema. As a result, several awkward theories to interpret Indian cinemas have emerged. Murthy offers not only an overview of the lacunae in such theories but also a de-Westernized approach as a holistic cultural model that subsumes both Indian semiotics and phenomenology. The chapter is predicated on the argument that negotiating the frames of Indian cinema from the perspectives of semiotics and phenomenology is a real challenge that calls for a rich knowledge of ancient Indian heritage, its

culture and aesthetics. It thus argues that a de-Westernized approach to Indian cinema is an ideal way to understand it in its entirety.

Uttaran Dutta: Portrayal of Women in Hand-Painted Visual Discourses on the Streets of India

Increasingly, critical-cultural and subaltern studies scholars, embracing de-Westernization perspectives, are raising questions challenging the Eurocentric constructions and representations of women, especially in the context of the Global South. For instance, in India, the nationalist and Hindu ideologies on the one hand, and the market-driven globalization agendas on the other shape, define and influence the identity of the Indian female; consequently, women are portrayed as a marginalized monolith. Embracing subaltern studies perspectives as well as principles taken from the six canons of Indian aesthetics or *Shadanga*, this paper examines two aspects: how female identities and agencies are portrayed in visual discourses commonly available on the streets of India in (i) nationalist representations and (ii) sexist representations. The visual portrayals of women discussed in this paper all reflect the intentions of the dominant power structures, representing women's identities as marginalized in order to accomplish hegemonic aspirations and attitudes.

Renata Wojtczak: Examination of Agentic and Communal Identities of Poland and China through Visual Analysis of the Countries' National Emblems

Renata Wojtczak addresses the de-Westernization of visual culture from two perspectives: the territorial and the conceptual. Territorially, it recognizes the scarcity and importance of the examination of national emblems originating from, and in the context of, semi-Western countries such as Poland and non-Western countries such as China. Conceptually, it seeks to construct a hypothetical model for discovering national identity from the visual examination of national emblems. Using McAdams' concept of identity and Langer's concept of signs and symbols, and by applying Lester's qualitative visual analysis framework, elements and relationships displayed in the national emblems of Poland and China are examined to hypothesize the national identities of both as imagoes of agency and communion. It is suggested that the proposed agentic and communal imagoes of Poland and China are interpretations. As such, they are not set in stone, but are, rather, expected to change over time and/or be subject to different interpretations.