

Visual Sociology Newsletter • May 2025



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Letter from the President

Dear friends,

The ISA World Forum of Sociology, scheduled for next July in Rabat, is rapidly approaching. The program schedule has been finalized and looks very promising. As noted in the previous newsletter, we received a record number of submissions for our 19 panels. Most panels attracted numerous valuable contributions, although a few did not resonate as well; however, this allowed us to divide the overpopulated panels into two parts. While we experienced a record number of submissions, we regrettably also encountered a record number of withdrawals. Nonetheless, we are pleased to present a comprehensive RC57 program consisting of 18 panels, which will take place from Monday to Friday.

Participating in international conferences has always posed a significant financial challenge for most attendees, and this issue appears to be worsening as universities worldwide are reducing their travel budgets, while at the same time, travel costs continue to rise. The small number of registration waivers that research committees can provide, along with the varying structures of registration and membership fees, cannot prevent large segments of the academic community from being excluded from a vital aspect of academic life: the opportunity to meet with colleagues from around the globe in person. This situation represents one of the most disheartening dilemmas in the pursuit of creating a more inclusive international organization.

For those of you fortunate enough to be in Rabat, I would like to draw your attention to the RC57 Visual Sociology Business Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, July 8, from 19:00 to 20:30. All RC members, as well as non-members interested in visual research, are warmly invited to attend. Contrary to what the title may suggest, this is truly a ‘membership meeting’—a unique opportunity to learn about the organization, share your ideas, and connect with your colleagues in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Additionally, this event will feature the awarding of the ‘Rachel Tanur Prize for Visual Sociology’ to its recipients, in the presence of the Tanur family. I eagerly anticipate meeting both old and new members in person. However, I also encourage those who cannot attend this year to stay connected by emailing board members and submitting contributions to our RC57 Newsletter editors or our Facebook page.

Warm regards,

Luc Pauwels

Editors' Note: Images, Sociology and Beyond

In 2024 we published two ISA RC57 newsletters and invited submissions from members and non-members in the three official languages of the International Sociological Association (English, French and Spanish). We are therefore delighted that we have continued to receive contributions in English and Spanish; and that the native Spanish-speaking authors have chosen to submit their contributions bilingually. We have also received contributions from people who are not (as yet) members of our RC but who share an interest in what images can bring to their work.

We hope that in this way RC57 can continue to develop ties with scholars, activists and artists engaged in other fields and in a broad range of activities around the world, expanding the spaces in which our work can circulate. In such difficult times, acknowledging people's lives and work internationally can help to alleviate the isolation and alienation that many of us are feeling. Let's continue to expand these networks in the coming years. In the meantime, please enjoy this issue and its articles by authors engaged in slow(er) sociological projects in less studied places.

The editorial team

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Cover image/Imagen de tapa: *"by John Goodwin — Pit Wheel. Snibston Colliery Park, Coalville"*

Back Cover image/Imagen de contratapa: *"by John Goodwin — The headstock and winding wheel at Snibston Colliery, Coalville, UK, from the wheels hung cages on cables that lowered men to and from the bit bottom. Taken on a Kodak Brownie 127"*

Nota de las editoras. Qué hay de nuevo en nuestro boletín de noticias - SPA

Durante 2024 publicamos dos boletines de noticias del Comité de Investigación 57 e invitamos contribuciones desde el interior de nuestro comité, y también por fuera de éste. Asimismo, alentamos la inclusión de piezas escritas en las tres lenguas oficiales de la Asociación Internacional de Sociología.

Estamos contentas de informar a nuestros miembros (y más allá de nuestros miembros) que hemos recibido en forma sistemática contribuciones en dos lenguas (inglés y castellano, por ahora) y también que las contribuciones de quienes escriben en castellano como lengua nativa han sido enviadas en formato bilingüe castellano-inglés. Hemos recibido además contribuciones de personas que aún no son miembros de ISA o del RC57, haciendo así posible un primer intercambio con académicos, activistas y artistas de otros campos de trabajo, actividades y perspectivas que, sin embargo, comparten con nosotros un interés en lo que las imágenes aportan al trabajo que realizamos.

De este modo, estamos contentas de ver que nuestro RC57 desarrolla vínculos globalmente y a través de disciplinas distintas, y continuamos alentando a nuestros lectores a expandir los espacios de circulación de esta publicación para que se amplíen los lugares por donde circula nuestro trabajo. En tiempos difíciles como los que estamos viviendo, reconocer la vida de personas y situaciones diversas, en distintos contextos internacionales, permite aliviar algo de la sensación de aislamiento y alienación a la que a veces estamos sometidos y experimentamos. Continuemos estableciendo redes con otros grupos, pueblos, organizaciones e instituciones que aún no hemos alcanzado. Mientras tanto, disfruten de este número de nuestro Boletín y de sus artículos por parte de autores/as que realizan proyectos sociológicos con más lentitud en lugares tal vez menos conocidos por la mayoría de nosotros/as.

Editoras del boletín de noticias

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Research Note: Visualising Spiritual and Sacred Spaces in England's North

Terence Heng

Reader in Sociology

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Goddess Temple, Sheffield City Centre

To many, the United Kingdom is often characterised as a broadly Christian society, displayed through its architecture and historical narratives. Cathedrals loom large in many cities, drawing tourists and worshippers alike. The “English countryside” is stereotypically represented by chocolate box villages and of course, quaint churches and chapels, many of which act as a social and cultural hub for their communities, notwithstanding the village pub.

Yet despite this architectural and aesthetic ‘dominance’, scholars have shown that the United Kingdom is far more diverse in its spiritual, religious and sacred practices and spaces. Examples include (but are not limited to) Buddhism (Starkey 2023), Islam (Yardimici and Martin 2024), folk beliefs (Waters 2015) and holistic movements (Bartolini et al 2017, Heelas and Woodhead 2005).

Spatially speaking, such movements/organisations play significant roles in the everyday lives of individuals living in the UK. They do so in a variety of creative and strategic ways, sometimes working

around economic or regulatory challenges. Sacred spaces that are formed without political and/or majority recognition have been termed by geographers as “unofficial sacred spaces” (see Kong 2002). I have expanded on this concept in previous work by considering similar acts of spiritual place-making as “sacred flowscapes” (Heng 2020) – unofficial sacred spaces made real through acts of spiritual imagination, but also purposively malleable and flexible in the face of social, cultural and political constraints.

Such malleability and flexibility is necessary because not all groups or individuals have the economic or political capital to construct purpose-built spaces for worship or spiritual practice in the UK. As such, many remain hidden in plain sight, their non-descript facades belies rich heritage. Although scholars have published widely about such spaces and the groups that make them, there has been little work done to sociologically and visually examine them.

This is especially so for spaces associated with holistic movements (see Holloway 2003) and moments of spiritual commodification (York 2001). As such, there was an opportunity not just to show such spaces as an act of public sociology, but to see them through a visual sociological lens.

Over the past two years, I have been on an academic road-trip of sorts to understand, through photography, these spaces in the north of England. Funded by the British Academy’s Mid-Career Fellowship, I have photographed more than 50 instances of hidden, overlooked or forgotten spiritual spaces. These include holy wells on street corners, a Thai Buddhist temple in a refurbished hotel and a pop-up Viking temple in the Peak District — an upland area in central northern England.



Spiritualist Stand, Whitby



Healey Dell Fairy Chapel, Greater Manchester

Methodologically, I have sought to apply principles of architectural and landscape photography to making sociological photographs. Because sociology is so much about humans, visual sociology that uses photography also concentrates on photographs of humans. In contrast, fewer projects exclusively think of space and ‘-scapes’. There are some exceptions, like Harper’s (2012) photographs of a piazza and McLeod’s (2019) use of rephotography in Japan (with the practice of rephotography also being very focussed on the rhythm of social change in spaces). My own approach has been to think of the personifications of space – incorporating compositions and elements that evoke the imagined and/or emotional connections that individuals have with a particular place, whether that is through discerning “points of praxis” (Heng 2021) or more enduring material embellishment. Given the spiritual nature of my project, I have also mixed in elements of the mundane to elicit conversations between “sacred” (imagined, designed or otherwise) and everyday architecture. The resulting photographs are deliberately subtle and quiet in their presentation. They invite the reader to contemplate the space, to imagine what others imagine, and feel what others feel.

“The Spirited North”, can be seen online at www.terenceheng.info/spiritednorth. Work from the project will be exhibited at the Victoria Gallery and Museum in Liverpool from late October 2025 to early March 2026.

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Hábitat más que humano

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En una imagen tomada en una vivienda campesina del noroeste de Córdoba, en Chuña, se despliega una escena cotidiana: un rincón exterior de la casa, en primer plano unos cerdos descansan, un pavo muestra su plumaje, un algarrobo viejo proyecta su sombra y una cerca da cuenta de un corral que se extiende más allá de la fotografía. La vivienda de adobe, con su textura erosionada, da cuenta de ese diálogo constante con el clima y el tiempo. Esta imagen, además de ser un registro de la vida rural, nos invita a reflexionar sobre las interacciones más que humanas que constituyen el hábitat campesino.

Desde una perspectiva tradicional, la vivienda podría entenderse como un objeto arquitectónico aislado, diseñado para responder exclusivamente a necesidades humanas. Sin embargo, como argumentan Gibson-Graham (2015/2016), la economía no es una esfera separada de su contexto ecológico, sino que forma parte de un entramado de relaciones interdependientes. En este sentido, el hábitat campesino no puede reducirse a la casa como entidad autónoma, sino que debe comprenderse como una red de interacciones en la que cohabitan diversas especies y elementos materiales, muchos de ellos también de origen vegetal.

La imagen muestra una arquitectura viva, donde las paredes de adobe no sólo resguardan a quienes habitan la casa, sino que también regulan la humedad, la temperatura de los ambientes interiores y expresa una paleta de colores que interactúan en armonía visual con el ambiente. En ese diseño bioclimático, hace su parte el árbol próximo a la vivienda, que también colabora filtrando el asoleamiento

sobre la vivienda durante algunas horas del día. El algarrobo es protagonista en la fotografía, como lo son todos los materiales de origen natural que toman lugar en ella. La cerca de madera, hecha con materiales locales, no marca un límite rígido, sino una transición porosa entre lo doméstico y el monte. Objetos dispersos -truncos, piedras, un barril- evidencian un espacio en transformación, un espacio habitado, donde las funciones no están fijadas de antemano, sino que emergen de las necesidades y posibilidades del entorno.

Asimismo, los animales no son solo una fuente de sustento, sino parte del ecosistema doméstico. A veces, aportando fertilidad al suelo y, en otras ocasiones, generando erosión, como se puede ver en la fotografía. En cualquier caso, se trata de partícipes en la dinámica cotidiana. Las plantas de diferente porte que hay en la imagen -y fuera de ella- no son adornos paisajísticos o solo cultivos destinados al consumo, sino que también actúan como reguladores climáticos, espacios habitados, fuente de sombra para galerías naturales y elementos fundamentales en el equilibrio ecológico del lugar.

Desde esta mirada, la vivienda campesina no es un objeto estático, sino un ensamblaje de relaciones vivas, en constante transformación según los ritmos de las estaciones, la disponibilidad de recursos y las prácticas de cuidado de quienes la habitan.

El uso de la fotografía en la investigación del hábitat campesino permite capturar y comunicar estas relaciones de manera distinta a la escritura académica convencional. La imagen no solo documenta, sino que también interroga: ¿Cómo podemos pensar la arquitectura y el hábitat desde una perspectiva más que humana? ¿Qué nos revela esta escena sobre las formas de habitar en la ruralidad?

En un contexto donde las políticas habitacionales tienden a homogenizar los espacios rurales bajo lógicas urbanocéntricas, al mismo tiempo que los territorios rurales se ven amenazados por las lógicas del modelo agroindustrial, que fragmenta el territorio y homogeniza sus formas de vida, estas reflexiones adquieren una importancia política. Recuperar la diversidad de estos modos de habitar, enraizado en saberes locales y en las interacciones ecológicas que los sostienen, es fundamental para repensar el territorio desde una perspectiva epistemológicamente más justa.

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More than human habitat by Noelia Cejas

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An image of a small farmer's dwelling in Chuña in the northwest of Córdoba province (North West Argentina). An everyday scene unfolds: the outside corner of a house, in the foreground pigs are resting, a peacock shows its plumage, an old carob tree casts its shadow, and a fence shows a farmyard that extends beyond the photograph. The adobe house, with its eroded texture, highlights a constant dialogue with climate and time. The image, besides being a register of rural life, invites us to consider the more-than-human interactions that constitute the small-holding habitat.

Conventionally, a house is understood as an isolated architectural structure, designed in response to human need. As Gibson-Graham (2015/2016) argues however, the economic sphere cannot be separated from its ecological context; both form part of a web of intertwined relationships. As such, the small farmer's habitat cannot be reduced to the dwelling alone, an autonomous entity, but must be understood as a network of interactions in which diverse species and materials, including vegetal elements, cohabit.

The image reflects a living architecture in which adobe walls not only protect the inhabitants of the house but also regulate the humidity and temperature of its interior spaces and express a palette of colors in visual harmony with the environment. In this bioclimatic design, the tree next to the house plays a role by filtering the sunlight over the house for several hours of the day. The carob tree is a leading character in the photograph, as are all the materials of natural origin visible in it. The wooden fence, constructed from local materials, does not mark a rigid boundary, but a porous transition between the domestic sphere and the forest. Scattered objects - logs, stones, a barrel - point to a space in

transformation, an inhabited space, the functions of which are not fixed in advance, but emerge from the needs and possibilities of the environment.

The animals moreover are not only sources of sustenance, but also form part of this domestic ecosystem, sometimes fertilising the soil and sometimes generating erosion, as can be seen in the photograph. In any case, they are participants in its daily dynamics. The plants of different sizes in the image -and outside of it- are not landscape ornaments or only crops for consumption, but also act as climate regulators, living spaces, as natural verandahs providing shade, and are core elements in the ecological balance of this place.

Seen in this way, this small farmer's house is not a static object, but an assemblage of living relationships in constant transformation with the rhythms of the seasons, the availability of resources, and the care practices of those who inhabit it.

The use of photography in the investigation of such dwellings allows us to capture and communicate these relationships in a different way from conventional academic writing. The image not only documents, but also interrogates: How can we think about architecture and habitat from a more-than-human perspective? What does this scene reveal to us about ways of living in rural areas?

In a context in which housing policies tend to homogenize rural spaces under urban-centric logics, and that rural areas are threatened by the logics of the agro-industrial model -which fragments territories and homogenizes its ways of life- these considerations acquire a political significance. Recovering the diversity of these ways of living, rooted in local knowledge and in the ecological interactions that sustain them, is fundamental to rethinking rural lands from an epistemologically fairer perspective.

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Contributions on the visual - short reflections and photographs

Coalville: Imaging 'Coal Was Our Life'

John Goodwin

Professor of Sociology and Sociological Practice, University of Leicester

Since the early 2000s, I have been engaged in an informal ethnography of Coalville in Northwest Leicestershire, situated in the English Midlands. It is informal in that I have received no funding for this endeavour, and the research practices associated with it are simply the things I do. I live nearby. I visit. I observe, record, photograph and reflect on what I have seen to fuel my sociological imagination, as Mills (1959) advocates. Of course, this overlaps with my professional sociological practice, but my time in Coalville is not directed towards any specific purpose, output or research agenda. The only exception is that I lead an annual teaching field trip to a long-defunct colliery [coal mine] as part of a sociology module for second-year undergraduate students.



Miners Memorial Sculpture. High Street Coalville, LE67 3EA, UK

As highlighted elsewhere (see Goodwin 2016), I am drawn to Coalville as I come from a coal mining family and region. Family and friends worked underground at the pit face, as electricians or mechanics in above-ground roles, or in various allied industries such as the coking works, where coal was transformed into what was euphemistically referred to as ‘smokeless fuel’. This once vital industry was at the centre of the Industrial Revolution and, equally, the deindustrialisation of many areas of the United Kingdom in the 1980s and 1990s.

Indeed, Coalville epitomises these processes. The very name reflects the essential heavy industry upon which it was founded and once relied. Neoliberal politicians in Britain in the 1980s also contested the name, with Margaret Thatcher famously suggesting that it be renamed ‘Enterpriseville’. What could be worse than having a place that reminded those politicians of an industry whose workers they labelled the ‘enemy within’? It seems they would have preferred a place that championed the pro-enterprise, entrepreneurial free-market, anti-working-class dogma of the time.



Mining self-rescuer. A time-limited device to protect those working underground against toxic gases during gas leaks, fires or explosions. A reminder of how dangerous mining was. Snibston Colliery, Coalville

lled the ‘enemy within’? It seems they would have preferred a place that championed the pro-enterprise, entrepreneurial free-market, anti-working-class dogma of the time.

Located in the vast midlands coalfield, alongside other significant coal mines in the region, such as Bagworth (1825-1991) and Desford (1901-1984), the coal extracted from here was vital for the rapid growth of the hosiery and textile industries in nearby Leicester (see Leicester City Council 2025). Trains carried the coal directly from the county to the city, powering the factories that ‘clothed the world.’ Remnants of these railway lines and the coal-dependent factories still exist as traces of what once was.

Despite the passage of time, the landscape here is marked by the effects of deep coal mining. Hundreds of miles of underground tunnels still exist—some fully equipped but now flooded, abandoned, and capped. We know where the mines were, and the landscape is

adorned with memorials to this lost industry. Statues of miners, plaques commemorating deaths and disasters, and the winding wheels of headstocks that are positioned at the entrances and exits of villages where mining once played a significant role in community life (see Dennis et al. 1956; Turner 2000). An entire industry has been relegated to memory and inscriptions.

In Coalville, Snibston Colliery is a striking reminder of this industrial past. Sunk in the 1830s and closed finally in 1986, this mine is now a scheduled monument – a designation typically reserved for ancient castles (see Historic England 2025) and recognised as part of England’s heritage. I understand the symbolic power of such memorials – yet witnessing the headstock and winding wheels is more visceral. It resonates deeply with many. A lingering haunting by the experiences of growing up, leaving school or working during the dehumanising deindustrialisation of the 1980s. The effects of pit closures are still felt.

A note on practice. Although I frequently use the camera on my phone, Hipstamatic software, and a digital SLR, I also incorporate analogue photography, the old, and the ‘instant’ into my work – 110 cartridge cameras, Kodak Instamatics, Kodak Baby Hawkeye and Kodak Brownie 127 film cameras, as well as Polaroid 640 SE cameras with Duochrome 600 film. All these cameras are acquired inexpensively from second-hand online shopping platforms. As I have mentioned elsewhere, this is not for any aesthetic value per se, although I appreciate the imperfections that old film cameras provide. Instead, these cameras possess a limited shot capacity, necessitating a slowdown in my sociological practice and fostering a more significant investment of time and focus (see Goodwin, 2023). For example, I used the 1959 Kodak Brownie 127 camera in Coalville to photograph the colliery; I had only ten shots, and while the images from the Kodak Brownie 127 may be imperfect, they resonate with the subject. In contrast, rushing through a landscape and capturing hundreds of perfect photos on my phone without immersion or thought would be easier, yet ultimately unfulfilling.

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Publications, Events and Networks

“Draw-in as disobedient performances”, Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice, in Drawing Disobedient Bodies, Vol.9 n:2, p. 223–39.
https://doi.org/10.1386/drtip_00139_1 Özge Derman

This paper provides a sociological analysis of the various drawing actions and experiences within two contemporary social movements, namely Occupy Wall Street (2011) in New York and the Gezi Movement (2013) in Istanbul. It introduces those actions as ‘draw-ins’, relating them to historical and contemporary acts of creative resistance such as the sit-in, die-in, bed-in and stand-in. The ‘drawing’, here referred to as ‘draw-in’, embraces an embodied act of disobedience as well, whether to visually illustrate the movement in question, or to criticize the authority, or to reveal the injustice, or to depict the experiences within the social movements. The question is to understand how different temporalities coexist through those experiences and experimentations from the gestural level of drawing performance to the ongoingness of the draw-ins. Despite their differences in terms of form, creative process and consequences, I argue that the draw-in actions are revealed as transformative acts in its both ephemeral and permanent forms. They illustrated and communicated these relatively contradictory temporal forms through the dynamics of form and flow. This article is based on my research on creative performativity and the fieldwork carried out between 2015 and 2022, both in Istanbul and New York.



Call for Expressions of Interest

4th International Workshop on Visual Research for PhD Students and Young Researchers, 10-14th November, 2025, Macau, China

This is the fourth edition of the ISA RC57 Visual Sociology Workshop for PhD students and young researchers. This time it will be co-organized by the ISA Research Committee 57 in Visual Sociology, the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of St. Joseph, Macau and the Center for Research and Studies in Sociology (CIES-ISCTE, Portugal). PhD students and young researchers who are interested in developing their skills in using image-based research are welcome to send their expression of interest. **The deadline is the 1st of June.**

The format of the workshop comprises three full days of intense academic exchanges between participants and attending academics (including three keynote speakers). The work will be centered around small projects (fieldwork) done in Macau. After the three days of the workshop there will be one day for a field trip in Macau or Hong Kong.

The overarching theme of the workshop is Visual Research for the Study of Urban Transitions in Asia. Possible themes for the workshop fieldwork projects are:

- Urban transitions and environmental complexity
- (Un)sustainability and practices of co-living
- (In)visibility of urban inequalities and frictions
- Space-making practices in urban density
- Coping with space, vernacular heritage, ecologies of space-making
- The water as an elemental force in shaping the urban identity of Macau
- Food practices and street life
- Materiality and cultural complexity in Macau
- Social practices related to contemporary image production
- Global-local changes and transculturality
- Art, new media and ecology
- Urban ambience and diversity of affective fields
- Urban design
- Tourism and vernacular

The best essays produced by the participants will be recommended for submission (publication) in the Taylor & Francis journal **Visual Studies**.

The workshop is free of charge and we are planning to request free accommodation for the selected participants on the university campus. Three scholarships (300 euros each) will be awarded to selected applicants (non-residents of Macau SAR). Please note that the workshop is strictly in-person (no online attendance will be possible) and that the working language will be English. We welcome participants whose work is grounded both empirically and historically/geographically. Prior experience of using visual methods in research is desirable but not mandatory. Participants from Asian countries are highly encouraged to apply.

If you are interested, please send your application to Dr. Dennis Zuev, using the following email addresses: tungus66@gmail.com and denis.zuev@usj.edu.mo

Your application should consist of a) a short abstract of your current project, b) a short abstract of what you wish to explore in Macau (using visual methods) and c) a one-page CV.

The setting:

The Macau Special Administrative Region is a fascinating territory in the south of the People's Republic of China. Macau is one of the world's key gaming hubs. Since the 2000s, the gaming industry has facilitated rapid, sometimes unbalanced, urban development. As the world's most densely populated city, Macau is a living laboratory for the study of cultural hybridity, consumerscapes, vertical urbanism, spectacular infrastructure-led urbanism and social inequalities. The city is also a tourist hub and has developed transportation, accommodation infrastructure as well as a vibrant university population.

Venue: University of St. Joseph, Macau, PRC

Check the visa policy for Macau here <https://www.gov.mo/en/services/ps-1474/ps-1474b/>.



Contact - Board Members and ways of contacting RC57

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