IMPRS REMEP Winter University 2012

Thematic Workshop on Visual Aspects of Retaliation, Mediation and Punishment

The International Max Planck Research School on Retaliation, Mediation and Punishment (IMPRS REMEP) was founded in 2008. Its research focuses on the role of retaliation, mediation, and punishment in the (re-)establishment of peace and social order in society. More specifically, it seeks to explore the relationships between retaliation, mediation and punishment, and to theorize on the basis of different disciplinary perspectives regarding retaliation, mediation, and punishment and social order. In its research approach, the IMPRS REMEP is thus decidedly interdisciplinary. It draws not only on the fields of criminology and jurisprudence, but also sociology, legal history, and social and legal anthropology.

The thematic workshop on visual aspects of REMEP introduces additional disciplinary perspectives that can help to better understand retaliation, mediation and punishment and their function(s) in processes of social ordering and control. ‘Visualization,’ writes Mariana Valverde (2006: 133) ‘is key to the social construction of both crime/danger and of its opposite or its remedy, namely, safety and order’. And Claire Valier (2004: 251) remarks: ‘the power to punish is a power of the image. […] Acts of showing, of looking, of seeing and of feeling become integral to the punitive power, and the ways in which it can be contested’. Yet, this aspect is often ignored or overlooked. Therefore, this workshop seeks to explore the performative, sensual and aesthetic dimensions of REMEP, as well as the symbolic displays, cultural interpretations and representational contestations that are formative parts of each one of these three key concepts. To this end, it draws on scholarly work done in the sub-fields of visual sociology and visual criminology, and considers valuable insights offered by research in (critical) visual culture, image studies and cultural studies. After all, if we want to understand the visual aspects of everyday experiences of retaliation, mediation and punishment, we need to go beyond mere enumerations or descriptions of manifest content. Rather, as cultural criminologists Jeff Ferrell et al. (2004) note in their edited collection Cultural Criminology Unleashed, we need to fuse precise visual attentiveness with politically charged analysis and to be as attuned to representation and style as to the way visual culture impacts on individual and collective behavior.

In order to explore the role of the visual in relation to the overall REMEP framework of the research school and in each one of the participants’ projects, this workshop will therefore, inter alia, address the following questions: How do visualizations render certain target populations and/or certain social fields visible and, ultimately, governable? How do visualizations function in the construction of both crime and order, i.e. how, by whom and for what purpose are they mobilized and instrumentalized? How, for example, is the realm of the visual used to legitimize or open up possibilities for control, punishment and/or mediation? Can crime be framed in such a way as to call justice into play? And can images or ways of looking themselves be punitive or retaliatory? What images and imaginations of crime, criminals and the criminal justice system are offered and why? And what images and imaginations of retaliation, mediation and punishment can be found? Are there differences in this regard between private, private-public and state actors? How can the articulation between politics and visuality be understood in this context? How is meaning produced by and through the visual when it circulates in and across specific cultures? Can the visual be used as a site of contest and resistance, as a form of counter-aesthetics? And finally, which visual events are relegated to the space of the unseen, the invisible?
Summary of Objectives

It is the aim of the visual workshop to:

- Analyze the role that visualizations play in the construction of crime/danger and of safety/order;
- Explore the role of visualizations in processes of retaliation, mediation and punishment;
- Examine existing conceptions, imaginaries, and stereotypes of retaliation, mediation and punishment and their significance in establishing and maintaining social order;
- Identify and analyze visual rhetoric/narratives in discourses of retaliation, mediation, and punishment and to understand how they function;
- Investigate how and to what extent visualizations help to create social environments which generate their own modes of social control;
- Assess in what way and to what extent visualizations aid in the construction of acceptance and legitimacy of different modes of social control;
- Consider how visualizations can be used to enable counter-narratives or to subvert dominant narratives of retaliation, mediation and punishment;
- Reflect on the relationship(s) between the visual, the political, law, violence, punishment, order, morality and justice.

Guest speakers

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Selected readings


**Paper workshop**
The purpose of the paper workshop which will take place at the end of the thematic workshop on visual aspects of REMEP is to use the presentations and ideas that are developed during the Winter University and to publish them in a small booklet, similar to the Summary Proceedings published by Andreas Armborst and David Jensen in 2009.

Those who are interested in having their papers published are asked to distribute their draft papers to all the participants at least one week in advance of the Winter University. In addition, they are asked to designate two critics who will introduce the paper and lead the discussion. Each paper discussion will start with extensive comments by the two pre-selected critics, at least one of whom does not yet have a Ph.D. After the two critics made their remarks, the author is given time to respond. The floor is then open to comments and questions by the other workshop participants.

In addition to oral comments, participants are encouraged to submit written comments.