



**DOCTORAL SPRING SCHOOL**  
**ON**  
**‘VISUAL ANALYSIS & CONTENTIOUS POLITICS’**  
**Call for Applications**

By Hans Joerg Trenz and Manuela Caiani (SNS)

*financial and logistic support*

*Scuola Normale Superiore,*

*Faculty of Political and Social Sciences,*

*Florence, Italy*

**Date** Monday 29th May 2023 (2pm CET time) until 1 June (1 pm CET time)

**Location:** Cortona (<https://www.sns.it/it/palazzone-di-cortona>)

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**Description:**

Studies on online political communication, participation and mobilisation increasingly integrate visual materials among relevant data for the understanding of contentious politics. To explore the symbolic messages and discursive meaning of images in online campaigning, contentious politics, political participation and progressive and regressive mobilisation this PhD school focuses on methods of *visual content analysis*. Visual productions by political actors such as photos, posters, leaflets and memes are considered relevant for their power to communicate, to mobilise political protest (e.g. during the Covid-19) and as tools of propaganda (e.g. during the Ukraine war). The PhD school will further pay attention to the new salience of visibility in online political contestation of values and democracy, This regards in particular the mobilisation of radical political forces of the political right and the left, expressions of populism, anti gender, no vax, hate speeches and conspiracies. What images

are used by these actors to tell their stories? What (pop-)cultural repertoires do they tap into to create resonance with their target audience? Which narrative and visual strategies do transitional phenomena, as ‘movement parties’, online opinion movements or conspiracy mobilisations use as forms of contentious politics?

The PhD school welcomes papers on geographical areas and actors that are underrepresented in current research and media coverage.

### **Programme of the PhD School**

The PhD School consists of three days with lectures by prominent scholars in the field of image analysis in the morning and sessions on carrying out visual analysis in the afternoon. The students will have a theoretical session and a methodological session every day, followed by a lab in which they apply the methods that they learn. Students will also get feedback from experts in the field of image analysis about their own research projects.

#### **Invited lecturers**

Lecture 1: Political conflict in digital images (Prof. Hans-Joerg Trenz, SNS)

Lecture 2: Visual narrative analysis - storytelling beyond iconic images (Dr. Katja Freistein, Helmut-Schmidt University, Hamburg)

Lecture 3: Visual cross-platform analysis: Digital methods to research social media images (Suay Melisa Özkula, University of Trento)

Lecture 4: Visuals in Social Movement Research (Prof. Nicole Doerr, University of Copenhagen)

Lecture 5: Visuals in the Mobilisation of the Radical Right (Prof. Manuela Caiani, SNS)

#### **Paper presentations and discussions:**

Discussant among the SNS faculty political science and sociology teaching staff.

#### **Application procedure**

The PhD School is open to **17 Ph.D. researchers** with an interest in visual analysis and the study of political conflicts on social media. Applicants should submit a **curriculum vitae** and a **short cover letter (no more than 1 page)** outlining how their research focus fits with the topic of the PhD School and how participation in the school would benefit their research. These materials should be submitted as **one PDF** by sending an email to [manuela.caiani@unifi.it](mailto:manuela.caiani@unifi.it); [hansjorg.trenz@sns.it](mailto:hansjorg.trenz@sns.it) before the **01st of March 2023**.

**Enrolment fees, accommodation and location**

There are no enrolment fees. The organisers will help providing accommodation. Travel and accommodation costs for the duration of the stay need to be covered by the participants. Lunch and coffee breaks are covered by the School. Cortona is a small town in the South of Tuscany, Italy, in easy reach by train from Florence or Rome. Classes will take place in the same location.

**Requirements**

To receive the certificate of participation participants are expected to complete the mandatory readings and actively participate in the morning lectures and method and lab sessions.

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