

## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

### **CONFERENCE**

#### **Visibility Matters: Rendering Human Origins and Diversity in Space and Time**

*The conference aims at bringing together scholars from various disciplines who work on the visualization of human origins and diversity. A particular focus will be on the diagrammatic forms of representation. Strategies of diagrammatic representation typically employ a series of textual, symbolic, and pictorial elements. Such strategies may include, among others, specific ways of subjectification; the serialization, spatialization, and temporalization of data; the storage of standardized data sets; and staging techniques of protagonists, events, and processes, notably in the architecture of exhibitions, parks and museums, and through the medium of film and animation.*

**Organizers: Research Groups ‘History Within’ (Marianne Sommer, Lucerne) and ‘Human Biological Diversity’ (Veronika Lipphardt, MPIWG) in cooperation with Staffan Müller-Wille (Exeter) and Susanne Bauer (Frankfurt)**

**Venue: University of Lucerne, Switzerland**

**Dates: April 25-27, 2013**

**Deadline for title and abstract submission: September 30, 2012**

**Submission at [officelipphardt@mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de](mailto:officelipphardt@mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de)**

*For further information see call for papers at <http://unilu.ch/visibility>*

In anthropology as in other scientific fields, images are no mere ornaments of texts, nor do they simply illustrate what is already textually explained. Rather, images of contemporary human groups and prehistoric humans constitute arguments in and of themselves, shaping anthropological debates in particular ways (e.g. Gould 1989; Moser 1992; Rudwick 1988). Anthropologists and archaeologists themselves as well as historians and sociologists of science have analyzed the irresistible depictions of extinct or ‘primitive’ humans and highlighted their blatantly racialized and gendered dimensions. Efforts have been made to enquire into strategies of persuasion, into the establishment of genres, and to disentangle the manifold socio-cultural preconceptions that are worked into images of life scenes in particular (e.g. Gifford-Gonzalez 1993; Moser 1993; Wiber 1998). Recent studies have highlighted the specific role of photography in anthropological and ethnographical research (Edwards 1992; 2009), as well as of visibility – and invisibility – for racial thinking (Stoler 1997). Also visualizations more broadly understood, such as ‘anthropological displays’ of ‘African villages’ in European zoos (Dreesbach 2012), and ethnographic or paleoanthropological dioramas have been scrutinized, and their production, visual codes, and mythologies situated in the context of colonial science (e.g. Arnoldi 1999; Bal 1992).

At the same time, a different kind of imagery of human variation and human origins has largely escaped systematic analysis: diagrams, or diagrammatic representations that integrate textual and pictorial elements. The most ubiquitous is the phylogenetic diagram, which has its roots in late medieval genealogical representations of 'noble descent' (Muller-Wille and Rheinberger 2007). From early linguistic trees, to Ernst Haeckel's German oak that encoded a hierarchy in accordance with a teleological view of evolution, to Cavalli-Sforza's linguistic and genetic phylogenies, arborescent images have come in many avatars, from artistic abstractions to naked line diagrams, to bush- or rhizome-like structures (Alter 1999; Bouquet 1994; Brace 1981). Such diagrams of hominid and human genealogies condense complicated theories and scenarios, and they have changed in concert with developments in the dominant view of human evolution in the course of history (Sommer 2007).

Other diagrammatic visualizations of human diversity and evolution have attracted less scholarly attention. This is all the more astonishing in light of the early nineteenth century turn to rigorous measurement and visual presentation of data in tables and graphs that preceded evolutionary accounts of human history (Gould 1981). Such diagrams became integral to fields such as anthropometry, ethnology, or eugenics, because they generated synoptic presentations of singular observations and measurements, which often brought about surprising effects (Hanke 2007; Lipphardt 2009). At the same time, the development of statistical and cartographic tools for the analysis and visualization of human diversity not only went hand in hand with new ways of analyzing genealogical relations (Parnes 2007); it was also accompanied by intense debates about the adequacy of these tools (Porter 1995).

Contemporary scientists of human origins and diversity, including anthropological genetics, work with distribution and migration maps, statistical tables, and graphs. A map may display distributions of characters, of human groups, or migration events, or all at once, in order to make statements about the ancestry and evolution of human populations (Gannett and Griesemer 2004). A table may compare diverse demographic figures derived from the study of ethnic groups in order to portray their dynamic relationships. These visualizations circulate in various scientific fields, medical, demographic, and biological disciplines, as well as in wider public arenas and popular media.

In the conference we would like to focus on the history of such diagrammatic tools of knowledge generation and communication in the human sciences. Even sources that at first glance seem to be of an overtly visual character can be analyzed for their diagrammatic content. An ethnographic collection of photographs, for example, does not only consist of individual depictions: their serial and spatial arrangement may render particular temporal or social relations visible, while others recede into the background. Strategies of diagrammatic representation typically employ a series of textual, symbolic, and pictorial elements (Goody 1977; Deleuze 1988). Such strategies may include, among others, specific ways of subjectification; the serialization, spatialization, and temporalization of data; the storage of standardized data sets; and staging techniques of protagonists, events, and processes, notably in

the architecture of exhibitions, parks and museums, and through the medium of film and animation.

In analyzing such sources, clues can be taken from the recent studies of early modern annotation practices and paper technologies (Vismann 2008; Blair 2010); of serialization as a characteristic of modernity (Hopwood, Schaffer and Secord 2010); and of contemporary practices of 'data-driven' research (Leonelli 2012). Among other things these studies point to the importance of analysing processes of production and circulation. Furthermore: How exactly are diagrams made, from the collecting of specimens or data to their final publication or presentation? How do they combine with each other, for example in anthropological collections, or in museum exhibits? We would like to consider how diagrammatic visualizations are integral to the research process and how they function as epistemic tools. Finally we ask how they have shaped social relations, between experts and lay audiences for example, or political relations, between researchers, administrators and subject populations.

Diagrams in the human sciences convey messages about how and when diversity emerged, and thus implicitly or explicitly make statements about who 'we' and 'they' are. At this conference, we would like to uncover the social and epistemic dimensions of diagrammatic representations.

*Submission guidelines:*

*Scholars who wish to contribute to the workshop are requested to send a proposal of 500 words by 30 Sept 2012 to the following e-mail address:*

[officelipphardt@mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de](mailto:officelipphardt@mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de)

*Please submit your proposal as an email attachment along with your name, institutional affiliation and email address.*

*Please indicate in the subject line of your message: submission visibility matters conference.*

*We hope to respond to all proposals by mid November 2012. We hope to be able to cover all travel and accommodation expenses for speakers.*

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