

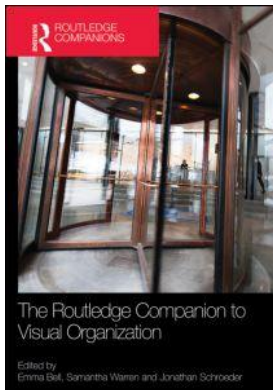
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## **The Routledge Companion to Visual Organization**

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### **Between the visible and the invisible in organizations**

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# Part I

## Thinking visually about organization

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# Between the visible and the invisible in organizations

Wendelin Küpers

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## Introduction

To explore visibility in organizations, this chapter takes a phenomenological approach, attending to the lived experience of visibility at work. Phenomenology aims to investigate the conditions of the appearance of phenomena and therefore what is taken as reality. In particular, it tries to reveal the difference between *what* appears and *how* something appears or becomes visible as something, as well as the interplay between these two modes. It also considers the invisible in this process. Following a phenomenological perspective, this chapter discusses specifically the status, distinct qualities and entwinement of visibility and the invisible in organizational life-worlds and how they function together as sources of perceiving, knowing, performing and understanding in and about organizations.

Vision, visibility, visual culture, and visual consumption are playing an increasingly important role in present-day societal and economic contexts as well as in organizational and managerial life-worlds (Campbell, Chapter 8, this volume; Fuery and Fuery 2003; Schroeder 2005). Apparently, we are living – and organizations are situated – in a visually over-saturated culture (Gombrich 1996), moving in the light and shadows of a visual or pictorial turn, towards an intensifying and ambiguous ocularcentric orientation (Jay 1993, 2002; Kavanagh, Chapter 4, this volume; Mitchell 1994, 2005b). Yet, despite the proliferation of powerful visual forms and relationships, the influence and production of various images or impacts of visual technologies in everyday working life, research on visibility and visual culture seems to be peripheral to the study of organizations. In part, this may be caused by organization studies' self-image, that is, what it regards as its identity, 'object' and methodologies – in other words, traditionally, 'the visual' is not seen as part of organizational analysis. However, as this chapter explains, visibility and the power to make visible are shot through all organizational action.

The phenomenon of vision and concepts of visibilities are complicated and implicated experiences and notions, with a long history of contested philosophical and scientific thinking and analysis, with regard to their ontological and epistemological status. Due to specific orders of visibilities, members of, as well as entire, organizations are framed in a certain way of looking. To explore this further, the chapter first presents a brief discussion of epistemologies of the eye and the act of seeing as performative practice. The role of vision in processes of organizational

objectification, as well as concrete practices of seeing in organizations, are then critically discussed, before the phenomenology of ‘visio-corporeality’ by Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1995) is put forward as a way to ‘re-member’ and ‘re-view’ organizations beyond objectified and instrumentalized forms. In particular, this shows how phenomenology helps understanding of the sensuous embodied socio-cultural ‘life-worlds’ of organization with its visible and invisible dimensions. Afterwards, some theoretical, methodological and practical implications for organization studies and practice will be put forward and the chapter concludes with an outline of some limitations and future perspectives.

## **Epistemologies of eyes and practices of seeing: how do we see and enact seeing?**

Vision and visually related phenomena are conceptualized, analysed, understood and interpreted in various ways. Seeing, sight and vision are embroiled in different, ambivalent, sometimes contradictory approaches. Visuality can be characterized as ‘how we see, how we are able, allowed or made to see, and how we see this seeing or the unseen therein’ (Foster 1988: ix). Instead of taking seeing and visualizing or vision for granted, visual processes need to be explored in the way they appear, and then problematized, theorized, historicized and critiqued (Mitchell 2005a: 264).

For theorizing critically and developing a methodological conceptualization, it makes analytical sense to differentiate between ‘epistemologies of the eye’ and ‘practices of seeing’ (Daston and Galison 2007; Brighenti 2007: 323).

Epistemologies of modern science attribute a fundamental role to the sense of sight, in the forms of vision and evidence that are taken as intellectual apprehension. ‘Epistemologies of the eye’ refer to the theoretical body of elaborations that address the philosophical and scientific theories of what vision ‘is’. These perspectives explore ‘how vision can be used to formulate and generate “representational” knowledge as well as how perceptions of subjects and scientific selves and their scientific gaze are constituted’ (de Bolla 1996: 76).

While the ‘epistemologies of the eye’ are concerned with theories of how knowledge claims are made on the basis of the inter-relationships between seeing, saying and previous knowing, ‘practices of seeing’ are studied in how vision and visuality happen, structure and inform everyday working life more concretely. Accordingly, ‘practices of vision’ refer to actual practicalities and day-to-day engagements with visual presentations and ways of seeing, serving specific purposes (Styhre 2010: 187). In contrast, ‘practices of seeing’ explore how visual practices are occurring, developed and used in various domains of presentation.

Epistemologies and practices are interrelated. On the one hand, theorizing is a form of practice. Interestingly, the Greek word for theory – *theoria* – shares a root with *theatron* or *theatre*, which literally means ‘a place for seeing’ (Sennett 2008: 124). Seeing in this sense is a theoretical affair that can be related to practice, as it is a kind of doing. On the other hand, practices of seeing do not occur in a social and cultural vacuum, but are always structured and organized in accordance with specific conditions, processes and epistemic regimes. How we acquire, interpret and transform what (and the way) we see is always contingent on the cultural and historical context of the seer and of seeing. Practices of presentational performative seeing are always that which is ‘re-presentative’ of and formed by a particular regime of vision, which is predominant in a locally situated and embodied setting. There is no ‘seeing *per se*’ detached from other embodied practices and procedures. In turn, vision and visuality are of essential significance for exploring how practices are constituted and how they engender organizational practices, processes and effects.

## The role of vision and practices of seeing in organizations

Driven by the need for security and a quest for certainty, gazing vision (for example, by management (systems) on employees' actions) is often instrumentalized so as to posit a distance and exert mastering control. Accounting systems, production statistics and the reduction of human endeavour to, say, performance management metrics are all examples of how organizations make some activities and actions visible (but not others) and, in doing so, render them as objects. The passion and drive of the employee's commitment to the organization is only made visible as a point on a Likert scale that can be ranked and contrasted with others' scores, for example. Following a 'frontational' ontology, this representational regime is characterized by an enframing and foreclosing of the viewer, which makes him/her 'stand-over-against' the world (Heidegger 1977 [1938]). This stance makes phenomena or things that organizations seek to visualize and our relationship to them sub-stances, standing under the masterful transfixing and possessing gaze in search of surveillance, security, control – thereby objectifying them. The operationalization of this objectifying vision therefore 'sees' only what can be measured, in other words, what can come to count as an object to be used. Intentionally or otherwise, this leads towards obscurity, occlusion or even suppression of other ways of seeing.

For example, Oswick (1996) develops a diagnostic approach for organization development including pattern recognition, spatial localization and visual imagery, illustrating vision as effect of an objectifying approach – including blind spots, visual accommodation or visual acuity. In diagnosing various forms of 'impaired vision' in organization, such as blindness, blurred or tunnel vision, as well as short- and long-sightedness, Oswick (1996: 148) argues we can consider the unseen, the unseeable and the overlooked in organizational life. Furthermore, these objects are posited as a 'naturalized' vision; they are taken as evidential proof of how things are, while overlooking the generative dimensions of visibility that allow objects to come into focus, forgetting the diacritical systems and meaning that are at play in object-formation. The logic of objectification tends to ignore, exclude or omit the social-historical horizon and material and affective or subjective dimensions, which, however, motivates and impacts the seeing. In other words, we forget that we are socialized into what is worth looking at and how we see it, which is *learned* and not given.

This powerful practice of vision can be seen in what has been called 'professional vision'. This orientation refers to a specific and contingent 'way of seeing' that is embedded in professional identities, ideologies, formal training and everyday work experience (Goodwin 1994, 1995; Styhre 2010: 43). Accordingly, knowing and knowledge is always already embedded in practices of seeing that are highly specialized and based on membership of communities and collectives. Importantly, for Goodwin (1995), vision is a professional skill that is neither individual nor innate, but always based on collective agreements and acquired through training and actual practice in the field of expertise. Visuality can also be observed as being executed in formal ceremonies and rituals of organizations with its visible language and visual labour or contexts. Practically, various depicting forms of graphs, ratios and other forms of mathematized vision or ways of visualizing time manifest an objectifying orientation (Styhre 2010: 18).

Echoed in the work of Spoelstra: 'some things can be seen only through organizations, other things can be organized only through seeing, and yet other things can only be hidden through organizations' (2009: 376). Spoelstra refers to this organizational 'hiddenness' as 'black blindness'. Organizations produce this 'darkness' of deprived sight for their members through the division of labour and the creation of distance – in other words, they prevent certain people from seeing certain things. In contrast to this dark form, a white blindness manifests as an excess of vision, as if taken away by light. Similar to Benjamin's concept of 'phantasmagoria' as a deceptive image

(‘*Blendwerk*’), designed to dazzle, whitening blindness refers to a ‘brilliance that conceals in its shining but which also produces its own singular attraction’ (Spoelstra 2009: 379), such as, for example, overly brilliant leaders or products or employees or shining corporate image-work in times of crisis (de Cock *et al.* 2011). Being ruled by a scopic regime, seeing has been systematically sharpened and disembodied, becoming an errant, clinically fixed but clouded gaze (Jütte 2005: 186). Accordingly, the gaze in organizations, with their orientation towards abstraction, masculinity, coldness and detachment, is used as a disciplinary mechanism and technique of disembodied panoptic eyes and social panoptical control and visio-governmentality (Foucault 1977; McKinlay and Starkey 1998).

Correspondingly, within organization studies, the objectivist and disembodied understandings of phenomena are connected to an ocularcentric orientation (e.g. Belova 2006; Kavanagh 2004), using vision instrumentally, for example, to produce a ‘functionalist transparency’ (Bloomfield and Vurdubakis 1997). Dale (2000) argues that the scientist’s ‘eye’ dissects what it sees in order to perform an invasive investigation. It fragments and reorganizes the object of study, and this anatomizing urge pervades almost all areas of knowledge, both as a metaphor and as a form of representation. Thus, the critique of the ‘culture of dissection’ presents vision as an incising, objectifying and ordering activity aimed at seizing and appropriating the other.

## Politics of visibility

In contemporary, supposedly more transparent society, organizations are required to become more visible, and thus accountable, through reporting, disclosure and, of course, unintentionally through Internet activity by those who their operations affect. This implies a specific politics of visibility (Tapscott and Ticoll 2003; Zyglidopoulos and Fleming 2011). Exploring such politics would consider the controlling and contested in-visibility of power (Simpson and Lewis 2005) and seeing that organizations and their members are situated in a tension between ‘transparency-as-secrecy’ and ‘secrecy-as-transparency’ with its inherent mutual dependencies and contradictions (Birchall 2011). As Birchall argues, considering a possible symbiotic relationship between secrecy and transparency means invoking a politics of opacity and openness, which is able to work with the inherent tensions involved. In other words, organizations display in order to conceal and vice versa. All is not what it first appears. For example, forms of organizational perception management practices, such as organizational aesthetics, architecture and design or marketing/branding, use a variety of manipulations of the visual in organizational spaces or settings to produce desirable effects in a market or the public (Styhre 2010: 13). Imageries are used as persuasive communication for apparently rendering organizations visually, but adopting a politics of visibility asks ‘what is simultaneously obscured?’ by these practices (Dale and Burrell 2003; Messaris 1997).

Accounting practices in organization, for example, are shaped and experienced as a series of images that undertake political work on behalf of organizations (Belkaoui 1987; Brown 2010; Davison 2011). Accounting reports are ostensibly artefacts providing visual traces (or drivers) of past, present and future activities (e.g. budgets) or other organizational action, processes and culture. They use words, diagrams, tables, charts and pictures to create images that render tangible and intangible values or specific organizational activities visible or invisible (Hines 1988). Yet re-presentational aspects of accounting are a symbolic, cultural and hegemonic force (Lehman and Tinker 1987). For example, corporate sustainability reports contain unsubstantiated visual rhetoric on ‘clean, green images’ and manifest a ‘reporting-performance’ gap (Adams 2004). For instance, the journey metaphor related to sustainability can be used as visual rhetoric

that masks issues of what it is that businesses are actually or even supposedly moving ‘towards’, thus paradoxically reinforcing business-as-usual (Milne *et al.* 2006).

However, critical scholars in this field have begun to document different accounting(s) than those of, for and by this visual instrumentality, potentially providing new envisioning, and stimulating new imag(in)ings (Brown 2010). Although there has been some myopia with regard to the importance of the visual in accounting and accountability (Davison and Warren 2009), some social and environmental accounting reports incorporate externalities and non-monetary (re)presentations and delineate consensual meaning-making processes, whereas others proactively seek to represent marginalized views and develop alternative professional bodies and digital technologies to challenge mainstream accounting (Brown 2010).

In another political move, ‘vision’, and especially visualization of strategy (Eppler and Platts 2009) and strategic envisioning, is seen as one of the critical tasks transformation or visionary leaders claim to perform to demonstrate their competencies (Larwood *et al.* 1995). However, this is often merely a rhetorical vision without authentic involvement or recognition of followers that then can result in disillusionment and distrust, instead of inspiration and motivation (Coulson-Thomas 1992) or various forms of resistance (Westley 1990). When we take recognition as a form of social visibility embedded in interaction between leader and followers, the lack of recognition has disempowering effects: in formulating strategic visions, the followers become paradoxically *invisible*. We can see this as having very real effects. In post-Fordist, more competitive workplaces, the conditions for genuine, intersubjective recognition have been eroded as supposedly counter-productive (Dejours 2003). Instead of recognition, managerial regimes of ‘sur-veillances’ (literally: to view from above) can function as subjugation and means of control through disciplinary regimes. Inherent in such one-way managerial gaze is a kind of dehumanization of the observed – and possibly, although indirectly, of the observer, too. Performance appraisals are an example par excellence of so-called ‘recognition’ in neoliberal organizations, which actually function as surveillance, control and objectification as also outlined earlier in this chapter.

The mono-gaze of the modern subject or agencies in organization is, thus, a ‘grasping’ look that advances political agendas by calculating, looking at in order to objectify and control, intentionally or otherwise, towards obscurity, occlusion or even suppression of other ways of seeing. For critically exploring underlying conditions of vision and regimes of visual representation and how practices of seeing serve as an influencing factor within organizations, a phenomenological approach is therefore helpful. It not only allows alternating between the two registers of epistemologies and practices, but also integrates them (Styhre 2010: 187). Merleau-Ponty, in particular, provides a post-Cartesian epistemology and relational ontology of embodied vision and an extended understanding of seeing and the invisible as part of embodied practice and somatic infrastructures in organizations, as opposed to the partial, political and ‘enframed’ vision this chapter has put forward thus far.

### **Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception and ontology: between visible and invisible**

Phenomenology has developed a profound critique of the hegemony of an optical paradigm in everyday vision. In critical distancing from the Husserlian transcendental visualism with its rectilinear, centred gaze of ‘*Wesensschau*’ (intuitive glance upon essences), Heidegger (1962) showed that our ‘visionary-being-in-the-world’ is part of our endowment as an attunement. Accordingly, he developed a critique of the re-presentational orientation of enframed vision. He tried to show that this enframing is a mode of revealing – when we understand the concealment



and unconcealment of what is happening; when seeing those moments when *Being* reveals itself as event we will be able to catch its hiding.

Like Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty (1962) disclosed other ways of experiencing the field of perception from a post-representational perspective, particularly by attending to the living body. For Merleau-Ponty, embodiment and perception – including seeing – are pre-reflexive openings onto a world. As such, these are not merely a screen of ideas or stage of Cartesian theatre, what we see ‘out there’ with us gazing upon it like an audience. Rather, processes of perceiving are incarnated through bodies as living media, especially mediating a crossing where matter, nature and culture, self and world as well as forces and meaning meet and unfold. Importantly, such an approach helps to bridge these divisions without effacing the differences between these poles of perception, knowledge and living.

Thus, he argues for a vision as being embodied. That is, when we see, we feel the presence of the thing we are looking at viscerally and are part of a ‘carnal formula’: a matrix of embodiment. By means of our bodily perceptive insertion into reality, we are always already vitally responsive to the demands of our situation upon our body. With this orientation, he aims at rediscovering and uncovering the system of inseparable ‘self-other-things’ (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 57) that create visual experience all together. The sensible and thus visual world is not comprised of a distinct subject that perceives distinct objects, but, rather, seeing is formed in the midst of the world and, as it were, in (relation to) phenomena experienced. Perception is not something that provides the embodied subject with access to the world, but rather embodied perception is only possible because it is of the world, whereby ‘he who sees cannot possess the visible unless he is possessed by it, unless he is of it’ (Merleau-Ponty 1995: 134–135).

By returning to this primordial experience, Merleau-Ponty is trying to find a third position beyond an empiricist-objectivist realism or materialism, as well as discount a rationalistic-subjectistic idealism or intellectualism. Both of these strands are reductive, reducing live-worldly phenomena, perception and sensation either to the realm of matter or to that of ideas of absolute subjectivity. He accused materialistic empiricism of reducing vision to observations of sensualistic in- and output mechanisms, and rationalistic intellectualism of turning vision to a function of thought and judgement. Instead, he argued for decentering perception and for a perspectivism, which are undermining the vision-generated dualism of subject and object.

Correspondingly, bringing the ‘becoming visible’ of the seen into the glance is not to take substantive sensualities, nor atomic sense data or a reason-oriented transcendentalism as a starting point. Rather, it requires considering the *process* of sensual experience of the entwined and embodied world-situated experiencing within a horizon and Gestalt figure-back-ground.

For Merleau-Ponty, perceiving and seeing is not holding an object egological with a frontal glance in a re-presentational way. Rather, the perceiver is embedded and delivered over to a field of the sensible and vision, which is structured in terms of the difference between things and colours, as a momentary crystallization of coloured being or visibility (Merleau-Ponty 1995: 132).

According to Merleau-Ponty, it is through a pre-cognitive multi-sensorial contact that the world appears within the perceptual field. Embodied visual sensing is mediating a pre-reflexive, yet active communion (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 212) and thereby meanings. Moreover, sensual and especially visual perception re-creates or reconstitutes the world at every moment (ibid.: 207). Seeing is not an act of the subject, but an event, which interplays between the one who sees, the visual and co-seeing in the sphere of visibility and performance. When we perceive things, we are constantly sensitive not only to what we perceive, but also, and essentially, to how well our experience measures up to our perceptual needs and desires. As sensing is embedded and related to a horizon of meaning, visual sensing and its making of sense are bound

by historical and cultural perspectives as well as social practices. Therefore, the seeing body and the embodiment of senses are always already culturally mediated (Merleau-Ponty 1995: 147) and to make visible cannot be conceived without (reflecting) a specific order of visibility and field of indeterminate vision, which is then endowed with meaning (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 5, 9). The glance is itself an incorporation of the one who sees and searches into a given visibility, to which s/he always already belongs.

For Merleau-Ponty, embodied perception, vision, consciousness and the world are all intricately intertwined. Focus on bodily experiences and embodiment not as 'objects' or 'representations', but as constitutive and 'open' media led Merleau-Ponty to an anti-foundationalism, anti-essentialism and non-dualism, and philosophy of ambiguities. These orientations characterize his non-reductionistic approach and post-metaphysical ontology of visibility. The patterns of meaningful being and action, as base or media for visibility, exist neither in the mind nor in the external world. They are neither subjective nor objective, but constitute rather a kind of world *in between*, an inter-relatedness of individual, social and trans-subjective practices. It is this 'between' within an ongoing continuity of ourselves, others and the natural world in what Merleau-Ponty calls 'flesh' that needs to be considered to understand vision, as both are enfolded ontologically.

### Vision and chiasmic flesh: the invisible in organization

For Merleau-Ponty, habitual ways of seeing and vision – entwined with other senses, especially touch – belong to a certain style or mode of fleshly being and primordial expression. Metaphorically, this elemental flesh refers to a textile or common connective tissue. As such, it mediates between exterior and interior horizons as well as functions as an 'anonymous visibility' (Merleau-Ponty 1995: 131, 142). Thus, this elemental being manifests a kind of invisible ontological processual 'foundation' out of which things, selves and others arise in reciprocal relations in search for an expression. This reversible dynamic inter-relationship and its in(ter)-between of flesh is processed and described by Merleau-Ponty with the post-dichotomous metaphor of chiasm. Derived from the Greek letter '*chi*' (Χ), chiasm implies a criss-crossing structure, as is found at the point in the brain where the optic nerves from the right visual field cross to the left side and vice versa. Since these perception-enabling nerves are not photosensitive, they 'create hidden blind spots in the periphery of our field of vision before the chiasm reversibly rejoins the two sides of the visual field in one unified visibility' (Cataldi 1993: 73). The chiasm in Merleau-Ponty's thinking is a point of diffraction and a mediating link between different sides, like a connecting lacuna of intersection, i.e. giving and taking that constitutes all perception and communication without a final synthesis (Merleau-Ponty 1995: 143).

Metaphorically, the affective chiasm is like a wave that encounters sand at the seashore before flowing back to the sea. Through a constantly reversible flow, they form an interlaced circular movement; each advances by turn, folding over and coiling back through divergence and overlap(ping) as an 'identity-encompassing-difference' (Dillon 1988: 159). Within this fabric of experience or 'flesh' pre-personal, personal and interpersonal dimensions are processed and serve as a milieu of visibility; 'the place of emergence of a vision' (Merleau-Ponty 1995: 272). In this way, flesh serves as a reflexive sensibility of things (Carman 2008: 123). It carries or mediates the perceptibility of the environment and of ourselves as perceivers simultaneously. The intertwining and reversible chiasm of the visibility of vision is much the same as the tangibility of touch. Even more, flesh sensibly reflects the exposure of anything to which the world itself can be exposed and related in experience, including the bodily sense or experience of motor intentionality and movement, as well as the inter-folding of things and words, language and meaning.

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and indirect, chiasmic 'inter-ontology' not only allows understanding of phenomena and its ambiguous visibility as multiform and multivalent. His philosophy also makes it possible to integrate both: a critical post-representational epistemology of the eye-world-contact and practices of pre-cognitive, moving-touching gestures. Accordingly, the space of vision both surrounds us and passes through us. Phenomena meet our embodied eyes in such ways of expressing or speaking as if they are looking upon us, as if objects stare back while we look at them (Elkins 1996).

As perceivers, therefore, we partake in the 'enfleshed visible' that makes us see and be seen, but, crucially, the medium that brings this reversible relation about remains hidden. For Merleau-Ponty, this invisible is not only part of being in the visible; it is also what makes visible or visibility possible in the first place. Specifically, there are two interrelated forms of invisibilities (Al-Saji 2009): on the one hand, there is the invisibility of the historical and material genesis of vision and, on the other hand, there are what Merleau-Ponty call 'the invisibles of the visible' (1964: 181), which concern the formal conditions of how objects appear to us, like colour, line, depth and movement, themselves conditioned through social structures and hierarchies of power. Thus, the invisible is not a transcendental or mystical realm, but rather the effaced medium, through which vision is realized, like the seeing-enabling blind spot in the eye. Therefore, the invisible is not simply something visible that happens to be contingently away from sight. Rather, the invisible is what is given, without being an 'object'. Both the visible and invisible are like a crossing-over 'fold' in Being, as Merleau-Ponty explains, 'the invisible is a hollow in the visible a fold' (1995: 235); therefore, the invisible is intrinsic to the visible.

How the invisible accompanies or makes something visible is present also in organizing and organization. For Cooper, in all acts of form-making in organizing, what is visible and communicable is a 'pre-sense' of an originary absence: 'it is the vague sensing of an invisible that lies beyond – and yet within – all the visible, positive objects and forms that make up the visibility of our everyday being' (2006: 63). Thus, 'vision is always constituted by that which it is not' (ibid.: 64). An illustrating example of this neutral omnipresence and latency is the very co-organizing white space of this page, on which this very text has been written and which you read at this moment. Here meaning and visibility of meaning is co-constituted by the present absence conveyed b e t w e e n letters and lines.

In the same vein, according to the theory of social systems (Luhmann 1986: 180), organizations are fundamentally grounded in a paradox: they continuously require both to visibilize and to invisibilize the alternativity of processes in order to allow for interconnectivity between them. For example, as Schoeneborn (2008, 2010) found in an empirical case study of a project organization in a globally operating business consulting firm, vast inherently constitutive contingencies were disguised or made opaque to non-participants (i.e. 'hiding the elephant'). As he showed, all that remains after a project has been completed is a collection of highly condensed PowerPoint documents, manifesting narratives that focused on consistency, e.g. 'best practices' or 'success stories', rather than contingency, e.g. doubts, mistakes or alternative paths.

Visualizing the invisible can be approached instrumentally or critically. Following an instrumental orientation visualizing of intangibles can be analysed. These refer to assets or resources, intellectual capital or cognitive property, but also unconscious structures and processes, which are identified, measured, reported and thus appropriated for their economic benefits (Epstein and Mirza 2005; Kristandl and Bontis 2007; Zambon and Marzo 2007). However, as Davison and Warren (2009), showed, a visual analysis of intangible values is not reflected in accounts and accounting. A more critical approach refers to the dynamics of visible and especially invisible social identities in organizations, such as religion, national origin, social group memberships, illness or sexual orientation, and how they influence and complicate workplace interactions,

especially in relation to stigmatization (Clair *et al.* 2005). Furthermore, there exists an invisibilization of banalized suffering of employees in relation to their intensified work, for example, not being able to cope with or the fear of losing one's job as part of the precariousness of existence in an intrinsically pathogenic, neoliberal society (Deranty 2008: 458–459).

The visual field of and in organizations, then, is not only a means for knowing the world, but also the invisible and preconceived ideas, beliefs and ideologies are always already present in the act of bodily seeing and embodied regimes of visibility.

## Some implications for organization studies

### *Theoretical and political*

Research is using lenses to perceive, frame, make distinctions and to ask different kinds of questions, develop research designs and pursue empirical studies related to phenomena or meta-studies. Lenses are sharpening filters of seeing and theorizing that select, categorize and interpret experiences, empirical findings and theories. Importantly, as we have seen, lenses are not passive neutral tools, but play an active, shaping role. They need to be seen in a network of lens relationships as part of a meta-theoretical integral approach to knowledge (Edwards 2010). By providing the means for an emancipatory visibilization via the act of 'seeing through', theory functions as an interrogative tool for seeing, i.e. for insights. They can function as an intermediary; an opportunity for practitioners to see beyond the current horizon of their own practice and expand the existing practice in new directions and explore new ways of doing, saying and being (Eikeland and Nicolini 2011).

Critical research on vision in organization explores how specific visual experiences, meanings and corresponding practices are discriminated, marginalized, degraded or ignored, excluded, dominated or subordinated, exploring how visual strategies are used to achieve and maintain power and control (e.g. Warhurst *et al.* 2012). This implies critically considering the ordering and normalizing of disciplinary techniques or governing functional and instrumental orientations within the organizational system. Interrogating the visual and the invisible in relation to organizations needs to include a critical investigation of how organizational members see (or not) ideological biases or power relations that arise in the construction and dissemination of visual representations or communication, like websites or blogs in daily life (see, for example, Elliott and Robinson, Chapter 17, this volume).

Furthermore, the conceptualization of vision as part of the 'political life of sensation' (Panagia 2009) that phenomenology affords thus opens space for a potential reconfiguration of the sensible. A phenomenological look at vision helps in re-interrogating the sensory world (Porcello *et al.* 2010), which implies understanding senses as complex and perplexing phenomena anew. Recognizing them both in their own right and as guide, a phenomenological exploration and disclosure can contribute to moving towards a regained integral sensorial culture, considering fascinating new developments such as ambient intelligence (Verbruecken 2003). This kind of sense-constituted culture is particularly relevant, for example, for experiential workspaces as characterized by dynamic mutability, emergent norms and epistemic openness (Talero 2008).

### *Methodological*

A sensually oriented methodology can contribute to visual possibilities and interpretations in organization studies (Warren 2002, 2008) and towards a more 'seeing' research (Prosser 2011). For collecting and analysing embodied, sensuous pre-reflective 'data', the integration of visual methodologies

and methods (Rose 2007), particularly videography, into research methodologies helps to study and present the visual experiences and processes, but also ‘unrepresentable’ dimensions of the invisible (Merchant 2011). Visual methods can help to capture embodied fieldwork; they complement and extend written and spoken textual forms, thereby ‘enabling the researcher to reflect more deeply on their embodied and emotional experience in the field in relation to other social actors’ (Kunter and Bell 2006: 192). Thus, they facilitate the collection, interpretation and communication of insights and findings about organizational phenomena in more inclusive and accessible ways.

Other methodological possibilities opened up by a phenomenological stance towards the visual include an ‘art of visual inquiry’ (Knowles *et al.* 2007), employing images and art forms as part of the inquiry process and representation, including photography, painting, installation art, collage, film or video, and sculpture. Where ‘method meets art’ in this way (Leavy 2009), researchers can include experimenting with alternative forms of expression and audio-visual possibilities, like image elicitation, photos, sounds, videos, scenes, stories, and so forth, some of which are discussed in this *Companion* (e.g. Berthoin Antal *et al.*, Chapter 16; Shortt *et al.*, Chapter 18; Stiles, Chapter 14) and which were used in an empirical study that revealed phenomenologically the embodied narrative practice of strategies (Küpers *et al.* 2013).

### Practical

Phenomenological seeing can be cultivated through an ‘education of attention’ (Ingold 2001: 139) with and to the body. Specifically, a critical phenomenology of visibility aims to cultivate an ability to see and explore embodied visual experiences ‘purposefully’ by deconstructing elements of images and reconstructing them in their social, environmental and cultural contexts (Campbell and Schroeder 2011). One important practical implication, therefore, refers to the ability to create, read and respond to visual images as active viewers, questioners and critical producers of meaning (Falihi and Wason-Ellam 2009: 410). This entails a co-presence of verbal and visual literacies as interlacing modalities, which complement one another in the meaning-making process. This learning to see implies developing attentive, connective and loving eyes (Pattison 2007). These organs are not only responsive and responsible, but also critical in being able to see what cannot be seen directly, while going beyond recognition towards nourishing otherness (Kelly 2001: 219, 221), seeing the unseen, and to see differently. For example, experiences of arresting aesthetic practices such as those discussed by Sørensen in his method of juxtaposition (Chapter 3, this volume), and those described by Matilal and Höpfl (2009) in their anti-narrative account of the Bhopal tragedy, contribute to a learning to ‘see with’ the body (Al-Saji 2009: 391) – which is, in fact, the original meaning of intuition (*intueri*) – and which may overturn ossified attitudes and categories. Such aesthetic practices, especially as somaesthetics (Shusterman 2008) may bring to new expressions previously unnoticed features of the world (Dillard-Wright 2011: 210) or facilitate the reconfiguring of the territory of the visible, the thinkable and the possible (Rancière 2004: 41).

### Conclusions

True philosophy consists in relearning to look at the world.

(Merleau-Ponty 1962: xx)

This chapter has called for the body to be reinstated as an active medium of meaning in the experiencing and (re-)structuring of the visible, which, in turn, cannot be separated from the invisible. Based on a critique of epistemologies of the eye and showing the significance of

seeing as practice, the phenomenological perspectives presented here offered possibilities for re-learning to look at and interact in the life-world of organizations differently. Importantly, vision needs to be seen not as compartmentalized or isolated, but can be reconceived in relation to and in the context of other embodied senses and their interplay as a sensorium. Phenomenologically, perception is a whole-body phenomenon and part of a dynamic, hybrid embodiment and supplementing inter-affects (Küpers 2013), sensing, gesturing, and seeing as well as saying, and acting.

Vision then is more than just the visual, as it is inseparable from the aural, the tactile, the kinaesthetic, the temporal, and thus co-constituted by the entire bodily existence, synaesthetic perceptions and shared social experiences. Such interconnected understanding of senses can then become the processual base for an extended and more integral sense-making in embodied organizations (Küpers 2013a). Foreseeably, the need to embrace this ‘new sensoriality’ and a further exploration of the sensory potential and forms of sensory cooperation in organizational and societal cultures will become even more important as the desire for more intensive experiences and deeper meanings of employees in organizational life-worlds grow. Increasingly, it will become more significant to understand senses as rich, complex and perplexing phenomena, both in their own right and because of where they may guide us, moving towards a more sensorial culture (Verbruecken 2003) that will be strongly focused on all senses and their integration.

However, considering the complexities of current organizations and their systemic infrastructures, it remains important to realize that not all of what is involved in them can be understood and interpreted adequately by the senses and bodily or embodied visual processes alone. The corpus of the ‘corporation’ is more and different to what can be captured and shaped by sensual dimensions and visual experiences. Therefore, falling into a trap of a devaluing anti-ocularism is to be avoided as much as the fallacy of hypervaluing visualism. A critical approach for exploring the intricacies of vision does not follow monocular scopic regimes, nor does it discursively collapse embodied vision into denaturalized visibility. Instead, it sees embodied vision and its meaning as part of an interdependent, caring interaction and ‘inter-visibility’ (Mirzoeff 2000: 7) and as a creative interplay with present and possible conditionings of vision. To realize this kind of integration, there is a need to shift our attention from the individual to the enacted encounter and understanding of an affective ‘participatory sense-making’ (De Jaegher and Di Paolo 2007) and participatory spectatorship as a kind of ‘democracy of the eye’ (de Bolla 2003).

Because our bodily and visual involvement with things is indeterminate, we encounter meaningful things in an interconnected and patterned, though ever open-ended world. Accordingly, what is made visible here is *pro-visional* in the double sense of providing or supplying the means for transmission and of being transient. Moving at the edge of vision between the visible and invisible, without losing sight of the potentiality to see new sights and creative insights, the re-visioning of vision can be part of rehabilitated sensual culture and practice in organization. Such a re-vision may become a medium for envisioning different organization studies and practices, which integrate sensual ways of relating towards a more sustainable, responsive and responsible organizing (Küpers 2012). If social and organizational change happens through ‘constantly negotiated imaginary space’ (Michelis 2002), a re-visioned imagination can play an important role in developing new visibilities (Soussloff 1996) or visual possibilities within practices as well as cultivating embodied and reflective embodied visions and visual cultures in organizations and beyond.

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