

## **Ad-Hoc Group: Visual Sociology**

### **An Introduction Concept Note, Significance and Objectives**

#### **Introduction**

In today's digital age, visual sociology has grown in relevance as images and visual culture permeate almost every aspect of daily life, influencing perceptions, identities, and social structures. The integration of visual methods within sociology equips scholars to critically examine how people experience, produce, and interpret visual media, an essential endeavor for comprehending contemporary social realities. By merging traditional sociological analysis with visual inquiry, visual sociology provides a powerful framework for understanding the modern social landscape. Thus, it is interesting to explore the crucial role of visual sociology in academic settings, highlighting its applications, contributions, and essential research methods for exploring diverse areas—from cultural studies to public sociology.

In an era shaped by Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence, the role of digital visuals in sociological research and pedagogy has become increasingly significant. Visuals not only document material and non-material culture but also reflect cognitive and social consciousness across time and space. As a methodological framework, Visual Sociology enables the reconstruction of cultural narratives and the analysis of historical cross-cultural influences, making it a critical tool for understanding societal transformations.

The rise of visual culture signifies a transformation in how people communicate, interact, and understand each other. Social media, advertising, and news media have become platforms dominated by visual content that shapes identities, reinforces power dynamics, and reflects social structures. Visual sociology enables scholars to analyze these complex visual environments, examining everything from memes to political advertisements. By understanding how visual representation influences individuals and communities, sociologists can uncover the underlying narratives that influence social behavior, identity formation, and cultural perceptions.

#### **Objectives**

To establish Visual Sociology as a critical sub-discipline within sociological inquiry by integrating visual methodologies into academic research, pedagogy, and interdisciplinary discourse, thereby enhancing its role as an analytical tool for studying culture, social structures, and historical transformations.

#### **Objectives**

##### **1. Academic Institutionalization:**

- Advocate for the formal recognition of Visual Sociology within the Indian Sociological Society through the establishment of a dedicated Research Committee.
- Integrate Visual Sociology into the curricula of higher education institutions as a methodological and theoretical specialization.

##### **2. Methodological Development:**

- Advance the use of visual methodologies as legitimate tools for sociological inquiry, particularly in ethnography, historical sociology, and digital humanities.
- Standardize frameworks for analyzing visual data, incorporating semiotic, discourse, and multimodal analysis to enhance sociological research.

### **3. Technological and Interdisciplinary Expansion:**

- Facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration by incorporating insights from anthropology, cultural studies, media studies, and digital technologies in the study of visuals.
- Promote the application of emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence and digital visualization, in the collection and interpretation of visual data.

### **4. Cultural and Social Analysis:**

- Investigate the role of visuals in shaping social consciousness, collective memory, and identity formation across diverse historical and geographical contexts.
- Examine cross-cultural visual exchanges and their impact on global and local sociocultural transformations.

By positioning Visual Sociology as a core analytical approach within sociological research and education, this initiative seeks to expand the discipline's methodological scope and foster a deeper understanding of social realities through visual representation. Keeping in mind the changes in contemporary India, proposed RC on Visual Sociology aims to cover following areas:

1. Rise of Visual Culture and its impact on sociological understanding
2. Multimodal Research using various visual research methods
3. Everyday Experiences through visuals
4. Critical Media Literacy
5. Globalization and Visual Communication
6. Visual sociology as an aid in Public Sociology
7. Marginalized section studies and visual sociology
8. AI-driven image analysis and geospatial mapping
9. Intersection of Art and Sociology

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