Francisca Comas Rubí, Karin Priem & Sara González Gómez

Introduction

Media Matter: Images as Presenters, Mediators and Means of Observation emerged from an international workshop organized in Spring 2019 in the context of a third-party funded project led by Francisca Comas Rubí, Bernat Sureda, and their team at the University of the Balearic Islands (Universitat de les Illes Balears, UIB).¹ The project paved new avenues to the Spanish history of schooling.² While existing research had been studying educational discontinuities by looking at administrative and political source materials and/or analyzing theoretical or programmatic shifts in education, Francisca Comas Rubí and her team were eager to complement these perspectives by focusing on historical sources that would grant access to much more tangible aspects of the Spanish history of schooling. The project took a cultural history approach, and the materials relevant for such analysis not only related to school architecture and other educational spaces such as school yards, but also to school furniture, school murals and decoration, didactical objects, teaching aids, and textbooks, as well as hitherto unexplored textual sources and ego-documents such as memoirs, dissertations, personal testimonies, school notebooks, visual documents, and teachers' professional journals. Thereby, the project set out to explore the material culture and practices of local school cultures, as well as how teachers made their own choices in their everyday professional practice. As such, the project also contributed to the heritage sector and the preservation of previously neglected cultural remains of the Spanish history of schooling.

Visual sources play a crucial role in tracing the cultural history of schooling.³ Images not only document and visually present where and how education manifested and was performed in the past, but also demonstrate in which ways students and teachers embodied specific values and norms.

The title of the book looks at images from the perspective of media history and to analyze them as mobile, reproducible media that play an active role within the public

¹ The project EDU2017-82485-P *School Culture and Practices in the Twentieth Century* was supported by the Spanish Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades (MCIU), the Agencia Estatal de Investigación (AEI) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

² Francisca Comas and Bernat Sureda, "Photography and History of Education. Ten Years of Research in the UIB's History of Education Studies Group," *Informes de recerca en educació. Illes Balears 2018*, January 16, 2018, <http://www.irie.uib.cat> (accessed April 24, 2020).

³ See, e.g., Jon Prosser, "Visual Methods and the Visual Culture of Schools," *Visual Studies* 22, no. 1 (2007): 13–30; Ian Grosvenor, Inés Dussel, Iveta Kestere, Karin Priem, Lisa Rosén Rasmussen, and Angelo Van Gorp, "'We Seek Revelation with Our Eyes': Engaging with School Cultures through Montage," *Encounters in Theory and History of Education* 17 (2016): 2–26; Karin Priem, Inés Dussel, and Marc Depaepe, eds., "Images and Films as Objects to Think With: A Reappraisal of Visual Studies in Histories of Education," special issue, *Paedagogica Historica* 53, no. 6 (2017).

and educational spheres.⁴ The different chapters of this volume are dedicated to the idea that images are more than “decisive moments.”⁵ Visual technologies invite documentation and presentation. Therefore, we will discuss how visual media circulated in the public sphere, how they participated in human interactions, how they shaped opinions, how they have been edited and strategically used, and, finally, how they functioned as means of identity formation. Thus, images are perceived as media addressed to various audiences in order to promote and convince.⁶ Moreover, they are studied as means of observation and storytelling, as objects that interact with each other as fragments of the past and as “ongoing moment[s]” that persist over time.⁷

4 See, e.g., Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *The Public Image: Photography and Civic Spectatorship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Jay D. Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999); Karin Priem, “David Seymour’s Album on the Fight against Illiteracy in Calabria as a Tool of Mediatization: Material Traces and Visual Storytelling,” in *They Did Not Stop at Ebola: UNESCO and the Campaign against Illiteracy in a Reportage by David “Chim” Seymour Texts by Carlo Levi (1950)*, ed. Giovanna Hendel, Carole Naggar, and Karin Priem (Paris: UNESCO; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 263–274.

5 [Henry Cartier-Bresson,] *The Decisive Moment: Photographs by Henri Cartier-Bresson* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952).

6 See, e.g., Stuart Franklin, *The Documentary Impulse* (London and New York: Phaidon Press, 2016); Edward Bernays, *The Engineering of Consent* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955); Edward S. Herman, and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988); Elspeth H. Brown, *The Corporate Eye: Photography and the Rationalization of American Commercial Culture (1884–1929)* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Karin Priem, and Frederik Herman, eds. *Fabricating Modern Societies: Education, Bodies, and Minds in the Age of Steel* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

7 Photographs are flexible and reproducible objects, and they establish many relationships over time which push back against fixed interpretations. Walter Benjamin suggests finding their multiple meanings by means of montage; Elizabeth Edwards looks at photographs as entangled objects; Inés Dussel suggests that their sheer presence expresses powerful agency and charisma, and Geoff Dyer analyzes photographs as ongoing moments: Walter Benjamin, “On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress,” in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belnap Press, 1999); Elizabeth Edwards, “Entangled Documents: Visualized Histories,” in *Susan Meiselas: In History*, ed. Kristen Lubben (Göttingen: Steidl, 2008), 330–341; Inés Dussel, “Photos Found in the Archive: An Approximation to the Work with Images Based on an Amateur Album on Children’s Games (Argentina, Late Nineteenth Century),” *Historia y Memoria de la Educación* 10 (2019): 91–129; Geoff Dyer, *The Ongoing Moment* (New York: Vintage, 2007). On the challenges of interpreting photographs, see also Karin Priem, “Visual, Literary, and Numerical Perspectives on Education: Materiality, Presence, and Interpretation,” in *Educational Research: Material Culture and Its Representation*, ed. Paul Smeyers, and Marc Depaepe, (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 53–69. Susan Sontag’s seminal collection of essays *Against Interpretation* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966) offers basic criticism against interpretational approaches to the arts. In addition, non-representational theory may offer inspirations for visual analysis in history of education: Lynn Fendler, “The Ethics of Materiality: Some Insights from Non-Representational Theory,” in *Educational Research: Material Culture and Its Representation*, ed. Paul Smeyers, and Marc Depaepe (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 115–132. A wonderful example of how photographs inspire historical storytelling was recently published by Carole Naggar, *Tereska and Her Photographer* (New York: Russet Lederman, 2019). In the present volume, see

This anthology is divided into three parts and eleven chapters which – even if thematically overlapping – spotlight different dimensions of the visual history of education.

PART 1 looks at images as models and presenters. In Chapter One, Ian Grosvenor takes readers on a visual journey “around the table”, which he sees as a place of consumption, ritual and identity formation. He argues that it is a truism that we are what we eat. In his view, eating is the most human of needs. Food brings people together and eating is part of our sense of community and belonging. Manners and taste are learned and performed. The fundamental connection between food and culture, and the repetitive embodied practice of eating, are part of the rituals of belonging and identity formation. When eating is captured in a photograph, it is rarely just about food because eating is personal and social, economic and political. *Around the Table: Consumption, Ritual, and Identity. A Visual Journey* uses vernacular images of children eating to consider the relationship between ritual, consumption and identity formation, and the extent to which cultural identity is reflected, shaped, and reinforced through food. Grosvenor does so not through extended prose but through the application of Walter Benjamin’s method of montage. For Benjamin, montage was central to his critical analysis of modernity. It allowed him to explore the experiences, moments and discontinuities associated with living in the modern world and through juxtaposing verbal and visual fragments to make the invisible visible. In Ian Grosvenor’s visual essay, photographs are deployed to confront the reader/viewer with the possibility of seeing what otherwise might be unseen, and to make connections revealing the complex interrelations of continuity and disjuncture relating to the cultural practice of eating. The photographs put on display in this chapter are from a range of archival sources, but each of them, as presented in this visual essay, has been removed from its original context, and thereby taken out of history. They have been assembled and juxtaposed with the intention to produce multiple ways of knowing and multiple sets of meanings, to speak to each other, and thereby making visible the connections between ritual, consumption, and the formation of identity.

Chapter Two by Iveta Kestere and Baiba Kalke looks at the emotions of teachers displayed on Soviet classroom photos. Exploring emotions as social constructions determined by individual experiences within historical, sociocultural, political, and institutional contexts, the focus of this chapter is on analyzing the representation of teachers’ emotions in the context of Soviet authoritarian rule. Using school photographs capturing emotional episodes as its source material, the study of 205 photographs taken in Soviet Latvia in the period between 1945 and 1985 addresses the following research questions: which emotions did teachers find important to demonstrate officially, namely, in specially organized classroom photos? How do emotional

also the chapters of Ian Grosvenor and Karin Priem, which both discuss issues of storytelling and interpretation.

expressions reveal the identity of the Soviet teacher? How should we understand and explain the emotions of teachers depicted in the photographs? The authors suggest that, in trying to meet all levels of expectation of the ruling power, teachers posed as disciplined, rational and masculine professionals, and demonstrated these virtues by emotional control. However, Kestere and Kalke conclude that a closer look at the history of the teaching profession reveals that the rules and display of emotional behavior are surprisingly similar, regardless of the political context and system.

In Chapter Three, Xavier Motilla Salas and Llorenç Gelabert Gual analyze images that date back to the last third of the twentieth century, to the beginning of the renewal of music education in Catalonia. The authors concentrate on the “Ireneu Segarra method”, which was very popular at the time. The Ireneu Segarra Music School holds a photography repository of 570 photographs that are mounted in three photo albums spanning the time period 1974–2003. The intention of this collection was to record initiatives carried out by the institution over nearly thirty years. The authors analyze a selection of twenty-two photographs that document the implementation of the Ireneu Segarra method in several schools. This rather homogeneous group of pictures reflects the application of different techniques and resources that were considered essential in the pedagogical ideology of the institution. The authors emphasize the importance of visual sources to reflect upon the actual practice of innovative music education, and the theoretical and methodological challenges that may arise from such visual analysis.

The last chapter in PART 1 is by Frederik Herman, who analyzes the visual traces of teenage workers in a huge corporate collection of 2,251 still images – images that were taken at the beginning of the twentieth century at the Luxembourg steel-manufacturing conglomerate Aciéries Réunies de Burbach-Eich-Dudelange (ARBED), and the associated vocational school (the Institut Emile Metz). Herman explores how various concepts of harmony – originating from societal fears, economic and political aspirations, ideologies, and the sciences – found their way into educational thought and practice. He shows how the visual (and textual) materials made by ARBED performed and enacted various forms of harmony, be it the harmony between body, mind and machine; the smooth and harmonious running of the body-motor; the ability to move flexibly and harmoniously between industrial, urban, and natural environments, and to have a foothold in both the past and present; and the harmonious social organism. These corporate images thus functioned as “visual metaphors” for the vocational school’s (and, by extension, society’s) search for polyharmony – a polyharmony that presented an antidote to the disharmony and imbalance that many feared from industrial modernity.

PART 2 includes three chapters that primarily deal with images as mediators. In Chapter Five, María del Mar del Pozo Andrés and Sjaak Braster reflect upon a 2019 exhibition that was financed by the leftist City Council of Madrid. *Madrid, ciudad educadora 1898/1938*, as the title of the show puts it, was dedicated to the pedagogical renewal that took place in the public schools of the city in the years before the

start of the Franco dictatorship in 1939. The purpose of this exhibition was related to the specific politics of memory-making initiated by the Spanish State, and the exposition showcased examples of progressive educational practices in public schools from the beginning of the twentieth century that were unknown to the wider public. The authors analyze how the show was designed, received and discussed – an injection of self-esteem for the Madrilenian people, as the Spanish newspaper *El País* put it. The chapter illustrates that the choice for subsidizing a historical exhibition is never a neutral affair. The same is true for the making of such an exhibition. In the case of the Madrilenian exhibition, several stakeholders were involved who offered different opinions about which items should be displayed and why, and how they were going to be presented. In this sense, the chapter focuses on the challenges academic historians have to face when organizing an educational exhibition for a non-academic audience, and how decisions are made about content and form, particularly in relation to the choice of images.

Another take on images as mediators is discussed in Chapter Six by Pere Fullana Puigserver and Avelina Miquel Lara on the Spanish Scouts (Exploradores de España), who played a key role in popularizing physical activity among children and adolescents in the first third of twentieth-century Spain. From 1913 to 1938, the Spanish Scouts published the magazine *El Explorador*, with a significant number of articles devoted to physical education and sports. Many issues were illustrated which stressed the instrumental role physical education and sports played in the association, and the efforts made to popularize physical activity among the Spanish Scouts. The chapter looks at the state of the art of physical education and sport activities in Spain between the late nineteenth century and 1930, while shedding light on the ideological mindsets of the Spanish Scout leaders and how their ideas were decisive in guiding the organization's approach to understanding and promoting physical education and sports. The chapter also provides an analysis of the visual discourse present in the illustrated articles, which appeared in the Scouts' magazine, to better understand how this particular vision was edited and spread.

Chapter Seven by Stefanie Kesteloot is also dedicated to an exhibition and how images are used as complex mediators within a multimodal setting addressed to the general public. Kesteloot deals with the history of one of the most famous travelling exhibitions after the Second World War, and offers a thorough analysis of UNESCO's *Exhibition Album on Human Rights* and its global reception in 1951. As a UN organization, UNESCO was assigned to present the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) to the global population in an effort to guide them to peace. In 1949, the organization's Department of Mass Communication undertook the creation of three tools to promote human rights: a large-scale exhibition at the Musée Galliera in Paris, a travel album, namely the *Exhibition Album on Human Rights*, and teaching handbooks. Kesteloot focuses on this travel album as a medium of circulation and, particularly, for promoting Article 26 of the UDHR: "The Right to Education." This right was represented by a number of images and captions whose visual elements and corresponding texts are

analyzed from an intermediate perspective. Moreover, she asks how the album was received by various audiences around the globe, arguing that the promotion and mediation of human rights were based on Western standards of education, and thus making it difficult to spread a universal message.

Finally, PART 3 focuses on images as means of observation. Francisca Comas Rubí and Gabriel Barceló Bauzá look at “recess” and how it was depicted as a crucial part of school life, and specifically scheduled time slots of the pupils’ school days dedicated to rest, interaction and play. The origins of recess date back to the late nineteenth century as a response to the need to counteract physical and psychological fatigue among pupils (*surmenage*). Thanks to different research projects undertaken in recent years regarding twentieth-century school photography on the Balearic Islands, the authors have managed to locate hundreds of photographs in public and private archives, school collections, teachers’ journals, yearbooks, institutional websites, social networks, illustrated magazines, commemorative books, etc. These pictures show how recess as a practice became ever more documented in photographs throughout the twentieth century. Their analysis provides us with specific information on both the practice and its historical evolution, as well as the constructed and projected visual discourses they contain, enlightening us as to how the public perceives recess. The chapter also aims to offer methodological reflections on the difficulties and challenges when using photographs as a historical resource.

In Chapter Nine, Karin Priem looks at both images and texts by analyzing Magnum photographer David Seymour’s photo story and contact sheets on the fight against illiteracy in Southern Italy. Priem suggests that his pictures focus on what was visible and present at the time by providing a filmic archive of the efforts to achieve social change in Calabria. Conversely, she argues that Carlo Levi’s texts on the fight against illiteracy in Calabria focus on intellectual analysis, and on reading and writing as necessary preconditions for political participation and citizenship. The chapter explores these two different approaches to the fight against illiteracy in Southern Italy, while also taking into account the interactions between images and texts. It first draws on textual sources, and looks at how reading and writing are described, endorsed, and understood by a politically and socially engaged journalist, poet, and painter, Carlo Levi, who primarily focused on the theoretically grounded analysis of the mental, cultural, and political impacts of reading and writing. Priem then discusses the successive moments or filmic presence in Seymour’s series of photographs on the fight against illiteracy, while stressing that documentary photography also has an impact at cultural and political levels. The chapter concludes by focusing on the differences between visual and textual approaches, and how these two dimensions interact to achieve societal change. Priem suggests that Seymour’s story is neither analytical nor interpretational, but rather presentational. It is an empathic and respectful story about the people of Calabria, their lives, and their specific struggle for education. This result also implies that historians of photography have to

take into account the pitfalls of interpretation, and be aware of what they do to photographs by visual analysis.

Chapter Ten by Juri Meda and Simonetta Polenghi studies how rural schools of Central and Southern Italy were shown in paintings from the second half of the nineteenth century. These paintings depict old, bare, poorly lit, and scarcely cleaned classrooms where a small group of students were taught by an old schoolmaster still using the individual method, as well as the so-called “shame punishments”, both of which were no longer allowed in modern pedagogy. The chapter shows that the poor material conditions of rural schools in the aftermath of Italian Unification (1861) continued to exist. The classroom paintings with their gloomy atmosphere not only portrayed “real” situations, but also depicted typical classrooms of the decades *before* Unification, when the individual method was largely used in the South. Hence, these paintings also convey a political message, highlighting the many faults of an outdated teaching method, which were associated with the old regime. The authors also tackle the question of the target clients for these paintings, and why they were purchased, to better understand the appeal of the school as a subject.

Chapter Eleven by Sara González Gómez and Bernat Sureda Garcia deals with the history of the Spanish Scouts and their public image. The authors explain how the Boy Scout method proposed by Baden-Powell was easy to align with many of the principles of the New School. This flexibility and adaptability also allowed scouting organizations to establish bonds with a wide range of political and religious powers. From this analysis, the authors explore the public image and social impact of the activities carried out by the Exploradores de España (Spanish Scouts), from the creation of the organization (1912) to the beginning of the Second Spanish Republic (1931). The authors use a large array of “photographic evidence” that has been collected from illustrated magazines, publications by the Spanish Scouts, the photographic archives of the Centre Excursionista de Catalunya, and the general press. The chapter analyzes the “media identity” of the Spanish Scouts, and the impact from this public image of the scout movement itself.

The present volume is dedicated to exploring how visual documents offer specific access to the past, and confront researchers with specific challenges when it comes to studying the history of schooling. At the same time, it testifies to the collaborative spirit of all the authors involved. Francisca Comas Rubí and her team are part of an international group of historians of education who discuss a broad range of themes and methodological issues around images, photography, and film. They share a fascination for the visual history of education, and how images became influential within the field of education at local, regional, national, and international level. By interrogating images as media, it is our hope that this collection will contribute to ongoing discussions on images as important pace-setters and agents in the history of education.

We are particularly grateful to the Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades (MCIU), the Agencia Estatal de Investigación (AEI) and the European Regional

Development Fund (ERDF) for providing funding for this book project. Further, our warmest thanks go to all the institutions and archives whose help made this book possible, not least by allowing reproductions from their collections. We also owe a debt of gratitude to our reviewer, to the editors of this book series, and to our publisher De Gruyter, in particular Rabea Rittgerodt.

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