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"PHOTOTELLING" AS THE INNOVATION OF PHOTOJOURNAL "6 MOIS" BY CONNECTING PRESS AND BOOK MARKETS

The author analyses the French journal "6 MOIS", which was created in Paris in 2011, from the point of view of visual sociology. The notions of documentary photography (350 pages of journalistic photography) that represent social life in the 21st century are investigated. The goal of this article is to demonstrate that the journal is a unique and significant source for social science. The research connects the views of the editorial team with photographers from around the world by analysing and comparing interviews conducted in collaboration with the editorial team and photographers from China, The Netherlands, France, Russia. The interviews reveal the main criteria relevant in selecting documentary photographic material: the "concept-story"; their journalistic nature; visual quality; and the actuality of the topic. By analysing journal publications this author has discovered the way social problems in documentary photography are demonstrated: using age; gender; emotions of heroes; the location of story; and the main social issues. To answer the question of how the popular documentary journal "6 MOIS" constructs the image of the contemporary, the content analysis of photographs and the journal's interviews and are presented and discussed.

Key words: Visual sociology, innovation, journalism, visual content analysis, social problems.

1. Actuality of the research

One year ago, while visiting a bookshop, I found an interesting example of French photo journalism. The name of the journal is "6 MOIS", and it's an example of both journalism and literature. This journal grew in importance, not just for the readers interested in photo images, but it became for me a major source for social science, especially for visual sociology research. So why have I decided to choose "6 MOIS" as the object of sociological study? There are several reasons. The "6 MOIS" goal seems simple at first glance: to portray the 21st century with images. "6 MOIS" publishes twice a year a 350-page magazine made up of eight or nine portfolios of images. The magazine is made for the general public – people who are interested in stories. And it's done with a relative success and more than 40,000 copies sold twice a year. The "6 MOIS" authors are Chinese, Ecuadorian, Russian, Belgian, Canadian, Somali, American, and French etc. To exist and develop, "6 MOIS" does not count on advertising nor on sponsoring, but simply on the readers.

"Visual sociology, documentary photography, and photojournalism, are whatever they have come to mean, or been made to mean, in their daily use in worlds of photographic work. They are social constructions, in this they resemble all the other ways of reporting what we know, or think we have found out, about the societies we live in, such ways as ethnographic reports, statistical summaries, maps, and so on" [H. Becker, 1995: 5].

The sociological goal of this research is to prove that the contemporary documentary photographs are important visual data for sociologists. They are subjective representations of society that sociologists can objective by different qualitative and quantitative methods. In other words, the hypothesis is that the documentary publishers are useful for social sciences researchers. They can provide social data – the visual representation of a social reality that can be used in social research. To verify our hypothesis we decided to use quantitative and qualitative sociological methods: semi-structured interviews and content analysis of photographs.

The problem of research is to define the characters of the choice of photo by photojournalists that can be useful for sociologists. That is why we are looking not just on selection criteria of photo-material but also we discover the professional background of journalists. The relation of the research to the up-to-date sociological knowledge on the problem is the connection between journalist data and sociological data analysis.

2. The literature review

Several sociological works explore the potentials of visual research's with photographic material. Bettina Kolb (a social scientist, at the Institute for Sociology, University of Vienna) suggests that the visual photographic data can be used in integrative approach of the social reality. She proposed three steps of use of photography in sociological research: involving, sharing and analysis [Kolb, 2008]. The book "Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method" of John Collier supports the idea that the documentary photography can be used in social science in systematic and methodological way [Collier, 1967]. Moreover Howard Becker states that social documentary photography itself shared important process of research and representation with sociological investigation [Becker 1986: 221].

In our analysis of "6 MOIS" journal we use the approach of Arthur Rothstein:

"...purpose of documentary photography is to learn about life—how people live, work, and play; their social structures and institutions; their environment. Pictures are made and collected, preserved and studied so that present and future generations can understand the past. Many documentary photographs are also made for immediate use, not for historical purposes. The aim is to move people to action, to change or prevent a situation because it may be wrong or damaging, or to support or encourage one because it is beneficial." [Rothstein, 1986 :33]

According to the statistical report of Claude Vaclare and Rémi Debeauvais that analyses the profession of photographers (published in may 2015): over a quarter of respondents from the sample of 3000 photographers say that they have seen their incomes decrease slightly (26 %) and almost 30 % say that it has "declined significantly". In total, 55 % have therefore seen their income reduced in 2015. There is a crisis of photojournalism that is provoked by the crises of the publishing press and world of journalism in general and by the growth of new media. The total number of photographers increases but the number of photojournalists decreases [Vaclare, Debeauvais 2014: 5].

There are different ways to contact photographers for "6 MOIS": email, web pages, and photo festivals. However for us the more interesting question is how to choose the photo material. Johannes Galtung and Marie Ruge most successfully advance in a general understanding of the selection processes in 1965. Their study shows how what appeared to be basically a simplistic and restrictive frame for analysing journalistic work and news production was a "process of successive selections, according to a number of news values or criteria which affect the perception of news events" [McQuail and Windahl 1982: 105]. This research tackled precisely what had been left undeveloped

in preceding studies—the criteria of selection and rejection. Moreover, it outlined not only what was presumed "natural" about news but also what could be seen as "cultural". Galtung and Ruge underscored the patterned and predictable nature of the selection process and introduced a constructed view of news making that complicated the idea of selection in journalistic work" [Zelizer 2004: 54].

Both social researchers and lay readers typically find images of culture and social life to be more credible when they're based on extensive and detailed observation in an appropriate array of natural settings, backed up by other data, and presented in ways that invite analysis, including commentary from the people they depict. But photographs can support empirical inquiry in ways that don't always square with popular notions of what makes them "true" or "false," and there's a danger in trying to turn these notions into categorical prohibitions or ideals. Additionally, posed photographs provide valuable evidence of how people want to be seen by others and photographed re-enactments can generate credible visual records, which are not otherwise available. Similarly, while page layouts featuring severely cropped and juxtaposed images can create false impressions, they can also highlight theoretically significant details and comparisons. These ambiguities are complicated by the routine fabrications of social life, including the social life it takes to conduct empirical inquiry. For example, while evidence can be collected systematically within specific data categories – time lapse photographs of people crossing a street; census reports of race, income and ethnicity; or sociometric charts of child friendships – the categories and data collection tools that guide work of this sort are themselves socially constructed. "We are not a journal about photography, we are journal by photos." – Chief Editor (Marie-Pierre Subtil).

3. Research methodology

In my sociological analysis of "6 MOIS" I used at least four different methods and approaches:

1. Observation in editorial office (according the 8 issues of journal from 2011 to 2015)? (Internship – one week in Paris conducted in November 2014);
2. Interviews with editorial office team (11 interviews conducted in 2014);
3. Content analysis of images in the journal;
4. Interviews with international photographers.

Thus, the first method I used was observation in a publishing office, which has 3 floors: the first – books and magazines stores, the second and third – workplace of team of "XXI" and "6 MOIS". There are about 40 workers in this publishing house and only seven of them work specifically with the content of the journal of documentary photography. Who are these people? In the team you will not find any photographers, they all are professional journalists that finished different types of education paths: political science, art history, school of journalism and sociology.

"I have worked during 20 years in "Monde" before, it was so long ago, I finished sociology in SciencePo and School of Journalism", – Chief Editor (Marie-Pierre Subtil). The team is very small because photographers do the biggest part of work. And after the team of journalists make the scientific reflection by selection and by writing text around the subject.

The places of retail for the journal are bookstores and cultural centres. The consequences of special selling areas are the two other innovations of "6 MOIS", which are connected to each other. The first one is a new type of advertisement of press production and the second one – the new profession that was be created – director of interaction (PR) with the bookshops. In the activity of this

journal, we can find a new phenomena of "cinema in bookstore". This describes the promotion of the journal using the video presentation of photo-report during the meeting with potential consumers in the bookstore. It's a type of advertisement that is very successful and it uses only social capital and interaction with the director of bookshop. Because of the social relationship with the director, the readers can find the journal in the most visible places (for example, in shop window or near cash registers). That makes this product journal different from other press goods by the choice of bookstores. They create a relationship and an exchange between the bookshop and the journal. Visibility of the product totally depends on the choice of bookseller, and can be increased by placing recommended good at most visible location. One problem in the French book market is that it's has not just a great number of bookshops; but it's also the huge production. This meeting (between "6 MOIS" and bookseller) is non-traditional advertising and has a particular quality. Their presentations include not just the presentation about the magazine, but it is the real projection (showing), like if you go to the cinema in the bookshop. This is inhabitable; in fact it's marketing. The library gives confidence to the reader that the journal is like a book, but his impact is very high because an image has more influence than a text.

4. The results of semi-structured interviews with journalists and editorial office team

The results of the first 10 interviews with workers from publishing represented this journal like an object on the market, which now does not have any analogues. The team of "6 MOIS" mentioned that there are typical issues that photographers send to the publishing house: the third world, drugs, illnesses, the Romany, poverty, economic crises, aging, wars and violence. Why? We can explain it by the fact that photographers choose social problems by economic criteria because it's easier to show the problems of the third world/prisons/wars, precisely they choose photo-projects which received financial aid from the government and UN. However, there are still the same problems for photographers:

1) Economic difficulty, that is to say they must be able to move, so photographers prefer to go to the Third world because it is cheaper.

2) According to the opinions of the journalist team, photographers are attracted by the spectacles, by the disease, the death, and the margins. There are more and more useful humanitarian findings: bankers, NGOs etc. It's hard to find jobs for photojournalist in the rich countries – they are simply not sponsored there.

Coming back to content, I should mention that all social classes are represented in the journal from rich Americans to poor peasants in China. I see the tendency that the topics have connection with the country, national or ethnic groups. However, there is a difference between what photographers propose and what journalists choose and print. According to the opinion of the publishing team, what photographers propose are often all the miseries of world, however the journal doesn't contain all the miseries within its 300 pages. Photographers have a tendency to document the same things: the issues about prostitution, pollution, children of the street, drugs, police and prisons. Photographers mainly focus on poverty and war zones. And social problems they are interested in often appear to be the same. As Petrut Calinescu (Romanian photographer) said during one of my interviews: 99 % of photographers shot social problems, whereas only 5 % – the world issues. However, that doesn't mean that topics are never repeated. For example, reports about prisons

were published 3 times, because points of views to the topic were different from others reports about the same subject. For example, one told about the prison on the border between Burma and China; another one – about the prison in Norway on an island where prisoners are free to work and live, and the last one – about the prison in Italy where prisoners became a theatre group. So, in this way, they try to find the contradictory to social stereotype. "The subject must make a question, there are three topics about prisons which make questions, so we published each of them", – Chief Editor (Marie-Pierre Subtil).

In "6 MOIS" you can find photography that would otherwise not be found in traditional media, it tries to represent an inhabitable vision of the world. Also I think the tendency of "6 MOIS" is telling the story and does not give a judgment. In some way it is a humanistic tradition, an opening of the world. During my interviews analysing the publishing policy, I found out that the main selection criteria of photographic material by this publishing house are concept-story, journalistic issue, visual quality, and the actuality of the topic. Thus, what is the most important in this "phototelling" by this Publishing team: narrative or aesthetic?

First of all, it's narrative. According to the team of journalists, the photo report should surprise and inform us. We don't like reports that we see a thousand times or in other journals. We like to be surprised, it is evident that the photo must be excellent but it must be also journalistic. And it must give us the information about constantly changing

world around. There are different opinions about the main criteria of the selection process of photography between leaders of journalism: on the one hand the most important is story, on another hand, the aesthetic and visual quality. For the youngest part of publishing it is actuality of report. So, the main discussion is between the artistic director and the chief editor. And the leaders of opinion are the Directors (Laurent Beccaria and Patrick de Saint-Exupéry) and the Chief Editor (Marie-Pierre Subtil).

5. The results of the content analysing

"6 MOIS" also has its' specific visual narrative character with a sociological approach. The part of the team has not only a journalistic education, but also a sociological and a political one. Their report has a task to tell the story and it's the reason why this work analyses stories, but not a single photography. The slogan of "6 MOIS" is "21 century in images". So what is the portrait of contemporary society produced by this journal according to my results of content analysing (according the 8 issues of journal from 2011 to 2015)?

1) The genders of "heroes" in photo reports are following: 61 reports with men, 50 reports with women.

2) The most frequent age group is the young people (33 reports represent from 1 to 15 year old persons, 47 are about in between 16 and 25 years old, 41 about from 26 to 54 years, 27 reports are about groups older than 55).

Ages of heroes in reports

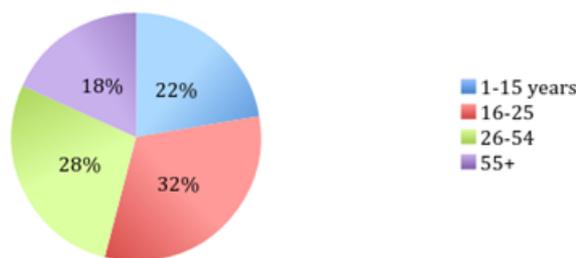


Figure №1. Percentages of age categories (generations) in photoreportages by "6 MOIS"

3) The biggest part of the report is from Europe (22) and Asia (19).

Territory of stories in «6 MOIS»

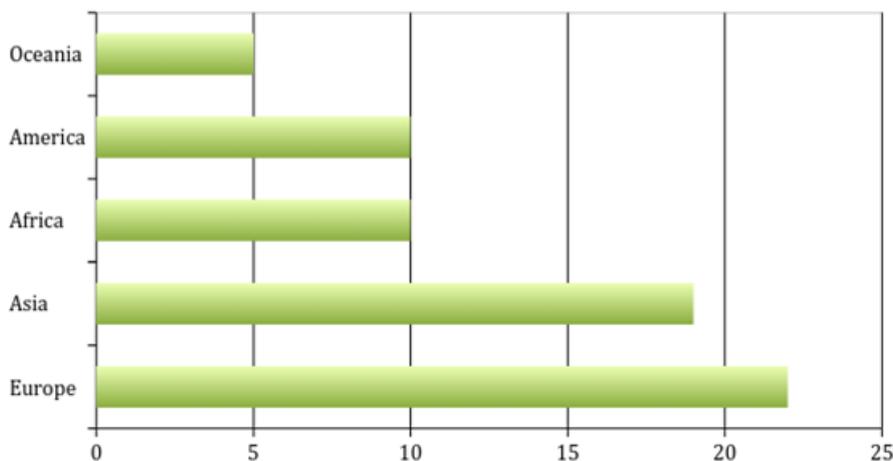


Figure № 2. Statistic of geographic locations of photostories in "6 MOIS"

There are two types of economical development that you can find more often in "21 century society " proposed by "6 MOIS" – advanced economics and least developed.

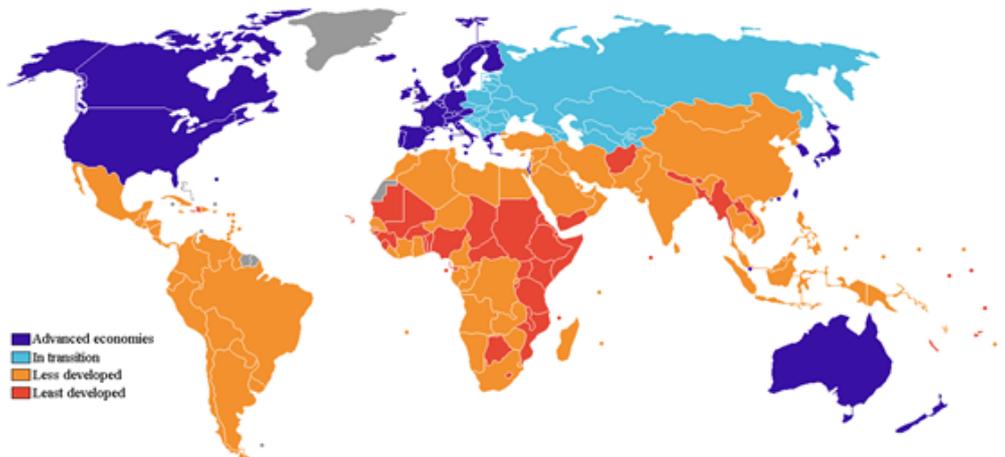


Figure № 3. Explanation of world economic classification

4) During my internship in "6 MOIS" in Paris, a part of the publishing team told me that they have mainly individual stories. However, the research suggests that there are 26 stories about social groups, 8 individual stories and 23 about society in general.

5) The most frequent emotions of heroes are smiles and calmness.

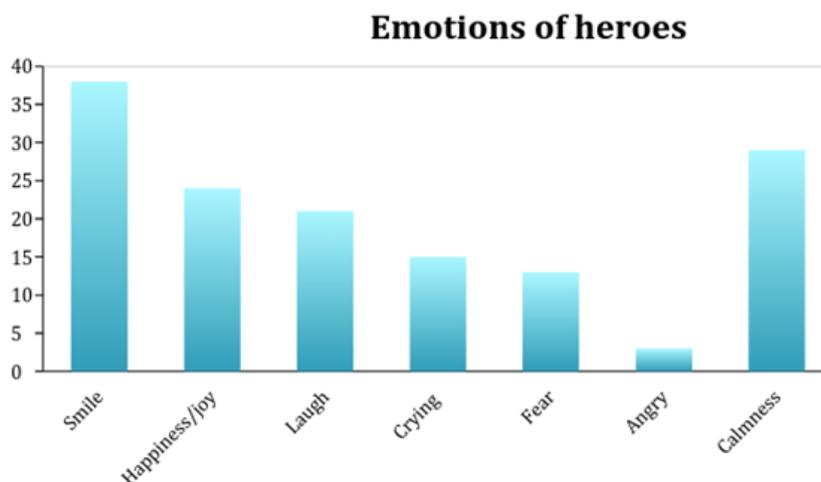


Figure № 4. Results of visual representation of emotions in photo-reports

6) The main social issues: poverty, low class, young life courses, work conditions, health and medicine.

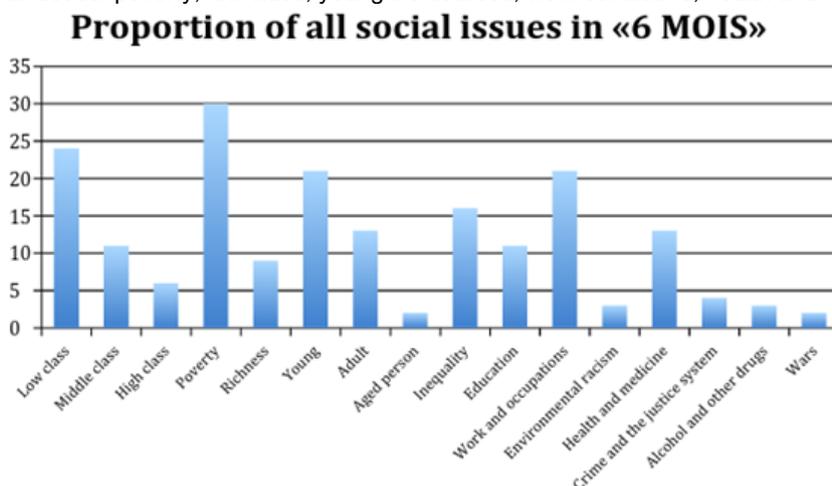


Figure № 5. Proportion of social issues in "6 MOIS"

6. Conclusion

The semi-structured interviews and content analysis of photographs prove that the contemporary documentary photographs are important visual and social data for sociologists.

Using these results of content analysis we compared the journal's real content with descriptions of the journal by the publishing team and by photographers who work with "6 MOIS". The principal difference of other opinions is that this journal doesn't try to show just the negative side of life. We can also find a lot of examples of everyday life and working conditions.

The result according to the goal is that the documentary photography can be empirical sources for social sciences. They discover the contemporary problems and involve all social classes. The heroes of photo represents the more problematic issues of society, reported on different generations, sex and region. Moreover, we discovered that documentary journalist have often social sciences background as sociology or political sciences. Sociologists within current sociological discourse can objectivize all subjective documentary photo-material.

Photographers of this journal prefer stories based on conflict. What are these conflicts? First of all the conflict with our typical view of social reality, so in some way they try to break social stereotypes and they give us access to an unusual empirical field. I found that "6 MOIS" has various selections of photographers. They have different ages, work experience, gender and nationality. So what do they have in common? They can tell the story. They introduce us a new type of photography and storytelling- "phototelling" by discovering the social world. The approach is working well because of good interaction between the publishing house and photographers. In this way we can find reports, which have the object of study to tell us a story by adding little comments to the photo. So before an anthropologist goes in to the field to make his observations, now he can open the journal to use the same method. The data presented in the article support the hypothesis that photojournalist are constructed social reality that sociologists can use as a social data about society.

After the interview with photographers of this publishing house, I understood that the *long* narrative is the basic attraction of this journal for photographers. In the contemporary press world the photos are published with text and in this way they often are proof of author statement or just an off cut of reality. In "6 MOIS" according to interviews, photographers can tell and speak; the editor and photographer spend a lot of time by selecting and creating together the story by images. The texts are small, but for each phrase the publishing team spend a lot of time (it can be half of a year) and negotiate that content with the photographer. For some photographers this journal relates more with literature than journalism.

In conclusion I can say that one of the strongest sides of this journal (which is more like a serialised book

according the opinion of the photographers) is the research of issues about which we have never thought about, social problems or facts that we have never heard of – it inspires social researchers of the present day. They show that human beings can find happiness and satisfaction, even in the face of difficult conditions. Obviously, there are more reports about low class and poverty, but it does not just focus on the negative side of the economical position because in the report we also can see the "phototelling" of the happiness that survives in world, a happiness that can outlive the greatest crises.

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"ФОТОТЕЛІНГ" – ІННОВАЦІЯ ВИДАННЯ "6 MOIS", ЩО ОБ'ЄДНУЄ РИНОК ПРЕСИ ТА КНИЖКОВУ СПРАВУ

З погляду візуальної соціології проаналізовано французький журнал "6 MOIS", створений у Парижі у 2011 р. Досліджено поняття документальної фотографії на прикладі 350 сторінок журналістських фотографій кожного випуску журналу, що представляють соціальне життя у XXI ст. Розглянуто інтерв'ю з редакцією журналу та його фотожурналістами з Китаю, Нідерландів, Франції, Росії тощо, на базі яких розкрито основні критерії вибору документальних фотоматеріалів: концептуальність, публіцистичний характер, візуальна якість і актуальність теми. Продемонстровано тенденції візуалізації соціальних проблем у документальній фотографії через аналіз вікових і гендерних груп, емоцій героїв знімків, географії фотоісторій та основних соціальних тем. Розглянуто питання соціального образу сучасного світу, який створює "6 MOIS". Виконано контент-аналіз фотографій, представлених у журналі.

Ключові слова: візуальна соціологія, інновації, журналістика, візуальний контент-аналіз, соціальні проблеми.