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Visual Appropriation: A Self-reflexive Qualitative Method for Visual Analysis of the International

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This article introduces visual appropriation as a method in critical international political thinking and acting, contributing to the evolving repertoire of multiple, pluralist methods for visual analysis of international relations operating in a digital visual environment. We define appropriation as reuse of existing visual material—either in its entirety or in part—without substantially altering the immanent characteristics of the appropriated material. As appropriators, scholars are producers of images who capitalize on and actively participate in digital visuality (seeing–changing–sharing). Appropriators are both image-analysts and image-actors but distinct from both, contributing not only to the *visual analysis*, but also to the *visual construction* of international relations. Approaching the international through appropriation grants researchers increased agency and responsibility vis-à-vis existing visual materials "out-there." Rather than exploring a digital space of visual images produced and appropriated by others, researchers consciously and deliberately partake in the production and dissemination of images. As a result, we highlight how we—as scholars and as citizens—are facing research-ethical problematiques linked to ways of showing and seeing inevitably emanating from appropriation.

Cet article présente l'appropriation visuelle comme une méthode de pensée critique et d'action en politique internationale, contribuant ainsi au répertoire en évolution de méthodes multiples et pluralistes d'analyse visuelle des relations internationales opérant dans un environnement visuel numérique. Nous définissons l'appropriation comme étant une réutilisation d'une ressource visuelle existante—que ce soit en partie ou dans sa totalité—sans altération substantielle des caractéristiques immanentes à la ressource appropriée. Nous voyons les chercheurs comme étant des appropriateurs et donc des producteurs d'images qui capitalisent sur et participent activement à la visualité numérique (voir/changer/partager). De ce fait, les chercheurs pratiquant l'appropriation sont à la fois analystes de l'image et acteurs de l'image et contribuent ainsi non seulement à l'analyse visuelle mais aussi à la construction visuelle des relations internationales. De plus, l'approche de l'international par l'appropriation octroie une agentivité accrue aux chercheurs vis-à-vis des ressources visuelles existant « là-dehors ». Cependant, plutôt que d'explorer la trajectoire par laquelle l'espace numérique des images visuelles est produit et approprié par d'autres personnes, les chercheurs participent consciemment et délibérément à la production et à la diffusion d'images. Nous sommes par conséquent confrontés—tout comme les chercheurs et les citoyens—à des problématiques d'éthique de recherche associées aux pra-

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tiques relatives aux faits de montrer et de voir qui émanent inévitablement de l'appropriation.

Este artículo introduce la apropiación visual como método en el pensamiento y la actuación política internacional crítica, y contribuye al repertorio en evolución de métodos múltiples y pluralistas para el análisis visual de las relaciones internacionales que operan en un entorno visual digital. Definimos la apropiación como la reutilización de material visual existente, en su totalidad o en parte, sin alterar sustancialmente las características inmanentes del material apropiado. Entendemos a los académicos como apropiadores y, por tanto, productores de imágenes que capitalizan y participan activamente en la visualidad digital (ver-cambiar-compartir). Como tal, los académicos que practican la apropiación son tanto analistas como actores de la imagen, contribuyendo no solo al análisis visual, sino también a la construcción visual de las relaciones internacionales. Además, el acercamiento a lo internacional a través de la apropiación otorga a los investigadores más materiales de agencia en relación con los visuales existentes "fuera." Sin embargo, más que explorar la trayectoria a través del espacio digital de las imágenes visuales producidas y apropiadas por otros, los investigadores participan consciente y deliberadamente en la producción y difusión de imágenes. En consecuencia, nos enfrentamos, como académicos y como ciudadanos, a problemáticas ético-investigativas, vinculadas a las prácticas de mostrar y ver, que emanan inevitablemente de la apropiación.

Introduction: Appropriation and Image-acting

This article is designed as an open-ended contribution to the growing repertoire of multiple, pluralist methods for the visual analysis of international relations (see Bleiker 2015, 2020), outlining how appropriation as a method can delineate a research position between image-analysis and image-making. Such a repertoire is needed to capture adequately the complexities and ambiguities of the operation of visual images in the visual international. Images are fluid, complex, ambivalent, contradictory, open to interpretation and contextualization, all of which must be attainable methodologically but cannot be addressed by means of one, seemingly all-inclusive, method (Bleiker 2020, 272). In this paper, we position appropriation as a critical, self-reflexive, qualitative method for both the analysis and the construction of international relations.

We suggest conceptualizing appropriation as a method, where appropriators are both image-analysts and producers, illuminating often implicit practices of reusing images in scholarship. To do that we "collect [visual] data to build [our] argument" (Schensul 2008, 521), we "'mak[e] explicit' what might otherwise be implicit" (Savage 2013, 17) and we discover "aspects of a reality, that is out there in a fairly definite form but is more or less hidden to us" (Law 2004, 38). Our visual data are important for analysis of that which it represents, of our own involvement in and responsibility for the coming-into-being of the collected data and the reality it represents and coconstitutes, and as material for others to engage and perhaps appropriate.

Our method is based on *appropriation* by which we mean the reuse and reconstitution of existing visual material by IR scholars operating as image-*actors*. Appropriating images as image-*actors* (rather than image-*makers*) means that IR scholars firmly locate images in digital culture's visual framework, conditioned by active interaction (seeing–changing–sharing). Rather than lamenting the digital image's intangibility, the image-actor uses its fluidity deliberately to intervene actively into world politics: to produce knowledge that the original (or its variations) contained the possibility

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of producing but did not, thus constructing the international in a new way. As such, appropriation is *both* analysis *and* construction of the international. Image-acting, then, is characterized by both *active interaction* and *a sense of responsibility* which can, to some extent, exist independent of one another; combined, however, they indicate a very strong and original subject position.

Although image appropriation can be found throughout the history of image-production, in the current digital media environment it is at the core of the idea of the image, defining what is meant by "image" and conditioning how images operate in/on society. Today, the visual construction of the international takes place in an environment where "[d]igital media translate everything into data, waiting for an author or an audience (or a machine) to reconstitute it" (Ritchin 2009, 17). Rather than being fixed and given, digital images are both elusive and ephemeral—they exist in different states simultaneously and successively. Single, identifiable creators morph into networks of actors, including anonymous ones. Neither networks nor actors can be easily or completely controlled, even by powerful agents such as states or international tech companies. Seemingly finite processes of image-production resulting in a "final" image (that, after completion, is available for analysis) are transformed into infinite processes where users engage with existing visual material, culminating in active, three-way interaction: viewers morph into users who engage existing images, modify them, and share the modified images with others (see Bennett 2012, 65), thus inviting them basically to do the same thing. By highlighting the sharing component, rather than focusing on showing, agency is directed from the one who shows to the one who responds. Should spectators not deliberately change anything, the digital image's invisible parts may nevertheless change, recording that it has been shown. Digital images, thus, are always and inevitably in flux.

Our procedure in the present article is based on a rather small sample of pictures. Rather than offering a quantitative or discourse analytical approach to the operation of digital images based on larger visual data sets (Hansen, Adler-Nissen, and Andersen 2021) we suggest a qualitative, interpretive and decidedly self-reflexive method in the tradition of "transcending the specialization in the process of intellectual production" (Benjamin 2008 [1934], 87; see also Benson and Gamedze 2020), again culminating in active, three-way interaction. First, we, as appropriating researchers, are spectators (seeing). Then we become producers of images (changing/modifying), participating in digital visuality, and finally we invite audiences to actively interact with both analysis and images (sharing). For us, then, scholars appropriating images are both image-analysts and image-actors—a term we reserve for those scholars who interact actively with existing images and invite audience participation.

We situate our paper explicitly in the context of three-way active interaction facilitated by digitization, which implies that we expect our readers to critically engage our appropriations as we engage our source material. This is what we mean by "open-ended contribution"; a contribution that does not stop at the end of the paper but continues through readers' interactions with it. This is also why we speak of image-*actors* rather than image-*makers* when reflecting upon our own appropriations.

As we will discuss below, we are not the first scholars of the international who act in images; appropriation is situated between image-analysis and image-production. We argue that approaching the international through appropriations and understanding scholars as image-actors offers a novel tool with distinctive advantages in terms of self-reflective knowledge production. Appropriation helps us analyze international relations and contributes to the construction of the international. What do we see *of* the international? What do we regard and what qualifies *as* international? And it makes us reflect upon our own roles in international affairs as scholars and citizens always inhabiting diverse subject positions.

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Knowledge production is always an embodied experience: “We are researching exactly when we are not researching” (Choi, Selmeczi, and Strausz 2020, 15). This is particularly so with regard to visual analysis, given that we live “in a world saturated, no, hyper-saturated with images” (Sontag 2003, 105), affecting us even when we are not consciously aware of their effect. By becoming image-producers themselves, scholars deliberately contribute to the *visual analysis* but also to the *visual construction* of international relations because “methods are fully part of the social world, embedded in and constitutive of it” (Law, Ruppert, and Savage 2011, 11; see also Law 2004). In this sense, studying the international is at the same time constitutive of what is studied (and vice versa). We engage with the method of appropriation to explicate what is oftentimes forgotten, what we as scholars *also* do when conducting visual analysis in international relations.

We suggest that approaching the international through appropriation grants the researcher increased agency vis-à-vis existing visual materials “out-there.” However, agency emerging from appropriation implies responsibility. Rather than exploring the trajectory through the digital space of others’ visual images, we consciously-deliberately partake in the production and dissemination of images, acknowledging research-ethical *problematiques* linked to ways of showing and seeing inevitably emanating from appropriation. Even if unavoidable in today’s digital media infrastructure, appropriation poses a variety of ethical questions that researchers using it ought to recognize.

The question of who is in a position to appropriate something from somebody is always linked to power and ownership. Indeed, “cultural appropriation” has become intensely discussed in public arenas. Often linked to North American politics and the decolonization debate taking place there, the term emphasizes harm for those subjects and groups whose “symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies” (Rogers 2006, 474) are appropriated by dominant non-group members, including scholars. For scholars, this debate casts a very different light onto their research efforts than does the, also North American, idea of *fair use,* which positions scholars’ appropriations as legitimate per default as they are motivated by making knowledge about, rather than a profit from, appropriated material. The tensions around appropriation, as well as its centrality to digital mediation, make our research timely and relevant.

Finally, image-makers, especially but not exclusively those considered artistic, increasingly intervene in current world politics by appropriating *techniques* of image-production hitherto reserved to state authorities. Such technological appropriations on the part of artists are an integral component of digitization. The work of the Irish photographer Richard Mosse, who appropriated technology of image-production to interrogate Europe’s borders in the context of migration and human mobility,[1] served as both inspiration and precondition for our conceptualization of appropriation as a method for the visual analysis of the international. This piece, thus, is an introduction into and engagement with different dimensions of appropriation and its role in the visual construction of the international.

The organization of this article is rather straightforward. First, we discuss the relevance of appropriation to current visual culture and international politics which leads to our definition of appropriation. Second, we introduce the visual material: we critically engage with Richard Mosse’s projects *Heat Maps* and *Incoming,* highlighting his appropriation of technology, the visual output of which serves as the “original” for our appropriations. Third, we discuss selected scholarly engagements

[1] This article is not primarily meant as a contribution to the literature on the visualization of migration, the EU politics on migration, or the visual construction of human beings as migrants. We use such politically loaded terms as “migrants” and “refugees” with uneasiness as they designate human beings socially-discursively-visually constructed as such. However, the human subjects thus designated are always carrying with them multiple subject positions, some of which do—and some don’t—support the subject position of a migrant.

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with visual material in IR in general, as well as practices of image-making in particular, and examine the commonalities with and differences from appropriation. In the fourth section, we establish appropriation as a critical, qualitative, self-reflexive method for the analysis and construction of the international and position IR scholars as both image-analysts and image-actors.

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Engaging an Appropriated World

"How we now—today—understand what photography is and how it works tells us something about how we understand *anything*. And it may appear that how we understand anything is not unrelated to how photography works" (Thompson 2013, 4). We understand photography as a "relational medium—a meta-network of machines, politics, culture, and ways of collective seeing" (Paglen 2011, 68) and, thus, fairly detached from the concept's original meaning (writing or drawing with light). Still, we assume that—despite digitization—images (or at least the images we are interested in here) "are inextricably linked to the real world" (Thompson 2003, 3), although the precise nature of this link changes, as does images' part in establishing the reality of the "real world."

What photography is and how it works is complex and increasingly hard to understand because the idea of the image has changed drastically: digital instead of analogue, data instead of negatives; networks of human and nonhuman agents replacing authors, and infinite processes finite ones. This new idea of the image necessitates new thinking about the operation of images in society because without it, our thinking might end up with what Paglen (2016), in the context of nonhuman photography, calls "distortions, vast blind spots, and wild misinterpretations." For example, human beings often disappear from the production and evaluation of images and "digital networked images . . . exist in a number of states that are potential rather than actual in a fixed and physical kind of way" (Lister 2013, 8). The digital photograph is essentially mobile (Nail 2019), based on "creating discrete and malleable records of the visible that can and will be linked, transmitted, recontextualized, and fabricated"; it is a "meta-image, a map of squares, each capable of being individually modified and, on the screen, able to serve as a pathway elsewhere" (Ritchin 2009, 141). We are interested in this "elsewhere."

To be sure, the idea that photography only documents what is in front of the lens when the shutter is released has long since been discredited. In Wolfgang Tillmans's words: "Art is not, and photography is not, just a depiction of a kind of reality; they are also a new reality in their very existence. They not only speak about something, but *are* actual things, objects that do something new entirely and something that the depicted subjects don't do on their own. So there is an act of transformation happening, which is not just recording" (Tillmans and Hägglund 2019, 35). Photography transforms and creates new reality, and using someone else's images, as we do in this article, transforms doubly: it is an act of double appropriation, increasingly removed from the scene but still, in one way or another, connected with it. Appropriations say something about *both* the original from which they stem and without which they would not exist *and* its referent—and this something tends to be different from what the original has to say about its referent. We are interested in this "something."

Appropriations have a long genealogy in the history of visual culture, and we want to give just a few examples here for the purpose of illustration. As regards photography, for example, appropriation refers to "re-photographing and re-presenting a real object or a pre-existing work of art into a new context" so as to "create a new situation, and therefore a new meaning or set of meanings, for a familiar image" (Emerling 2012, 101–2). Thus, appropriation engages with authorship and situatedness. For example, Sherrie Levine appropriated selected Walker Evans photographs, made in the 1930s, by taking photographs of these photographs and

subsequently included these "new" images in her 1981 solo exhibition. Richard Prince appropriated one of the most familiar icons of 20th century US consumer culture, the Marlboro cowboy,[2] by taking pictures of billboard advertisements, "cropping out the branding and texts and showing only the grainy colour-saturated visual fantasies of developed capitalism" (Cotton 2009, 209).

Visual appropriation is at the center of digital media practice, through the always-slightly-altered remediations of digital images presented by recommendation algorithms in "social" and mass media (Saugmann 2017) and new media practices such as the production and circulation of memes (Brennan 2015; Dean 2019; Hamilton 2016). In recent years, the "forensic" appropriation of digital images has played an important role in international politics through, for example, Forensic Architecture's reconstitution of scenes of violence or Bellingcat's use of open-source images to investigate international conflicts. Intelligence practice has created the acronym OSINT for "open-source intelligence" while scholars warn that "open-source" image appropriation risks dragging civilians in warzones into a "visual security paradox" where images are both necessary for, and dangerous to, people in conflict zones (Saugmann 2019). Thus, we experience international politics increasingly as constructed by the production and appropriation of digital images: we live in a visually appropriated world.

Appropriation, as we understand it, equals what some authors call adaptation while what they call appropriation is close to what others call remix, and all of these categories possess an element of visual citation. For the purpose of this paper, it is neither necessary nor feasible to discuss the differences between adaptation, appropriation, and similar terms and concepts as elaborated in the literature (see Nicklas and Lindner 2012; Sander 2016). We define appropriation as *reuse of existing visual material—either in its entirety or in part—without substantially altering the immanent characteristics of the appropriated visual material*. Appropriation is the construction of something new that is related to, but not identical with, the reused material. This is so even without any substantial modification of the reused material, in which case recontextualization establishes the reused material's novelty. Thus, appropriation means change; it cannot *not* alter that which is appropriated (even if no obvious changes are made to it). What amounts precisely to a *substantial* alteration may be contested. For example, appropriation of parts of an original may, in the view of some, amount to a substantial alteration of the original's immanent characteristics. Our procedure follows photojournalistic rules: we neither remove something from, nor add something to, a given image; and we do not create a new image by uniting within the same frame two or more images (or parts thereof) formerly separated from one another. Our take on appropriation includes clear reference to the appropriated work and its creator; thus, we do not engage with authorship. We do not call into question the work's originality either, which rather performs an important function for the appropriation to be just that, an appropriation rather than a fake original.

Appropriation is not automatically critical of state policy or cultural governance or anything else; it can be done either as a part of cultural governance or for the purpose of critique (and what is done for the purpose of critique may over time morph into an ingredient of cultural governance or vice versa). Such ambiguity is hardly surprising as "visibility is not correlated in any straightforward way to recognition and control, or to any specific moral value. As such, it does not constitute anything inherently liberating, nor, conversely, does it necessarily imply oppression" (Brighenti 2007, 340).

[2] Philip Morris's "Marlboro Country" appropriated "one of the most familiar images of 'the West'" in US culture, created by John Ford in his nine Westerns filmed there. Ford, in turn, visually expropriated the Navajo nation, for some of whom this area "has been the ancestral home" (Shapiro 2004, 132).

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Visual Data—Original and Appropriations

In addition to the appropriation of the *output* of image-production, techniques of image-production can also be appropriated. This further develops the notion of appropriation prevalent in the literature, moving it from *image* to *visualization technology*. We do not ourselves appropriate visualization techniques but use their visual output, by appropriating Mosse's composite images, and are inspired by his work to think in terms of appropriations. We do not imply that appropriations of visual technologies and of images operate according to the same principles. However, although we appropriate images rather than technologies, we need to be aware of Mosse's procedure because the images we appropriated are derived from his appropriation of techniques of image-production.

Mosse's recent projects, Incoming and Heat Maps, are visual engagements with militarized border politics and the politics of surveillance in the context of migration.[3] Similar to the work of such artists as Trevor Paglen and Laura Kurgan, Mosse's recent work is based on the replication and appropriation of technologies of image-production. Paglen appropriates facial recognition software (Crawford and Paglen 2019),[4] Kurgan appropriates "incriminated" drones, including their cameras, (Kurgan 2013, 86)[5] and Mosse (2017b) appropriates border control and surveillance technologies. These artists insist on "underlying sociological, cultural, and political facts" rendered visible in their work despite, or because of, their works' "epistemological and visual contradictions" (Paglen 2010, 151). Their aim is not to obscure these facts; on the contrary, Mosse acknowledges that "the real is central to my interests" (Schuman and Mosse 2011, 56). Mosse specifies that his team,[6] by appropriating technologies of image-production, "were trying to enter into [the apparatus'] logic—the logic of proprietary government authorities—to foreground this technology of discipline and regulation, and to create a work of art that reveals it" (Mosse 2017a, 3).[7]

In order to create such a work of art, Mosse decided to operate an "extreme telephoto military-grade camera that can detect thermal radiation, including body heat, at great distance" (Jack Shainman Gallery 2017).[8] The camera, being produced by an unspecified "multinational defence and security corporation" that also builds "cruise missiles, drones, and other technologies" (Mosse 2017a, 1), qualifies as a weapon under the International Traffic in Arms Regulations. It "is most suited for long range land, coastal or maritime environments" (Mosse 2017a, 1) and is used in such environments by border authorities for the purpose of surveillance and control, executing sovereignty, controlling borders, and regulating migration. Thus, Mosse uses a military technology designed to control and project power in a specific social situation to visualize this situation at the time when, and at the

[3] For this context, see Dijstelbloem, van Reekum, and Schinkel (2017).

[4] At the exhibition, Training Humans, by Kate Crawford and Trevor Paglen, Osservatorio Fondazione Prada, Milano, from September 12, 2019 to February 24, 2020, both Image-Net Roulette, Trevor Paglen Studio 2019, "us[ing] a neural network trained on the 'people' categories from the Image-Net dataset to classify pictures of people" and Age, Gender, and Emotions in the Wild, models by Gil Levi and Tal Hassner, Trevor Paglen Studio 2019, "us[ing] models developed by researchers at Facebook and Amazon to estimate the age, gender, and emotional state of the faces it detects," could be seen; see Osservatorio Fondazione Prada (2019).

[5] Kurgan's research proceeds as "a series of projects utilizing the technologies that have produced these images in order to investigate them" (Kurgan 2013, 13). "These images" refer to images produced by "new technologies of location, remote sensing, and mapping" or, in other words, "global positioning, imaging, and interpretation" developed originally to "serve the needs of governments and their military and intelligence establishments."

[6] In Incoming (2017b), Mosse collaborated with the cinematographer Trevor Tweeten, the writer John Holten and the composer Ben Frost.

[7] As we define appropriation in terms of limited alteration of the appropriated images, it is important to note that Mosse, when appropriating techniques of image-production, made only small adjustments to increase functionality (Mosse 2017a, 3).

[8] "Under test conditions," this camera "has proved able to detect a human body from 30.3km. It can identify an individual from 6.3km" (Mosse 2017a, 1).

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location where, it takes place, strengthening a sense of realism, immediacy and urgency emanating from his work.

Mosse uses this camera to "track and document the journeys taken by refugees and illegal migrants along two of the busiest and most perilous routes leading into Europe" (Mosse 2017a, 5), one leading from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq in a western direction toward Europe, the other from African countries in a northern direction toward the Mediterranean in the hope of crossing the Mediterranean Sea and reaching Europe. The panoramic artworks shown in/as Heat Maps were mainly taken in refugee camps in Greece (among others in 2017 at the infamous Moria Camp); one panorama was produced in 2016 in Ventimiglia, Italy. In addition to the panoramic scenes which are at Heat Maps' center, Mosse transforms his video installation (Incoming) into film stills camouflaging as photographs. His gallery explains that the panoramic images shown in Heat Maps are "constructed from a grid of almost a thousand smaller frames, each with its own vanishing point" and then "blended into a single expansive thermal panorama" (Jack Shainman Gallery 2017) which could not be seen or anticipated while operating the camera. As such, there is a gap between what the photographer sees on location and what later appears in the images.[9]

In terms of operation, the camera, while being "probably one of the world's most powerful cameras," is also "definitely one of the most frustrating to operate, at least for civilians like us" as it functions without buttons, focus rings, knobs or dials and is "operated remotely by laptop, through a complicated user interface software" (Mosse 2017a, 2–3). Thus, this camera is not suitable for conventional photojournalistic work, as Mosse notes with reference to Henri Cartier-Bresson's genre-defining understanding of the photojournalistic task: "Clicking through various panels and dialog boxes on a touchscreen Windows 8 laptop is not convenient when it comes to capturing *the decisive moment*" (Cartier-Bresson 2014; Mosse 2017a, 3, italics added).

Like many other photographers, then, Mosse portrays people's journey toward Europe but he does so in a different way, producing *new* images—images not seen in public before. These images are critical in that they oppose and go beyond "the mere recognition of established opinion or the extrapolation from established versions of facticity" (Shapiro 2015, 10). Based on "conceptual innovation," such images can render possible "critical political thinking" (Shapiro 2015, 10) and contribute to resistance to oppressive political and social processes, regardless of whether they are produced by artists or scholars. However, they do neither automatically nor necessarily do so (see our discussion of Figure 4 in section four).

The visual novelty of Mosse's images may pose a challenge in that its aesthetics may be either misread as attention-seeking visual gimmicks—the comic- or zombie-like grayscale figures in Incoming and Heat Maps[10]—or employed for yet another rehearsal of the discussion of the seemliness of beauty in political art (see Lisle and Johnson 2018; Möller 2013, 36–55; Reinhardt 2007). Yet, Mosse's aim—"put[ting] the viewer into an unfamiliar space so that they can see fresh, to see again without all the baggage of the mainstream media"[11]—requires an unfamiliar visuality: "Habits of seeing are estranged *strategically* in the hope of opening up a space to think differently (about warfare, about landscape, about photography, about vision," David

[9] William Henry Fox Talbot noted in 1844 as "one of the charms of photography ... that the operator himself discovers on examination, perhaps long afterwards, that he has depicted many things he had no notion of at the time" (quoted in Brunet 2019, 152, note 39). This historical reference shows that Mosse's photography engages with questions that have been central to photographic discourses since photography's invention.

[10] The camera, "stripping the individual from the body and portraying a human as mere biological trace, ... does this without describing skin colour—the camera is colour-blind—registering only the contours of relative heat difference within a given scene. ... Even at close range, the camera is unable to perceive that vehicle of emotional communication, the eye's pupils. Instead it represents the eyes as viscous black jelly" (Mosse 2017a, 2).

[11] See https://www.popphoto.com/american-photo/richard-mosse-on-using-military-grade-camera-to-find-signs-life-in-refugee-camps/ (accessed May 8, 2017).

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Figure 1. Richard Mosse, *Idomeni Camp, Greece*, 2016, with added indication of appropriation. All photographs taken by Frank Möller on 2 March 2017 at, and reproduced courtesy of, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York City.

Campany writes in the context of photographic abstraction (2013, 51, italics added) and this can also be said of Mosse's work. He deliberately and explicitly positions himself and his work outside of photojournalism, producing images that photojournalists cannot produce. State and border control authorities *do* produce similar images using similar technologies. However, while using these images for the planning and execution of their operations, they do not normally share their images with a public audience.

There are practical reasons why we are not appropriating this camera technology directly: The camera, qualifying as a weapon of war, is not normally sold to civilians; it costs a fortune; and it is extremely difficult to operate. Furthermore, in the context of a gallery where we produced our appropriations, using a thermal grade camera to take pictures of its own pictures would be a different and more artistic endeavor. Given the inaccessibility and unavailability of images produced by border authorities, we open up an alternative trajectory of images: from those produced by border authorities to those produced by Mosse to, finally, our appropriations (or seemingly finally because our appropriations may later be appropriated by others, e.g., in a university course setting). We use a "normal" camera to appropriate the visual output of Mosse's appropriation of technology, that is, Mosse's images—both the panoramas in their entirety and selected details from these panoramas, produced not by cropping the panoramas but by taking individual photographs of selected details of these panoramas. Figures 1 to 4 clarify the visual and spatial relationship between the panoramas and the details we selected in Figures 2 and 4, marked in Figures 1 and 3 in red.

Producing Images in the Study of the International

Most often, scholarly engagement with visual material situates itself as *after* image-production: scholars respond in various ways to an existing image while not as often appearing as image-makers themselves as we do here. Michael Shapiro, for

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Figure 2. Detail from Richard Mosse, *Idomeni Camp, Greece*, 2016.

Figure 3. Richard Mosse, *Moria in Snow*, 2017, with added indication of appropriation.

Figure 4. Detail from Richard Mosse, *Moria in Snow*, 2017.

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example, in excellent publications analyzes how images think but he does not produce or analyze his own images (Shapiro 2009, 2015). In a more complex approach, Leena Vastapuu, in her work on the role of female war veterans in Liberia, shows Emmi Nieminen's illustrations derived from thousands of photographs commissioned by Vastapuu but taken by the war veterans (Vastapuu 2017, 33–7). Thus, an illustrator, rather than the researcher herself, reworked photographs produced by the informants, not by the scholar. Researchers' engagement with visual images is not limited to those originally produced by artists. Rothe, Fröhlich, Rodriguez Lopez (2020, 11), for example, use UNOSAT satellite images to conduct spatial analyses of refugee camps in Jordan. Quite understandably, they do not operate their own satellites for the purpose of image-production (in which case they would appropriate visualization technology). Numerous references to similar work could be given here but the essential point is that these works distance the scholar from the image-maker.

The routine of analyzing the images of others has been challenged in a number of works where scholars appear as image-*makers*. Cynthia Weber is well known for her video work on difference and identity following September 11, 2001, filming the fear of difference and writing about the resulting images from the perspective of a filmmaker, not a scholar/writer (Weber 2011, 8). This procedure deviates substantially from the practice of analyzing the visual works of others and writing about them as scholar, not as filmmaker. In works following Weber's, scholars like Saugmann Andersen (2015) or Callahan (2020) use filmmaking *as* theorizing, understanding "filmmaking as a theory-making activity that joins the metatheoretical with the practical in its consideration of the sensible politics of the everyday" (Callahan 2020, 61). Likewise, image-making in terms of both documentation and visual deconstruction of documentary-style photography in our earlier work represents a different method from the one suggested here (Möller 2013, 124–55) just as do art-based methods such as collaging, used by, for example, Särmä (2018). Such practices evolved from various twentieth century "avant-garde movements and later pop art and appropriation art repurpos[ing] familiar motifs and objects from pop culture and art. Visual citation assumes new forms in the digital era as media users circulate and/or create appropriations and other visual, viral comments such as internet memes and gifs" (Mortensen 2017, 1144) but also beyond such technologically and artistically rather limited attempts.

Christine Sylvester introduced the method of collaging to the study of International Relations, arguing that "a collage reworks and remakes reality, revealing connections and tangencies that the viewer might not have noticed or thought much about before" (Sylvester 2005, 859). Särmä uses playful "parody images" to comment on, and to ridicule, digitally manipulated images published by pompous official sources to disguise political failure, and identifies their makers as "participants in world politics" (Särmä 2018, 114). Despite reusing existing material, collages and photomontages do not fit our definition of appropriation as they take elements from several sources and creatively reassemble them so as to produce clearly distinct visual objects with distinct meanings and politics, some of which are highly critical of the source material (Kriebel 2014). Finally, Gibbon and Sylvester's (2017) reprint of a photograph of sketchbooks created by one of the writers herself (Jill Gibbon) is an appropriation but the published image is not primarily used for research purposes, thought of as mimetic of the original, and serves mainly as illustration.

As we understand visual methodology as pluralist, we do not deem our method superior to, but simply different from, other ways of producing and analyzing images in international studies. Like most colleagues, we acknowledge that researchers dealing with existing visual material always make decisions when it comes to choosing and analyzing material. A "process of collecting, editing, and then circulating images as part of research entails a series of ethical decisions about accuracy, authenticity, and representation" highlighted by thinking in terms of appropriation

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(Shepherd 2017, 219). We agree with Koni Benson and Asher Gamedze (2020, 131) that "[c]reative practice should not be seen the exclusive preserve of people who self-identify as artists." The main purpose of our appropriations, however, is not to make "quality art as a form of doing IR" (Crilley 2020, 11) but other IR scholars may be more artistically ambitious.[12] While "many artists are highly sophisticated analysts of the international sphere" (Danchev and Lisle 2009, 775), they comment on the international primarily as artists. Merging the subject positions of artists and scholars is one possible approach; aiming at cumulative knowledge resulting from different subject positions and socializations, including visual ones, is another one, capitalizing on the intellectual interplay (including tensions) between the image-maker as scholar and the scholar as image-maker. Indeed, why should we assume that scholars' and artists' politics and interests are always identical, save perhaps for a vague, overall interest in critique? If they were identical, appropriations would be redundant anyway. It is for this reason that we do not rely, for our research, on the stills from Incoming accompanying Heat Maps or on Mosse's most recent publication, The Castle (Mosse 2019), but appropriate his work in our own images.

Appropriation as a Self-reflexive Method

We appropriate images as image-*actors*, by which we mean that we locate images in an overall visual framework conditioned by active interaction (seeing–changing–sharing). As such, every image-maker can become an image-actor, provided that she operates within this visual framework. The specific features of a digital image can be analyzed at any given point and its trajectories can be explored; however, its malleability can also be capitalized on deliberately to intervene actively into world politics: to produce knowledge that the original (or its variations) failed to produce and to construct the international in a new way. Appropriation explicitly acknowledges that methods (and images, as per Tillmans, above) "construct or make reality" and understands method as "acting in the world as much as studying action in it" (Saugmann Andersen 2015, 67, 69; cf. Aradau and Huysmans 2014; Law 2004; Ruppert and Scheel 2019, 235). Thus, appropriation is both analysis and construction of the international. With construction comes responsibility, another feature of the image-actor that we will explore in what follows.

Our appropriations are based on two assumptions. First, rather than erasing the tensions, contradictions, and ambiguities inherent in the appropriated artwork, appropriations reproduce them. Yet, they never *only* reproduce them; they always also construct something new which may, or may not, amount to a critique of the original's ambiguities (while simultaneously creating their own ones). Second, appropriations, as in our case, of both massive panorama images and details reflect the idea that a change of scale invites a change of perception. Just as "cultural intimacy" (Herzfeld 1997) may escape attention when focusing only on the level of meta-discourse, details may escape attention when putting emphasis only on Mosse's panoramas. For instance, everyday life—including everyday life in refugee camps—can be made comprehensible through "*détournement* or change of scale that does not change the phenomenon but makes it perceptible" (Sheringham 2006, 85). Mosse's panoramas—overwhelming, unfamiliar, and aesthetically appealing as they are—may precisely discourage the viewers from perceiving the details depicted; our appropriations of details (Figures 2 and 4) operate differently. As Roland Barthes is said to have suggested, change of scale "transforms the power of attention and observation" by "disrupt[ing] familiar perception" (Sheringham 2006, 194). It makes viewers perceive things that they have seen (or could have seen) before but failed

[12] Särmä (2020, 290), for example, writes: "Calling myself an artist came before the formal recognition, however, and owning this identity emboldened me to do artistic work in the doctoral dissertation."

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to perceive in any substantial manner.[13] As the details omit overview and context, obviously, panoramas are of value, too; the inclusion of both in the selected visual data illustrates the difference inevitably produced in each appropriation.

Looking slowly at appropriated material creates space for investigation, inspired by the artist but to some extent liberated from the artist's choices.[14] Appropriators can focus on those aspects of the original image they find most interesting, provocative, or appealing instead of relying on the artist's choices. Scholarly appropriators may be interested in aspects that differ from those the artist finds most relevant and by appropriating these aspects, they can morph from "readers or spectators into collaborators" (Benjamin 2008 [1934], 89). We do not claim that scholars have a better informed or more knowledgeable approach to the artworks' underlying social and political conditions. Rather, the different subject positions of artists and scholars may result in different agendas[15]—and tension emanating from these differences may be productive when translated into dialogue. Accepting a plurality of viewpoints on the same image—including mutually exclusive ones—reflects an "intellectual and political commitment . . . that works *with* difference and not by *reducing* difference" (Couldry 2000, 21–2; see also George and Campbell 1990). Appropriating selected aspects of an original by capturing them photographically enables the researcher to think with and about the image and that which it depicts even after the initial encounter, transforming ad hoc impression into systematic thinking.

Data—such as photographs—are never just data, "out-there" in the "real" world awaiting the neutral researcher to gather and analyze it objectively. Data always reflect the process of its coming into being, the choices made when selecting something rather than something else. Laura Shepherd emphasizes that "[e]thical practice in the construction of image data . . . requires reflexivity about composition, framing, lighting, and perspective and so on" (Shepherd 2017, 218). "So on" is the most important element in the present context: while the researcher may not directly influence lighting and perspective (in digital copy-paste appropriations at least), "so on" includes choices made by the researcher as image-actor—choices that reveal "'where the researcher is coming from' and how this impacts on the knowledge produced" (Pink 2003, 189). Consequently, different researchers would have appropriated the same visual material differently, just as we would have done had we encountered the material in different conditions or repeatedly.

It is therefore important to reveal the conditions in which our appropriations—seventy-five photographs—were made, influenced by the presence at the gallery of gallery staff and other visitors at a specific point in time on March 2, 2017.[16] Metadata reveals that the photographs were taken between 11:34 a.m. (first picture) and 12:15 p.m. local time (last picture). We stayed longer at the gallery, however; introductory conversations with staff and familiarization with the location preceded the first photograph. In the forty-one minutes, during which time we appropriated the photographs, it was neither possible, nor attempted, to photograph all details inherent in the panoramic landscapes or to mentally process the exhibition completely. Our photographic work reflects that we are not professional photographers. Operating a hand-held camera, we were dependent on the light conditions and reflections in the gallery, not all of which made it easy to take photographs. Furthermore, working during the gallery's official opening hours, there were people

[13] In 1927, Siegfried Kracauer differentiated seeing from perceiving: "In the illustrated magazines people see the very world that the illustrated magazines prevent them from perceiving" (Kracauer 1993 [1927], 432).

[14] On "slow looking" as a critical reading practice, see Bal (2007, 113–5) and Shapiro (2008).

[15] "When constructing a visual ethnography, for example, a researcher might crop an image to cut out the side of a building that she deems irrelevant to the component of the story she wishes to tell" (Shepherd 2017, 219), thus altering the scale for narrative purposes.

[16] The following sketch of our production and selection process is not meant as a full-fledged auto-ethnography as suggested by, for example, Pink (2003); such an ethnography is not our aim and space is limited.

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walking around all the time or stopping in front of what we wanted to capture. Thus, our line of sight to the photographs was often blocked. Furthermore, taking photographs of photographs in a gallery space is what we normally consider one of the most annoying features of digital consumer culture; practicing the same culture in our appropriations was an irritating experience. In consequence, there was an element of serendipity involved when, after our return journey, we proceeded to look at our photographs and discovered that some of them turned out to be quite useful for our purpose (while others did not, e.g., due to low resolution or blurriness).[17]

In earlier work, we appropriated a photograph where a person sitting in a tent can clearly be seen (Figure 2). This appropriation made us think about privacy (or the lack thereof) as part of the lived everyday experience in the refugee camps, political approaches to privacy (respecting or disregarding it, found to be primarily strategic and connected to policy priorities), and the use of long-distance photography to capture—and violate—privacy. Thinking in terms of appropriation foregrounded our complicity in exploiting and violating the privacy of the subject depicted—presumably believing to be hidden from public view in the privacy of the tent—by appropriating and reproducing this image in our work (Saugmann, Möller, and Bellmer 2020).

Another example of our complicity concerns what can be called an inappropriate appropriation (Figure 4). Such an appropriation, reflecting what some observers may deem a problematic scenario appearing in the original artwork, might undermine the artist's—and our—critical intentions. It might inadvertently support anti-migration politics and foster racist and xenophobic attitudes by seemingly repeating well-known visual strategies with which to discredit "migrants" and "refugees" in terms of anonymous and potentially dangerous "masses," mostly consisting of male figures. Such masses can easily be represented and referred to as a threat, and such threat designations tend to trigger and legitimize repressive politics.

Given the indistinction with which people are here depicted, they may appear as "clones"—identical replications of one another. The word clone not only refers to individuals but also "to the entire group or series . . . designat[ing] a collective entity with an indefinite number of members" (Mitchell 2011, 39). Referring to groups of people as "clones" appeals to all sorts of anxieties, designated by W.J.T. Mitchell as "clonophobia" (2011, 25–43), prevalent among western audiences.[18] Mitchell reminds us that "the terrorist is often portrayed *as* a clone, a faceless automaton, masked and anonymous" (Mitchell 2011, 74) facilitating threat designations.[19] And while the number of members in the picture is not indefinite, accompanying discourses in terms of "waves" and "floods" can rather easily achieve the impression that the people depicted are but a small sample of a much larger group. Figure 4 is indeed eerily reminiscent of images used widely in anti-migration discourses in 2015 and 2016, reminding us that images and appropriations by researchers are neither unpolitical nor neutral, nor under the exclusive control of the appropriating researcher. They can be used for diverse political purposes, and this has to be acknowledged in appropriation as a self-reflexive method.

This is particularly important for researchers as image-actors, as active three-way interaction (looking–changing–sharing) is certainly not limited to those other

[17] Such discovery is one of the features of photography that can be traced back to the inception of photography. Thus, while, throughout the paper, we emphasize that there is something new in digital visuality, this visuality is not completely separated from the history of photographic image-making but, rather, builds on it.

[18] According to Mitchell (2011, 26), clonophobia "is a deeply rooted cluster of ideological anxieties and symptoms that continually shift ground, circulating around a historic crisis in the very structure of common understandings of the meaning of life itself." Interestingly, for Mitchell clonophobia is "the contemporary expression of a much more ancient syndrome known as *iconophobia*, the fear of the icon, the likeness, resemblance, and similitude, the copy or imitation" (*ibid.* 32).

[19] This is an unintended consequence of the disappearance of facial features stemming from the specific camera technology used in this photography.

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parties who allegedly share a similar political agenda with the researcher-as-image-producer. For example, it cannot be ruled out that border authorities (re-)appropriate original or appropriated images for purposes other than those envisaged by the artist or the appropriator—for the purpose of surveillance, border enforcement, cultural governance, population control and so on.[20]

Understanding our subject positions as researchers, image-actors and appropriators, thus, helps us take seriously Debbie Lisle's appeal to researchers to be "more painfully honest about how and when 'we' as scholars are complicit in reproducing forms of violence and exclusion; more courageous in calling out our own complicity; and more creative in opposing all forms of impending closure" (Lisle 2016, 422).

A main concern in understanding researchers as appropriating image-actors is to not assume that scholars are somehow exempt from allegations of exploitation routinely made with regard to artists, especially photographers (see Solomon-Godeau 1991). We are inspired by approaches to performance art that "choose to use people as a material": "the better examples of this work . . . exploit precisely to *thematise exploitation itself*" (Bishop 2012, 238–9). Researching the visuality of migration governance through and with appropriations makes us acknowledge the power inherent in visual constructions of human beings as "migrants" and "refugees" who are surveilled with powerful visual technologies operating in "our" name by agencies commissioned by democratically legitimated governments, that is, by us.[21] It is indeed, as O'Hagan (2017) notes, "our human tragedy" as well. Thus, our complicity is *independent* of the reproduction of images—an uncomfortable condition that the active act of appropriation reveals. Without ignoring the problematic aspects of our method (described above), appropriations help us better understand the role we play as researchers and as citizens in the politics of migration, visual and otherwise.

Appropriation, Interaction and Responsibility

This paper introduced visual appropriation—understood as the reuse of existing visual material (either in its entirety or in part) without substantially altering the main characteristics of the appropriated material—as an original contribution to the evolving repertoire of critical, self-reflexive, qualitative methods of visual analysis (and construction) of the international. Its power resides in the ability to rationalize our subject positions as researchers and citizens and to question what we see within taken-for-granted categories, thus inviting new ways of seeing and thinking and, tentatively, new politics. As a self-reflexive method, appropriation foregrounds the researcher as image-actor, rendering visible her decisions leading to the (re-)creation of images (Shepherd 2016, 35) and revealing her role and responsibility as contributor to the visual construction of the international. Appropriating images as image-*actors* means that we locate images in an overall visual framework conditioned by active interaction (seeing–changing–sharing). The image-actor uses the digital image's fluidity and malleability deliberately to intervene actively into world politics: to produce knowledge that the original did not produce and to construct the international in a new way. As such, appropriation is always *both* analysis *and* construction of the international.

Appropriated materials render possible researchers' investigation of a variety of aspects of the international through and with images produced by more

[20] This danger should probably not be overestimated: authorities do not need these images because they have their own visual repository legitimizing and facilitating their policies (Popoviciu 2021).

[21] In our earlier work, we define Mosse's aesthetics as sensor realist, by which we mean an aesthetic realism based on the visual replication of technologies used in visualizing an issue rather than on a photorealistic depiction of that issue in terms of documentation and verisimilitude. Because sensor realism "repeat[s] what 'we' already do through security agencies" (Saugmann, Möller, and Bellmer 2020) it is an especially suitable, yet not the only, vehicle with which to reveal our political complicity.

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commonly considered image-producers, while simultaneously exhibiting some degree of emancipation from the original image-producer's choices and foci. Appropriating Richard Mosse's photographs made us encounter ethical questions not unlike those Mosse is himself facing. When we, as scholars, actively participate in image-production, our sense of urgency increases, as does our sense of responsibility toward the image and its subjects, both the subjects depicted and the overall subject addressed in the photography. Thus, our appropriations made us reflect upon our own positionality vis-à-vis the images and their subject(s)—migration and people migrating. As image-actors, we cannot—and we do not—delegate responsibility to the photographer while hiding our own intervention behind safe critical distance (cf. Austin 2019). Thinking in terms of appropriation makes us acknowledge some degree of complicity and use this acknowledgment to reflectively interrogate research ethics and our subject positions, as scholars and citizens, vis-à-vis international politics. Ultimately, our appropriation of Mosse's work, which replicates technologies of sovereignty for which we, as citizens, are responsible, is precisely a confirmation of the responsibility that we inhabit as scholars and as citizens anyway, and from which we cannot easily escape.

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