

Call for Papers

Interdisciplinary Doctoral Symposium: '(In)visibility: seeing, making visible, keeping hidden' Venice, 14-15-16 April 2026

Organised by PhD students of the 40th doctoral programme in Asian and African Studies of Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Department of Asian and North African Studies.

Accessing and producing knowledge is never neutral. From the erasure of certain voices in historical narratives to the strategic visibility of bodies, choices are constantly made about what can be seen and believed — and, consequently, what must remain hidden and invisible. **Two main forces are at play:** on the one hand, the partial, selective, or ideologically inflected nature of the **sources themselves**, whether they are written, visual, or oral; on the other hand, **the situated position of the scholar**, informed by personal preferences, intellectual traditions, and cultural assumptions. These forces reflect underlying historical, political, cultural, and social hierarchies of power. Crucially, they can result in the **exclusion, marginalisation, misunderstanding or invisibilisation** of voices endowed with less power, socially and/or historically.

This symposium questions how presence and absence are constructed, how certain topics or agents are rendered peripheral, and how historiographical, disciplinary, ethical, methodological, but also institutional **choices reinforce (or challenge) patterns of invisibilisation**. How do our ways of seeing and not seeing shape the contours of knowledge?

Harnessing **(in)visibility as a lens on knowledge**, this symposium explores three interrelated dynamics: seeing, making visible, keeping hidden.

Seeing: seeing (in)visibility means questioning the limits of our perceptions and moving beyond prima facie classifications to understand how presence and absence are actively negotiated.

Making visible: making (in)visibility visible means spotlighting and ethically responding to what and who is marginalised, unlocking their emancipatory power.

Keeping hidden: keeping hidden means tracing the deliberate practices of concealment that shape what is (in)visible to reveal their underpinning politics of erasure.

Theoretical and methodological framework

The symposium is grounded on **interdisciplinarity, intended as a methodological and relational practice that helps us appreciate how things are interconnected**. For this reason, while we recognise that each theory, concept, and notion emerged within a certain discipline, in our approach we refer to fields of study rather than disciplines. Each field can then bring together scholars and practitioners from different disciplines.

We are particularly interested in abstracts that **re-examine primary sources, propose new methodological frameworks, or focus on objects of study that have remained outside dominant research agendas**. We welcome submissions aligned with the symposium theme **including, but not limited to, the following fields:**

- ***Heritage, Memory and Material Culture***. Contributions exploring the role of heritage, archives, and museums in the display and underplay of identities: how do they mirror, support, and subvert dominant historical narratives?
- ***Media and Performance Studies, Art and Visual Culture***. Contributions engaging with aesthetics, media, and performative practices: how do they represent and/or contrast (in)visibility?
- ***Literary and Narrative Studies***. Contributions analysing narrative forms and canon, with a particular interest in non-Western and marginalised literary voices: how do language and literature mediate (in)visibility?
- ***Language and Translation Studies***. Contributions exploring practices of deliberate concealment and addition, but also (re)translation as empowerment and the (in)visibility of the translator/interpreter. How does language determine what is seen, made visible, and/or kept hidden?
- ***Historical and Classical Studies***. Contributions devoted to historiography, textual traditions, and manuscript studies: how does the lens of (in)visibility enhance our understanding of the preservation of past traditions?
- ***Religious Studies***. Contributions probing how religious practices, rituals, and spaces engage with the spiritual, the unseen, or the hidden: how is (in)visibility mediated and experienced?
- ***Gender, Sexuality, Disability, and Intersectionality Studies***. Contributions addressing the impact of social power dynamics on the (in)visibilisation of bodies and identities: how do these dynamics speak of intentional choices orienting what should be seen and what must remain hidden?

- **Critical Theory, Pedagogy and Epistemology.** Contributions examining how power, justice, equality and rights play out in education and knowledge transmission: what epistemological, ethical, and ontological concerns do they raise?
- **Spatial Studies.** Contributions interrogating how (in)visibility is embedded in space and territorial practices: how do spatial layouts speak of power hierarchies?
- **Migration and Diaspora Studies.** Contributions inquiring into the experience of displacement, belonging, and identity: how does migration inform practices of forced or strategic (in)visibility?
- **Environmental Humanities (EH).** Contributions assessing how ecological knowledge and environmental crises are made visible or kept hidden: what forms of (in)visibilities emerge at the intersection of environmental justice and climate change?
- **Digital Humanities (DH).** Contributions assessing the liberatory potential of DH in the negotiation of (in)visibility: how can digital tools provide infrastructures to valorise marginalised communities and how, conversely, do they sustain practices of marginalisation?

The symposium aims to facilitate a collegial atmosphere where **early-career scholars** can receive feedback on their research and network. As such, though open to all, it is designed specifically for **Master's students, doctoral students and post-doctoral students**. Contributions are also encouraged from **art practitioners and activists**.

Submission guidelines

Please submit your abstract in the format of a **.doc or pdf document (max 300 words, size 12, double-spaced)** to in.visibility@unive.it by **17 November 2025**.

The abstract should also include a **title** and **three to five keywords**.

At the top of the document, indicate your name, email address, and institutional affiliation (if any).

Abstracts will be assessed according to a **peer-review process** by the Symposium Organising Committee, made up of PhD students of the 40th doctoral programme in Asian and African Studies, offered by the Department of Asian and North African Studies of Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Value will be placed on abstracts displaying **relevance, innovation, originality, and clarity**.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the symposium, we welcome proposals in innovative or experimental formats such as digital methods, performances, and creative workshops, either integrated in panels or as standalone sessions.

Deadline for submission: 17 November 2025

Notification of acceptance: 12 December 2025

Confirmation of attendance: 7 January 2026

(In)visibility Symposium dates: 14-15-16 April 2026

Symposium details

The Symposium will take place **in Venice, from Tuesday 14 April 2026 to Thursday 16 April 2026**. Further details about the conference premises, schedule, and keynote speakers will be released later on on the symposium website. **All venues are accessible for people with disabilities**; please contact the Symposium Organising Committee for any specific accessibility needs. Please note that **attendance to the symposium is only in person**.

The official language of the symposium is **English**.

There is **no fee for registration** and attendance.

Unfortunately, we are unable to offer financial support for travel or accommodation. We encourage selected presenters to book hotel accommodation in Venice as soon as possible to avoid overpriced options.

Contact Details

For any doubt or queries, please contact the organisers at in.visibility@unive.it.