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Types of Visual Arguments

Abstract: This article focuses on the visually-rendered components of an argument. I am interested in the conditions that must be fulfilled for visuals to successfully perform an argumentative function. I am trying to find out which aspects of an argument are amenable to visualization: is it only the factual aspects that can be effectively captured in a visual? What about abstract claims? Are visuals not capable of providing support for them? In the attempt to answer these questions, I delineate two types of arguments that may be supported by visual material, and try to show the differences and the similarities between their argumentative regimes. Although the concept of visual argument is not uncontroversial, I do not intend to make a new contribution to the twenty-year debate surrounding the question *whether* there are any visual arguments. My wish is to build on the literature that is already established in the field, with the hope of taking further our understanding of the argumentative action that visuals may perform. My approach is inspired by the authors who believe that visuals can participate substantially in the creation of a well-developed argument, by providing *reasons* in support of claims. To do this successfully, they usually need words in their immediate closeness, but their action is not reducible to that of the surrounding words. Most of the times, they function as distinct components of *hybrid* arguments (as Anthony Blair suggests) – those arguments that are composed of visuals *and* words. Going with the general trend in argumentation studies, I use the term *visual arguments* to refer to the visually-rendered components of hybrid arguments.

Keywords: visual argumentation, hybrid arguments, visually-rendered reasons, factual claims, axiological claims, visually-rendered social proof