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**International Legal Sightseeing
as a Phenomenon and a Methodology**

**Il turismo giuridico internazionale
come fenomeno e metodologia**

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ABSTRACT. Legal sightseeing denotes the ‘eventisation’ of international law: international courthouses stage public photo exhibitions and offer audio tours, international lawyers partake in film festivals, and the buildings of international organisations have become top tourist destinations. We zoom in on these encounters and ask how international law is presented to ‘the public’ and in turn what that public shows up for. We argue that as phenomenon, legal sightseeing is vital to our understanding of the contemporary practice of international law and to questions of who gets to partake in it. Moreover, as experimental methodological intervention, legal sightseeing is not only an argument about what to look at and for, but also about how to look and see.

ABSTRACT. Il *legal sightseeing* (giro turistico giuridico) denota l’eventizzazione del diritto internazionale: le corti internazionali installano mostre fotografiche aperte al pubblico e offrono tour audio; gli internazionalisti partecipano a film festival e gli edifici delle organizzazioni internazionali sono divenuti ambite mete turistiche. In questo articolo, ci focalizziamo su questi ‘incontri’ e indaghiamo come il diritto internazionale viene presentato al pubblico e cosa spinge il pubblico a entrare in contatto con il diritto internazionale. Nel contributo, argomentiamo che il *legal sightseeing* come fenomeno è fondamentale per comprendere la ‘pratica’ contemporanea del diritto internazionale e per problematizzare la questione di chi ne prende parte. Inoltre, come intervento metodologico sperimentale, il *legal sightseeing* non è solo un’ipotesi in merito a cosa osservare o cosa cercare, ma anche un’ipotesi sul come guardare e vedere.

KEYWORDS / PAROLE CHIAVE: International Law; Methodology and Critique; Eventisation; Audience; Socio-Legal Studies / Diritto internazionale; metodologia e critica; eventizzazione; pubblico; studi socio-giuridici

International Legal Sightseeing as a Phenomenon and a Methodology

Sofia Stolk and Renske Vos

SUMMARY: 1. Introduction. – 2. Theoretical Connections. – 2.1. The Plurality of Audiences. – 2.2. International Law’s Visual Turn. – 2.3. Triviality and Spectacle. – 3. Legal Sightseeing as a Methodology. – 4. Legal Sightseeing in Sofia, Bulgaria. – 5. Concluding Remarks.

1. *Introduction*

The city of The Hague annually hosts the Just Peace festival, including *The Hague International Open Day*, when international institutions such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) organise tours, Q&A sessions, and children’s activities to welcome the general public. This is just one example of the ‘eventisation’ of international law that has become widespread and commonplace: international courthouses stage photo exhibitions, international lawyers partake in film festivals, and the buildings of international organisations are top tourist destinations¹. We denote this eventisation as a form of ‘legal sightseeing’. Legal sightseeing as a phenomenon pertains to the encounter between international law and ‘the public’ in unexpected ways and places. Our interest with this encounter is in how international law is presented to ‘the public’ and, in turn, with what that public shows up for.

We argue that the analysis of this understudied phenomenon that we call ‘legal sightseeing’ is vital to our understanding of the contemporary practice of international law and to questions of who gets to partake in it. Moreover, in this article, we put legal sightseeing forward as not only a phenomenon, but also an experimental methodological intervention. As, our work on legal sightseeing is not only an argument about what to look

¹Stolk/Vos (2020); (2018), pp. 44-48.

at and for, but also about how to look and see. As a methodology, legal sightseeing is firmly situated in the field of socio-legal research and law's 'visual turn'. We reflect on this approach and how it could affect, advance, or disrupt current methodologies in the field of international law.

Evaluating international law's public presentation and perception is particularly pertinent in light of increasing demands on institutions to deliver on legitimacy, transparency, and accessibility². Communicating with the public has become a key objective for international legal institutions. To understand and assess this communication, we need to look beyond international law's traditional structures. The prevalence of legal sightseeing evidences that international law persists, transforms, and travels not only through obvious ways such as legal texts, court hearings and lawyers' practices, but also through more mundane objects and unexpected encounters between international law and its diverse audiences³. We understand legal sightseeing as a broad category that encompasses many different activities and different participants. We loosely define 'sightseeing' as the activity of visiting places of interest, which can entail iconic buildings but also festivals, exhibitions, memorials, etc. The 'legal' part of the sightseeing refers to the character of the site which can be somehow linked to (international) law, whether the person undertaking the activity is aware of this legal element or not. The key feature of an instance of legal sightseeing for us is the way in which an activity, object or event entails an encounter between an international legal institution and the public beyond – but not necessarily excluding – formal settings and structures such as courtroom hearings. To explore the variety of forms in which legal sightseeing appears and to test the fuzzy boundaries of its categories is one of the main objectives of our project. This helps us to better understand the many ways in which international law and the public meet and interact.

Encounters with international law can be found at usual places – e.g.

² Bianchi/Peters (2013); Nobuo/Bailliet (2017); Dobson (2023, forthcoming, PhD thesis, VU Amsterdam, on file with author).

³ Hohmann/Joyce (2018).

visitor exhibitions at courthouses, memorial sites – and at unusual places – e.g. in street art, abandoned buildings, a film festival, where international law may appear sometimes even accidentally or with unintended effects⁴. As we have articulated elsewhere:

The question that drives our engagement with these sites and practices of legal sightseeing is: what is international law doing here? There are at least two ways of understanding this question. On the one hand, it opens up from our amazement at the manifestation of and encounter with international law at a particular instance: what is it doing here?! On the other hand, we wonder what it does to bring international law to this encounter: what is it *doing*⁵.

As we shifted our focus to these understudied encounters, we found a related need to reconsider our methodological approach to them as well. Like the phenomenon under study, legal sightseeing as a research method, seeks to also be visually-oriented, participatory, and to hold a sense of curiosity and wonder. Such a research method allows for a creative and intuitive approach to international law, and one that warrants a reflexive attitude towards our own role in this encounter. Through relying on photography, co-creation and walking as core components of the legal sightseeing method, we aim to advance a new way of ‘seeing’ international law.

In discussing legal sightseeing as a method, we also turn to ourselves as research-participants. As researchers, we set out to legal ‘sights’ and become legal sightseers. Legal researchers are a specific kind of legal sightseers. We can be more like a tourist, who accidentally encounters a site of international law during our holidays, or set out on a legal sightseeing trip as means of research. But even in the former scenario, our intellectual baggage is very specific and our tourist and research selves are entangled. Legal sightseeing as a methodology is a plea to open up

⁴The risk being that one starts to find international law literally everywhere, as identified by Hohmann and Joyce in their search for international law’s objects, Hohmann/Joyce (2018), pp. 3-4.

⁵Stolk/Vos (2020).

to international law with the casual, wayfaring attitude of a tourist but nevertheless with a research objective in mind: to study how international law manifests itself in non-traditional ways. This calls for a reflexive attitude and awareness of our own role in shaping these manifestations, on which we will elaborate below. As legal scholars, we partake in the (re)production of international law but not solely through teaching and writing academic texts. Our engagement in legal sightseeing and the way in which we have applied legal sightseeing as a form of co-constructed research fits with a renewed attention to reflexivity in international scholarship and an awareness of the positionality of the research that is fundamental to understanding the inner workings of international law and the unexpected shapes it can take⁶. In this endeavour, we take a perspective of wonder⁷, in line with what Anne Orford has called ‘critical intimacy’, approaching international law «with curiosity rather than suspicion».

In this article, we set out the theoretical points of departure when studying the legal sightseeing phenomenon (section 2). Thereafter, we discuss legal sightseeing as a socio-legal methodological intervention (section 3). We present the foundational components of the method, its connection to other disciplines, and the innovation it brings to the field of international law. Finally, we discuss a case study to show legal sightseeing ‘in action’, by describing a legal sightseeing intervention during a conference on international studies taking place in Sofia, Bulgaria (section 4). We conclude with an invitation to readers to join the legal sightseeing movement.

2. *Theoretical Connections*

A focus on legal sightseeing sits well with an understanding of international law as being more than texts and courtroom procedures. We situ-

⁶ On reflexivity, see for example Emtseva (2022); Lang/Marks (2013).

⁷ Orford (2019), pp. 174-178; (2005), p. 31.

ate our approach within an emerging socio-legal literature focused on international law's materiality, visibility, and everyday life on the one hand⁸ and the innovative work on the use of commercial and/or artistic tools to enforce international law's institutional legitimacy on the other⁹. In particular, it contributes to the advancement of our understanding of the plurality of international law's audiences; international law's visual turn; and the tension between triviality and spectacle in international law. In this section, we briefly set out these three strands of theoretical engagement of the legal sightseeing project.

2.1. *The Plurality of Audiences*

Studies of the interaction between international legal institutions and their audiences are limited in quantity and scope. Scholars in legal anthropology and socio-legal sciences have looked into the daily practices of professionals working at international institutions, and the reception of their work¹⁰. In international law, work has been initiated on the role and perceptions of the general public of international law in the media¹¹. Particularly in international criminal law, scholars have focused on the experiences of victims with international courts¹². However, visitors to the physical institutional sites have been largely ignored in these studies. The diversity of visitors and the variety of reasons for their visits are among legal sightseeing's key interests. Methodologically, this interest requires on-site engagement with these diverse audiences in order to distil their varying responses to their encounter with international law, as we detail below.

⁸ Kang/Kendall (2020); Eslava/Pahuja (2012); Johns (2013); Boer/Stolk (2019); Hohmann/Joyce (2018).

⁹ Schwöbel-Patel (2021); Werner (2016); Drumbl/Fournet (2021).

¹⁰ See, for example, Riles (2001); Dezalay (2017); Niezen/Sapignoli (2017); Koulen (2019); Merry (2009).

¹¹ Joyce (2020); Chiam (2021).

¹² Nouwen (2013); Eltringham (2012); Human Rights Center at the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law (2015); Clarke (2019).

The eventisation of international law can also be seen in light of the debate on marketing and branding in international law¹³, and the pervasive capitalist logic «where justice becomes a product, citizens become consumers»¹⁴. While legal sightseeing does draw attention to visitors as tourists or consumers of international law, we do not mean to advance this argument here. Instead of discussing deep running neoliberal structures that facilitate these encounters, we pause at the moment of encounter in an attempt to look at all that is present in that very moment, with an eye for the unexpected and the accidental, and an appreciation of the diversity within this amorphous group of ‘visitors’ at legal sights. This becomes apparent in a short ethnography that we drew up on the composition of visitors at the Peace Palace grounds:

The people that we encounter around the site are similarly diverse: retired couples, families, tour groups, young travellers, and incidental passers-by. A mother and daughter from India are interested to see the place for real that has featured in the news about the *India v. Pakistan* case before the ICJ. A girl from Moscow walked by this beautiful building by coincidence and stopped to take a photo; she asks what the building is. A young man has arrived too early for his first day at his new job across the road and is killing time by reading the information signs around the square. Two guys visiting from Greece are diligently taking photos of the Wish Tree and praise the audio guide that ‘covers all the basics’ in a short span of time, which is just as well as they plan to visit two more cities later today¹⁵.

By cataloguing the wide range of these encounters, legal sightseeing displays how international law travels and transforms in multiple, not always obvious ways, and through interaction with a plurality of people and objects that might not be the most self-evident legal actors. Legal sightseeing explores and illuminates the manifold ways in which different

¹³ Schwöbel-Patel (2021).

¹⁴ Stolk/Vos (2018); Schwöbel-Patel (2021). On the ‘managerial turn’ of law and the translation of demands of transparency, accessibility and openness into ‘logos, slogans, tags and mission and vision statements’, see Hutton (2014).

¹⁵ Stolk/Vos (2018).

people become involved in international law and make sense of it. For example, visiting an exhibition about the ICJ is not a neutral activity of merely taking in objective information about an international institution. The narrative presented is normatively loaded and the visitor carries her own experiences and intellectual baggage¹⁶. Both affect the experience of the visitor and hence the way in which the work of the ICJ is understood, interpreted and how this narrative is potentially carried forward to others. Moreover, legal sightseeing shows not only how we can engage with international law but also who can engage and the different modes in which different people have access to different iterations of international law.

2.2. *International Law's Visual Turn*

Visual studies are of increasing interest and importance to the field of law – as also evidenced by this very issue of *LawArt*. Landmark pieces in this area have for example addressed the intertwinement of law and culture in different jurisdictions¹⁷, the historical role of images in and about the courtroom¹⁸; and the abundance of work on the interrelation between law and film, art, or pop culture more generally¹⁹.

Still, research into the visual qualities of international law remains a relatively new area of study. Notably, work has been done on international law's objects²⁰; the architecture of institutional buildings²¹; the role of visuals in outreach and fundraising²²; the relation between film

¹⁶ Museum studies provide crucial insights on this. See for example Dudley (2013).

¹⁷ Wagner/Sherwin (2014); Douzinas/Nead (1999).

¹⁸ Goodrich (2014).

¹⁹ To name just a few, Asimow/Brown/Papke (2014); Machura/Robson (2011); Bendor (2012); Finchett-Maddock/Lekakis (2020).

²⁰ Hohmann/Joyce (2018).

²¹ Bak-McKenna (2021); Vos/Stolk (2020); Aalberts/Stolk (2020); Charlesworth (2020).

²² Stolk/Werner (2020); Dobson (2019); Schwöbel-Patel (2021); Dobson/Stolk (2020).

and international law²³; and the role of social media in international and regional courts²⁴. The acceleration of the production and distribution of visual materials online has spawned a (renewed) interest in the role of visuals as evidence in international courtrooms²⁵. Yet, the imagery produced and disseminated by international legal institutions and the reception thereof by intended (and unintended) audiences is largely taken for granted.

This is all the more striking, given that legal institutions have not been blind to the rise of visual media. Established and novel international institutions such as the ICJ and the ICC are cautiously loosening their bias towards the written word. Visual means are increasingly important within the legal procedures: the use of video, photos, animations and maps, changes not only the physical appearance – one can think of the two big screens prominently occupying the ICJ’s courtroom wall – but also the content of the proceedings. Moreover, the visual domain is of crucial importance to the often-invoked goal of international institutions to communicate with their global constituency and to enhance the trust in the institutions; few people read the tribunals’ lengthy judgments or difficult regulations, but a YouTube video, catchy photo on Twitter, or an on-site exhibition can potentially draw a broad audience²⁶. Legal sightseeing as predominantly visual practice and experience sheds light on the importance and prevalence of international law’s visual qualities in its engagement with different audiences. A diverse audience with different backgrounds, purposes, and «their own ways of making sense of the world»²⁷.

²³ Werner (2016); Tallgren/Humphreys/Ainley (2018), pp. 3-11; Joyce/Simm (2015); Delage/Goodrich (2013).

²⁴ Dobson (2019); Eichert (2021); Steininger (2022); Gradoni (2022); Eslava (2018).

²⁵ Freeman (2018).

²⁶ Stolk/Werner (2020); Dobson (2019); Eichert (2021); Schwöbel-Patel (2021).

²⁷ Parfitt (2019).

2.3. *Triviality and Spectacle*

Two focus areas in critical international legal research that inspire research into legal sightseeing are international law's materiality and everyday life²⁸ on the one hand and its aesthetics and discourse of spectacle on the other²⁹. The former emphasises the importance of international law's physical qualities; the actual sites where international law 'works' matters to how it is shaped, (re)produced and transformed. Studying legal sightseeing affirms the importance of studying international law's everyday practices to better understand what it is and does. At the same time, the project is interested in the dramatised discourse and aesthetics invoked by international legal institutions when communicating to the wider public, emphasising their mission and making grand promises about international justice. Legal sightseeing signals the paradoxical need for international courts to engage with the public by spectacularising their work through rather trivial sightseeing activities.

The architecture of the buildings in which international institutions reside are the most prominent embodiments of the collision of the everyday/spectacle. Elsewhere, we have discussed how these buildings encapsulate both functional and ideological requirements: practical as well as aesthetic interventions, for they are both rather trivial office spaces as well as the stage of legal theatre³⁰. These places make international law tangible – in the very physical sense that you can actually touch the buildings – but also enhance their spectacular positioning in the actual and mental landscape³¹.

Beyond the obvious, legal sightseeing also investigates smaller, less

²⁸ Hohmann/Joyce (2018); Eslava/Pahuja (2012); Kang/Kendall (2020); Vos (2019).

²⁹ Simpson (2021); Schwöbel-Patel (2021); De Falco (2022); Stolk (2021).

³⁰ Vos/Stolk (2020). On institutional architecture, see also e.g. Bak-McKenna (2021); Resnik/Curtis (2011).

³¹ Dovey (1999).

familiar encounters³². And even within a visit to a prominent building, smaller interactions and details may destabilise expectations and shape the encounter in unexpected ways³³. In the context of a legal sightseeing expedition in the former American Embassy in The Hague, Vos and Werner note:

We found ourselves gazing at the most ordinary objects: doorknobs, stairwells, wall outlets and windowsills. These objects appeared as props in a play that can never be performed in its original form: the diplomatic staff are gone and will never return. Yet we know what the objects could have been as we know, quite well, what it is to work in a large bureaucratic organization and we know, more or less, what it is to work for an embassy. Because of this, the objects are not only placeholders of a diplomatic past but also pointers as to the way in which this past can be brought into the present. They prompt the imagination³⁴.

To be able to see, touch, and experience the embassy's office spaces (and their abandonment) is to become aware of «the deep entanglements of international law and the material things around us»³⁵ and to become sensitive to the meaning of Eslava's statement that «international law operates through national and local norms, administrative and spatial practices, ordinary artefacts and daily activities»³⁶. Our surroundings are inextricably connected to the larger system of international law and these mundane objects and activities are often easier to grasp – quite literally – than the 'official', abstract, jargon ridden, textual and highly limited depiction of international law. Describing how international law can come alive through a renewed attention to detail is another way in which legal sightseeing endeavours to bridge its everyday materiality with its spectacular manifestation or imaginative power.

³² For examples, see the legal sightseeing photo archive at www.legalsightseeing.org.

³³ On being attentive to such unexpected engagements, see for example Sylvester (2015); Lisle/Johnson (2019).

³⁴ Vos/Werner (2020).

³⁵ Hohmann/Joyce (2018), p. 2.

³⁶ Eslava (2014), p. 7.

3. *Legal Sightseeing as a Methodology*

Moving away from the theoretical embeddedness of the study of legal sightseeing as a phenomenon, we would like to discuss what legal sightseeing has to offer as a methodological intervention. Legal sightseeing as a methodology is socio-legal and interdisciplinary in nature and draws on critical visual studies, museum studies, and anthropological methods³⁷. The study of legal sightseeing as a phenomenon relies on more traditional forms of socio-legal research including ethnographic techniques such as interviewing, focus groups, and observations. Here, we would like to draw attention to the methodological advantages of legal sightseeing itself, characterised by (the combination of) two rather mundane tourist activities: walking and photographing. Over the past years, the legal sightseeing project has experimented with new approaches to research involving these activities, of which we want to highlight two: the legal sightseeing photo archive and the legal sightseeing tour.

The main way of researching and documenting instances of legal sightseeing has been the continuously growing photo archive, located on the Legal Sightseeing website³⁸. The page includes a collection of photos, short descriptions, and longreads collected by ourselves and several guest contributors, documenting a wide variety of legal sightseeing practices worldwide. Visual anthropology is known for using photography as a research method, turning the photographer into a participant observer who simultaneously captures and interprets an experience³⁹. Choosing photography – or other means of visual registration and interpretation as a method of data collection inherently problematizes the line between objectivity and subjectivity and contributes to the emerging call for reflexivity in international legal research. The legal sightseeing tour entails a similar activity of walking and taking photos, but in a slightly more orchestrated, collective, and interactive manner.

³⁷ See e.g. Rose (2016); Dudley (2013).

³⁸ www.legalsightseeing.org.

³⁹ Collier/Collier (1986).

Both activities, building an archive and the walking tour, stimulate the co-creation of research data and enhance the emancipatory potential of the research⁴⁰. The methods are also loosely connected to the field of ‘legal design’, which aims to empower its audiences by involving them in the research design, data collection, and its dissemination⁴¹. Legal design entails a human-centred approach to law with «a designerly focus on lived experience (how we do things, what things look and feel like to us, how things serve us)»⁴². Legal design makes use of similar ethnographic techniques, including ‘photovoice’, the use of photos to initiate analytic discussion⁴³.

In legal sightseeing, we combine this more practical legal design approach with an affinity for the notions of aesthetics, affect, and emotion, currently gaining traction in international law⁴⁴. In what we call ‘concrete materiality’, this concerns a focus on the experiences of people who engage in a legal sightseeing encounter. Such experiences do not have to be expressed in words, but can also be represented visually (sketchings, drawings, photography, collage). As such, we see legal sightseeing as a ‘lived’ methodology, seeking to immerse researchers and participants (the co-constructors) in international law’s daily spectacle. The purpose of such and immersive methodology is to not only observe and register international law’s daily operations and its entanglement with object and artefacts but to *experience* them and to enhance our sensitivity to our own role in international law’s (re)production.

Both core activities, the tour and the visual archive, draw attention to walking as an instructive form of engagement with research objects. The movement on foot through a legal sightseeing sight is not merely a means of transportation, it is crucial to what we see and how we experi-

⁴⁰ Vos/Zong-Syuan Han (2020).

⁴¹ Hagan (2020).

⁴² Hagan (2020), p. 4.

⁴³ Hagan (2020), p. 7.

⁴⁴ See for example White (2021); Sutton (2022).

ence what we see. Pace, mood, attentiveness, interaction, these things matter to how we perceive what we encounter and are affected by how we move, and what we are moved by⁴⁵. Scholars in ‘walking studies’ have pointed our attention to the difference between ‘wayfaring’ and ‘transport’⁴⁶. The movement of the legal sightseer is typically more like the first, in contrast to legal professionals who might walk the same space but with a different purpose. The legal sightseer has a child-like sense of curiosity, a «focus on the near-at-hand», feeling the urge to «reach out and touch as well as look at»⁴⁷. This connects to a reflexive, affective research method with attention to detail and appreciation for the unexpected.

The aspect of co-creation and reflexivity draws on the idea that collaboration can serve as ‘check’ on a scholar’s own positionality⁴⁸. As noted elsewhere: «integrating the voices and views of respondents, functions as a mode of co-production. Bringing in varying perspectives into the research and allowing these perspectives to inform choices of selection and direction, has helped to mitigate -at least to some extent- my own blind spots and bias». ⁴⁹ A very practical form of co-creation we have drawn on in legal sightseeing research is making collages. The collage is a 20th century art form that allows for placing different elements together to create a novel image⁵⁰. But [i]mportantly, the image [...] presented is not seamless: the different elements remain in tension with one another as the outside ties of the individual elements are maintained⁵¹. In the words of

⁴⁵ Vos (2019); Kinney (2018); Ingold/Vergunst (2008); Atkinson-Phillips (2018).

⁴⁶ Ingold (2007), p. 81.

⁴⁷ Ingold/Vergunst (2008), p. 4.

⁴⁸ See e.g. Leander (2020), p. 67; Leander refers here to Haraway (2016); and Stengers (2010).

⁴⁹ Vos (2021, PhD thesis, VU Amsterdam, on file with authors).

⁵⁰ E.g. Ben Stolk, *Sofia (Bulgaria) in Collages: Workshop Visualising International Law* (13 September 2019) (<https://legalsightseeing.org/2019/09/13/sofia-bulgaria-in-collages-workshop-visualising-international-law/>); Cran (2014).

⁵¹ Vos (2021).

Hopkins, collage emphasises «the disjunctions of our typical life experience» contrasted to the «smooth, continuous, unruffled space of older representational art»⁵². Legal sightseeing embraces this attention to drawing out contrast, unexpected connections, and intuitive aesthetics. Collaborative collaging has been a recurring part of our methodology, as we will describe below.

To further illustrate these methodological features of legal sightseeing tours as a method of data collection, we will now discuss one particular case study of legal sightseeing as methodological intervention.

4. *Legal Sightseeing in Sofia, Bulgaria*

In 2019, we headed out to Sofia, Bulgaria, for the 13th Pan-European Conference on International Relations (PEC19) of the European International Studies Association (EISA). The central theme of this year's conference was *The Seen and Unseen of IR*. Since 2017, we have convened and chaired a section on international law within the context of PEC. Staying within this year's general theme, *The Seen and Unseen of IR*, we entitled our section *(In)Visible International Law*. Next to four more 'traditional' panel and roundtable sessions, we also seized the opportunity to experiment with the format of a key feature of the conference itself and to put legal sightseeing forward as a method of research as well as a method of conferencing. This experiment with alternative forms of the conference panel and with visualising law consisted of two parts. First, a walking tour through sunny Sofia. Second, a collage-making workshop. Both under the direction of visual artist Ben Stolk and a local student assistant with considerable knowledge of the city's history and geography.

For the walking tour, participants were invited through leaflets distributed at the conference, word of mouth advertisement, and via social media channels. We embarked on the trip with a mixed group of familiar and unfamiliar faces, conference attendees from our own section but also from

⁵² Hopkins (1997), p. 6.

outside of it. Lawyers, political scientists, students, and an artist. Participants were given the brief to collect materials that were reminiscent of law to them on this walk: through making sketches, collecting paper scraps, or otherwise. In the second part of the exercise these materials were handed over to another group of participants who used them to make collages. In these activities, we experimented with walking and collaging as methodologies of (participatory) data collection, research, and conferencing.

The walking tour was set up to invite the participants to look for (international) law and (il)legality in the city of Sofia. The artist and student assistant prepared the tour in advance by walking around and finding a meandering route through the city connecting a few more obvious sites of law and politics such as governmental buildings and statues. The focus however was on the route between the obvious anchor points. These rather stereotypical sites merely formed an entry point to discovering law and politics along the way in more mundane or unexpected disguises. We wanted to (re)examine basic questions such as: is international law visible? How? Where? Is it informative, do we observe it with certain emotions, is it in plain sight or hardly recognisable? The participants were invited to pay attention to detail, which was endorsed by the means to observe: sketching. The act of sketching one's environment slows down the pace of looking, of registering, and of making sense. It differs in pace and sensory engagement from for example taking written notes or photography and leaves a different type of memory trace. The idea was not (only) to sit down and make a perfect drawing but to use the notebook to make cursory visual notes. Especially frottage, the technique of rubbing a pencil/ charcoal/ crayon over an object placed underneath a paper or canvas, enhances the registration of details, structures, and surfaces; not the spectacular manifestations of law but its intimate materiality⁵³.

⁵³ On the pedagogical and methodological implications of frottage, see for example Pindyck (2018). On collaging as an analytical strategy in international studies, see Leander (2020).

In the collage workshop, we used materials that were partly prepared by the artist and included paper in different colours and structures. The artist also actively looked for materials that would bring in the city and collected local newspapers, maps, and tourist flyers to be used in the collages. The other core materials were the sketches, frottages, photos and other items produced during the walking tour. The exercise of working existing materials into a new image brought about another layer of reflection to the process of seeing and feeling international law in Sofia. The collages that were produced, communicated a combination of estrangement and familiarity similar to what we experienced during the tour, transformed into a visual commentary⁵⁴.

Both activities stimulated a renewed appreciation for what we are doing (research in international studies) but also for *where* we are doing it. The conference venue is not a mere venue where we present research in international studies, but can be an actual site of research into the very same subject. We explored this premise through a collective meditation on the everywhere presentness of our object of study and our very own participation therein. As such, the tour and collage workshop were a commentary on the traditional conference practice. Through the tour, we invited the participants to actively engage and connect with the location of the conference as a research site. The city of Sofia became more than the stage of the conference; we experienced how the city itself embodies the living reality of international studies and how we are part of this arrangement ourselves when we move through the city. We noticed how it was as much us who brought international law and studies along as experts in these fields, actively looking to find law in the everyday of our surroundings, as it was the city itself that once we had started looking for it, showed us that law resides in its memorials, institutional buildings, protest graffiti, poster campaigns, and the like. In this encounter, our ideas about law, visuality and the interna-

⁵⁴ An overview of the works is displayed on the legal sightseeing website: <https://legalsightseeing.org/2019/09/13/sofia-bulgaria-in-collages-workshop-visualising-international-law/>.

tional travelled to manifest as very local and transformed into something actually very concrete.

Both activities foregrounded co-creation as an approach to visual research and visual interpretation. The participants dispersed collective engagement (discussing issues and objects, assisting each other with frottage, sitting next to one another) and individual focus (while sketching, collaging, musing etc.). Some activities necessarily merged the individual with the collective. Most prominently, the activity of walking as a group, moving through the city, emphasises both individuality and collectivity. Furthermore, the group provides safety and courage for individuals to sit down and individually start drawing in the midst of a lively city. Especially those who are new to this form of note taking, being exposed to outsiders overlooking or critique when drawing can be quite a hurdle. The group provides comfort, legitimation, and encouragement of the individual visual activities and enhances immediate reflection both internally and externally⁵⁵. In the collage workshop, all participants worked individually but with materials provided by others (sketches, notes, frottage) and in the presence of co-participants. In the end, this all contributes to the reflection on ourselves as researchers who move through spaces where international law is somehow (in)visible and how we, individually and collectively, contribute to the interpretation and creation of this (in)visibility.

5. *Concluding Remarks*

What we presented in this article is legal sightseeing as an experimental space to contemplate on international law's visuality, as well as to visual-

⁵⁵ A methodology of co-creation also warrants reflection on the composition of the collective. The different backgrounds of the participants and their motivation for participation was a topic of discussion during the exercise. Knowledge in different areas of expertise (politics, law, art) were shared amongst each other. The interests of the participants likely also impact their choice of topics to draw but we have not systematically inquired into this during this particular session.

ly contemplate on international law. Central to this endeavour, is the encounter between international legal institutions and their diverse visitors and responses. We argue that far from trivial, the way that international law comes to life to these diverse audiences in these encounters, is a vital part of the contemporary practice of international law, of its visibility, and of who gets to partake in it. These encounters can revolve around iconic buildings or other prominent representations, but it can also entail capturing a glimpse of everyday international law, a small emblem, a door knob perhaps, on paper through the technique of frottage⁵⁶. In this way, legal sightseeing is an intervention into legal research that embraces slowness, attentiveness, visuality, and reflexivity⁵⁷. From this perspective, law's 'visual turn' does not only entail an invitation to address law's visual presence but also a turn to visual methodologies and visual research outputs.

The phenomenon and methodology of legal sightseeing make us aware that creativity and intuition of both the researcher and the public hold an important place in law. The stereotypical divide between ratio and emotion – with law belonging in the first category – is a false dichotomy. Visual critique exposes how affect, emotion, and experience are a fundamental part of international law's lived reality. Embracing visual methods as legal researchers enables a deeper understanding of law as a multisensory operation. By engaging in legal sightseeing ourselves, by becoming legal sightseers, we carve out a place where we can question our own role in the (re)construction of international law's appearance in an experiential and experimental way. Legal sightseeing is a playful confrontation, and we invite all of you to join us⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ For an extensive historical analysis of legal emblems, see Goodrich (2014).

⁵⁷ On attention to detail, see also Orford (2012), p. 609; Hohmann/Joyce (2018); Boer/Stolk (2019).

⁵⁸ For example by sharing your own legal sightseeing experiences in a contribution on the legal sightseeing blog: www.legalsightseeing.org.

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