

Digital visualisation tools are everywhere today; from the news media's disaster reports to smart phone applications for tracking jogging rounds. However, there is still little research-based knowledge on how visualisation tools are actually used as information resources, and with what consequences. How are meanings interpreted? How is credibility and authority achieved? And how – if at all – does the traditional notion of critical literacy apply? This dissertation sheds some light on these issues.

The study presents an analysis of users' descriptions of and interactions with visualisation tools in two professional case settings. Case 1 is centred on how a geographic information system (MapInfo) is used for analysing and preventing traffic accidents. Case 2 is centred on how a dynamic time series animating chart (Trendalyzer) is used for analysing and spreading knowledge about the world's development.

The analysis describes three directionalities of critical literacies which in turn suggest a more nuanced narrative of visualisation tools as supporting the formulation of new questions and enabling alternative analyses, rather than as providers of answers and truths. The dissertation also (re-)conceptualises visualisation tools as documents and representational artefacts and presents a new theoretical construct for analysing and understanding the mutual shaping of critical literacies and information resources through a combination of sociocultural theories on tools and sociotechnical theories on inscriptions.

Veronica Johansson works at the Swedish School of Library and Information Science (SSLIS) and is a member of the Linnaeus Centre for Research on Learning, Interaction and Mediated Communication in Contemporary Society (LinCS). *A Time and Place for Everything?* is her doctoral dissertation.



UNIVERSITY OF BORÅS  
SCIENCE FOR THE PROFESSIONS

# A TIME AND PLACE FOR EVERYTHING?

Veronica Johansson

Social Visualisation Tools and Critical Literacies

VALFRID