

Panel 26

IVSA Conference 2009

Appreciating the views: How we're looking at the social and visual landscape

Panel Title	
Visual dimensions and consequences of land use planning	
Description	
<p>This panel takes the visual dimensions of consequences of land use planning processes as its unifying theme. Though the respondents explore their own contexts of interest in widely differing ways, considering the impact (and after effects) of the conscious intervention of interest groupings in determining how specific spaces are to be used is common to all. As befits a sociological context we have critics and supporters of such interventions in our ranks, setting up this interesting subject focus as a potentially active one for lively debate.</p>	
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Final Selected Papers

Name:	Gentiane Bélanger , University of Quebec, Montreal, Canada
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Paper Title	Points of Interest at the Center for Land Use Interpretation: Taking In the View from the Ground Up
Description	<p>This presentation intends to unpack the Center for Land Use Interpretation's complex understanding and study of landscapes, to delineate the particularities of its ecological perspective—akin to what is sometimes called social ecology—and to demonstrate the extent of its interaction with an equally singular art legacy. Following a description of the Center's artistic ambiguity—amalgamating relational approaches with formal asceticism and institutional conventionality—I should contextualize this conflation of genres in light of its post-tourist ethos. The concept of post-tourism, as defined by sociologist John Urry, allows me to situate the Center within contested issues of site-specificity, authenticity, mediation and mimicry, all the while deconstructing (often misconstrued) conceptions of nature.</p> <p>"Dedicated to the increase and diffusion of information about how the nation's lands are apportioned, utilized, and perceived," the Center for Land Use Interpretation (or CLUI, as it has come to be known) is a non-profit research organization that "aims to improve the collective understanding of the human/land dialectic." Centering its gaze on human-altered landscapes, CLUI tours, charts and archives the land in search of curious or phenomenally banal land-use specimens, which they, in turn, photograph, interpret, circulate, and exhibit as countless "points of interest." Mirroring the magnitude of its subject of enquiry, the Center intentionally maintains an indefinable practice, keeping at the margins of ecology, art, geography, anthropology and tourism. In what director Matthew Coolidge terms "anthropogeomorphology," the methodology of geomorphology—deciphering underground activity and geological history through the reading of surface signs—is extended to humanized landscapes, for the knowledge they provide on human-land relationships. Focusing on a project about California's Owens Valley, I should emphasize CLUI's negotiation of agonistic conceptions of "wildness", "pristine nature" and "thriving ecology" when searching for clues that might elucidate the convoluted and conflicted relationship we have with the land.</p> <p>Gentiane Bélanger is a PhD candidate in art history at the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQÀM), and has research interests in ecology and contemporary art.</p>

Name:	Jonnabelle Vidal Asis
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Paper Title	
The Violence of Beauty: Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA)'s Metro Gwapo Campaign and the Discourse of "Urbanidad" (Urbanity)	
Description	
<p>Metropolitan Manila has been experiencing a "face lift" under MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando's <i>Metro Gwapo</i> Program since 2001. Under this plan, Fernando aims at renewing the urban physical landscape along with urban dwellers' culture. Some of the components of the program are as follows: promotion of "urbanidad"ⁱ, beautification of the "Investor's Corridor"ⁱⁱ, MMDA Artⁱⁱⁱ, Sidewalk Clearing Operations^{iv}, Wet Rag Operations^v, Pink Flag Operations^{vi}, and Watch the Pink Line^{vii}.</p> <p>This study locates <i>Metro Gwapo</i> at the intersection of the Arroyo administration's efforts at integrating national economy into the existing neoliberal globalization, and MMDA's mandate in providing the physical structure in realizing this agenda. It intends to transform Metro Manila into a super highway for the unprecedented and unhampered flow of capital into the country for tourism, trade and investment. The underlying principle of the program is that "Physical change leads to social re-orientation, which leads to change in social behavior."^{viii} This in turn seeks to discipline the body of public transport drivers, commuters, sidewalk vendors, "barkers," and other occupants of urban space.</p> <p>This paper will tackle MMDA's visual construction of the utopian metropolis and the ideal public. It will also attempt to unpack issues of gender and class that necessarily interweave in the discourses that MMDA mobilizes in order to promote its vision of the metro. This study further argues, through an offering of oppositional visibility, that what is being missed in the materialization of Arroyo and Fernando's utopian vision of Metro Manila as a "humane world-class metropolis renowned for its livability, economic vitality and socio-cultural exuberance"^{ix} is the state violence that is inherent in the program's implementation. Over the years, MMDA became notorious for its inflexibility and aggressive clearing operations to rid the metro of the 'unsightful' and 'undesirable.' The violence it employs ranges from the physical to the symbolic and entails the further displacement of the urban poor, criminalization of the unemployed's economic coping mechanism, and the use of the feminine to pursue anti-people ends.</p> <p>* <i>Jonnabelle Vidal Asis</i> is an assistant professor at the Department of Sociology at the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of the Philippines-Diliman.</p>	

Name:	Målfrid Irene Hagen, Buskerud University College, Drammen, Norway
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Paper Title	
Symbolic interpretation of architecture	
Description	
<p>I am working on a PhD-project on corporate art and architecture in USA, Japan and France. One of my research questions is how art and architecture visually appears in the companies' headquarters, and how it can be interpreted. I seek to interpret the symbolic meaning of architecture by using metaphors, and sociological, by looking at the social meaning of architecture, as for instance how architecture contributes to corporate identity as well as territorial identity, and reflecting cultural capital. In one example I show how architectural form can mirror patterns of the society in general, by using a gender metaphor as interpretation tool. In another example I investigate how corporate architecture can reflect ritual places of the ancient Greek, and by that reflect cultural capital and conciseness. In a third example, I look at how architecture can reflect territorial architectural customs and by that underpin local and territorial identity. The methodological approaches for this part of my PhD-project, is related to Visual sociology, interpreting the visual by photos and statements collected by walking and guided tours through corporate campuses, including interviews and photo sessions.</p> <p>I am a Visual artist by education and practice, and a Sociologist, Cand. polit. of Sociology (master). Currently I am a PhD-candidate at Oslo School of Architecture and Design, and an Assistant professor at Buskerud University College, dep. School of Business and Social Sciences.</p>	

Name:	Monika Schwärzler, Webster University Vienna, Austria
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Paper Title	
The contaminated landscape and its visual constituents	
Description	
<p>My paper will focus on representation of the polluted landscape as featured in print media, school books and in advertisements. The main question will be how pollution shows. Of course it can be measured and expressed in figures and data but the phenomenon itself is not depictable. In many cases the danger at stake is not apparent to the human eye and cannot be pinpointed by vision. Its visualization is basically a matter of the logic and narrative of effects.</p> <p>Yet, we all have images of contaminated landscapes in mind and believe we know what they must look like. My thesis is that a few master signifiers exist which are used when communicating the devastating effect of pollution on landscapes. No knowledgeable reader of images will mistake a romantic misty landscape for a smog ridden place. We all can distinguish between these two views because the pictorial codes are different. From an early age, schoolbooks provide children with visual equivalents of phenomena that basically defy depiction. For example, in his book which describes his mother's life and his childhood in a village in Carinthia, the Austrian writer Peter Handke remembers that in their textbooks a smoking chimney stood for prosperity and a stable economy.</p> <p>All pictorial conventions are time bound, so my paper will also try to compare today's imagery of the stigmatized landscape with visual records of the effects of industrialization in the 19th and early 20th century.</p>	

ⁱ codes and modes of behavior that city-dwellers must follow (i.e. refraining from littering, spitting, going out in public without a shirt, hanging clothes within the public's view, advising jeepney drivers to use deodorant)

ⁱⁱ the network of streets from the International Airport to Malacañang Palace

ⁱⁱⁱ murals in public places to cover graffiti and dissenting slogans

^{iv} confiscation of goods and rounding-up of sidewalk vendors

^v use of pink wet rag fitted on a pole attached to a moving MMDA patrol car to compel commuters to wait for their rides on the sidewalks, and to use pedestrian crossing and footbridges as well as Loading and Unloading Bays

^{vi} a traffic enforcer stationed at PUV loading/unloading area waves a pink cloth on a handle tied with a bell to call the attention of the driver of an overstaying passenger vehicle to move. The pink cloth, which carries the message "This bus is overstaying, take the next bus," is positioned to block the further loading of passengers

^{vii} A pink line is painted on sidewalks to remind sidewalk vendors not to block the pink line because these are walkways

^{viii} www.mmda.gov.ph

^{ix} MMDA's vision statement from its official website