

## Panel 29

### IVSA Conference 2009

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

Panel Title	
<b>Envisioning theory: reflections on the production and publication of visual essays and video-articles</b>	
Description	
<p>A "Visual Essay" and a "Video Article" are an academic work, and a documentary genre, aimed at the presentation of theoretical arguments and research results by means of visual and multi-media material. The sheer availability of technologies of vision, and the increasing availability of global means of distribution of visual contents, have enormously increased the potential of this once niche form of cultural production. Video production especially has gained a strong momentum in the last few years opening unprecedented possibilities. This panel wants to offer an open platform to discuss the status, the potential and the methodological and theoretical issues involved in the production and distribution of visual essays and video-articles. Participants are encouraged to present their own work and to share reflections on the issues involved in their production. Encouraged are also papers that elaborate on the methodological and theoretical issues involved in the production of visual essays and video articles, and discussions of the present and future potential of multimedia scholarly work.</p>	
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Final Selected Papers

Name:	Jocelyn Murtell, Brock University, Ontario, Canada
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Paper Title	
<b>Youth, Space and Leisure: a Photovoice Project</b>	
Description	<p>Youth seem to theoretically occupy an ambiguous space in public consciousness that makes people uncomfortable. Youth are consistently framed as a problem of being 'a risk' to society, and 'at risk' of becoming a problem for society. In dominant discourse, youth have become the ultimate 'other' on which the fears of the public are unloaded or projected (Giroux, 2003; Malone, 2002). There is a need to develop more studies that seek to understand how youth manage and negotiate the exclusionary practices that they encounter in public spaces (Green &amp; Singleton, 2006; MacDonald &amp; Shildrick, 2007; Malone, 2002). Researchers have begun to tackle issues of representation through community-based projects that use participatory methods that seek to empower participants to represent themselves.</p> <p>My research seeks to understand the experience of marginalized youth in the leisure spaces that they use through the participatory visual method of photovoice. The first project will take place within a drop-in centre and temporary housing complex for youth and the second will take place within an after-school program in a subsidized housing complex in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada.</p> <p>Some critics propose that participatory photography projects further marginalize youth by 'othering' or exoticizing their experience as more authentic or real (Walsh, Hewson, Shier, &amp; Morales, 2008; Wang &amp; Redwood-Jones, 2001). A public presentation of images created by 'marginalized' youth also runs the risk of being framed by the media using the dominant discourse of 'risk'. The ethical critiques of representing marginality are complex and perhaps cannot be resolved, but need to be acknowledged and discussed.</p> <p>How can researchers engage marginalized youth in research that seeks to understand and value their experience, but not further marginalize youth through exoticized or romanticized framing? At the end of a participatory photography project, do youth feel empowered?</p> <p>Jocelyn Murtell is a Masters student in the Department of Recreation and Leisure at Brock University, her research interests include marginalized youth and the ethics of representation through photography.</p>

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Paper Title	
<b>Ndengane: a visual biography of rural South Africa</b>	
Description	
<p>The objective of this photo-essay is two folded: (1) Following the argument that “seeing comes before words” the present essay aims at creating a visual <i>ethnofoundation</i> (Burawoy 2000) of globalization and hence understanding this process from below, stretching from local to global; and (2) considering that we are living in a world dominated by visual images a visual documentation aims at transgressing the usual supremacy of the written text and <i>narrate visually</i>.</p> <p>The narrative of the images – the micro narrative of the household in Ndengane, Eastern Cape, South Africa – focuses on the everyday life of individuals in remote outskirts of a global world and by doing so portraying their activities and observing the material and non material influences of globalization. The fact that the essay captures individuals aims at giving a human face to a highly abstract and macro process, in other words, grounding globalization.</p> <p>Equally important for this project is the use of still photographs considering that we are under a ‘tsunami of images’ as accurately pointed out by photographer Alan Mingam. This allows stopping for a moment and thinking about the image.</p> <p>When working with visual methodology it is important to bear in mind that both the act of looking<sup>1</sup> and the image itself are not neutral; they embody a “way of seeing” (Berger). The photographer is the one with the power to frame, to select. By doing this he is offering a certain perspective, making a statement about the world. Therefore social scientists engaged in visual representation and making use of visual methodology need to be aware of this. In this photo-essay I will discuss some of the challenges and problems encounters while doing the research.</p>	

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<sup>1</sup> Gombrich also points out that “there is no vision without purpose, that the innocent eye is blind” (Mitchell 1984: 525)

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Paper Title	
<b>Moving Theory: Reflections on theorizing, knowing and walking with Video</b>	
Description	
<p>In this presentation I reflect on the possibility of creating a video essay that involves constructing a novel kind of theoretical, methodological and empirical coherence. In doing so I am seeking to find a point of synergy between texts and practices that are usually thought of as being quite different. To develop this I am going to use a concept of movement. By this I mean that the theory, the methodology and the subject matter of the video essay I am hoping to produce are all focused on (a type of linear) movement, and based on the idea that as we move we come to know in new ways. The question is however, while these synergies might be created in an abstract discussion, how might they actually be realized in a documentary video that is theoretically, methodologically and empirically coherent?</p>	

Name:	Steve Spencer and Dave SurrIDGE, Sheffield Hallam University
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Paper Title	<b>Sheffield - City of Contradictions: a visual exploration of the divided city in popular culture</b>
Description	



A short video will be presented exploring the duality of Sheffield, a visual journey to the heart of Sheffield's identity. The representation of a city with seams of industry at its heart, once considered to be England's "paradigmatic industrial city," competing with Pittsburgh as "The City of Soot." (Baringer, T. 2005: 187-8, Reys, J 1965: 206).

The video montage attempts to capture the changing identity of the city through archive film and photography but also through the use of local studies archives, paintings, prints, and maps. In addition this presentation examines different modes of visual consumption of the city and the social construction of nature, drawing upon the theorising of landscapes (e.g. suggested by Macnaghten and Urry, 1999; Castree and Braun, 2005). The city has a long history of industry and early roots as a town involved in iron smelting and forging, harnessing the river systems for the production of millstones.

The city boundaries overlap with the landscape of the Peak District National Park. This is an area which bears witness to long, sustained industry and quarrying from at least the middle ages and early use of iron ore along the rivers for a much longer period. However, since the early 1980's the city has been transformed by the sweeping changes in global markets and political ideologies. The contradiction of the title derives from a long-standing interaction between industry in the heart of 'nature' and 'nature' in the heart of industry. The popular image of Sheffield is perhaps one of a city battle- scarred by industrialisation; brutalist architecture, a bleak wasteland following from confrontation with the forces of neo-conservatism in the early 1980s. Yet Sheffield still produces cutlery for the world and is also England's greenest city having a unique relationship to the surrounding countryside ('More than a third of the city is located in the Peak District National Park - no other city has a National Park within its boundary.')

The shape and livelihood of the city has been demonstrably forged by the transitions in modes of production. The landscape around the city can reveal layer upon layer of past cultural concerns. Recent examples from popular culture show this sense of multi-layered identity. This composite text is an attempt to capture the collective symbolism, and what Schutz called the 'life worlds' the which comprise the 'human condition' of the city. It is only through recognising the meaning of collective

cultural symbols, and rituals in everyday life that the dialectic between individual and society might be understood.

Barringer Tim, *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 2005), 187, 188. [Published for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art

Castree and Braun, (2005) *Social Nature, Theory, Practice And Politics* Wiley-blackwell

Fahlman Betsy (2006) Current Research on the Art of Industry Artists at Work: Imaging Place, Work, and Process <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/sia/32.2/fahlman.html> From the IA, The Journal of the Society for Industrial Archeology Vol. 32, Issue 2. Viewed March 14, 2009 18:23 EDT

Macnaghten and Urry, (1999) *Contested Nature*, London: Sage

Reps, J.W. (1965) *The Making of Urban America* p206

Schutz, A (1962) *Collected Papers 1: The Problem of Social Reality*, Edited by Maurice Natanson, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Schutz **A** and Luckman, T (1973) *The Structures of the Life-World* Evanston, IL: North- western University Press

Name:	Paolo Parmeggiani
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Paper Title	
<b>Multimedia essay: methodological reflections and issues of representation</b>	
Description	
<p>Is it possible to communicate with our peers about visual sociology going beyond Microsoft PowerPoint or Words?</p> <p>This is an online presentation where I will show how a couple of software could help to develop this stage of the research.</p> <p>Before writing an academic paper, producing power point slides or a documentary, we often need exchange images, ideas and hypotesis with our colleagues or even clarify to ourself which is the overall design of our work in progress. I call this a "multimedia representation of the research process".</p> <p>It should sign a path thought the complexity, richness and depth of our archives (video, photography, audio interview, written text, images), highlight our best ideas, and clearly map our interpretations and relationship between theory and observations. It should give our correspondents the chance to comment specific points. It should be as friendly as possible.</p> <p>I'll present the use of some software to organize an online multimedia communication with our peers and make some methodological reflections about this audiovisual representation.</p>	