

Panel 3

IVSA Conference 2009

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

Panel Title	
Sensory and Imagined landscapes	
Description	
<p>Cities are genuine hubs of cultural expression and unusually rich exponents of visual culture. Urban (visual) cultures emerged out of human imagination, ambitions and desires, numerous intentional and unintentional choices, concerted and rival actions. Buildings, streets, squares, parks, monuments, shopping malls and other urban artefacts - the newly emerging, long-established or the barely surviving - eloquently testify of these past and present ways of thinking and doing, and together with the multi-formed activities of its inhabitants and visitors constitute the complex human and material fabric of the city. The social and cultural fabric of the city for many years has been the focal point of visual sociologists studying important issues such as social change (Rieger), gentrification (Suchar), ethnicity (Gold, Krase) etc. But the cultural space of the city is truly limitless with regard to sociologically relevant aspects and themes with a significant visual dimension.</p> <p>This session comprises contributions that offer a refreshing theoretical and/or empirical view on visual aspects of cities as (multi)cultural spaces par excellence.</p>	
Panel Chair Name:	Lakshmi Srinivas, University of Massachusetts, Boston Tulasi Srinivas, Emerson College, Boston
E-mail address:	srinivasl@rcn.com tulasisrinivas07@gmail.com

Final Selected Papers

Name:	Lakshmi Srinivas, University of Massachusetts, Boston
E-mail address:	srinivasl@rcn.com tulasisrinivas07@gmail.com
Paper Title	
Cinema in the City: the mundanity of fantasy	
Description	
<p>In India cinema does not exist merely on the screen, it permeates everyday life. Just as formula films are punctuated with song and dance, fantastical interludes which at times break from the narrative to express the dreams, wishes and desires, in short the 'inner-world' of characters, everyday life in India maybe seen to be punctuated with the fantasy world of cinema. Cinema saturates the urban landscape, film music is the popular music of India and heard on city streets, in cafes and restaurants, film fashions and film magazines are everywhere as are posters, giant billboards, hoardings and towering cut-outs which loom above the street and make cinema's presence in the city tangible. What is to be made of the images from this fantasy world which populate the urban landscape? What does cinema's spectacular presence in the city mean for cinema? For urban life? Scholars have studied such forms as art, as advertisements and urban spectacle which form a mediascape. Taking a phenomenological perspective this essay provides a descriptive analysis of the incorporation of cinema into everyday settings addressing the significance of this presence in the context of the flow of urban life and for the 'extra-cinematic experience' of cinema. While study of posters and billboards as advertisement acknowledges their intentional role, this essay comments on the unintentional aspects of cinema's visual and tangible presence outside the theater and the kinds of reactions and interactions it attracts.</p>	

Name:	Tulasi Srinivas, Emerson College, Boston
E-mail address:	tulasisrinivas07@gmail.com
Paper Title	On Miracle Ground: Globalization, The New Religious City and Narratives of Belonging
Description	<p>In recent years, the Sathya Sai Baba ashram in Puttaparthi in South India, has witnessed the growth of Sai devotion. Estimates of the total number of Sai Baba devotees around the world at 20 million in 164 countries and their net worth at approximately 6 billion dollars. The sacred city of Puttaparthi is now the global in the making and the built language of this global sacred city raises crucial questions about the intersections between sacred space, territory, and identity for the transnational Sathya Sai devotees. The city of Puttaparthi is not just the fixed environs of the urban space but exists in the minds of all Sai devotees as the desired place to be, as a spiritual home. The paper examines the sacred city bicamerally; as a rhetoric of conscious historical and imagined locality, as opposed to the obvious narrative of globality that the social actors bring to Puttaparthi; and as the "built charisma" of Sathya Sai Baba that is dialogic to the diasporic condition. The paper sets the sacred city against recent cultural theories of the postmodern city, to suggest that the architectural language of Puttaparthi is endlessly inventive, drawing from seemingly 'traditional' sources, to create a narrative urban matrix, which recasts urban subjectivity through a complex formulation of the affect of "belonging".</p>

Name:	Robin West, University of Essex, UK
E-mail address:	rmwest@essex.ac.uk
Paper Title	
Between nature and abstraction: moving beyond conserved landscapes as the border and backdrop to everyday life	
Description	
<p>In recent years various UK nature conservation organisations have engaged increasingly in landscape-scale projects. At the same time they have approached the nature-society relationship through reinvigorated, yet principally quantitative, accounts of 'quality of life'. Theoretical and empirical research suggests that a deeper understanding of what 'quality of life' means for those living in places where boundaries between preserved nature and social space are potentially blurred can serve to stimulate more meaningful relationships between individuals, communities and conservation projects. In short, narratives of meaning in everyday life reveal landscape as the border between often abstract ideas of authenticity of place and a negotiated understanding of conservation practice. By drawing on fieldwork undertaken in a semi-rural, 'middle-class', village I argue that the roots of such relationships are found in constant attempts to reproduce narratives of belonging and to exercise symbolic capital. Utilising Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Williams' structure of feeling, and Giddens' ontological security, I demonstrate how the community's relationship to conservation is expressed through the aesthetic memory of a 'peopled landscape' as the invocation of meaningful social practices. Landscape therefore exists simultaneously as a retrospective symbolic form and in terms of innovative land use in the everyday production of natural and social space – both of which are nonetheless grounded in ideas of a purposeful interaction with the environment. Discovering ways of recognising and integrating these often diverse identity-orientating narratives into their conservation policy may help organisations fulfil social and pedagogic roles. This could support the promotion of senses of place that encourage both a broader ecological ethic and a widening of the boundaries to conservation's own particular narrative. By way of conclusion, this paper reasserts that attention to the way in which apparently 'sociologically-naked' conservation landscapes are articulated offers us a timely methodological tool through which the relationship between nature and social structures can be read.</p>	

Name:	Kairan Li, Sheffield University
E-mail address:	K.Li@sheffield.ac.uk
Paper Title	
Landscape Scenes Series in East Asia, the way of place making : sensory and imagined landscapes in forms of a combination of poetry, calligraphy, and painting	
Description	
<p>There were series of landscapes selected and celebrated by a national, provincial or local government and promoted as places for outdoor leisure activities in Chinese history. They were presented as Landscape Scenes Series, usually in number of eight or ten, thus in Chinese called 'bajing' or 'shijing'. These scenes series were usually titled with short poetic phrase, and often represented in forms of a combination of poetry, calligraphy, and paintings. Various artistic expressions related to each other to render the sensory experience of a real landscape. Most historic examples of this genre have been recorded in local historic Gazetteers, which first flourished in China in 8th -14th century, and then has spread and transmitted to other places of East Asia including Japan and Korea. The importance of this genre is shown as being worthy of study in its own right.</p> <p>Through analysis of a large amount of surviving examples of Landscape Scenes Series in East Asia, this research reveals the remarkably modern attitudes in perception and experience of landscape in ancient China. The tradition of Landscape Scenes Series extended not just to visual aspects, but also included reference to history, seasonality, time, weather, and was experienced by all the senses. These wide ranging aspects reveal key moments in which particular landscapes would be most valued, and these identify the interrelationship of the physical world and that of subjective feelings and traditional beliefs. These are best represented in the titles of Scenes, which often provide poetic metaphors. Such practices of Scenes selecting, naming, poetry composing and inscribing constructed places, along with the embedding of experience in place. Places were made and simultaneously promoted in this way, through the selecting, naming and artistic representing of real landscape in series. The various dimensions of visual perceiving, sensory experiencing and mind imagining were combined together to make and deliver the wholeness of the vivid landscape environment. In this way, Chinese people in history formed meaningful relationships with the scenic locales they occupy.</p>	