

Panel 9

IVSA Conference 2009

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

Panel Title	
Topographies of Work1: Changing Topographies of Work	
Description	
<p>The theme of these panels is work, employment and the visual. Work and workers have long been and continue to be configured photographically by states, corporations, workers' organisations and individual photographers, whose output can be read as symbols of difference and division – especially through the intersection of class with 'race', gender and age – or as symbols of social solidarity and heroic status. More recently, social researchers have sought photographic data representing the views of workers themselves, and this is leading to further research on the relationship between photography, work and employment, and photography's contribution as research method and data source. The panel will address these themes by focusing on topographies of work, considering work and employment in terms of their relationship with the landscape and environment, broadly defined.</p>	
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Final Selected Papers

Name:	Tim Strangleman, University of Kent
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Paper Title	
Picturing Work in an Industrial Landscape	
Description	
<p>In this paper I try to explore the way we can read landscape through industrial photography. It raises questions about how industry is embedded and disembedded across time and space and what the visual record tells us about such a process. This paper is based on work carried out by the author at the former Guinness Brewery at Park Royal in West London which was built in the early 1930s and closed its doors finally in 2005. The author worked with a professional photographer to produce a visual and oral account of the last six months of production of the site. In addition he has carried out archival work including an examination of the extensive photographic collection pertaining to the brewery. Through the combination of the contemporary and historical images we can develop a more complex reading of work and industry in a landscape.</p>	

Name:	Carol Wolkowitz, University of Warwick
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Paper Title	
The 'Body Work' Landscape	
Description	
	<p>This paper examines the growth of 'body work' as an aspect of paid employment through its impact on the changing spatial environment of southeast Florida. The background to the paper is my interest in forms of paid work which involve 'hands on' co-presence, in occupations such as medicine, nursing, hairdressing, nail salons, personal training and sex work. Such work is often 'high touch' rather than 'high tech'. Although the intimacy such work involves can make it particularly difficult to investigate visually, we can document the ways in which health care and other body work enterprises now dominate the changing topography of work, and what this might tell us about their role in economic life in different localities.</p>

Name:	Samantha Warren, University of Surrey
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Paper Title	
Organizational Topophilia: the countryside and aesthetic pleasure at work	
Description	
<p>This paper draws on ethnographic data gathered during a research project to explore the impact of a corporate aestheticization programme on employees' experiences of work. Briefly, this entailed a managerially led 'make-over' of the offices of the web-design department of a large multi-national IT firm based in a rural location in the south of England in order to foster an environment (presumed to be) more conducive to enhancing creativity than more traditional physical working environments. The data were generated using aesthetically driven ethnography and qualitative interviews structured around photographs taken by the research participants. What was striking about these data was the extent to which the photographs and subsequent discussions reflected the importance of the countryside environment <i>outside</i> the newly aestheticized office: topophilia – a source of pleasure, delight and enjoyment for all the respondents. Using a range of conceptual resources from aesthetic and cultural theory, three interpretations are put forward in the paper: (1) the countryside environment can be seen, functionally, as a form of organizational decoration and/ or a form of escape from work and tasks; (2) these data could also be read symbolically as representations of a socially conditioned desire for nature as an aesthetic object; and (3) the nature of my respondents' engagement suggests a hyper-real orientation to their countryside environment as befits members of an advanced consumer society. The implications for organizational aestheticization and organization studies more broadly are also noted.</p>	

Name:	Dario Da Re, Andrea Lorenzet and Marco Rangone
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Paper Title	
	Landscapes of Commuting: What do People Really See When Travelling to Work?
Description	
	<p>Employment is increasingly characterized by commuting experience. Whether by train, by bus or by car, commuting involves both social and aesthetic experience. The research focuses on the visual observation to the varying landscape, and on the social and economic relations that the natural and artificial features of landscape imply. We concentrate on a major route of commuting route in the Veneto region, from Venice to Verona. This area, while highly urbanized, is also characterized by dense industrialization and changing natural landscape. As a first step we will gather visual data by recording videos of the views available to the commuter, who may use different means and technologies of transportation. The material will be scrutinized and categorized; a <i>content analysis</i> will be carried out with dedicated visual software (e.g. Transana), looking at the social and productive consequences of the above landscape. As a second step, we aim at using the visual data to: a) make interviews (video-elicitation) to commuters to investigate their process of visualization (what do they recognize of the landscape (patterns, details...)? how did they get familiar with it? what do they concentrate on? what does the landscape – or single parts of it – mean to them?); b) organize focus-groups to delve into the issue of social meaning of the built environment, investigating in particular the use of different transportation systems and technologies and their relation with the perceived and “constructed” landscape. Our goal is to investigate through visual</p>