

CvW is concerned with what we see and, in a complex sense, how we see it - how we make sense of it, how we know what we see.

The basic tenet seems to be that we see the landscape by walking through it and looking. We know what we see by recognising (re - cognising) monuments. We fit those monuments that we pick out into an existing internal, mental schema, we match the unfamiliar - what we are just at this moment looking at - with stuff already in our heads - the act of recognition. "(O)perations of recognition are nothing more, yet also nothing less, than *self*-experiments of landscape perception. The landscape that becomes apparent in my text, therefore, is the result of my own self-experiment of such perception..." (Para 5)

I'll focus out those points that CvW picks out in his response.

1. I don't have doubts about 'walking and looking' as a way of finding out about the world, indeed, I see it as an essential tool for an exploration of the environment (any environment) as it currently is. However, I don't see it as a sufficient method of urban research.
2. On the picking out of elements of the landscape and calling them monuments. Such identification is arbitrary, dependent upon the observer's intentions, reasons for being there, interests.
3. If CvW is not making generalisable claims about the landscape he perceives (paras 5 and 6), what is the status of the statements he makes?
4. While I do distinguish between the 'incoming observer' and the 'inhabitant of the neighbourhood', I don't think I put them in 'opposing corners' and I don't think I give primacy to one or the other. What is not clear in the original paper and is clearer in the response, is (relating to my point 2 above) is that it is the observer's 'relational engagement' (para 8) with the world that influences their perception of it. This point CvW elaborates through to paragraph 14 where he discusses the non-neutrality of scientific knowledge. And I absolutely agree with his final sentence in paragraph 13: 'Not only in photography do we make decisions about what we think is relevant for the discussion and what is ignored by us but, I would like to add, this is certainly also the case in science'.
5. In his discussion in paragraph 14 CvW argues that the form of observation he proposes in his paper - 'operations of recognition' is different from normal participant observation practice. I agree that it is. But this does not make it a research tool or practice. I do not, as CvW asserts consider Smithson's work to be participant observation (although he is an observer I think his status as participant is dubious). I further think that CvW's reading of participant observation as always 'neutral' is too narrow. I will need to come back to this a bit later where CvW discusses "Operation of Recognition as research' (para19).
6. In paragraphs 15 - 18 CvW addresses the question 'Where are the people?' I raised the issue in my critique because the descriptions of the environment seemed as of an alien land, being made by a creature of a different species from the inhabitants. I

totally disagree with CvW's statement: "I am confident that most people would agree with me that an image of the personal belongings of a person could tell us something about that this person even though we don't see the owner in the picture." (Para 17) And indeed, I think CvW contradicts this belief with earlier arguments about the creative aspects of 'knowing' (para 14) and: 'Coming to know about a landscape ... or... about anything in the world is always an act of subjective creation.' (para 4) And so is making judgments about a person from seeing their belongings; we impute meaning to what we see. My question 'where are the people?' asks for urban research to be more than a description of the landscape - the urban is person-made, not just a happenschance of natural forces - and should include those other aspects of participant observation - interviews, planning records, architect's accounts and perhaps the wider political/economic context.

7. Lastly, I will look at CvW's final section 'Operations of recognition as research'. I'll start by agreeing that conventional research methods are not perfect, however there are many varieties of them and the validity of findings is not fixed and absolute but subject to challenge and development. The problem with Operations of Recognition is precisely that it is a subjective process/practice with an outcome of relevance only to the practitioner. (This is not to say that practitioners might not get together and discuss their experiences in and practitioners with different interest might well raise different opinions and express them from different sets of interests.) Operations of Recognition as a reflexive way of being/moving in an environment is useful to all the different interests of the people who need to be in the environment but in itself is not research. It might be useful as a precursor to research, might provide researchers with ideas to follow up.

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