

WWTF International Summer School 2014 Designing Places of Emancipation?

Learning field E

Between everyday life and scientific insights

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Abstract:

Witnessing Public Spaces

As the remainder of what is often the space of transportation infrastructure, urban public space has been a flexible, residual category in many cities that raised problems of policing and order. Scientific advances have allowed mobile media to be created that 'augment' the public 'commons' with a virtual informational space that is both public and privatized (and Twitter, Youtube videos of events, crimes). Where The family, at the regulatory intersection of bios, kinship, religion and state, once resisted publicness, this now crosses into the life of private households in forms that are old (television) and new (email, Twitter, digital media). Augmented reality blends presence with absence, here and there (relations at a distance), now and then (replays and memorialization via captured images and sound) at the same time as promising to increase the timespace 'richness' and authenticity of experience by topologically extending the circles of witnesses to our actions and the duration of that action and meaningful memories through a kind of 'digital scrapbooking' (Facebook, Instagram). Conversely, expanded regimes of digital surveillance and tracking of mobile devices pin material actions, media identities and discourse to bodies and to huge circles of implicated others, resulting in a new public ethos of retrospective investigation and practices of local public execution, memorialized in global digital media. In this cultural topology that is reconfigured temporally and spatially, what is the role of urban public spaces as sites of presence and witness and what is their relationship to the wider public commons of the mediatized social body?