

## 2<sup>nd</sup> ICOHTEC Webinar

### Photography, technology, and landscape: an intricate relationship

Organiser: Hugo Silveira Pereira

March 22, 2022 @ 15:00 GMT

Online and worldwide

Registration required. Please send email to [hjs.pereira@fct.unl.pt](mailto:hjs.pereira@fct.unl.pt)

#### Elizabeth Patton

*The Construction of New Orleans as the Postcard City: The Role of the Camera and the Photographic Archive*

**Abstract:** This talk examines the role of photography during the 1930s and early 1940s in constructing contemporary representations of New Orleans' mythical past. In 1933, the National Park Service and the Library of Congress established the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) to document the United States' architectural heritage. Two years later, Franklin Delano Roosevelt established the Works Progress Administration (WPA) by executive order. Through HABS and the Louisiana Section of the WPA, city officials embarked on a massive effort to preserve the city's architectural history and beautify New Orleans between 1933 and 1942. In the process to document these efforts, two photographic archives emerged from the efforts of formerly unemployed photographers hired to document historical buildings and project sites in and around the city. Since the 19th century, New Orleans has embraced cultural heritage tourism to appeal to tourists in search of authentic experiences. Following Rosalind Williams' claim that technology "has become part of the historical drama," this research demonstrates how the HABS and WPA photographic archives contributed to the production of material space in New Orleans and shaped the heritage industry that continues to drive tourism in the city.

**Bio:** Elizabeth Patton is an Associate Professor of Media and Communication Studies at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. She is the author of *Easy Living: The Rise of the Home Office* (Rutgers University Press, 2020) and has published chapters in edited books and journal articles on media, space and identity. Elizabeth has served as managing co-editor of the *Mediapolis: A Journal of Cities and Culture* since March 2020.

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#### Nora A. Draper

*The Photograph and Evidentiary Data: A Critical Examination of Polaroid's ID-2 System Advertising*

**Abstract:** This talk examines arguments by the Polaroid Corporation in the 1960s and 1970s that a photograph was an essential part of identity verification. While the Polaroid Corporation is primarily remembered for its consumer products, most notably its instant cameras, the company was a global leader in identity cards by the end of the twentieth century. When Polaroid launched its ID-2 System in the 1960s, it highlighted the integration of personal information with an instant photo as an advancement for identify verification. As both a technology and a technological system, Polaroid's photo ID cards represent a response to mounting efforts at identifying and mitigating. Through a critical examination of advertisements for the Polaroid ID-2 System from the 1970s, this talk examines how the promotion of Polaroid IDs engages arguments about the

evidentiary power of the photograph that provide historical context for contemporary discussions about biometric surveillance and technologies of identification.

**Bio:** Nora A. Draper is an Associate Professor in the University of New Hampshire's Department of Communication. Her research explores the complexities of authenticity, privacy, identity, and reputation in the digital era through frames of cultural theory, critical institutionalism, and public policy. Nora's work, which examines how identity shapes experiences of privacy, surveillance, and visibility in a digital environment, has been published in the *International Journal of Communication*, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *Policy & Internet*, and *Surveillance & Society*. In her book, *The Identity Trade: Selling Privacy and Reputation Online* (NYU Press, 2019), Nora examines successes and failures of companies that have aimed to sell online privacy services to consumers. Nora's ongoing research examines how feelings of resignation influence public attitudes toward digital privacy. In her current book project, Nora examines the role women and minority workers played in the creation and sale of the Polaroid one-step camera.

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### **Hugo Silveira Pereira**

*STMgram – A tool to analyse the construction of anthropogenic landscapes in Portugal and its colonies (1850-1914)*

In Portugal, the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were marked by a strong investment in science, technology, and medicine in the mainland and the colonies, which was registered in thousands of photographs. In this proposal, I show how photography contributed to the construction of technoscientific landscapes in Portugal and its former colonies, by analysing a database of photos of practices, practitioners, and displays of science, technology, engineering, and medicine that include the following metadata: year, author, person(s) portrayed, original caption, researcher caption, activity captured and geolocation.

I draw from the basic notion of landscape, understood as a human-made socio-cultural construction that include human and non-human actors and within the territorial analysis paradigm that takes into analysis a structured group of elements in a determined territorial system. In this sense, landscapes where technology, science and medicine are distinctive elements can be transmuted into technological and scientific landscapes, as well as anthropogenic landscapes, created by the combined action of urbanization, settlers inoculation, resource extraction and public works construction. I argue that photography was particularly relevant in this historical timeframe, as it was perceived as being completely objective, a product of science and technology, unlike paintings or texts that reeked of subjectivity inculcated by its authors. Consequently, it acted as a tool to shape the representation of landscape and as a tool of power. The methodology will overcome the misleading appearance of objectivity of photographs by analysing the contexts, institutions and agents (their intentions, expectations and sensibilities) associated with photographs. Photographs themselves will be examined using Barthes' framework that distinguishes signifier (the object depicted), the signified (the message that is carried out), and the sign (the myth created by such composition).

**Bio:** Hugo Silveira Pereira is Assistant Researcher at the Interuniversity Research Centre for the History of Science and Technology (NOVA School of Science and Technology, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Portugal) and Honorary Visiting Fellow at the Department of History (University of York, United Kingdom). He holds a PhD in History from the Faculty of Arts of University of Porto (Portugal). He published several books and articles about Portugal's mainland and colonial railways. His current academic interests include the use of photography to record activities of science, technology, engineering, and medicine and create representations and ideologies of progress and modernity.