

The Future of Landscape and the Moving Image

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Start Date: 19 March 2007, Duration: 36 months

Landscape & Environment



This project begins with the observation that, as people move about the world, the identification of a person or a culture with a particular place or landscape becomes more problematic. Despite this – in different ways, and in different parts of the world – people seem, increasingly, to value a sense of belonging to or being rooted in a place or landscape, especially if this is absent, in circumstances of exile or loss. The project asks if it is possible to reconcile this idea of belonging with our increasingly common experience as more or less displaced people? What does it mean to dwell in a landscape characterised by mobility; technological change and increasingly pervasive virtuality; shifts in economic power; environmental impoverishment, war and a variety of other anticipated catastrophes?

The project is a collaboration between three researchers – a geographer, Professor Doreen Massey of the Open University; a cultural historian, Professor Patrick Wright of Nottingham Trent University and a film-maker, Patrick Keiller of the Royal College of Art – that sets out to locate economic, social and political aspects of the current global predicament in the UK's landscapes.

The researchers' collaboration dates from Keiller's film *Robinson in Space* (1997) which was informed by Massey's essay, and its expansion as a book that included a conversation between Keiller and Wright. *Robinson in Space* investigated England's economic geography in the mid-1990s, a period characterised by a particular interpretation of the world economy. The project proposed here is a further evolution of this mode of research, after a decade during which perceptions of the world's economy have changed, suggesting a study of the new predicament, with its many anxieties.

The researchers will collaborate in the production of several works, each primarily identified with one of the three: Patrick Keiller will research, photograph and write a feature-length film, a document of journeys through the UK's landscape in search of images of urban and rural landscapes and what is generally understood as 'nature', as the basis for a critical commentary, so far envisaged as a re-imagination of the UK's landscape as that of a semi-fictional near future. Patrick Wright will research and write a book, a critique of past and present ideas of deep settlement and their engagement with landscape. Doreen Massey will write an essay in which she will argue for a sense of place as open to elsewhere; for place, as she puts it, as event.