Visually branding the environment: climate change as a marketing opportunity

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ABSTRACT   While there has been extensive work on the textual realizations of climate change in the media, there has been little on the way such discourses are realized and promoted visually. This article addresses this using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis to examine a new collection of images from the globally operating Getty Images intended for use in promotions, advertisements and editorials. Getty is promoting this collection in terms of Green Issues being a 'marketing opportunity'. In this article we consider the results of these issues being recontextualized through this process, where they are shaped to fit the culture of branding. Analysis is of the images and the search terms where Getty lay out what can be said with the images.

KEY WORDS: *climate change, environment, green marketing, image banks, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, visual analysis*

Introduction

While much has been written on discourses of the environment and green issues that are found in the news media and in advertising, and how these might shape public perceptions, this has predominantly been at a textual level to the neglect of the role of images. More recently writers in Critical Discourse Analysis such as Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001, 2007) and Iedema (2003) have emphasized the need to pay much more careful attention to how discourses are realized and disseminated visually. Just as we can describe the way that discourses are signified in texts through lexical and grammatical choices so we can look at the visual semiotic choices that realize these in images. These authors emphasized how, like language, images can be used to promote particular interests and ideologies, particular versions of events and issues through particular semiotic choices and combinations. In other words if we wish to understand the discourses presented in the media that might shape public perceptions of the environment and green issues we must also understand how these discourses are realized visually.

In this article we study a specific set of images offered by a commercial image bank, Getty Images. Getty is now one of the global leaders in provision of stock photography used in advertising, promotional material and news features and its images can be found daily in all of our mass media outlets around the planet. Machin and Van Leeuwen (2007), looking at the Getty collection and its use globally in specific media, considered how these images represent events and issues in a way that broadly depoliticizes them favouring themes and representations that are in harmony with corporate capitalism. They suggested that these images reflect a broader change in the use of photography in the mass media, one heavily influenced by branding culture, from a former time when it was used to document reality and bear witness to more recently where it is increasingly used to symbolize them.

Early in 2008 Getty released a new special 'Green collection' promoted in terms of green and environmental issues being 'a marketing opportunity'. Immediately the images from this collection appeared in news and promotional media. The question we ask here is, what happens to environmental issues when they become recontextualized to be in harmony with a marketing opportunity, rather than being presented as a specific set of problems? What kind of discourses does this favour?

Images and discourses of the environment

There is a growing body of research on media coverage of climate change, where numerous studies (e.g. Antilla, 2005; Boykoff and Boykoff, 2004; Carvalho and Burgess, 2005; Mazur, 1998; Trumbo, 1996; Trumbo and Shanahan, 2000) have deployed a variety of text-focused approaches (content analysis, discourse analysis, framing analysis, etc.). But these studies deal with visual discourses of climate change at most only in passing.

It has long been recognized that perceptions of nature are socially, politically and culturally constructed and that the visual has had a key role in this process (Urry, 1992; Williams, 1973). And it is accepted that historically specific constructions and visual representations of nature are used – and exploited ideologically – to inform everything from public debate about genetics (Hansen, 2006), advertising and marketing of everything from cars and cosmetics to food, alcohol and tobacco (Hansen, 2002; Williamson, 1978), to the marketing of tourist destinations (Urry, 1992). In light of the long pedigree of these discussions it is surprising that few studies have taken a closer look specifically at the visual aspect of media coverage of green and environmental issues.

Two recent studies by Doyle (2007) and Linder (2006) are important exceptions to this pattern, dealing respectively with the visual aspect of television and print images of 'global warming' and Greenpeace communications and campaigns on climate change. Of particular relevance to the analysis which we present below are Linder's comments on key signification processes involved in the visualization of climate change, particularly the *decontextualization* and *aestheticization* of landscapes or physical settings. Linder shows 'a preference

for aesthetically pleasing, natural settings, shot from a considerable distance. They show an affinity for nature, at least the placid, picturesque kind, combined with a sense of detachment . . . [and] myths of unspoiled wilderness as national heritage' (p. 113). Doyle (2007) similarly alludes to the important implications of aestheticization and of the inscription of campaign images into the romantic tradition of landscape images, dominant since the Enlightenment (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998; Williams, 1983).

In an analysis of television coverage of the environment, Cottle (2000) similarly notes television's emphasis on environment as spectacle, landscape and 'under threat'. Television deploys, as Cottle argues, '(. . .) a crafted succession of iconic and symbolic images' which have become part of an 'almost standardized visual "lexicon" deployed in the representation of environmental disaster stories . . . ' (p. 41). In their analysis of global images on British television, Szerszynski et al. (2000) similarly find extensive use of – often abstracted or decontextualized – 'global imagery' in the form of *globes, representative environments* ('such as rainforest or the Antarctic ice shelf', p. 105) and *representative people*.

The indication is that television and other media visualize the environment through the use of increasingly 'symbolic' and 'iconic' images rather than those which are recognizable because of their geographic/historical or socially specific identity. Through their repeated use these images replace other possible representations, particularly those that locate and connect such issues in actual concrete processes such as global capitalism and consumerism.

Of course, many environmental issues are difficult to depict visually such as the thinning of the ozone layer or climate change. And the slow and complex nature of their development means that they have an awkward fit with the flow of news reporting and established news frames (Schoenfeld et al., 1979). In some ways these factors challenge the possibility of a 'realist' perspective on green issues. Nevertheless, we must not overlook how and for what purposes particular representations are disseminated.

In this article we consider the representations of climate change offered by Getty in their new collection where these phenomena are recontextualized as a marketing opportunity where visual semiotic choices are harnessed precisely for the purposes of branding and promotions and certainly not to bring about their remedy. While the above mentioned studies draw our attention to *what* images of nature represent, the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analytic approach we take allows a more systematic analysis of *how* images connote broader discourses and therefore more precisely allow us to understand their nature.

Methodology

Central to the analysis in this article is the notion of 'discourse' as it is used in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In CDA the broader ideas communicated by a text are referred to as discourses (Fairclough, 2000; Van Dijk, 1993). These discourses can be thought of as models of the world, in the sense described by Foucault (1977), which can include kinds of participants, behaviours, goals,

and locations (Van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999). These discourses project certain social values and ideas and in turn contribute to the (re)production of social life. In CDA texts are analysed in terms of the details of the linguistic choices that they contain as these allow the analyst to reveal the broader discourses that are realized.

More recently in CDA there has been a visual turn, inspired mainly through the work of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2001). Prior to this discourse analysts had focused on the way that discourses were realized through the linguistic mode. But these writers showed how we could systematically analyse the way that this happens visually through photographs, pictures and visual designs. Kress and Van Leeuwen, out of a concern to include much of the visual meanings that had been missed in linguistic oriented CDA, showed that much communication is 'multimodal' rather than 'monomodal'. Therefore discourses, along with their values, participants, actions settings, etc. can be connoted by both linguistic and visual choices. As we can study lexical choices in language to reveal discourses so we can study choices of visual semiotic resources.

The question of power has been at the core of the CDA project. The aim is to reveal what kinds of social relations of power are present in texts both explicitly and implicitly (Van Dijk, 1993). Since language can (re)produce social life, what kind of world is being created by texts and what kinds of inequalities, interests might this seek to perpetuate, generate or legitimate? Here language is not simply a neutral vehicle of communication but a means of social construction. Therefore discourse does not merely reflect social processes and structures but is itself seen to contribute to the production and reproduction of these processes and structures. In the context of our present interest in the environment and green issues we ask what kinds of discourses are found at a particular moment in Getty Images and in whose interests these might serve.

Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) suggest that discourses represent not only models of the world and why these are legitimate but also reasonable ways of acting in the world. They use the term 'scripts' (p. 99) to describe the vision of what sequence of behaviour is associated with a particular discourse. These discourses represent a kind of knowledge about what goes on in a particular social practice, ideas about why it is the way it is and most importantly in the context of the environment, what is to be done. 'Scripts' is a useful term here as this turns our attention to the way that discourses include the goings on in a particular social practice along with a certain set of ideas as to why that practice is the way it is, for what purposes, and whether it is good or bad (Van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999). The visual discourses of the environment and green issues generated by Getty can be thought of therefore as connoting scripts where there are sequences of activity, necessary behaviours and evaluations.

Central to Van Leeuwen and Wodak's (1999) work is an account of the way producers of discourse recontextualize events in order to reflect and promote their own interests:

Substitution: The details and complexities of activities can be substituted by generalizations or abstractions. Also social actors can be

represented in terms of who they are, through appearance and feelings, rather than what they actually do.

Addition: Recontextualization also involves adding elements. Three important forms of addition that play an important role in representation are legitimation, purpose and reactions. Reactions in particular are a prominent feature of the images analysed here and they represent actors' feelings, pleasures, fears, problems, etc.

Evaluation: In texts recontextualization always also involves evaluation of the social practice that is written about. Events and people in each recontextualization are represented according to the goals, values and priorities of the presenters. This can result in the delegitimization of certain kinds of actors and actions that are not in harmony with the values of the presenter.

These categories are useful to understand how Getty seek to recontextualize green issues visually in order to use them as a 'marketing opportunity'.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis allows us to analyse the way that Getty images and the terms available for searching the images, convey particular kinds of scripts, values and identities and what kinds of social relations these favour. Particularly, it allows us to characterize how a particular set of events or processes, the destruction of the ecosystem and its consequences by certain practices, are recontextualized in the name of the interests of marketing and branding.

The Getty Image Collection

You have just clicked on the *Daily Telegraph* website to read an article about the effects of climate change on global agriculture. The text discusses a number of the dangers and effects. On the page you also find a photograph. Taken from a very low angle it shows a tousled field of wheat in extreme close-up with a golden sun shining warmly through from behind. The sky is a clear, bright, saturated blue. This photograph has not been taken for this particular article but has been purchased cheaply and conveniently from Getty images. The page editor will have searched the millions of images of the Getty archive by inputting 'environment' and 'green issues'. This image does not document climate change or threats to the environment but symbolizes the beauty and abundance of nature.

On another webpage which contains information for consultation for companies concerned with green tax you find a short introductory item which discusses carbon offsetting. The heading is 'Green your horizon'. Above is a photograph of a man in a suit sat on a chair in middle distance. The chair is positioned on a green grassy hillside and he looks towards the horizon where there is clear, bright, saturated, blue sky. Again this photograph has not been commissioned for the item but was purchased cheaply and conveniently from Getty. Again it does not document instances of carbon emissions, nor solutions to this. Rather some kind of relationship between the office and the environment is symbolized.

The kinds of images we find in these two cases can now be found on any webpage, newspaper, promotional material or advertisement. They are of high technical quality and look great on the page. Importantly there are no issues of

copyright clearance or model or location clearance. But the use of these images has important implications for the way the environment and the dangers it faces are becoming recontextualized. To understand Getty's success and the ubiquity of its images we say a little about its history.

Getty Images is the largest supplier of stock images in the world and has transformed the way that page editors and journalists use photographs, and in turn has changed the kinds of representations found in the media by the public. Getty is not exaggerating when on its website it claims that:

> Every day people around the world see us on the front pages of newspapers and magazines, within multinational advertising campaigns, on the covers of best-selling books, in motion pictures and everywhere else images are used to tell a story. (Gettyimages, 2008a)

Getty began in 1995 when investment bankers Mark Getty and Jonathan Klein saw potential in a fragmented world image market. At this time image banking meant filing cabinets full of negatives. Designers would have to search through catalogues to find the right image and then wait for the order to arrive. Or they could contact the image bank to describe what it was they wanted. A photo researcher would then dig out some samples to be sent by mail. If the designer did not like the images, the whole process would have to be repeated. In 1998 when Getty moved into digital imaging with the purchase of PhotoDisc this revolutionized the use of image banks. With the Getty digital online service the same process could be done quickly and cheaply. The industry's main costs, storage and distribution, were eliminated. Since this time Getty went on to spend over $1 billion to buy out a range of image collections such as Eastman Kodak's for $183 million in 1999 and the Visual Communications Group for $220 million in 2000 with what at the time was the world's largest image collection with around 10 million images. Later, it was to license the *National Geographic* image collection which contained over 10 million images. Getty claims that:

> Today, gettyimages.com serves an average of 3.2 billion thumbnails, 7.3 million visits and 4 million unique users in addition to an average of 175 million page views each month. (Gettyimages, 2008a)

The company has about one third of the world's $3 billion a year industry, one which formerly consisted of many hundreds of small-scale regional and specialist companies. With their superior technological and financial clout, and of course economy of scale, Getty, based in Seattle, now tailor their services to customers in more than 100 countries including Singapore, The Philippines, Korea, China, Lebanon, New Zealand, Russia, United Arab Emirates, Europe and Latin America. In 2008 Getty was sold the private equity firm Hellman & Friedman for $2.4 billion, a globally operating corporation that has interests in energy through Texas, marketing, insurance, software, healthcare and owns 15 percent of Nasdaq.

The key to Getty's success is a system that allows designers to simply type in search terms such as 'office' and 'countryside' and also 'conceptual terms', as Getty describes them, terms like 'tranquillity' or 'idyllic'. This will throw up pages

of thumbnails of images associated with the search terms. Designers can then download the images to find one that fits in with their design, and pay online for the rights to use it.

Getty offers two main kinds of images, editorial and creative. The former are for use in current news items. Our focus here is on the second of these. Creative stock images typically show images of romantic couples, business women looking serious or concerned, or retired people having fun. These images are syndicated on behalf of individual photographers and companies who produce images that are of the kind of quality and nature required by Getty. These images are generated in the first place for the needs of the corporations who use them, and more specifically by the requirements of branding as we will discuss. These images have become even more important to media outlets since the waves of commercialization from the 1990s that placed a new emphasis on costs and profit and therefore on cutbacks, de-staffing and outsourcing.

We will now turn to an analysis of the Getty environment and climate change collection. To begin with we focus on how the images achieve 'genericity'. This is important as it shows *how* the images are able to recontextualize the environment and climate change. In this first section, we analyse the characteristic of the images from the Getty 'Green' collection. Afterwards we look at the search terms provided by Getty, in other words what Getty says you can say with the images. Here we analyse a sample of 600 images from a total of 50,800 that were available for a search of 'environment and climate change', although for some of the content percentages we have been able to draw on the total due to the way that searches of the collection can be made more specific, so for example, selecting 'green issues' and a specific content feature such as 'child'.

The generic image

The Getty Green images have all the qualities described in the case of its broader collection as described by Machin (2004). The Getty visual language is moving us away from one which emphasized the photograph as witness, as record of reality, to one which emphasizes photography as a symbolic system and the photograph as an element of layout design, rather than as an image which can stand on its own. These changes in visual language, and particularly in the case of representations of climate issues, are driven by the needs of global corporations, more specifically by the requirements of the concept of 'branding'. Marketing in the era of branding does not rely so much on describing product details but on loading the product with certain values: a beer with friendship, an insurance policy with freedom from worry. In this section, we describe the symbolic nature of the images.

Machin (2004) noted that photographers who contributed images to the Getty collection had said that images needed to be general rather than specific. An image of a child with a cuddly toy, for example, can be used to illustrate childhood worries and traumas of many kinds. A woman jumping in the air can be used to illustrate freedom in many contexts, where any actual political, legal, or

financial freedom can be connoted by the freedom to move and the lack of physical restriction offered by open space. The more uses these images have the more revenue they are likely to generate. Therefore Getty promote image that are multipurpose and generic that no longer capture specific, unrepeatable moments. This is a photography which denotes general classes or types of people, places and things rather than specific people, places and things. And of course these must all help communicate the kinds of brand values useful for marketing purposes. Machin (2004) suggests that the Getty images achieve their multipurpose nature, or genericity, in three ways: 1) through decontextualization, 2) through the use of attributes, and 3) through the use of generic models and settings. It is through this decontextualization and use of particular models and settings that we find the visual equivalents of the categories of recontextualization offered by Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) allowing the environment to be transformed into something that can be useful for marketing purposes.

DECONTEXTUALIZATION

A key characteristic of all Getty images, and for those representing environmental and climate issues, is that the background is often either out of focus or eliminated altogether. Many images are produced in the studio, against a flat background. We can see this in Figure 1 which shows a woman holding a seedling, which could be used in a text to connote the fragility of the environment – where the tiny seedling symbolizes the environment in the hands of humanity.

This decontextualization allows photographs to be more easily inserted into a variety of contexts, and allows them to acquire a 'conceptual' feel. Where

FIGURE 1.   *Woman holding plant.*

settings are shown, they are often out of focus and tend to appear over-exposed suffusing them with a feeling of brightness and airiness. Clearly, the world of the image bank image is the bright and happy world of 'positive thinking' favoured by contemporary corporate ideology.

If other settings are shown they tend to be *generic settings*. We find many generic office settings, as seen in Figure 2. These kinds of interiors avoid clutter. Their style is the style of the showroom or the interior in the home decoration magazine. Often there are bright modern lighting, large windows, expansive floors and minimalist furniture. Exteriors also tend to be generic. They are generic idyllic countryside scenes, not rugged or dangerous, but peaceful and depicted much as in a romantic painting (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). These are not environments with which we interact but ones at which we look. People are seldom depicted in these exteriors. If so these tend to be cultivated farmland in summer. Other settings depict a barren urban location such as a car park or bare room interior and contain a single animal or plant that could be used to symbolize nature being overwhelmed or human societies being able to create a space for nature.

Through these representations Getty are able to recontextualize climate change, not by a reasoned argument showing how their solutions actually work, but by substituting reference to the real world of events, real environmental processes and our role in them by abstractions.

FIGURE 2. *Green office.*

ATTRIBUTES

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the importance of props for the generic image. Props are used to connote, not only the setting, but also the identities of the actors and the nature of activities. These are in terms of 'types' rather than individual identities. An image can show a child with a flower, a woman with moss 'growing' on her, or a man sat at a computer placed on a section of lawn. Take away these props and the meaning of the image changes. However, importantly since these attributes are so unspecific, a wide range of environmental issues can be signified. For example, Figure 1 can be used for any item, advert or promotion which wishes to represent nature as fragile, innocent, needing care. Both images, of course, suggest how we relate to the environment and what the environment and climate are. In both cases nature is gentle and pretty and certainly not dirty, slimy, etc. – for example, it is not snails or insects – and it is certainly not dangerous.

In the collection we also find globes with plants growing out of them, people with pretty plants growing on them, children holding toy windmills, flowers growing out of petrol pump nozzles, etc. These attributes are in the most part used to connote what Getty call in their marketing brochure 'Hope and union' (Gettyimages, 2008b: 12) – what they see as a consumer desire for 'a kind of harmony with nature', locking into 'the mystical and folkloric'.

MODELS AS GENERIC PEOPLE

In Getty images the models are not represented as individuals but as types. In each case identity is specified by a number of particular deliberate features. Dress, hairstyle, make-up, posture must all help create genericity. We see in Figure 2 a generic office worker. The woman in Figure 1 is pretty but unremarkable and represents a type through her clothes, expression and hair. This is typical of the generic types who populate the Getty Green collection images. In each case their individuality has been fully 'appropriated' by the type they are to represent, as Barthes would say (1973: 118). People shown interacting with nature in the context of climate issues are a number of types, office workers, 'earth people' who carry some of the connotations of the mystical and folkloric, couples at leisure, scientists (the office workers but with white coats rather than suits), and a large number of women of Chinese ethnicity. This last case is important for connotations of spirituality and tranquillity as in Tai Chi and Yoga. In its Green marketing report Getty noted the importance of the 'timeless' and spiritual connection to the planet: 'for this reason we are likely to see more imagery of women and children, symbolizing nurturing and the future' (Gettyimages, 2008b: 12).

In our account of models as generic people it is not always clear what people actually do. But it is clear who they are in terms of appearance and since many are depicted as smiling, or in a moment of spiritual contemplation, who the participants are has as much to do with their feelings. Reactions in particular are a prominent feature of the images analysed here representing actors' feelings and pleasures. This kind of addition helps provide evaluation of the discourses the images realize. The participant in the images serves a role to positively evaluate

the discourses of 'Hope and union', for example, in the case where the woman holds the plant in Figure 1.

TIMELESSNESS

Image bank photographs tend to lose their origin in time and space. Above we described the use of a field of wheat in the sun to connote agriculture in an item on climate change. But this field is not used to reveal something about a particular place at a particular time. An image of a polar bear on an ice-floe is not about a particular animal, place or time but used to connote global warming, even if the image itself was taken at a time when there was a different agenda about wildlife conservation. The result is that a limited number of features, attributes and landscapes come to represent the whole of a hugely complex issue that is of a particular moment in history and is happening in precise places. So the threat to the environment by climate change can be connoted by a woman nurturing a delicate plant. She references no place or occasion, only the idea of 'Hope and union'. But as such images come to dominate the visual language of climate change, to what extent do they shape our expectations of this particular visual world? What scripts are fostered? To what extent will such discourses come to dominate our cognitive models of how such problems can be formulated and addressed?

MODALITY

To explore the decontextualization of image bank images further we use Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) concept of visual modality. We have shown so far that these images lack 'denotative excess'. According to Roland Barthes (1977), because photographs reproduce reality, they have an 'ineffable richness' of detail. This means that the photograph, however much it is a message with a connoted cultural meaning, also always contains many things that 'are just there'. These may not necessarily contribute anything to the cultural meaning, but their presence helps 'naturalize'. In written fiction we find the same thing, where certain realistic details, 'indices' as Barthes calls them (1977), do not add to the storyline but serve to heighten realism. In image bank images such realistic detail, such denotative excess, is eliminated. In this visual language served up through the culture of branding it is not needed anymore. Signification in the Getty image is more overt, and is no longer in need of naturalization. Indeed, indexes of artifice, of *un-reality*, can be added, such as the emphasis on colour coordination, which gives away that the images are designed rather than 'captured'. This kind of unreality has long been common to advertising. The difference is that, today, the images we find accompanying texts that refer to real issues and responses to environmental problems and climate change also carry such characteristics.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) have pointed out that verisimilitude has never been the only criterion for the truth of images. Scientific diagrams must be truthful, not in the sense that they look like what they represent, but in the sense that they correspond to the underlying nature, or 'essence' of what they represent. Scientific diagrams can more faithfully represent something such as

the workings of the body, for example, than a detailed photograph which shows unnecessary features and only the surface. Diagrams can get beneath this surface and eliminate needless details.

Another possible validity criterion for images, Kress and Van Leeuwen suggest, is their emotive resonance. Here what matters is neither the truth of verisimilitude, as in the photograph, nor the abstract, 'essential' truth of the scientific diagram, but sensory truth. We find this, for example, in impressionist paintings. Also children's toys tend to represent the sensory experience of objects, such as where a toy car has massive wheels to emphasize the 'wheelness' of vehicles. Kress and Van Leeuwen call this 'sensory modality'. From the point of view of photographic realism such 'sensory' images will be less realistic, but this time not because of a reduction, but because of an increase in the use of the means of visual representation: uncannily fine detail, richer colour, extra deep perspective. In the case of the image banks we find a move towards both the abstract truth where we cut away unnecessary elements and, at the same time, the sensory, emotive truth, through saturated light, enhanced colour, etc. In doing so they are also increasingly moving *away* from the naturalistic, empirical truth.

Meaning potential

Another way to investigate the discourses communicated by these images is what Getty say they can mean. After all, while page editors may require an image, it is Getty who choose what can be said with them through the ways that they are made available in searches. Here we explore the structure of the visual language rather than the structure of its specific uses.

Roland Barthes (1977: 39) described images as 'polysemous'. They are a 'floating chain' of signifieds where the reader can choose some and ignore others. It is words, or captions, that control this potential proliferation by selecting single specific meanings for them. Other theories emphasize the way readers, rather than captions, anchor the meaning of both images, and verbal texts. Here texts themselves embody a set of possible meanings or have meaning *potential* (Halliday, 1978). Which of these meanings will be actualized depends on who 'reads', where, when, and for what reason.

Getty cater for 'reading' or 'use' more akin to the second of these theories. Image bank images are not 'anchored' by a specific caption, but categorized in terms of a range of possible meanings, which are labelled by search words which specify the kind of people, places and things shown in the image, and sometimes also the period and the type of photograph. In addition they provide a connotative meaning potential, categorizing the images in conceptual terms, as expressing 'freedom', 'growth' and 'connection'.

The search terms play a key role in the visual language of Getty – and they can also provide a framework for our investigation of the discourses of green issues that it disseminates. In this case rather than asking 'What does this image mean?' as we have above, we ask 'What, according to Getty, can be said with

this image?'. Getty's own promotional material claims to provide the kinds of visual language suitable for using green issues as a marketing opportunity. So here we can look at the meaning potential of the collection, in other words what discourses can be built with the images. Importantly this also allows us to ask: 'What cannot be said in the Getty visual language?' Here, for example, is the meaning potential of Figure 2:

> Bizarre, Growth, Contrasts, Abundance, Business, Environment, Nature, Horizontal, Indoors, Office, Rear View, Caucasian Appearance, Office Worker, Sitting, Moss, Forest, One Person, Excess, 30s, Colour Image, Overgrown, Cubicle, One Mid Adult Man Only, One Man Only, Environmental Conservation, Photography, Eccentric, Adults Only, Ideas, Sustainable Resources.

What we explore here is not these descriptions themselves, but the structure that underlies them, the structure of the Getty 'semantic field'. However, given the size of the image bank, this is a very large task, and we therefore limit the exploration to just two issues. We choose a number of semantic fields that allow us to draw out the kinds of places, actions, motivations and values offered by Getty. This further allows us to document what kinds of discourse scripts Getty offers. First we will look at the semantic field of settings and action. Second, we will look at the 'conceptual themes' field. Also to control the size of the task we used a sample of 600 images in our analysis from a collection of 50,800 in the search category 'environment and green issues'. In fact after only 100 images we found that the conceptual themes repeated suggesting a limited range of 'values'. We will be able to use the full amount of images in the collection to make comments about percentages of images with particular kinds of content or search categories due to the way the archive can be searched under sub-categories.

Settings

We found a total of 155 setting descriptors in the Green issues category. We categorized them in terms of three broad categories: geography, interiors and exteriors. Here follow some observations.

Almost two thirds of the settings search terms are of specific places such as 'California', 'Morocco', 'Diamond Peak', 'Bonavista Bay', although visually these places are rarely recognizable and may show only a close-up of trees or a smiling person. The images that the terms throw up are therefore mainly generic, in that they could be anywhere, or iconic, and can also be searched by terms such as 'pack ice', 'mountain range' or 'indigenous people'. It is clear that whoever designed the codebook did not assume that Getty's clients would be interested in looking for specific locations, and had no particular interest in creating a systematic database in this regard. Precise geographic location is haphazard. For example, locations have no relation to where there are actual clear environmental effects of climate change. Machin and Van Leeuwen (2007) in their analysis of image banks suggest that the inclusion of specific place names is a leftover perhaps from the earlier days in which place and data were the key authenticating data of any documentary or news photograph. Specific setting seems to be irrelevant for green issues.

As well as being classified by specific places, images can be searched by generic terms for interior and exterior spaces. Of the whole collection 4704 of the images were described as simply 'indoors'. Such images were also listed, for example, as 'office', connoted by an attribute such as a laptop of person in a suit. Others are 'domestic kitchen' showing sinks and taps in designer kitchens or families and children smiling next to recycling bins. And 'studio shot' was used for 2631 of the images from the collection. The interior spaces included here are all represented in generic form, as abstract spaces with a few props.

'Exterior' could include all of the specific settings images but also others such as 'factory', of which there were only five in the sample. These images showed factories with large chimneys emitting smoke but nevertheless were highly stylized. There were four images labelled as 'traffic'. These did show traffic jams but also carried blue skies. Buildings, too, are unremarkable and unmemorable, with little in the design denoting their function. In the exteriors there is much emphasis on water which is used to index relaxation, tranquillity, health and being carefree. We get a sense here of the way corporate visual language incorporates 'new age' ideas. Connotations of serenity, escape and freedom bring a sense of 'philosophy' or even morality into the corporate world of branding and consumerism. We find images of men sitting in the Lotus position on top of a car, or a woman in another yoga style pose near to a stream. 'Zen-like' is itself a search term. But of course this is not the Buddhist philosophy itself and its rejection of materiality, ambition, selfishness, etc. but allows concepts such as 'meditation' or 'tranquility' to be aligned to promotions and advertising.

Actions

We found 55 actions terms. What is notable here is that they were for the most part non-transitive actions. These are actions without material outcomes, and what Halliday (1978) would classify as behavioural processes. These were terms such as: sitting, laughing, jumping, looking, staring, crawling and resting. There were some, but few, material processes. These were often associated with leisure such as fishing. There were two for 'manufacturing' although the images showed no such manufacturing, only objects. 'Recycling' was the main transitive search term generally assigned to images of smiling children standing with gleaming plastic bottles near to recycling bins. These observations are important and support our earlier comments that the people who appear in these images are not to be evaluated in terms of what they do, but in terms of how they look and their responses.

Conceptual themes

We found a total of 113 'conceptual' search terms. We put these into two main categories: a) mental states, and b) themes expressing core values associated with the people, places and activities shown. As we have already suggested, it is these which are the true raison d'être of stock images. It is here that the

discourses are connoted, not by what people do but by the moods and concepts that they evoke.

We have analysed category b) conceptual search terms into five groups: goals and motives; positive characteristics of people, places, things and/or activities; negative characteristics of people, places, things and/or activities; positive mental states and negative mental states.

There were 51 goals and motives that all express positive moral values (see Appendix for full list). These include:

- Social goals: togetherness, friendship, love, protection, care, rivalry, teamwork, communication.
- Desire for knowledge and progress: exploration, aspiration, curiosity, innovation, growth, on the move, ideas, inspiration, vision, imagination.
- States of mental and physical well-being: spirituality, balance, relaxation, satisfaction and well-being.
- Other less easily classifiable terms: freedom, individuality and escape.

It is clear that we are dealing with a systematic catalogue of the moral values of the new capitalism, values which play a key role in the age of branding where product ranges are associated with precisely these kinds of values. Schroeder (2006), writing in *Marketing Theory*, suggests that it is all these kinds of concepts that provide the ways to 'connect consumers with green and should be considered when crafting a marketing campaign'. We found no negative goals and motives in the sample for green marketing.

This is a visual language where people do not act upon the world but respond to individual props and attributes. These items and responses carry meanings of positive goals and motives such as 'satisfaction', 'vision' or 'innovation', for example, that can be then used to bring the same meanings to products, promotions and feature items. This is despite the fact that we see no evidence of these actual things. For 'vision' a man looks at a globe through binoculars. 'Innovation' shows a computer keyboard with grass seedlings growing from between the keys. But such images do not allow us to show actually how we will think innovatively and what kinds of vision will allow us to deal with environmental issues.

There were 21 positive characteristics of people, places, things and activities (see Appendix for full list). These are mainly associated with aesthetics/morality such as majestic, idyllic, vitality, purity, harmony, bright, freshness. Such positive terms dominated our sample. There were a few negative terms such as 'endangered', which showed a gorilla, and also 'barren' and 'damaged'. Clearly, the environment in green marketing is wonderful and sensual and the consequences of the consumerism to which this points only marginally represented. 'Barren' can show a beautiful bloom placed on dried cracked mud. Clearly this kind of image points not to actual causes, effects and solutions but highlights the fragility and beauty of nature. It points not to cause in global capitalism and production but to personal emotional responses.

There were 16 positive mental states that include both affective states such as love, awe, joy, excitement, cheerful, content, happiness, and cognitive ones

such as anticipation, satisfaction, concentration, confidence. There were seven negative ones: sadness, uncertainty, loneliness, depression, lost, disappointed and anxiety which were found only infrequently. Again we find values that fit with the new global corporate ideology. Negative characteristics such as uncertainty and sadness point at the possible risks of this ideology although the causes of these are not shown, and are represented by actors in generic settings who look slightly thoughtful. 'Loneliness' will be depicted simply by a single person in a large space.

Conclusion

Linder (2006) describes how with some success international environmental groups and a number of Western governments have invested considerable resources in the promotion of issues of global warming and climate change. Opinion polls suggest that public awareness is increasing with some willingness to adopt the recommended measures. But the more notable change appears to be the commercial appropriation of this discourse, and therefore the effect of promoting greater consumption. With its considerable influence on the visual discourses of environmental issues Getty will provide pressure groups with further competition to define the discourses and scripts that define precisely what such problems are and how we are to deal with them. Getty's images are designed in the first place to foster greater consumption of products and services. What can be said with the Getty images is that the environment is beautiful and tender, that we should seek union with it, that this is a kind of spiritual journey, and certainly a feel-good one. Yet how this is done is itself abstracted and recontextualized through the corporate consultancy language of 'vision' and 'innovation' rather than depicted in concrete logical terms.

   Getty images are on the one hand merely an extreme form of trends that have been under way for a long time as part of the globalization of the public sphere, that is, the increasing abstraction and decontextualization of specific environments into symbolic/iconic environments. Yet on the other hand, Getty represents a new phenomenon, a systematic attempt to recontextualize all issues including the environment to promote discourses suitable for branding and marketing. To do this they *deliberately* move away from naturalistic, empirical truth. At this moment in time this is certainly the last thing that is needed.

APPENDIX

Examples of search terms in our sample:

- Goals and motives: Beginnings, growth, discovery, efficiency, freedom, individuality, progress, teamwork, choice, decisiveness, communication, recycling, exploration, friendship, togetherness, journey, protection, focus, care, travel, performance, getting away from it all, solitude, connection, adventure, science, escape, challenge, speed, aspirations, determination, competition, rivalry, growth, ideas, continuity, transportation, inspiration, vision, share, experience, wellbeing, active, accuracy, on

the move, survival, imagination, planning, innovation, creativity, cooperation.

- Positive characteristics of people, places and activities: Tranquil scene, simplicity, beauty, modern, majestic, purity, freshness, idyllic, abundance, stylish, vitality, strength, affectionate, sensuality, harmony, healthy, well-dressed, energy, flexibility, bright, lush.
- Positive mental states: Happiness, enjoyment, awe, excitement, love, content, anticipation, cheerful, satisfaction, carefree, confidence, joy, contemplation, humour, concentration, spirituality.

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