Visualising Changing Landscapes of Work and Labour

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Sociological Research Online, 17 (2) 25
<<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/17/2/25.html>>
10.5153/sro.2674

Received: 25 Apr 2012 Accepted: 22 May 2012 Published: 31 May 2012

Introduction

1.1 This Special Section of Sociological Research Online (SRO) is located within the now well-established sub-field of visual sociology and the corresponding commitment to the visual as a means to excite new directions in scholarly research and research-led teaching. Writing in the introduction to their Special Section of this journal on 'Working Visually', Halford and Knowles (2005) note this increased interest in the visual among sociologists and the distinctive ways in which a journal like SRO supports its development. As an online medium, they point out, SRO provides a rich forum for visual sociology, one that fosters a visual sensibility through a forum that offers visual researchers a richness and flexibility not normally open to print-based forms of intellectual exchange. Indeed, this can be seen in the SRO Special Issue immediately preceding this one, on the 'Use of Visual Methods in Social Research' (Coomber and Letherby 2012). The journal's inclusive and dexterous use of (colour) photographic images, the invigoration of the dialogue between text and pictures, forays into video emphasising movement and process, the complementary embedding of sound; these, Halford and Knowles (2005) note, are developments which are more than matters of innovative methodology or a novel way of communicating research findings. Rather, innovations like these touch upon questions of what sociology is and how it may be performed, by speaking to 'sociological engagements that are contextual, kinaesthetic and sensual: that live' (*ibid.* para 1.1).

1.2 Using the visual to foster a 'live' sociology is one aim of this Special Section, while a second is its determination to underscore the value of the visual to the study of work and labour. This concern with work, work relations and workers' experiences and understandings of what they do takes place within a rapidly expanding field of interest, as researchers have turned to visually engaged research and scholarship for a number of reasons. Photographs are felt to invigorate social inquiry through the routine incorporation of still (and to a lesser extent moving) photographic images into research projects as both unique forms of data and as a means to add lucidity to social research, thus enriching more conventional forms of sociological investigation, analysis and reportage (Harper 1998). Elsewhere, Knowles and Sweetman (2004: 2) point to the reflexive turn in sociology as encouraging greater attention to the texture and fabric of human sociality and how this 'demand[s] visual representation as researchers struggle with the methodological means of imparting what they see in more than words'. With this (re)imaging of the social world, they argue, comes a necessary reformulation of knowledge, as when seeing the world in new or different ways we are forced to reconsider extant understandings. For Pink (2005: 4) the implications of the turn to the visual are more far-reaching and any equation of what she sees as the dominant 'scientific-realist' paradigm much be resisted. In the concern for encouraging a reflexive ethnographic practice, she argues that one would do well to reject the incorporation of the visual into existing social scientific paradigms and embrace the more fundamental challenge the visual brings to the construction and representation of knowledge.

1.3 The turn to the visual in the study of work of course also reflects the upsurge in interest in visual media more generally. For some scholars it has meant engaging with cultural studies and photographic theory, taking advantage of the increasing frequency of photography exhibitions, courses and seminars; the expansion of photography galleries (such as the Photographers' Gallery in London) and the increasing recognition of academic journals exploring photographic practice, such as *Philosophy and Photography* and *History of Photography*. For others, and this includes most of the articles in this Special Section, the interest is more specifically sociological. Even so, visual sociologists have long been interested in using visual methods, especially photography, not only as documents of how people look (how people appear) but also to consider the ways different media allow us to access 'how an individual or group of people look AT, see and otherwise understand life around them' (Chalfen 2012: 142).

1.4 Located within and engaging with these broader dilemmas and debates, this Special Section contributes a carefully focused series of discrete but inter-related visually engaged studies of work and

labour. It originates in a stream we ran at the annual International Visual Studies Conference (IVSA) held in Carlisle, England, in the summer of 2009. In order to link to the title of the conference, 'Appreciating the views: How we're looking at the social and visual landscape', we used the words 'landscape' and 'topography' liberally in our Call for Abstracts. Both we and our stream's participants found these terms a useful way of approaching the study of work and labour, and one which provided ample scope for considering the contribution visual methods can make to 'appreciating' work. In part through encouraging contributors to give these concepts life and substance we have discovered what we regard to be a real affinity between work and visual methods. This was in part because it led to a focus on space and place as important dimensions in constituting work, and also because the emphasis on visibility enhanced our appreciation of the materiality of labour, something which, as we discuss below, challenges current fashions.

1.5 One of the issues we faced in editing this Special Section, and which the peer reviewers shared in providing their assessments, was striking a balance between exposition and evaluation of the visual methodologies the contributors adopted and the exploration of substantive issues in the changing world of work and employment relations. This is perhaps a continuation of what Howard Becker (1995) identified some time ago in his seminal essay on visual sociology, which he felt was suffering from the absence of an accepted vocabulary within which sociologists and others can talk about their research. Without an established 'context' to guide their practice, Becker pointed to how visual sociologists have had to work hard to create their own conventions and then to convince others that these constitute legitimate ways of *doing* sociology. The expansion of the field is testament to the success that Becker and other 'pioneers' have had in this regard (see Chaplin 1994). But it has also been our experience that in soliciting opinions on these papers from a diverse body of reviewers there remained continuing uncertainty about the approaches and practices, conventions and status of the role of the visual in social research.

1.6 The difficulty, therefore, has been how to respond to the desire of readers to know more of the 'context' within which the visual is being deployed, without losing sight of the substantive interest in work and labour. As editors we were clear that what we did not want to produce was a collection of essays that would simply sit alongside the now many 'how to' accounts of visual sociology appearing in publishers' catalogues, as valuable as these guides to visual research are. At the same time, we understood the need to know more about visually orientated ways of researching among those for whom the field is less familiar. In the end we choose to deal with this tension by making clear to individual contributors the aims of this Special Section and then leaving them to decide how best to balance their discussion of methodology and substance. It must be noted, however, that as the papers progressed through different iterations it became clear to us that attention to both are necessary for high quality visual sociology, for the success of visual methods must lie partly in their ability to depict work vividly and empathetically and to provide convincing sources of data and insight, but also to identify and explore substantive issues in ways that contribute further understanding. In the rest of this Introduction to this Special Issue we not only highlight the strengths of the different contributions but also try to establish some of the links between work and its representation deployed by our contributors.

Research Strategies

2.1 At a basic level, the papers in this Special Section provide examples of the main visual methods in sociology and anthropology. Writing before the upsurge in textbooks on visual methodologies around a decade ago (with many now in their second or third edition), Banks (1995) suggests that sociologists and anthropologists proceed by

making visual representations (studying society by producing images), by examining pre-existing visual representations (studying images for information about society), and by collaborating with social actors in the production of visual representations.

2.2 Banks' typology is neither definitive nor exhaustive of how the visual has been thought about or utilized by social researchers and for readers seeking a more inclusive introduction to the debates and research techniques around the visual there is now an extensive range of introductory texts. More recent ones include, *inter alia*, Banks (2007), Margolis and Pauwels (2001), Pink (2005), Rose (2001), and Stanczak (2007). Nevertheless, Banks' simple but effective typology of research strategies still provides scope for understanding the variety of methods and technologies researchers adopt and how these may be used to explore a range of types of work and substantive themes. We discuss each of these in turn, particularly as they apply to the contributions in this volume.

2.3 Each of the approaches in Banks' typology of working with photographic images is present in this Special Section, but one rarely exists in isolation from another. For instance, not surprisingly for a section titled 'Changing Topographies of Work' three of the four authors in the first section utilize existing historical images alongside those they produced more recently. These images play a distinctive role as sometimes they are used to evoke an understanding of the past, so as to locate and contextualize how landscapes of labour are subject to both continuities and change over time where these shifts would otherwise have gone unnoticed. Used in this way, these images contribute understanding of those observable elements of the changing organization of work and industry, and also allow comparisons between past and present work practices and organization.

2.4 Tim Strangleman's article continues his long-standing interest in the relation between photography and work (Strangleman 2008; Strangleman 2005) and his article includes a review of visual research on work and workers that provides a very useful entre to this Special Section as a whole. He combines images from the Diageo Archive with those produced by his photographer colleague, David McCairley, of the last days of the Royal Park brewery, where Guinness was brewed in West London. As he notes, the demise of our industrial fabric, whether knocked to the ground, as Park Royal was, or reinvented in the form of

galleries and shops, whether in King's Cross, Shoreditch or Mumbai, has involved the loss of jobs and expertise and the displacement of communities. These processes have been captured through many photographic studies. These include not only Sebastião Salgado's (1998) well-known (and aptly subtitled) *Workers: Archaeology of the Industrial Age*, but also, in addition to those mentioned by Strangleman, pictures of the demise of the Ahmedabad textile industry by Parthiv Shah (Bremen and Shah 2003). To these series of photographic images we might add the retrospective paintings of the Mumbai textile industry by Sudhir Patwardhan, especially when, as at the Institute of International Visual Arts (Iniva) 'Social Fabric' exhibition in London in 2012, they are contextualised by newspaper reports and press photographs of workers' resistance to the decimation of their industry.

2.5 Carol Wolkowitz's article is interested more in the postindustrial landscape emerging in south Florida rather than what it replaced, but she also includes existing photographs of Miami Beach from the 1960s and 1970s by the American photographer Gary Monroe and others. Her own images of the emerging 'body work economy' of south Florida attempt to document the extent to which the current landscape is marked by enterprises providing 'body work' services to ageing retirees, fashionable tourists and fashion models. She argues that these signify the emergence of the provision of body work, i.e. paid work on other people's bodies, as a driver of economic development and new patterns of employment, not simply as a response to local needs.

2.6 Frances Holliss' article on the spatial arrangements of what she terms the 'workhome' in three localities of England relies mainly on photographs she herself took of the work and living spaces of home-based workers. An architect by profession, she is particularly interested in analysing the spatial implications of home-based work at the neighbourhood and building level, noting also the coincidence between types of 'workhome' arrangements and sociological variables. But she too makes good use of archive images to illuminate historical continuities in the use of the dwelling as a workplace. In addition, she adopts yet another visual method, this time building on the work of Tufte (1997) and others to analyse her data visually through the construction of diagrams and topological drawings.

2.7 Collaboration with subjects in the production of images is most apparent in the work by Phil Mizen and Yaw Ofosu-Kusi, and Harriet Shortt. These authors adopted the increasingly popular method of asking participants to take photographs of what was important to them, nowadays often called 'photovoice', and then discussing their images with them in photo-elicitation interviews (Harper 2002). In Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, their collaborators were drawn from among one of the most marginal groups of workers, poor children who live and sleep on the streets of a large city in sub-Saharan Africa. By providing their participants with single use cameras, they encouraged the children to bear witness to different and hitherto unavailable aspects of the topography of informal working in the form of photographic depictions of a day or two in their lives, and through corresponding conversations carried out in, around and through the resultant images. Through the resulting collaboration, the children used their pictures and words to lead the authors through what they identify as a terrain of labour defined by its flatness, a landscape of 'wageless life' that the children occupy somewhere towards the bottom of Accra's huge informal economy and in which they must struggle to find work each day. Shortt's informants, while limited in the main to picturing the rather confined space of the hair salon, presented the topography of the salon as a surprisingly segmented space, divided into functional sections (colouring, styling etc) that are associated with different individual loyalties and experiences. The junior trainees, like the teenage workers studied by Bolton et al. (2001), also claimed space outside the salon, in doorways and courtyards, where they were free from the disciplinary eye of regular salon staff. Moreover, in their interviews the participants created visual topographies by bringing together their images into pictorial montages that Shortt calls 'identityscapes'.

2.8 Collaboration was also essential to Katy Pilcher's work with an erotic dancer working in a lesbian club in London. Although Pilcher herself took most of the pictures of *WORLD MISTRESS* dancing in the club, she found herself in the intriguing situation where her subject often directed the shots, used some of the resulting images for her own website, and then decided upon which of them could be published in Pilcher's academic writing. Pilcher also found the tables turned when she appeared in images produced by a photographer who had been hired to take pictures of their interview. Pilcher's experience suggests that even when visual sociologists do not set out to produce images by giving cameras to their participants, their work inevitably relies upon a high degree of collaboration. While this is nearly always true of ethnographic work, which requires a degree of acceptance, it is also often true of photographers, who frequently say that good portraits, for instance, depend on establishing a high degree of rapport with their subjects. Similarly, Frances Holliss found that she worked collaboratively with her informants, who frequently suggested shots of what was significant in their working environment (and, alternatively, what she should not photograph). In this way, the production of images that emerges from these papers is not so much the intrusive or subjugating force attributed to it by some of the more uncompromising critiques of photography's colonizing gaze (Tagg 1988). Rather, in these instances, photography serves a more benign function as something instrumental to initiating or furthering the understandings and dialogues so necessary if research on work and labour is to grasp its detail and meaning.

2.9 Consequently it is not surprising that the authors whose visual material depends entirely on their own photographic output, Lorena Muñoz and Dawn Lyon and Les Back, clearly required close cooperation with their subjects. Muñoz writes that taking photographs in the two street-vending neighbourhoods in Los Angeles in which she undertook her ethnography was 'a bridge that connected the vendors and myself' and that the camera emerged as a means of 'co-constructing knowledge'. As Muñoz makes clear, however, this 'bridge' required careful construction, as her respondents initially reacted to the presence of her camera with uncertainty and a measure of suspicion. It was her willingness to help with the everyday practices of vending, her continued presence in the study areas, her shared heritage and routine picture taking that formed the basis of what she feels was a 'symbiotic relationship' necessary to understand the movement, practice and texture of informal street vending in post-industrial LA.

2.10 The street is also the site of Dawn Lyon and Les Back's research, only this time their focus is a neighbourhood market. Their study of the fishmonger trade in Deptford market, with its 300-year history as part of London's riverside economy, involves paying close attention to the embodiment of skill and craft, and to the sensuous qualities of work, as they go about detailing how mind and hand interconnect with knives and fish. Cooperation is clearly essential to this project and they link their case studies of Charlie, a fishmonger who can trace his family's lineage in the business back at least 100 years, and Khalid, a recent Kashmiri immigrant to London, to the rhythms of market life and to how these workers not only embody their skills in working and trading, but extend their craft to their participation in the social landscape within which they ply their trade. The authors accomplish this through paying close and detailed attention to the sensory experience of both the market and these two fishmongers. They begin by asking how making records and representations through multimedia may change our understandings of work and in answer they weave together the still photographs and sound files they have created, sometimes alone and at other times in sequences or montages, so as to complement, extend and deepen their textual analysis. Images and sounds are further used to revisit earlier observations, develop new lines of analysis, to hear and see what was not previously comprehended and to establish hitherto unrealised connections. By using images and the sounds of market life, their aim is to access in a sympathetic and evocative way the sensations, sounds and experiences embodied in fishmongering.

Technologies of Visual Research

3.1 Banks' list of research strategies could be seen as dated, however, in so far as it precedes the emergence of new visual technologies which many see as essential to the recent explosion of interest in visual methods, and to what is sometimes called 'sensory sociology' more generally. Moreover, new digital technologies are an important area of research in their own right as well as a vehicle for research (e.g. Graham et al. 2011; Margolis and Pauwels 2011). In the paper by Lynne Pettinger and Dawn Lyon, they reflect upon their own frustrations with conventional means of academic dissemination and how their discontents led them to create their own website dedicated to the sociological understanding of work and labour. Central to their *No Way to Make a Living* project is a belief that academic research and dissemination has failed to keep pace with developments brought about by digitisation, where difficulties with even ostensibly simple matters like reproducing images in scholarly papers continue to act as a brake on the development of knowledge, a few notable exceptions notwithstanding (including this journal). Pettinger and Lyon make clear that these difficulties are not simply matters of technology. Importantly, they also see the problem as reflecting a wider disciplinary recalcitrance, a 'blind spot', following Strangleman (2004), particularly in relation to the visual's contribution to the study of work and labour. Their website is, in part, a rejoinder to this tunnel vision, a means of collecting and disseminating multimedia posts that comment on on-going research, provide quick-fire notes on 'ethnographic happenings' and rapid responses to current affairs. The flexibility and expediency of a digital format like *No Way to Make A Living* means that it cannot simply be reduced to analogies with more established analogue techniques. Rather, in taking the sociology of work and labour into web-based media and by looking to understand work through a range of sensory forms, they too see the accretion of new kinds of knowledge of working lives. Not only is this a consequence of how threads of common interest weave new and unexpected patterns or a passing comment initiates a reassessment of established assumptions and debates. Rather, it is also the outcome of a sympathetic meeting of content and form, as documenting the multi-sensorial dimensions of work allows a showcasing of visually inspired approaches, such as time-lapse photography and video, as well as sound.

3.2 Elsewhere, however, we feel that there is something also curiously familiar about the practices adopted by many of the contributors. In an age when electronic 'crowd-sourcing' has opened up participatory methods to large commercial or bureaucratic organisations, like YouTube's *Life in a Day* or the BBC's forthcoming *Britain in a Day*, many of our contributors still relied on analogue cameras and/or worked with hard copy photographic prints. This is partly for practical reasons, as well as expense. In the context of Mizzen and Ofose-Kusi's participatory research among street children in Accra, the distribution of single use cameras represented a cheap, flexible, robust and easy-use technology suitable to the social and physical environments in which the children had to make their way. However, analogue technologies may offer other less straightforward advantages. From our own teaching of visual sociology we know that students working purely from screens, be it their cameras, mobile telephones or laptop computers, can have adverse consequences for research. Accompanying the digitisation of image making is a potential risk of dematerialisation, as objects that were produced and exchanged for specific purposes lose their velocity and weight which seems, in part, to derive from the contexts from which they emerge. It is perhaps no coincidence, therefore, that Strangleman comments on the importance of gaining access to the Guinness' photographic archive as a means of grasping more fully the changing industrial landscape at its Park Royal factory. We have also learned that students working with photographic images purely on screen can lead to unthinking and mechanistic fieldwork practices. There is something about the linearity of the digital delivery of images, and the way in which the default position of much photographic software is to move through images in one-dimensional ways, that can lead to stilted or short-lived exchanges when images are viewed sequentially or in rigidly ordered ways. In contrast, Shortt, who also gave analogue cameras to her hairdresser subjects, found that that they preferred to look at their images in paper prints, enabling them to arrange and rearrange their photos into montages bringing together different aspects of their environments to discuss. There is something of an irony here in that the digital form, so often welcomed for its flexible and recursive qualities, seems only partially able to capture or connect with the complexity of the experience of work.

3.3 Some of these papers are technologically more ambitious, like Lyon and Back's work with sound and video recording or Pettinger and Lyon's sociologically oriented work website. Here there is a much greater dependence on digital devices, which are usually far cheaper and easier to use for research than comparable analogue varieties. And of course where digitisation is especially important is in

dissemination as images and sound can now be made available, exchanged and reproduced in startlingly easy ways. The impact of these digital technologies is easily gauged when it is recognised that far from being incidental to the presentation of the research being discussed in these papers, the contributors deploy their images and sounds largely unencumbered by the physical constraints of traditional academic media. One measure of this is that the number of images used in the articles in this collection ranges from 6 to more than 50.

Visualising Different Forms of Work

4.1 If this Special Section is any guide, certain kinds of work seem to lend themselves more easily to study through visual methods and vice versa. Reflecting back on the types of work on which these articles focus, it is striking how far the feasibility of access may shape their choice of subject matter. While it is certainly possible for visual sociologists to get inside the corporate world (for instance, Warren 2008), our contributors seem to have shown a preference for forms of work (or aspects of work) that have a public face, or where access can be obtained through an easily approachable gatekeeper. There is a distinctive focus on markets, for instance, including the informal street markets of LA neighbourhoods captured by Muñoz and the inner London twice weekly market day stalls in Deptford studied by Lyon and Back. Many of the photographs taken by street children in Accra are also of markets. Studying such workplaces provides opportunities for picturing the drama of work, as captured best in Lyon and Back's close-up sequences of images dealing with the preparation of fish. They also build on a tradition of visual studies of street vendors; Duneier and Carter's (1999) *Sidewalk* second-hand book sellers come to mind. But markets are also relatively accessible, as were the public facades of the body work enterprises on which Wolkowitz concentrated. Other articles focus on privatised interiors, such as Holliss' informants' workhomes and Shortt's hairdressing salons, but they were able to gain access directly from those whom they wished to interview. Similarly, Pilcher was able to negotiate her ethnographic access to the London lesbian club where she did research by speaking to the manager, barkeeper and individual dancers. Only Strangleman's study of the Guinness factory involved a corporate venue requiring delicate negotiations to access, and this was enabled by the owners' wish to capture its last weeks before closure.

4.2 Complementary to this is what is missing from this Special Section, as the visualisation of work contained in these papers does not extend very far into the occupational terrains and work practices of middle or senior managers. This is, of course, a direct consequence of the particular interests of the individual contributors, but it is also notable that the papers here reproduce work photography's more general neglect of those who exercise control and influence over the organisation of production. There are no attempts here to visualise those who control work in ways, for example, analogous to Nick Danziger's (2002) dialectical representation of the rulers and the ruled contained in his photographic study of *The British*. This is an absence that Strangleman explores in his valuable summary of the uneasy relationship between the sociology of work and labour and the visual, but it also emerges in passing from his own project. While the photographic record of Guinness, past and present, is dominated by attention to its workers, management remains off camera but always lurking in the background, like the surprised response when Strangleman asks a manager for permission to photograph a cleaner only to be told that cleaning has been outsourced and this worker is not part of the Guinness family.

4.3 What all the articles have in common is that work and work relations are presented as material realities. The articles are materialist in the most obvious sense that their images document the activities, relationships and spaces that people enter into in the course of earning a living, of producing their means of existence. But more specifically, studying work and workers visually enhances the probability that they will be pictured in situ; as situated rather than abstract. Photography makes the material, physical aspects of work very apparent. There is little support here for the idea, as expressed by Hardt and Negri (2001) or in the journal *ephemera*, that work is increasingly immaterial; there is evidence, rather, for the materiality of even service sector work (Warhurst et al. 2009). This is conveyed most strongly by Lyon and Back, who show not only the physical dexterity required to scale, gut, clean and cut up fish but mention also the visual strategies adopted by Khalid, one of the fishmongers, who gets to know his customers (and what they want) by looking through their transparent carrier bags at what they have bought elsewhere. Holliss shows that even home-based workers involved in mainly intellectual or creative labour require room to work and room to store their paraphernalia, while Pilcher shows how *WORLD MISTRESS*'s emotional labour requires physical props as well as costumes, particular hair styles and other forms of aesthetic labour.

4.4 This last example suggests that capturing the materiality of work does not mean ignoring workers' personal identification with their work, but, rather, it makes it visible, because in so many cases both work identities and inequality are deeply inscribed in the corporeality of work, workers' interactions with customers and clients and the locales in which they work. Workers' identities involve dress, uniform and sometimes special makeup, as shown vividly in Liz Murphy Thomas' project 'Uniformity', which she presented at the IVSA conference. In it she displays diptychs of 12 different individuals, parallel images in which her subjects pose for her in their everyday clothes and their work gear. Workers' identities also reflect and contribute to the manipulation of physical space – for instance, the differential ability of men and women home-based workers to mark out space within the home, and to use it to support their occupational identity; the creation of a space 'from back home', in the case of Muñoz's market traders; or for the children in Accra, their physical struggles over maintaining a space in which to work. Even Shortt, who is more interested in hairdressers' intangible relationships with customers and each other than the mechanics of hair cutting or colouring, found that spaces and objects, as well as people, are integral to the fabric and substance of hairdressers' identities at work. Visualising work is therefore a good way of showing how work takes up space, marks out space and impacts on bodies in ways that are both material and symbolic at every point. It seems, therefore, that even if we see photography as a representational practice, the successful production of images nevertheless depends on there being something to photograph, a tangible connection with the physical world.

4.5 One final point relates to the continuing implicit or explicit influence of realism on the papers included in this volume. Most of the contributors are aware of the pitfalls of equating photographic images with simple realism, whether manifest in their discussion of the importance of collaborative practices in knowledge formation involving the visual, the (co)constructed nature of an image's meaning or the openness of the photographic narrative. None of the authors in this volume can be easily (lazily) dismissed as naïve realists and some would see their work as having a closer affinity with more constructivist understandings of photographic 'truth'. These caveats and reservations notwithstanding, this Special Section is nevertheless also characterised by a common and tangible orientation to the visual as a means to record and document an external reality, one that can testify to the observable realities of working life by bringing to the eye information in visual form that holds value to the researcher. Good examples of this are the inventories of the forms and styles of informal vending collected by Muñoz, Strangleman's pictures charting the rise and demise of the Park Royal brewery, Wolkowitz' images of how the visual landscape of south Florida is being transformed by body work and Holliss' pictorial surveys of homework spaces. The photograph as record is also central to Shortt's study of hairdressers, and to Pilcher's collaboration with *WORLD MISTRESS*. Lyon and Back are also explicit that the record supplied by their photographs and accompanying sound files, were highly productive in aiding access to and understanding of the craft practices of Charlie and Khalid once they had left the field.

4.6 It is worth concluding by contemplating why this connection between visual research on work and photographic realism remains so durable, in this edited collection at least, when photographic realism has been the object of a sustained and deep critique over the past two or three decades (Edwards 2006). At a rather general level, we wonder if the continuing, if sometimes understated, influence of realism in these essays arises from the indispensable requirement to consider how photographs are necessarily a product of an encounter with the physical world, in much the same way that the workers depicted in these studies are required to engage with the material in realising their capacity to labour. Perhaps it is the materiality of the work that is studied here, whether the use of hands to brew stout, cut hair, fillet fish, push or pull vending carts, fetch and carry market produce, or work upon other people's bodies, that finds a resonance in approaches to photography as one means to know and understand what this physical labour involves. More specifically, Strangleman points towards the strong affinity between photography and an interest in work and economic life as a result of the ability of photographic images to convey insight into the conditions of work and, in so doing, create the possibility of an affective link between the viewer and a picture's subject. These themes of connection and affect are also central to Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi's elaboration of photographic realism as the basis for a productive visual sociology of children's work. As the title of their paper indicates, they argue that photography can allow the viewer to establish connections with a world of work otherwise beyond their immediate experience, out of which may arise a meaningful process of discovery with these hitherto unknown realms of labour.

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