

◇Description

Embodiment, Deferral and (Dis)inhibition: Learning and Teaching Geography with VR

Virtual reality (VR) is increasingly claimed to hold significant potential for pedagogical applications in University education. We draw on the burgeoning field of digital geography to critically examine this claim, with reference to results from a two-year research-teaching project based on a postgraduate VR field trip to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. We found that VR technology may work as a (dis)inhibitor, providing users with a sense of social and temporal freedom to explore sites but in combination with a new set of spatial and perceptual constraints. Importantly, we found that learning with and through VR technology required active bodily adaptations, raising questions of embodied capacities and their inequalities. We conclude that, in this context, VR works most effectively if conceived not as a journey into a self-contained virtual realm, but instead as a spatial 'prompt' designed to provoke new questions for students already on the path to developing geographical understandings and imaginations of specific sites.

Dr. Richard Carter-White (Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at the School of Social Sciences, Macquarie University)

Dr. Richard Carter-White is a Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at the School of Social Sciences, Macquarie University. His research sits at the intersection of cultural and political geography, and provides a geographical perspective on structures, spaces, representations and experiences of violence (both political and environmental). He is currently engaged in projects investigating the spatialities of the concentration and refugee camp, post-disaster communities and landscapes in Japan, and the implications of digital technology for sites of difficult heritage.

Dr. Maartje Roelofsen (Postdoctoral Researcher, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain)

Dr. Maartje Roelofsen holds a PhD in Sustainable Urban and Regional Development from the University of Graz in Austria. Her research has examined digital transformations within the realm of tourism, urban space, and geography education. Her current research project

investigates how users of short-term rental platforms encounter and respond to digital modes of governance. She also explores the organisation and transformation of domestic work through digital platforms within the hospitality and tourism sector. More recently, she has made contributions to debates in geography and education on the use of digital technologies in learning and teaching. She is an Associate Editor of the journal [Tourism Geographies](#) and has recently published a monograph on [Hospitality, Home and Life in the Platform Economies of Tourism](#) with Palgrave Macmillan.