In this lecture we look at a number of ways that we can characterise how events can be recontextualised through language and images. These are techniques that distract attention from actuality. We look here at images also to help you to explain how images can also serve to manipulate alongside language. Consider this example given by Fairclough:

> Finest grade cigar tobaccos from around the world are selected for Hamlet. Choice leaves, harvested by hand, are dried, fermented and carefully conditioned. Then the artistry of our blenders creates this unique mild, cool, smooth smoking cigar
>
> Hamlet: Fine cigars

What has been recontextualised here? Is there any evidence that social practices have been abstracted? In other words actual micro processes are concealed, certain forms of activity are given prominence. What actors have been excluded and which included? How are social relations excluded?

'Blenders' are the only actors. Harvesters, dryers, transporters, carriers, excluded.
Passive clauses – 'are selected' and 'harvested by hand' by peasants without the help of machinery?
Circumstance is not specific 'around the world' In Cardiff? In the first world? In a factory/plant? Fairclough suggests this alternative scenario:

> As noon approached, as the sun had gone beyond unbearable, Pedro gritted his teeth with the pain of the blisters and began vigorously cutting leaves of the southern end of the field which he knew the overseer would inspect first. The increased costs of the price of bread meant that he could no longer afford to be docked money.

Here participants (Pedro, overseer), activity (cutting) objects (leaves) and circumstance are all clear.

In Hamlet case why refer to the production process at all – the quality of material and the care taken into selection and processing (fine, unique, carefully, choice, by hand, selected, the artistry of our blenders) are all given prominence by being placed in the initial position in the clauses.

So **social events can be represented at different levels of abstraction and generalisation**

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 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).

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. They offer three useful categories. These help us to think about the ways that texts persuade and manipulate not by logical argument, by assessment of information, or by actually giving a clear account of what those events might be, but through a range of abstractions. Here are three categories of recontextualistion:

Substitution: For example, social actors can be represented by types, either through functionalization, described by their role, or identification, by what they look like. So in the Hamlet example we have Blenders, which could functionalise the peasants. The details and complexities of activities can be substituted by generalizations or abstractions. So in the Hamlet example the details of processes and circumstances are substituted by passive clauses.

Addition: Recontextualization also involves adding elements. Three important forms of addition that play an important role in representation are legitimation, purpose and reactions. We will look at these more below

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 participants. This can result in the delegitimization of certain kinds of actors and actions that are not in harmony with the values of the presenter.

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Getty Images

We now move on to look at the way that a global commercial image bank, Getty Images, recontextualises environmental issues through the process of addition, substitution and evaluation (from Hansen and Machin 2008).

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 bestselling books, in motion pictures and everywhere else images are used to tell a story. (Gettyimages, 2008a).

Getty has revolutionised the way that the media obtain images. Rather than expensive photo-shoots editors can now quickly and cheaply buy images online from the Getty collection. Photographers can place their images in the collection for which they get royalities. These images must be multipurpose so that they can be used for a range of topics.

The company has about one third of the worlds $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. 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 'independence', '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 recently released a new collection of images which promised to help companies make the most of green issues as a 'marketing opportunity'. We can use Van Leeuwen and Wodak's recontextualisation of social practice to think about the way Getty transform green issues in order to make them suitable for commercial purposes. They allow us to see how a particular set of events or process, the destruction of the ecosystem and its consequences by certain practices, are recontextualized in the name of the interests of marketing and branding.

Below is an example of one of the 'Green' collection. Here danger to planet is represented through abstraction.

As in the case of the Hamlet advert we find that abstraction and evaluation are important in the way that consumerism and branding can hijack the matter of responding to the danger of environmental catastrophe.

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. So it will be in the interest of corporations to load their products and services with values associated with caring for and being aligned with the interests of the planet, nature and the environment. Of course the interests of corporations and consumerism do not sit well with saving the environment. Therefore how can this concern be represented but in a way that sidesteps actual concrete issues and action?

The images

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. 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.

Decontextualisation:
A key characteristic of all Getty images, and for those corporations/media 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.

FIGURE 1. *Woman holding plant*

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*

Props:
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.

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 above 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).

It is not always clear what these generic 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', holds the plant in Figure 1. 'Hope and Union' is one of the key themes Getty describe in their collection. So actually dealing with issues such as global warming is recontextualised into this discourse. This is not therefore a script where we actually change our behaviours to deal with complex climate issues, for example by addressing levels of consumerism itself, but by spiritual acts of union with a delicate and beautiful nature.

This was received by me in an email for public sector workers. In what ways has social practice been recontextualised here?

In the next few years, funding for the UK public sector is set to shrink. However, the demands on the sector will remain and the challenge will be to deliver a first class service with fewer resources. This means an increase in productivity achieved through streamlining work and organisational structures. 'Doing things differently' will be a constant theme, as will improving quality and 'getting things right first time'. The latter is particularly important as it can result in a big reduction in wasted effort. Addressing these themes will enable staffing levels to be maintained at a higher level than would otherwise be the case. Managing demand for services is an important means of maintaining a steady workflow and can lead to greater efficiency and better service.

Hansen, A., & Machin, D. (2008). Visually branding the environment: climate change as a marketing opportunity. *Discourse Studies*, 10/6, 777-794.