



University of
Western Sydney

CENTRE FOR
CULTURAL RESEARCH

CCR seminar series 2010

Zoë Sofoulis

(University of Western Sydney)

The Myth of the Average Water User

This paper is concerned with how the concept of the 'average water user' (AWU) enables water managers to avoid the complexities of both social structure and consumption patterns, while missing opportunities to engage diverse people and communities in accelerating change for sustainability. In engineering-centred 'predict and provide' approaches, the AWU is often linked to a figure of average consumption per person. The AWU is a variety of more general notions of 'average' and 'norm,' a legacy of governmental projects to gather and proliferate numerical and statistical data (cf. Ian Hacking). Especially relevant are the discourses of population control and public health that shaped metropolitan water systems, and the accumulation of detailed data about water and users by public water utilities and their corporatized successors, for whom the 'citizens' have become 'customers'. This 'customerisation' coincided with an increased emphasis on the sustainable management of water demand, and both trends can lead away from the average user and towards better recognition of complexity and challenges to the engineering-centred approach. Tensions between established and emergent approaches are illustrated with examples drawn from current research for my National Water Commission Fellowship project.

Dr Zoë Sofoulis is an Adjunct Research Fellow at CCR. She has an international scholarly reputation in the areas of cultural studies, gender and technology, philosophy of technology, and currently writes on cultural aspects of urban water use. Recent team projects led by Zoë include *Universal Design and Cultural Context: Accessibility, Diversity and Recreational Space in Penrith*, *Who Are the Users? Demand Management Through Cultural Innovation*, and *Everyday Water*. Zoë was also the convenor of the successful 2007 CCR symposium [In the Pipeline: New Directions in Cultural Research on Water](#).

Juan Salazar

(University of Western Sydney)

Antarctica: Cultural imaginations from the south

The rising interest in polar geopolitics in recent years has come in parallel to a renewed concern from some Antarctic Treaty signatory countries (Australia, Argentina, Chile, the U.K) to assert and tighten their sovereignty claims over portions of Antarctic territories and the adjacent continental sea shelf. Despite a growing importance in world affairs, the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Antarctic Treaty (1961) – to be celebrated in December 2011 - arrives at a time of increasing uncertainty. The paper invites thinking into emerging critical cultural geographies of Antarctica in a context of looming international tensions over exploitation of its resources and international governance of its territories. The paper provides a preliminary comparative analysis of historical and contemporary practices of occupation by southern rim countries (Australia, Chile) looking at sustained cultural and political practices (symbolic and material) for mapping, domesticating, performing and exhibiting Antarctica.

Juan Francisco Salazar is a Senior Lecturer in Communication and Media Studies at the School of Communication Arts, and a researcher at the Centre for Cultural Research. His research interests include: media anthropology; Indigenous media and communication rights; experimental film, documentary video practices and new media; and cultural/political imaginations of Antarctica. Juan has directed and coordinated several consultancy projects for Chilean government agencies and not-for-profit foundations and international evaluations, including UNESCO. He holds a PhD in Communication (2005) and a Master of Arts in Cultural Studies (1999) from the University of Western Sydney and a Bachelor of Anthropology (Honours) from the University of Chile (1994).

Date

November 18, 2010

Time

2pm - 4:30pm

Venue

Gallery
Female Orphan School
Building EZ
Parramatta Campus
([view map](#))

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