

THE WORD

A FREE Newsletter from
The BSA Urban Theory and Research Study Group



WELCOME COLLEAGUES, MEMBERS & FRIENDS...

To the June/July edition of **THE WORD**. In this edition we will be looking at the recent 'Everyday Life of the Global City' conference at Manchester Metropolitan University. Things have been a little quiet from the membership over the last month but I'm sure that during the summer period when teaching is at a lull then many people will have been attending, perhaps presenting, their work at conferences around the world, therefore in editorial mode I wanted to encourage the members of the group to make sure that they inform the convenor and BSA team of any activities and particular initiatives or events that might be of interest to the wider membership both of the study group and the academic and practitioner community. This edition we are also piloting the project profile to raise awareness of some of our other activities and work amongst members, so please do let us know when you are engaged in research and we'll always be happy to let more people know what people are working on.

The study group lives and dies on the support of its members so please do tell us what you're up to and we will always try to help promote the activities of the membership.

THANKS FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT...

Dr Peter Rogers
Group Convenor



Sandra Burslem Building on All Saints Campus at MMU
Conference Venue

If you want to know more about the papers presented contact Chris Porter: C.Porter@mmu.ac.uk

If you would like to know more about the MISST research institute goto: www.misst.mmu.ac.uk

'Everyday Life in the Global City'

Manchester Metropolitan University
Manchester Institute for Social and Spatial Transformations
9th-11th July 2007

The event took place in the second week of July and with a range of topics including UTR group members list name (topic), the discussion was often lively in the quality facilities provided on All Saints campus in the city centre of Manchester.

The plenary speakers hit upon a number of issues that increasingly concern those investigating everyday urban life and lifestyles. John Eades discussion of 'Polish trans-national immigration practices in London' and the impact upon the everyday culture of the city was a sharp contrast to Bev Skeggs appraisal of 'banality and reality in reality television', before the final plenary session saw the conference summarised in style by David Bells irreverent appraisal of the 'guilty pleasures of globalisation'.

Among the key themes to emerge from the conference were the importance of migration patterns and the effect of changing cultural heritage on a range of issues, from employment to financial transfer and the everyday language of urban life. Discussions often touched upon the interpersonal aspects of the everyday; from what we eat and how we eat it (not just due to the sumptuous meals in local restaurants but also to presentations on this topic) to our performance of identity and how we are both watched and watch each other, assessing identity, quality of life, appropriateness of access to spaces and embodied practices of moving through the city in different ways.

Rearing its familiar head was the discussion of regeneration, but with some usefully fresh takes on gentrification of urban space, marketing and positioning of global cities and the redevelopment of cities as diverse as Belfast, Brno, Genoa, Newcastle upon Tyne and more. These fittingly contrasted to the assessments of transversality in cultural exchanges between citizens in migrant communities and the re-appropriation of spaces, not just physical spaces but also medical spaces, psychological spaces and community spaces; ranging from the exchange of back garden grown vegetables, to the SARS epidemic, globalisation of mental disorder rhetoric and the spontaneous display of Christmas lighting in Working class neighbourhoods.

It was felt by all to be a great three days of discussion debate and as the contributions of our members were among the best received of the week, a great start for the UTR.

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A study group of the British Sociological Association

UT&R
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PROJECT PROFILE



Programme: AHRC Diaspora, Migration and Identity Programme

Project: Diaspora as Social and Cultural Practice: a Study of Trans-national Networks across Europe and Africa.

UTR link: Dr Nadia Kiwan

Duration: November 2006-October 2009

How do (post-)migrant cultural practitioners, performers and musicians originating from North-Africa and Madagascar use multiple trans-local and trans-national networks across African, European and wider global spaces?

We suggest that artists who create or enter such networks make use of, but go far beyond the traditional 'bi-focal', ethnically and spatially defined communities that link originating and sending countries, as studied in much Diaspora research.

Our empirical studies of Francophone Malagasy and North African artists will provide new insights into the creative practices of migrant cultural practitioners which transcend geographic diasporic communities, and throw light on their modes of cultural, social and political engagement. This research is a collaborative effort with Professor Ulrike Meinhof at Southampton University.

Website: <http://www.tnmundi.com/>

Email: n.kiwan@abdn.ac.uk

WE NEED YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

Please remember to send information and updates to us so we can keep firing out these regular updates for members of the group.

WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU'RE UP TO!

Not in a creepy way but in regards to your work, publications interests, activities or even just thoughts a feelings to discuss with our resident investigator *Kojak*.

Please do get in touch
...and support the UTR

KOJAK investigates... religion and architecture in the UK.



Recently I noticed that the landscape of religion in cities is changing. The reason for this was reflections on a visit from Jehova's witnesses during Easter; I invited these personable gents in for tea and cake and a 3 hour debate on scripture resulted. Interestingly one of the things we discussed was the role of the 'church', not just as a gathering place, but in the intellectual landscape of the city. People identify strongly with religious architecture in a highly emotive way, but to some faiths these glorious buildings are not raised for the glory of God but for the glory of man.

Historically the accumulation of wealth from the masses was a central role of the church as a site of worship. This notion could raise some very interesting questions about the historic role of religious architecture, and how these forms have evolved over time.

In a multi-cultural context the landscape of the city flexes under the influence of a range of faiths, the architecture of religion is undoubtedly often stunning; in its scale, beauty and/or functionality... but it has also been a site of varied contestation in relation to gender, sexuality, political ideologies, poverty and access or social exclusion. In the Mediterranean there are countless examples of contestation where chapels have become mosques or mosques have been converted, instead of burned as many of us assume, by fervent Crusaders in days of yore. Where iconography sits side by side in praise of whichever god people choose to believe in, such moments of peace are poetry to the eyes of a cynic.

In an increasingly secular world, and given the depth of funding and interest in issues of Religion and Society (not the least from the ESRC), community integration and increasing support for contract research based consultation projects that themselves focus on interventions in radicalisation rather than understanding the roots causes of such shifts in personal and collective belief; is it possible that there could be a case to be made for focussing the agenda on highlighting and celebrating our similarities rather than our differences or are we simply pawns and peons on the stage of history?

Kojak

If you have an idea for a UTR newsletter, want to run and produce the newsletter, are a member and want to be profiled, or just want to get more involved in the UTR & contribute some news or even – god forbid – a scholarly article or polemic to the cause then contact

Peter Rogers: P.rogers@mmu.ac.uk

...& **DON'T FORGET** to sign up and register for the UTR online. You can find our registration forms and information about the group online at <http://www.britisoc.co.uk/specialisms/URBAN+THEORY+AND+RESEARCH+STUDY+GROUP.htm>