

Symposium and public lecture: The future of the multi-ethnic city

Wednesday May 29, 2013

Symposium: 10:30am - 5pm, Arthur Lewis Building, 2nd floor Board Room

This interdisciplinary event will bring together scholars interested in race, ethnicity and the urban. It will address questions such as: What is the future of post-industrial cities in an era of renewed economic uncertainty and a creeping racialised politics of citizenship? How can scholarly work engage with questions about the future of such cities and the engendering of new inequalities?

'Digging Up the Urban Periphery: Reflections from Beijing on Migration, Ethnicity and Cities': Public lecture by Professor Caroline Knowles (Goldsmiths) 6-7.30pm (Samuel Alexander lecture theatre LG12).

10am Tea, coffee and biscuits

10.30 – 12.30

Panel 1 – Spaces/relations

Shamser Sinha

Malcolm James

Alina Rzepnikowska

Ajmal Hussain

Chair: Prof. Claire Alexander

Lunch break – 12.30 – 13.15

13.15 – 15.15

Panel 2 - Citizenship

Naaz Rashid

Tina Patel

Bethan Harries

Robin Finlay

Chair: Dr Yasminah Beebeejaun

Tea Break – 15.15 – 15.30

15.30 – 17.00

Panel 3 - Futures

Leila Hadj-Abdou

Joseph Downing

Femi Adegunle

Chair: Dr Helen Wilson

Abstracts

Panel 1

Shamser Sinha – ‘Making Methods Sociable: Dialogue, Ethics and Authorship in Researching Migration and the City’

We argue for fostering sociable forms of dialogue in qualitative work researching migration and the city. Conventional research shares an emphasis on extracting narratives with judicial and invasive state modes of enquiry rather than on learning from a genuine two-way dialogue between participants and researchers. Using a study of young migrants we show how involving participants as observers and shapers of analytical dialogue can produce circulations of communication oscillating across the researcher’s and participant’s horizons of understanding. These link and subvert notions of the near and far with profound consequences for thinking through migrants and their relationship to the city. This produces new insight, beyond the limits of qualitative investigation, that extracts information from participants, and in so doing has the potential to affect shifts in perception that animate and enchant experience. It has consequences for re-thinking authorship that share, credit and specify responsibility. Developing such an approach opposes the ‘ethical hypochondria’ characterising qualitative research culture, where ‘automatic anonymity’ is limiting the potential of research to travel, connect people and engage the public imagination. Through making methods sociable we come to a new understanding of movement, connection/disconnection and the city

Malcolm James – ‘Neo-liberalism, nihilism and negative youth politics in Outer East London’.

As the ‘riots’ in 2011 aptly demonstrated, multi-racial urban young people’s actions are quickly condemned as apolitical. On the right this occurs through developing discourses of racialised and classed nihilism, and on the left through narratives of consumerism and the near total subjection of the individual to the neo-liberal behemoth. What both these positions fail to account for is: how young people living in the multi-racial city continue to be political; and what significance this has for academic understandings of these locations. Drawing on a two-year ethnography of three youth clubs in Outer East London, this paper explores the contemporary characteristics of young people’s politics in the multi-racial city. Through an analysis of ethnographic material, the paper revises out-dated theses of ‘resistance’ and academic intoxications with neo-liberal totalities. It argues, that young people have not simply become apolitical automatous dupes. Rather, neo-liberalism’s draw and nihilism’s allure have become the diasporic and situated tropes through which oppression is re-enacted and reflexive politics done. This paper argues that if we are to understand the future of the multi-racial city we need to understand how young people are political today, the significance of their negative post-colonial politics, and their analyses of dystopian and utopian to-comes.

Alina Rzepnikowska – ‘Convivial cultures in multicultural cities: narratives of Polish migrant women in Manchester and Barcelona’

In the times when multiculturalism, which was once seen as culturally inspiring and empowering, is under attack, it is important to ask a question of how can migrant communities and ‘host’ societies cope successfully with the challenges involved in living together? Firstly, this question will be approached by exploring the relationship between ethnicity and the multicultural city with the emphasis on the daily negotiations of ethnic difference in the everyday urban. Secondly, the findings from the participant observation and the narrative interviews with Polish migrant women will shed light on how their everyday experiences are shaped by convivial practices and how different spaces of the city shape their relations with local population of Manchester and Barcelona. The rise of migration of Polish people after the European Union enlargement in 2004 has attracted the attention of the media, politicians and researchers across Britain. These new actors of the transformation of multicultural societies have been often accused of ‘taking jobs from British workers’, putting a strain on the health and education system and not wanting to integrate. In the context of the Spanish multi-ethnic cities, Polish migrants have become an invisible minority due to their number, whiteness and assumed compatibility with the Spanish values. The question of their everyday experiences and strategies of contact and exchange with local population in both countries has been overlooked. Therefore, by applying a cross-cultural comparative approach and exploring Paul Gilroy’s (2004) notion of ‘convivial cultures’, my doctoral thesis focuses on Polish presence increasingly affecting relations within the multicultural spectrum of Manchester and Barcelona.

Ajmal Hussain – ‘Looking for the post-racial city: reflections from the sidelines of an ethnography’

This presentation discusses two minority ethnic organisations in Birmingham that have become emblematic of the evolvement of cultural diversity in the city. In popular local narratives the Bordesley Centre in Sparkbrook and the Niskham Centre in Handsworth represent a move away from local authority governed multiculturalism toward one of self-managed ethnic enterprise and advancement. The positioning of difference in this way can be seen as an outcome of development in the neoliberal city that produces polarisation of minority groups as well as the promise of their incorporation. It also resonates with reconfigured discourses of race reflected in narratives of post-race. Drawing on conversations with local people, users of these spaces and interviews with their managers, I will suggest that the impression of the post-racial city – embodied in the Bordesley and Nishkam Centres - is challenged by tensions and contradictions in their local areas, which are now increasingly heterogeneous places in terms of ethnic make-up. Furthermore, that seeing these spaces in a rational post-racial way misses the everyday negotiation and argumentation that actually characterises life in those areas, and which produces an alternative lived multiculturalism. I will argue that the associated politics of race, in which these entities are located, should be viewed as much more fragile and contested than imagined in popular narratives of post-race.

Panel 2

Naaz Rashid – ‘Recognising diversity in diversity: the importance of place in delivering national policy initiatives on empowering Muslim women in the UK.’

In 2005, post 7/7 a taskforce was set up to consider how to tackle Islamic extremism. My research focuses on the policy initiatives arising from that period which specifically related to ‘empowering Muslim women’. My research considers how the powerful ‘demonising’ discourses of the Preventing Violent Extremism agenda are gendered and rely on positioning Muslim women solely in relation to their religious affiliation. However, my research findings also highlight the way in which particular local circumstances affected how policy initiatives are received and implemented and that within these geographic variations, issues such as class, ethnicity and citizenship status are also important and intersect with gender and religious identity.

This paper will use empirical data compiled in different urban contexts to illustrate how the delivery of initiatives to empower Muslim women has varied in different UK cities. Through analysis of case studies, the paper will reflect on the importance of recognising diversity within diversity. In particular it will compare policy delivery in local areas where Muslims constitute the only minority population (and are broadly from one ethnic or social class background) with policy delivery in areas where Muslims constitute a more diverse category (in terms of ethnic origin, citizenship status and class for example) and where they are not the only minority ethnic group in a local area. It will suggest that both are problematic because religious identity is privileged at the expense of building potential solidarities with other disadvantaged groups.

Tina Patel – ‘Failed Multiculturalism and Limited Freedoms: Browning in the Terror Panic Context’

We are supposedly living in post-race times. This refers to a deconstructive approach to identity and social relations, in an attempt to move beyond traditional constructions of race. More recently within the terror panic context, post-race discussions have specifically been considered within debates about citizenship, community cohesion, multiculturalism and securitisation. This has produced a *multiculturalism - national identity - terrorism* narrative that makes reference to inclusiveness and legalistic measures for combating racism, and yet in reality results in the securitisation of race-relations and black and minority ethnic populations. The ‘war on terror’ has been articulated in ways which produce a new mode of racism and ethnic discrimination, for instance what can be referred to as ‘xeno-racism’. This allows discriminatory practices to continue in ever more intensified, state ‘legitimated’ and publically accepted ways, i.e., consider the regimes of racial spatialization and bodily control in stop and search practices under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984) and sections 44 and 45 of the Terrorism Act (2000). Using the case of the recent terror panics, in particular its narrative around the ‘Islamic terrorist’ and the process of ‘browning’ – and by drawing on the preliminary findings of a small qualitative study that examined racialised experiences of surveillance in Manchester (England), this paper looks at how constructions of deviance continue to draw on an already embedded racist discourse, which is delivered within rhetoric of anti-Muslim racism, failed multiculturalism and white superiority.

Bethan Harries – ‘Reinvention, resistance and recognition in the ‘post-racial’ city’

Post-industrial cities in the UK have been constructed through their multi-ethnicness as sites of tolerance and colourblindness. Young people living in these cities are often drawn upon to represent the multicultural future; as emblems of a new ‘British’ generation for whom the salience of race is omitted. However, it is not typically the complex and interesting convivial relations that emerge in these contexts and those which can unsettle reductivist notions of cultural dispositions that are brought to our attention. Instead, young people are called upon as symbols of a multicultural future in the sense that Amin (2010) talks of; as symbols or markers of ‘tolerance’ and a ‘tolerant’ Britishness that silences processes of marginalisation and does nothing to engage with the needs of minorities.

This paper draws on research with young adults (20-30 year olds) who are read as ‘black’ and ‘Asian’ living in Manchester who were asked to photograph and talk about their day to day lives in the city. It explores the contradictions that emerge within the respondents’ narratives when they seek to identify with the notion of a post-racial city and explain their own lived experience. The respondents want to claim recognition as part of the reinvention of Manchester. Yet, this claim is made difficult when their Britishness is not assumed and presents challenges when they want to simultaneously resist the ways in which they are positioned and talk about the racism they experience.

Robin Finlay – ‘Belonging, Loss and the ‘Right to the City’: The Moroccan Diaspora and the City of Granada, Spain’.

The importance of analysing the city as a distinctive ‘diaspora space’ (Brah, 1996), with unique contexts, and thus, unique diaspora experiences and imaginations, has been prominently put forward by geography scholars of diaspora and transnationalism (Blunt & Bonnerjee, 2008). In order to understand the multiple diaspora experiences that occur around the world, it is not only the significance of nation states that should be considered, but also cities and their diverse contexts. This paper, therefore, will provide an empirical demonstration of how urban spaces can create distinct diasporic experiences. Through ethnographic research of the Moroccan diaspora in Granada, Spain, I will argue that Granada’s diverse cultural landscape, both material and imaginary, can produce distinct economic, cultural and social processes and experiences for the Moroccan diaspora. It is a Western urban space where Moroccan identities have a certain ‘right to the city’ (Lefebvre, 1968), and they can be commodified and celebrated for economic gains. Furthermore, Granada can provoke strong feelings of nostalgia for the Moroccan diaspora, and consequently this produces paradoxical emotions of belonging and loss with the city. Therefore, the contextuality of Granada enables for culturally transgressive processes, although capitalism, and its unpredictability, are essentially at the heart of these practices.

Panel 3

Leila Hadj-Abdou – ‘Governing Urban Diversity’

This paper is summarizing the results of my Ph.D. thesis, which explores how city governments respond to the presence of immigrants and the ethnocultural difference that comes with it. The thesis analyses both, discourses about immigrants and immigration by relevant policy makers and immigrant integration policy types. It is conducting a comparison of the capital cities Dublin and Vienna. These contrasting cases allow to examine processes of convergence, as well as to scrutinize particularities of European cities in the domain of immigrant integration.

Cities potentially differ from nation states concerning the inclusion of immigrants. The nation state and national citizenship are institutions which are based on principles of social closure, and the notion of the “imagined community” (Brubaker 1992). Cities, in contrast, are potentially more predisposed to openness towards strangers. The research findings of the thesis challenge this idea of the open city to some extent. It shows that cities are clearly embedded in the national categorizations of “boundary making” (Wimmer 2004). The thesis moreover demonstrates that urban immigrant integration policies are largely led by cost and benefit considerations of policy actors confronted by global economic competition.

Joseph Downing – ‘Multiculturalism is not dead in France? Possible Convergence in multiculturalism in Lyon and Marseille’

Marseille and Lyon have arguably been conceived as cities that have adopted very different responses to their large ethnic minority populations. Marseille has been the only city in France to adopt what could arguably be described as a ‘multicultural’ agenda, where the municipal government recognises group claims for political participation through the Marseille Esperance forum of dialogue that brings the leaders of the city’s 9 largest religious communities directly into political life (Mitchell 2011). Lyon, however, has been conceptualised as adhering to French assimilationist policies that refuse to recognise difference, and have left its ethnic minority communities with a ‘thirst for citizenship’ (Dikec 2007) due to this lack of recognition. However, on examining the cultural activities of the two cities, arguably more convergence towards a multicultural expression of culture is seen that would perhaps be expected from two cases of varying forms of municipal governance. However, both the cultural policy of the municipalities and those of NGO’s in the city demonstrate a convergence towards recognising difference. This paper will analyse this convergence by first outlining a research context defining multiculturalism and its relationship to the study of France. It will then comparatively analyse the cultural policy of the municipalities of the city. After this, the agenda of NGO’s involved in public culture in the two cities will be examined. Finally, the paper will conclude with summarising this convergence.

Femi Adekunle - ‘Intergenerational geographies of race and racism: How could you end racism in a generation’.

This paper is based around looking at the intersection of various theoretical, practical and policy issues. It aims to look at the intersection of intergenerational tension;

racial conflict and the everyday urban' – 'the daily negotiation of ethnic difference' (Amin, 2002). It aims to conclude with a discussion of how to "strengthen the micro-publics of negotiation" (ibid,ii) based around a more realistic and pragmatic view of how multi-cultural and multi-ethnic communities function.

This study is based on the supposition that young people are increasingly and markedly distinct from adults and face challenges very different from their parents. The Runnymede Trust project 'Generation 3.0' outlines this simple fact within a racially super diverse urban space within Birmingham and London. Based around the simple premise of interviewing a broad intergenerational sample and looking at similarities and differences, it shows how attitudes towards race and racism have changed over 3 generations. In short, it is a continuing multi-media project that involves art, documentary films and social research to survey how different generations experience racism and racial inequality. By outlining how a persistent and complex social and cultural inequality in the city has evolved the project hoped to create genuine intergenerational dialogue.

To this end, this paper also presents some tangible proposals as to how to activate young people to move from voicing an experience, to engaging in social action. By providing a set of neutral forums and spaces where young and older people can meet and exchange ideas, knowledge and experience lessons can be learnt.