

Leverhulme Cultures of the Suburbs International Research Network

Annual Report for 2011-12 (first year of project to 01 September 2012)

Project and Infrastructure

The Cultures of the Suburbs International Research Network comprises six core partners and an Advisory Board, as defined in the original project funding application. The partners are: Dr Jo Gill (University of Exeter), Dr Martin Dines (Kingston University, London), Professor Mary Corcoran (National University of Ireland, Maynooth), Dr Christopher Niedt (Hofstra University, New York), Dr Sarah Nuttall (University of Witwatersrand, SA) and (initially) Professor Geoff Woolcock, since replaced by Professor Paul Burton (Griffith University, Australia). The Advisory Board comprises representatives from Deakin University, Australia; UCLA; UCL; Westminster University, Radboud University, Netherlands; Brunel University; Loyola University, Chicago; and Yeshiva University, New York.

Networking

The principal initial outcome of the project – the establishment of the Network website – began with a University of Exeter link page on which we were able to promote the symposium and details about the Network Partners and Advisory Board. In early 2012 the new Cultures of the Suburbs website was launched (<http://suburbs.exeter.ac.uk>); the original page on the University of Exeter site remains, but with a link redirecting viewers to the project site.

The Cultures of the Suburbs site contains links and information on (for example): Network and non-Network events and conferences; research centres and projects; external events and exhibitions (current and archived); Resources (Libraries and archives; digital collections, websites); Publications (bibliographical resources; Network publications; online articles and blogs; forthcoming publications and links; working papers); current and archived media articles, and Virtual Exhibitions (currently: Neil Roland 'Manchester Suburban Areas'; Anthony P. Marchetti and Laura E. Migliorino 'Occidente Nuevo'; Jane Bennett 'Pymont Paintings', and Mary Burke 'Suburban Shadows')

In the period of activity from 10 April to 01 September 2012, the site had been visited by 1,120 people, with 1,980 visits, 56.72% of which were new visitors. The majority of visitors were from the UK (797 visits) and USA, followed by Canada, Australia, Portugal, Japan, Ireland, France, Germany, and the Netherlands (26 visits).

There is a regular flow of emails with new enquiries and requests to join the mailing list. Membership of this mailing list by 01 September 2012 stood at 116. We are also regularly contacted by academics wanting to join our online researcher database (which at 01 September 2012 comprised 40 individuals) and to add details to the conference and publication lists.

Fliers promoting the Network and with tailored information for each conference were sent to the University of Westminster one-day symposium 'Narratives of Suburbia' (15 June 2012); the American Oral History Association Annual Meeting 'Sing It Out, Shout It Out, Say It Out Loud: Giving Voice Through Oral History' held in Cleveland, Ohio (10-14 October 2012), and The Canadian Association for American Studies, York University and the Centre for the Study of the United States, Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto conference 'Geographies of Promise and Betrayal: Land and Place in US Studies' (25-28 October 2012).

Emails notifying academics, postgraduates, authors and artists of the Network's work, with invitations to join the mailing list, Researcher Database and Virtual Exhibition pages are sent out regularly, making use of new research sites such as Acadmia.edu to identify potential interested parties.

Events

The principal event of the first year was the Inaugural Symposium, held at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth on 9 December 2011. The one-day event attracted 24 delegates, including postgraduate students and established academics, with 8 'salon' style presentations, a keynote address by Professor Mark Gottdiener (SUNY, Buffalo) and readings by authors Joanne Jacobson and Roddy Doyle, from their respective works on suburban life in Chicago and Dublin.

Earlier in December, Jo Gill and Martin Dines, two of the Network Partners, led a Research Roundtable in the School of Humanities at Exeter University. The two papers addressed 'Historicising Suburbia in American Literature' and 'The Poetics of the American Suburbs' and the event was attended by a number of undergraduate and graduate students and staff from across the University.

In May 2012, Jo Gill took part in a 'Town meets Gown' event arranged by the Exeter Global Centre. These events have been run for five years, with twenty-nine sessions of topics ranging from the Oceans, Aboriginal tent embassy in Canberra, the First World War and policing in London, and are an opportunity for academics at Exeter to share their research with a wider public. About thirty participants attended the event on 15 May, at which Dr Gill spoke about the 'Cultures of the Suburbs' project.

In January 2012, Mary P. Corcoran delivered a keynote address on 'Planning, the Built Environment and Community: Integrating Insights, Processes and Practices' at the International Centre for Local and Regional Development 7th Annual Conference, *Planning the future*, in Dundalk, Co. Louth. A few months earlier, Mary participated in a panel discussion on 'Suburban dreams, suburban realities' organized by the History at History Ireland Hedge School in association with the 'Mountains to the Sea' book festival in Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown, September 10, 2011. This was a public event and was attended by about one hundred people.

Selected Publications

Corcoran, Mary P. "Sustaining Communities: setting the agenda" (with Cian O Callaghan and Wendy Fuller) *GeoJournal: international journal of geography* Volume, 77(2) April 2012. pps. 1-6 (published online 2010).

Brian Conway, Mary P. Corcoran and Lynne M. Cahill "The 'miracle' of Fatima: media framing and the regeneration of a Dublin housing estate", *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism.*, 13 (6) pp. 1-21 published online 2011, *Journalism* 13(5) July 2012 pps. 551-571

Mary P. Corcoran was quoted in Rich Land Poor Land, *Irish Times*, January 05, 2013, in a feature examining the declining affluence of new suburban communities in the hinterland of Dublin. www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/weekend/.../1224328446985.html

Jo Gill, 'Space, Gender, Race: Josephine Miles and the Poetics of the California Suburbs', *Western American Literature* (Fall 2011) 250-71

Niedt, Christopher (with Sandra Garren). 2012. "Mortgage Volume and Price on Long Island, 2005-2010: An Analysis of HMDA Data." National Center for Suburban Studies Working Paper 2012-01.

This report examined suburban racial disparities in mortgage lending on Long Island, post-foreclosure crisis

Long Island Regional Economic Development Council Writers' Group. 2011. *A New Vision for Long Island's Economy: The Strategic Economic Development Plan for Nassau and Suffolk Counties*. Long Island Regional Economic Development Council. (Winner, Best Regional Plan Award)

Professor Niedt wrote or revised Infrastructure and Workforce and Education report sections that had been developed by work groups featuring business, government, and non-profit representatives (as part of a statewide regional plan competition)

Niedt, Christopher. 2012. "A Brief Analysis of Incomes and Affordability in the Village of Hempstead and Its Proposed Downtown Overlay Zones." Prepared for New York Communities for Change.

An analysis of incomes in footprint of a suburban redevelopment area, identifying mismatch between incomes of present residents and the unaffordable rents of proposed housing

Future work and work in progress

Planned events include: a seminar led by Professor Paul Burton of Griffith University at Exeter in September 2012; a 'Cultures of the Suburbs' panel at The Canadian Association for American Studies conference 'Geographies of Promise and Betrayal: Land and Place in US Studies' (25-28 October 2012), and a panel at the British Association of American Studies conference in April 2013. Exeter University will be hosting an 'Extreme Imagination' event for local schoolchildren in February 2013 at which the 'Cultures of the Suburbs' will be represented by a participatory workshop titled 'City, Country, Suburb: Where Would You like to Live?'. An on-going, student-led project for Exeter undergraduates is also planned: 'The Creative Suburbs' will encompass oral histories, creative writing, photography and artwork projects exploring perceptions of life in the suburbs.

Organisation for the second symposium, to be held at Hofstra University in June 2013 is already underway and the conference package for the 2014 conference at Exeter has been booked.

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