

The Cultures of the Suburbs International Research Network: Final Conference

Imagining the Suburbs

University of Exeter 19-21 June 2014

ABSTRACTS

SPEAKERS

Ian Abley, Architect and Organiser of the 250 New Towns Club

Ian Abley is a tenacious architect who has worked on large scale, demanding, fast-moving, and innovative projects, mostly in London. He is currently employed on the Tate Modern extension. He helps organise the 250 New Towns Club as an experimental plan drawing club, through the pre-development website www.audacity.org. Ian argues for far more house building to meet the needs of a growing population.

ABSTRACT:

Freeing farmers and builders to build the low cost suburbs people want.

In 1947 it became illegal to build suburbs without permission from a Local Authority. Before government nationalised development rights through the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, Britain's small builders built the popular suburbs of the 1920s and 1930s on cheap farmland. After Freehold land ownership was formalised in 1925, millions of suburban homes and gardens were built, all accessible by road and rail.

That law was innovated at a time of rationing, after the social disaster of the Second World War. Farmers gave up their rights in land, grateful for continued state support of food prices. Builders needed licences for scarce materials. Government directed labour and resources in the shattered building industry to repair existing towns, and build New Towns. Ambitious house building made planning law seem dynamic, until the 1970s and 1980s.

Today house building has declined to numbers not seen before 1925, even though the population is larger, and growing. Suburbs are in short supply, while new house building is at urban densities, without gardens. The question of this paper is: Why persist with an emergency planning law? Being given back the freedom to build on their own land, farmers and builders would work together again to build low cost suburbs in great numbers.

JOINT PAPER: Ellen Avitts, Assistant Professor of Art History, Central Washington University, and Stephanie Hallock, Professor of Political Science, Harford Community College.

Ellen Avitts received her PhD from the University of Delaware, specializing in American art and architectural history. Her research focus is on middle-class, single-family suburban housing in the United States at the turn of the twenty-first century. A native of Texas, Ellen is an Assistant Professor of Art History at Central Washington University.

Dr. Stephanie Hallock is a Professor of Political Science at Harford Community College in Maryland, USA, where she also serves as the Coordinator for the Office of Global Education and Engagement.

ABSTRACT:

Democracy and the Suburbs: How the Suburbs Have Separated the American Political Process from Its Ideological Roots

Suburbanization has been a key factor in the evolution of American democracy. Early suburbs in the United States were promoted with rhetoric that stressed moral and civic virtue. Indeed, for many nineteenth-century pattern book authors, in the building of appropriate housing lay the preservation of the nation, and appropriate housing meant single-family dwellings surrounded by nature. Yet the actuality of suburban life challenges the political culture of American democracy. This paper posits that suburbanization of America has undermined the political process and structures created 250 years ago; as a result they no longer function as originally envisioned. The political ideology of America's founding fathers was both a reaction to monarchic oppression and an attempt to politicize Enlightenment philosophy. The result was a political culture grounded in individualism, liberty and imperialism. The political processes that emerged from these roots support a constitutionally defined rule of law, the expansion of civil rights, and a steadfast belief in an "American Dream" of upward mobility. Today, more than half of the population lives in suburban developments. This paper examines this phenomenon, focusing on how the culture of suburban life contradicts core ideologies of American democracy, thereby presenting significant challenges to political structures and processes.

Paul Burton, Griffith University, Queensland, Australia

Paul Burton is Professor of Urban Management and Planning and Acting Director of the Urban Research Program at Griffith University in Queensland, Australia. His current research interests include urban planning and climate change adaptation, planning for greater urban food security and the professional lives of practicing planners.

ABSTRACT:

Behind the brochure: suburban realities in a future Australia

Since European settlement in the late 18th century, Australia has embraced a suburban lifestyle with considerable enthusiasm. Despite continuing attempts to promote a more compact and cosmopolitan form, detached living in suburban settings remains the preferred housing type and setting of most Australians. And in the face of a host of 'clichés of suburban doom', to modify slightly Ruth Glass's expression, developers continue to build suburban estates further into the peri-urban hinterland and to sell them successfully.

But what is the experience of those who buy into and live in these contemporary suburban enclaves? Do they get to live the dreams set out in full colour in the developers' brochures, or is the reality different? And how might these pioneers cope in a dystopian future in which the benefits of living in 'the countryside' begin to be outweighed by the costs of living a long way from business districts, shopping precincts and service hubs and centres of culture?

This paper draws on exploratory research among a group of peri-urban pioneers in South East Queensland, one of the fastest growing regions of Australia, to explore these questions and to examine how the lifestyles imagined in the developers' brochures are experienced in practice.

John Brown, Associate Dean, Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary

John Brown is a Professor of Architecture in the Faculty of Environmental Design at the University of Calgary. He is also a registered architect, a founding Principal of the architectural firm Housebrand, and a co-founder of Slow Home, an international movement advocating for increased design quality in North America's housing market.

ABSTRACT:

Crystals of the Good Life: Analysing Historical Models of Suburban Development in Canada

"All buildings are predictions. All predictions are wrong."¹

With this simple statement, the noted theorist Stuart Brand calls into the question the efficacy of residential design and defines suburbia as a repository of failed predictions. If every home is a permanent crystallization of an evanescent definition of the good life at the time in which it was built, what are the implications for suburbia - past, present, and future?

This paper explores these issues through an historical review of 4 decades (1930s, 50s, 70s, 80s) of house and community design typologies in the suburbs of a medium sized Canadian city. A series of house plans indicative of each decade are analysed across a common set of objectives. A similar analysis process is undertaken for a representative neighbourhood plan from the same decades. The study concludes with an analysis of remodelled homes based on original floor plans from each decade. The presentation will compare the results against each other to tentatively identify some of the underlying cultural assumptions that are specific to each time period as well as those that appear to persist. A series of preliminary implications for future suburban growth are presented for consideration.

1. Brand, Stewart, *How Buildings Learn: What Happens after They're Built*, Penguin Books, 199

JOINT PAPER: Allan Cochrane, The Open University, UK, Bob Colenutt and Martin Field, The University of Northampton, UK

Allan Cochrane is Professor of Urban Studies at the Open University, conveniently located in the suburban paradise that is Milton Keynes. He is currently working on an ESRC funded research project (with **Bob Colenutt and Martin Field**) which is focused on understanding the tensions and possibilities of sustainable housing growth on the edge of the South East.

ABSTRACT:

Living on the edge: building vulnerable suburbs on the edge of the South-East of England

Since 1945 (particularly after 1979) it has been taken for granted that home ownership was the route to security. The suburbs were invented as places of safety away from the threats and challenges of the (multicultural) city - protected spaces of family houses, gardens and steadily rising property values.

But what happens when the taken-for-granted assumptions are undermined and the search for security becomes more intense and uncertain?

In 2008, a crisis in the housing market was just one expression of the wider financial crisis. Plans for new house building were put on hold and in most parts of the country house prices fell. For the first time in a generation the proportion of the population living in private rented accommodation rose.

This paper focuses on just one aspect of the new world, drawing on research undertaken as part of an ESRC project on tensions and prospects for sustainable housing growth on the edge of the South-East of England. It looks at the ways in which some aspects of the suburban (or exurban) dream have had to be re-imagined, as the drive to making up new communities has slowed and new development has more explicitly been defined as a threat to existing residents.

Mary Corcoran, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Mary P. Corcoran is Professor of Sociology and Head of Department at the National University of Ireland Maynooth. Her research interests include urban sociology, migration and public cultures.

ABSTRACT:

Portrait of the artist as suburban interpreter: painting 'home' in Tallaght, Dublin.

Human beings are not just economic and social actors; they are also cultural actors. Access to cultural resources, the ability to generate and sustain cultural capital, and the capacity to engage in active cultural citizenship are crucial to a sense of selfhood and social belonging. But very often culture is seen as secondary when devising strategies to combat social exclusion. Access to the arts and cultural practices foments community connections that represent "paths of engagement," leading to new opportunities for arts and cultural organizations to build participation, (Walker,2002). In other words, access to arts and culture provides an important avenue through which people can be engaged and included in the wider public realm.

This paper reports on an innovative cultural intervention in Tallaght, Dublin, a sprawling suburb with a profile of economic disadvantage. A Dublin artist, Mary Burke, whose work has consistently focused on portraiture of middle class suburbia, engaged with ten different volunteer families to paint a portrait of their home. The paintings will form the basis of a public exhibition- House Portraits- and will later be returned for permanent keeping to the participating families. This paper reflects on the meaning of home for the participating families, their engagement with the artist and the process of portrait production, and their reflections on the outcome.

Ref: Walker, Chris. 2002. Arts & Culture: Community Connections. Urban Institute.

Dottie Ives Dewey, Westchester University, Pennsylvania, USA

Dorothy Ives-Dewey is a Professor and Chair of the Geography and Planning Department at West Chester University in West Chester, Pennsylvania. She completed her doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania in Urban and Regional Planning in 1997. Her academic background is in urban and regional planning with primary focus in land use planning, land development regulation, and community development planning. She has published qualitative and quantitative research on the evolving nature of land use planning processes, place-making and the impact of arts on community development, development planning tools, the fiscal impacts of development on local economies, and planning pedagogy.

ABSTRACT:

Imagining Climate Change: Place Making in Suburban Climate Adaptation Strategies

Suburbs are on the forefront of efforts to adapt to climate change in the United States. With the majority of the U.S. population residing in the suburbs and a high degree of land use control vested in local suburban municipalities, suburbs are poised to play a major role in the effort to adapt to an uncertain future. Impacts of climate change – sea level rise, flooding, warming, etc. – are contingent on local geographic, socio-economic, biological and hydrological conditions. Many of the potential measures to adapt, including land use regulations, building codes, protecting and maintaining critical infrastructure, are utilized in local place making. The fragmented local governmental system creates challenges to address a globally-scaled challenge, but offers an opportunity to engage local communities in planning to address climate change challenges and crafting adaptation strategies that are grounded in local concepts of place. This research investigates the recent suburban-level efforts in climate adaptation planning and place-making. The study area includes two regions, one coastal and one non-coastal. Together the regions contain 75 municipalities at different stages of suburban development. Based on a review of local plans and local regulations, climate adaptation strategies are analyzed to identify the linkages between place-making and the design of policy and programmatic responses to climate change.

Martin Dines, Kingston University, London

Dr Martin Dines is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Kingston University London. His research focuses on the place of the suburbs in Anglo-American writing, queer domesticities, and the interconnections between national identity, space and sexuality. He is the author of *Gay Suburban Narratives in American Literature and Culture: Homecoming Queens* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) and co-editor (with Timotheus Vermeulen) of *New Suburban Stories* (Bloomsbury, 2013).

ABSTRACT:

A Child in the Suburb

In his landmark study *The Child in the City*, Colin Ward acknowledges that, following demographic shifts in the twentieth century, 'the majority of urban children in Europe and North America are in fact suburban children' (1978, p.67). Despite this, just one chapter of Ward's book is devoted to the child in the suburb. A suburban childhood is the most common type of childhood in the West; partly for this reason it is seen to deserve only minimal attention, or otherwise evades scrutiny altogether. In the area of literary production, representing suburban childhood is certainly a minority pursuit. There has been a prolific outpouring of writing over the last century and a half in response to suburban development, particularly in the Anglophone West, but almost all of it is focalized through the perspective of adults (see Jurca, 2001; Beuka, 2004; Hapgood, 2005; O'Reilly, 2012). On the other hand, within the burgeoning field of children's geography, expressions of embarrassment about the apparent over-representation of suburban childhoods (and therefore the over-representation of the experience of growing up in white, stable and relatively affluent environments) are not uncommon. Inevitably, these childhood experiences are far more accessible to western researchers; David Sibley anguishes though that the treatment of street children in Brazilian and Columbian cities by death squads is 'a more pressing issue than mealtimes in Laburnum Crescent' (1995 p.137; see also Horton and Kraftl, 2006, p.262). Actually, geographers whose work focuses on children, as well as scholars of children's literature (e.g. Jones, 1997; Jones, 2002; Bavidge, 2005), often overlook suburban experience and representations due to their pre-occupation with the dichotomy between of urban and rural childhoods. If a long-standing association between childhood and nature renders children and urban environments incompatible (with far-reaching implications for the way children's access to urban space is regulated by adults), suburban childhood is left unacknowledged and unproblematised.

In this chapter I address this neglect by bringing to bear some of the observations of children's geography – many of which draw inspiration from Ward's formative work – on imaginative writing that focuses on suburban childhood. One of the principal problematics of children's geography concerns the extent to which it is possible for an adult to imagine, or even understand, how a child experiences the world. These imaginative accounts – written by adults of course – put trust in children's capacity to generate their own narratives, stories which are responsive to the emergent spaces of suburbs and which imagine possible futures and future histories. In so doing these accounts resist nostalgia and an adult desire to claim or colonise childhood (see Probyn, 1996, pp.93-124; Jones, 2012), adopting instead a much more reflexive, and flexible, approach to memory and to an understanding of self. These stories accord rather with Owain Jones's reflection: 'Memories mobilise, a landscape within me comes alive, reforms, yet into something fresh. I change.' (2007, p.205) The emotional intensity that so frequently characterises narratives of suburban childhood does not simply correspond to attempts to render children's experience of space more authentically; it expresses a quickening, an enlivening sense of possibility, of new connections and relationalities. These stories encourage their readers to see their environment, and themselves, in new ways.

Claire Dwyer, University College London

Dr Claire Dwyer is a Senior Lecturer in social and cultural geography at University College London where she is Co-Director of the Migration Research Unit. Claire's research interests are in geographies of ethnicity, gender and religion; transnationalism and diasporas; feminist and multicultural theory. She has undertaken research on Muslim identities in Britain, British South Asian diaspora commodity cultures and new suburban religious landscapes in Britain and Canada. Her publications include *Transnational Spaces* (co-edited with Peter Jackson and Phillip Crang, Routledge, 2004) and *New Geographies of Race and Racism* (co-edited with Caroline Bressey, Ashgate, 2008).

ABSTRACT:

Faith in Suburbia: Reimagining the suburban vernacular in religious architecture the case of St Thomas the Apostle and the Salaam Centre

This paper draws on an on-going project on 'Faith in Suburbia' which explores the intersections between faith, migration and suburban change drawing on case studies in West London and Vancouver. This project explores the presence and visibility of suburban faith communities in the built environment and the lived practices of the suburban faithful. In this paper I offer an analysis of two different religious buildings in West London – St Thomas the Apostle Church, an Anglican Church built in 1933 by celebrated ecclesiastical architect Edward Maufe, and the Salaam Centre, an innovative religious building currently under construction by members of a Shia Muslim community and designed by leading British Muslim architect, Ali Mangera. I argue that both buildings reflect a self-conscious engagement with the suburban vernacular in their architecture and artistic work which includes the nativity located in a suburban landscape of allotments and semi-detached houses, and decorative motifs which reference William Morris alongside Islamic gardens. Reflecting on the role of modernity and artistic innovation in religious architecture in the suburbs in both the past and present, I suggest that attention to the significance of faith in suburbia challenges myths of the suburbs as mundane and monotonous or secular and materialist. Instead a focus on suburban faith communities offers a framing of the suburban through transnational connections and postcolonial trajectories

Dion Georgiou, PhD candidate, Queen Mary University of London

Dion Georgiou is a PhD student in the School of History at Queen Mary University of London. His thesis looks at street carnivals in suburban London during the late Victorian and Edwardian eras.

ABSTRACT:

'An essentially Ilfordian event, representative of Ilford's life, amusement, business and enthusiasm': representing the suburb in the Ilford carnival, 1905-1914.

Between 1905 and 1914, the London suburb of Ilford held an annual street carnival to raise funds for establishing a local hospital to serve a population that rose from 10,913 in 1891 to 78,188 in 1911. By 1912, the event was drawing an estimated 250,000 spectators.

This paper will examine how Ilford and suburbia more generally were represented in the Carnival and the discourse surrounding it. It argues that suburban life was characterised in procession items as a combination of tradition and modernity, with floral decoration coexisting alongside new technologies. It also contends that the event allowed contributors and commentators to define Ilford in relation to neighbouring suburbs, London, nation and Empire, but that the festive configurations of Carnival day permitted this imagined geography of Ilford and its place in the world to be temporarily reshaped.

Furthermore, the paper will discuss the means through which the suburb was represented. Images of Ilford were propagated not just in the procession, but also through local and national press reports on the event, not to mention films of the procession. The paper highlights that as well as reflecting and facilitating the development of local identities in Ilford, these representations were partly shaped and disseminated by external forces. It also makes the case that the procession route itself should be seen as a representation of suburbia – integrating new suburban spaces into a linear narrative of the district.

Carol Hager, Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania, USA

Carol Hager (Ph.D. University of California, San Diego) is Associate Professor and Chair of the Political Science Department at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, where she also serves as Director of the Center for Social Sciences. She specializes in comparative public policy and social movements.

ABSTRACT:

Renewable Energy and the Reinvigoration of Bedroom Communities in the Black Forest Region of Germany

My paper will explore the effects of Germany's energy transition on suburban and exurban communities in the Freiburg area of the state of Baden-Württemberg. Many formerly independent villages in the region have become virtual bedroom communities of the city of Freiburg. Demographic and economic shifts have hollowed out traditional small farming and crafts trades in the region. At the same time, former city residents have become more willing to endure long commutes in order to live in a "greener" setting. I find that local renewable energy production, facilitated by Germany's Renewable Energy Law, has begun to change this long-term trend in interesting ways. Locally owned solar and wind facilities provide a boost to local economies and, importantly, to community identity and self-confidence. The turn to "plus energy villages" has, however, created new local fault lines, which my current research also explores. The paper will be based on case study research in the communities of Freiamt and St. Peter (and possibly also Emmendingen, which has different demographic characteristics from the other two).

Briavel Holcomb, Rutgers University

Briavel Holcomb received a PhD in geography from the University of Colorado (1972) and has taught at Rutgers University ever since. She has circumnavigated the earth twice teaching on Semester at Sea, visited the University of Exeter 1999-2000 and had a Fulbright in Malta 1995-6.

ABSTRACT:

Suburban social relationships in the material and virtual worlds

I (age 72) live in a small suburban town thirty miles South of New York. My daughter and her family including three school age children, live in a small suburban town thirty miles North of New York. I will explore (possibly with some of the students in my course on cybercities) how virtual communications are changing the social networks of varied generations. I hypothesize (based on preliminary observation) that the oldies (my generation) continue to maintain our local social networks largely through face to face meeting, some phone contact and minimal virtual contact, though we maintain our long distance (international in my case) networks virtually. My daughter's generation (in their 40s) rely much more on Facebook etc. and texting for their local networks. My students (in their late teens/early twenties) meet frequently in cyberspace, but less frequently than my generation in the material world. My grandchildren with newly acquired cell/smart phones most frequently arrange real world gatherings virtually. Do these variations have impacts on the social "glue" of suburbia?

JOINT PAPER:

David Kendall, Visiting Fellow, Centre for Urban and Community Research, Goldsmiths, University of London

Nabil Ahmed, Research Fellow, Centre for Research Architecture, Goldsmiths, University of London

Abbas Nokhasteh, Director, Openvizor

Moustafa Traore, Visiting Lecturer, Sorbonne University in Paris

David Kendall is a visiting fellow within the Centre for Urban and Community Research, Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths, University of London. His photography and research explore how spatial, economic and design initiatives, as well as participatory practices, combine to encourage social and spatial interconnections or conflict in cities. Kendall has presented and exhibited research at cultural and academic institutions including University of Copenhagen, University of California, South Bank Centre London, Queens University Belfast, Goldsmiths, University of London, Tate Britain London, Queen Mary, University of London and University of Oxford. www.david-kendall.co.uk

Nabil Ahmed is a writer, artist and researcher. He has participated in the 2014 Cuenca Biennale, 2012 Taipei Biennale, and has exhibited at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) in Berlin and South Asian Visual Arts Centre (SAVAC) in Toronto. He has written for Third Text, Volume and the books Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth (Sternberg, 2013), Architecture and the paradox of Dissidence (Routledge, 2013) and a contributor to the World of Matter project. He is co-curator at Call & Response, an artist run sound art project based in London. He is currently a PhD candidate at the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths, University of London where he is a research fellow in the project Forensic Architecture. He has previously taught at the department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths. He is a lecturer in history and theory of architecture at the CASS faculty of Art, Architecture and Design at London Metropolitan University.

Abbas Nokhasteh is a curator, filmmaker and producer. He is a graduate of King's College London (BA Hons War Studies) and Imperial College London (MBA). He has presented research and curated events at cultural and academic institutions including The Serpentine Gallery and The Centre for Possible Studies; The Victoria and Albert Museum; The Jewish Museum Berlin; The British Library; The Architecture Foundation; University of Oxford; Sadler's Wells Theatre, London; The Whitechapel Gallery, London; The French Institute, London; Goldsmiths, University of London; Queens University, Belfast; Queen Mary, University of London; Mimar Sinan University, Turkey, Istanbul Biennale; CARIMAC University of West Indies, Jamaica; Los Andes University, Museo Nacional de Colombia and Museo de Arte del Banco de la República, Colombia. www.openvizor.com <http://www.facebook.com/openvizor>

Dr. Moustafa Traoré is the author of *l'intégration de la culture musulmane en Grande-Bretagne, des principes à la réalité* (l'Harmattan, 2011). He is a visiting lecturer at Sorbonne University in Paris and is the founder of the website www.anopeneye.org which is an online newspaper dealing with French social issues and politics. Traoré has presented research at cultural and academic institutions including Sorbonne University, South Bank Centre London, Queens University Belfast, Goldsmiths, University of London, Queen Mary, University of London and University of Oxford. www.anopeneye.org

ABSTRACT:

Spaces, Edges and Thresholds: Artist Interventions into Private and Public Spaces inside and outside the Perimeter of Paris

The 19th arrondissement in contemporary Paris, France is among the twenty administrative districts that form the city and has the youngest population. The majority of inhabitants in the

district are French citizens of West African and North African descent, commonly known in the Hexagone as ethnic minorities. In Paris political / public institutions and private organisations use historical photographs and films of daily life to visualise, commemorate and form specific social histories, public memories and pictorial archives. Low-income residents and ethnic minorities are often denied any form of historical and spatial recognition within the ocular and aural identity of the city. For example, in 2005 the Adda'wa mosque in the 19th arrondissement was demolished without funds to rebuild. The second largest mosque in Paris moved to a temporary location, a disused bus hangar in La Villette on the perimeter of the city. We continue to work within this environment and explore the concept of the banlieue (or suburb) as an architectural space 'put or set aside', a threshold between private and public spaces inside / outside the city and French society. The project proposes and generates activities defined by individuals and groups on their terms and engages in pragmatic collaborative art methodologies and spatial practices within the built environment to generate new audio-visual narrative tools, allowing the ephemeral to become definable stories that begin to map edge conditions; past and present.

If the proposal is accepted a three / four-person panel will be formed from our project collective which includes: Sound artist Nabil Ahmed (Centre for Research Architecture, Goldsmiths University of London), photographer David Kendall (Centre for Urban and Community Research, Goldsmiths University of London), filmmakers Andrés Borda-González and Tijmen Veldhuizen, Amal Khalaf (Serpentine Gallery), architectural researcher Füsün Türetken, social researcher Dr. Moustafa Traoré (Sorbonne University, Paris) and project curator Abbas Nokhasteh (Openvizor). Our project architectural advisor is Ali Mangera, cofounder of MYAA Architects, developing new mosque architecture in Europe and the Middle East.

Dr Jarrad Keyes, Independent Researcher

After studying Literature at the University of Essex and Cultural Criticism at the University of Manchester, Jarrad completed a PhD in representations of urban space in contemporary British fiction at Kingston University. He is particularly interested in the conceptualizing and representing urban space and the works of J.G. Ballard and W.G. Sebald, and he is currently revising his PhD manuscript for publication.

ABSTRACT:

At the 'wavefront of the future': J.G. Ballard's Suburban Poetics

A city like London doesn't really offer me anything - I'm not interested in it, it's much too old. Whereas the suburbs are, comparatively speaking, new [...] A suburb like this [Shepperton] is the real psychic battleground - it's on the wavefront of the future, rather than a city area —J.G. Ballard
A common misconception concerning Ballard's works is that they are, in essence, dystopian. The Collins English Dictionary defines 'Ballardian' as 'resembling or suggestive of the conditions described in Ballard's [works], especially dystopian modernity, bleak man-made landscapes and the psychological effects of technological, social or environmental developments'. Given that the typical setting of his post 1973 fiction is suburban, this paper asks what, exactly, is 'Ballardian' about Ballard's later works?

To examine how Ballard's 'wavefront of the future' offers an important reconceptualization of suburbia engendered in terms far from dystopian, I will refer to a number of his later works. Moving from *The Unlimited Dream Company* (1981) through to *Kingdom Come* (2006), this paper explores the visionary elements of Ballard's suburban poetics through their innovative ways of understanding the changing relationship in Britain between the city and the suburbs.

Thomas Kohlwein, University of Vienna

Thomas Kohlwein is a Vienna based writer and editor exploring places, their architecture and literature. His latest work includes an anthology about Switzerland following the routes of its rail network.

ABSTRACT:

Off-Peak Travelcard: A Journey to Urban Literature outside the Centre

Every spot in the cityscape, every urban setting can be a source of storytelling. Each neighbourhood provides spaces to participate in urban life and cities are defined by interchange between them. Constant movement, like the everyday practice of commuting, forms the rhythm of the city and from these movements emerge stories. A journey along transport patterns in the direction from the centre to the suburb reveals the literary potential of the suburbs, along the nodes of the urban landscape. With examples from European and Australian cities the following questions are discussed: (1) How do stories give meaning to places like suburbs? (2) How can the narratives of centres vs. suburbs be merged into a model of literary urban landscapes? (3) How can this analysis of urban form and everyday places be part of an effort to map an urban literary landscape? Movement patterns form a network of paths through the contemporary city. Following these paths, the memory of urban life reveals itself. By collecting the findings along the way, the first step to a literary map of the urban landscape is taken.

Mary Lester, Independent Researcher

Mary Lester researches local and civic identity in West Ham and Hackney between the 1880s and the 1920s. This started as a full-time PhD project which she is currently taking a break from to work for the Dorset Waste Partnership on project management/business analysis, whilst continuing to research suburban identity.

ABSTRACT:

Imagining the Suburbs: The Theatre Royal, Stratford East, and suburban civic culture in West Ham, c1880-1920

The Theatre Royal in Stratford, east London, opened in 1884 and had an immediate impact on the cultural, social and political life of the industrial suburb of West Ham. This paper will look at the theatre as a case study for the ways in which suburban civic identity could be shaped by individuals, buildings and cultural networks, and be at once very locally individual but also part of a bigger picture of what suburban life could be and aspired to be.

The theatre was owned by local councillor Alfred Fredericks, whose self-interested politics gradually turned into a successful popularism which chimed with the emergent labour-politics of the area. On stage, images of the capital city were presented to its own suburban fringes, as part of the network of London actors and productions. Fredericks' image of what the Theatre Royal could be, and his own distinctive political style, fitted closely with West Ham's increasing sense of civic identity around the turn of the century: notorious, for good and ill, distinctive, appealing, metropolitan but also independently suburban. Exploring the place the theatre had in the local imagery is a way to understand this district as a particular, rather than general, suburban location.

Antonia Mackay, Oxford Brookes University

Following her departure from the world of fashion journalism in 2007, Antonia has pursued an academic career with particular interest in feminism, queer theory and American literature. Her research focuses on 1950s American culture and the spaces of the cold war. She has held the position of associate lecturer at Oxford Brookes University since 2011 and Goldsmiths University London in 2012/2013.

ABSTRACT:

Simulacra and Selves in Cold War Suburbia

The concept of the American suburb is perhaps most famously epitomized by images from the Fifties - of Levittown, picture windows and Betty Crocker. Cold War theorists have increasingly asserted the relevance of this 'containment' ideology in the provision of tense sites of gender ideals. According to these recent studies, masculinity and femininity were caught between both domesticity and commercialism and conformity and individualism, thereby alluding to a performative body. I propose that it was through the spaces of suburbia themselves and the objects therein, that identities were shaped and expressed, formed and reformed, thereby permitting an examination of the role of space and technology in creating identity in the Fifties. Basing my argument on the works of both Elizabeth Grosz and Gilles Deleuze I will investigate the technologically rooted selves in Vladimir Nabakov's *Lolita* (1962) and John Updike's *Rabbit, Run* (1960), referencing the influence of culture, television and film in creating the space of suburbia and its experience. I intend to illustrate the way in which both *Rabbit* and *Lolita* themselves are both products and producers of their environment, consuming the visual media surrounding them whilst simultaneously promoting it. The paper aims to challenge the accepted notions of Fifties America by suggesting Cold War bodies were capable of creating as well as reacting to their suburban location in a fluid movement which blurs the boundaries between conformity and escape.

Janice Morphet, Visiting professor, Bartlett School of Planning, UCL

Janice Morphet is a Visiting Professor in the Bartlett School of Planning at University College London. She is currently working on infrastructure planning and sub-state governance in the UK including the role of the British Irish Council, Devolution and the fiction of John Le Carre and Len Deighton. Janice has held senior posts in local and central government, was Head of the School of Planning and Landscape at Birmingham Polytechnic and on the Planning Committee of the London 2012 Olympic Games. Her recent books are *Modern Local Government* (2008), *Effective Practice in Spatial Planning* (2010) and *How Europe Shapes British Public Policy* (2013).

ABSTRACT:

Bringing the Cold War to the suburbs: Re-locating the post-war conflict in Le Carre and Deighton

The development and recognition of the Cold War as a major shift in world conflict from 'over there' where battle was conducted in uniforms by the armed services to one that was to be fought on the new home front through spies was a significant plot component in the first novels of both John Le Carre, 'Call for the Dead' (1961) (later filmed as *The Deadly Affair*) and Len Deighton's 'The Ipcress File' (1962). In both novels, the sleepy suburban milieu becomes the centre of Cold War espionage discovered and resolved by two iconic outsider characters, George Smiley and Harry Palmer, introduced in these works.

Smiley and Palmer were seemingly dissimilar in almost every way including their age, class and war records. However these characters were united in their metropolitan provenance and experience and there has been little consideration of them in relation to each other and in their role together in re-situating the potential threats of the post-war period into a UK domestic setting from mainland Europe. An examination of the fiction of Deighton and Le Carre suggests a different world where the locus of external danger was in the suburban midst of Surrey or Wood Green. This paper will argue that these novels formed an essential role in reawakening the Home Front and alerting people to the removal of the safety and security once promised by the suburbs.

Shuntaro Nozawa, PhD candidate, Sheffield School of Architecture, University of Sheffield

Shuntaro Nozawa is currently undertaking a PhD project focusing on the change in the perception of the relationship between the body and space, and its modern subjectivity in Japanese house and home.

ABSTRACT:

Imagination in Action: A Case of Hankyu Corporation and its Suburban Development in Japan, 1910-1939

This paper explores the means by which the socially acknowledged images of domestic life were realised architecturally, through an examination of Japanese suburban development in its formative period. I revisit a thirty-year period from 1910, when alternative patterns of daily life suitable for an industrialised age emerged; Hankyu Corporation, an Osaka-based railway company on which I focus, opened up the first railway suburban estates in Japan. Growing fears of individual materialism, meanwhile led to calls for a domesticated leisure and the concept of 'home' in which refuge and pleasure were pursued by the whole family. This paper is therefore concerned with the relationship between the 'imagining' of everyday life and the provision of houses, mainly for the middle-class households, the fusion of which can be seen in Hankyu's case perceived as a pioneering model for private homeownership. I draw on a social-anthropological approach to material cultures connecting the body with goods and spaces that have been made through mass media and consumption in an industrial society. Hankyu's publications such as magazines, newsletters and housing catalogues are scrutinised, to disclose how it materialised the widely recognised narratives of family life as suburban dwellings and their settings through its architectural practices.

Chris Niedt, Hofstra University, New York, USA

Chris Niedt's research is broadly concerned with the effects of suburban growth and decline on race and class inequality in the United States. He is the editor of *Social Justice in Diverse Suburbs: History, Politics, and Prospects* (Temple University Press, 2013) and co-editor of *Forging a New Housing Policy: Opportunity in the Wake of Crisis* (with Marc Silver, NCSS, 2011).

ABSTRACT: Available on request

Racial Segregation in the U.S. Suburbs: How Different Scales Tell Different Stories

Ondine Park, PhD candidate, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta, Canada

Ondine Park is a Sociology PhD student at the University of Alberta. She works with, and develops, social, cultural, and critical geographic theories in the interpretation of cultural representations of the suburban imaginary. She has co-edited *Ecologies of Affect: Placing Nostalgia, Desire and Hope* with Tonya K. Davidson and Rob Shields (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011).

ABSTRACT:

Anaesthetic Figures of the Suburban Imaginary

This paper is concerned with the suburban imaginary and the ways it is represented in visual art. The suburban imaginary is a culturally and historically located set of meanings, expectations, images, and ideas about the suburb that is dialectically shared and formed in the popular imagination, particularly through various popular cultural media. The suburban imaginary is made recognizable and familiar while also distinct and particular through the assertion and repetition of "figures". Figures act simultaneously as generic categories and as particular instantiations and are instructive. While any number of different figures might be identified, I will focus on anaesthetic figures of the suburban imaginary. The suburb figures as anaesthetic when it is imagined as numbing the capacity for emotional, affective, or aesthetic response through either a deprivation or an excess of the sensible (that which can be sensed or made sense of). Specifically, I will discuss representations of suburban spatialization as anaesthetic in a selection of visual artworks and theoretically-informed interpretive descriptions.

Andrew Porter, Deputy Director, B-Pro / Post-Professional Masters Programme, Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL

Andrew Porter is an award winning architect and Deputy Director of the Post-professional Masters programmes in Architecture at UCL.

ABSTRACT:

Suburbanstudio

Suburbanstudio is an award winning garden studio in a typical North London suburb. The project was winner of the New London Architecture 'Don't Move, Improve' Awards 2012 and was a finalist in the RIBA London Regional Awards. Designed by Ashton Porter Architects as their home office, the project was built by partner, Andrew Porter.

The project addresses 4 central themes:

1. New models of home working for the suburbs for the 21st century. The impact of information technology means that home working for a highly skilled professional demographic is now real possibility.
2. Increasing density of the suburbs whilst retaining key features, such as outdoor space. The suburbs are generally low density and if we are to make cities more sustainable increased densities are a necessity.
3. Innovative timber frame building with a unique cantilever and beam structures. The ground breaking structure was developed in collaboration with 'Apple store' engineers, Eckersley O'Callaghan.
4. Developing a new palette of materials that respond to the suburban context. Too much of the suburban landscape is dominated by a narrow and monotonous palette of materials.

The architect and builder, Andrew Porter, proposes a 20 minute presentation to talk about the conceptual, design and detail building processes of the project.

More info at: <http://www.ashtonporter.com/index.php?/resproj/suburbanstudio-london/>
<http://www.suburbanstudio.co.uk>

Deborah Stevenson, Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney (Parramatta)

Deborah Stevenson is Professor of Sociology and Urban Cultural Research in the Institute for Culture and Society at the University of Western Sydney, Australia. Her most recent research books include: *Cities of Culture: A Global Perspective*; *The City*; *The Ashgate Research Companion to Planning and Culture*; and *Cities and Urban Cultures*.

ABSTRACT:

Themes in the Conceptualization of Suburbia

Suburbia occupies a highly ambiguous position in conceptualizations of cities and urban cultures. It is regarded as a physical and discursive space located somewhere on the margins, set in a supposedly featureless imaginative landscape beyond the 'real' city but not yet in the country. Also important are frameworks that position the suburb as the city's 'other' and regard the city as the centre of creativity and diversity and the suburbs as banal and homogeneous. This paper traces some of the ways in which suburbia has been understood within urban studies and the popular imagination. It suggests that the explanatory power of many established conceptual frames are rupturing as a result of the demographic and spatial realities of the suburbs. In particular, the core-periphery (binary) model of the city and the suburbs has been rendered partial, and heterogeneity rather than homogeneity needs to be more firmly placed at the centre of examinations of suburbia. The paper concludes by arguing that as urban form changes and the distinctions between the city and the suburbs break down, it is time to move beyond stereotypes and constraining dichotomies and to engage with the spatial diversity and lived complexity that is contemporary suburbia.

Elizabeth Throesch, Associate Professor of English, Community College of Allegheny County

ABSTRACT:

What Can We Learn from Teaching the Suburbs? Some Findings

In this paper, I will present my findings from my first semester of teaching Suburban Studies to first-year undergraduates at a suburban, American college campus. This one version of a core course which is required of all students at my institution, and it is intended to serve as an introduction to research, composition, and critical thinking skills. I am designing it as a special topic course in suburban studies for two reasons. First, just as masculinity studies (another field in which I am interested) challenges us to examine the masculine subject as a construction, rather than as the default position to which femininity is the “other”, suburban studies can function as means to explore the normativization of modern American life in opposition to (racialized and sexualized) others. Second, I am particularly interested in working with first-year, suburban students in the field of suburban studies, as I think this experience will be particularly helpful in revealing what suburban studies has accomplished and where it needs to go.

My twenty-minute paper will address the questions raised from my first semester of teaching this course, which will run in Spring 2014. Additionally, I will share what I have learned about teaching cultural theory to non-specialist undergraduates. I am looking forward to the first run of this unique course, and to sharing what I have learned with my colleagues. Additionally, as I have experience in teaching at both British and American higher education institutions, I will be able to offer insight on ways this course could be adapted for undergraduates in the United Kingdom.

I have reproduced the course description below:

Through much of the 20th century, the “American Dream” was defined by life in the suburbs. However, in the 21st century, this ideal seems to be subject to revision. The first decade of this century has seen major American suburban areas become home to the country’s largest and fastest growing poor population. Television shows such as *Weeds*, *Desperate Housewives*, and *Suburgatory* have questioned the suburban utopian ideal. The band Arcade Fire even went as far as creating a themed album, *The Suburbs*, in 2010. Clearly, the suburbs are not just spaces occupied by many Americans; they are also spaces which occupy the imaginations of many Americans. In this course, we will explore the changing nature of the suburbs in the American imagination. We will examine a variety of texts, including short stories, popular film and television, music, sociological reports, and historical archives. Students will be encouraged to consider the role the suburbs have played in shaping the way Americans experience race, gender, the environment, and economics. In addition to assigned readings and discussions, students will develop research, composition, and analytical skills.

Catherine Turner, Drama Department, University of Exeter

Dr Cathy Turner is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Exeter. She is also a founder member of Wrights & Sites, whose artistic work relates to place and space. This paper represents part of her research into her forthcoming monograph, *Dramaturgy and Architecture* (Palgrave).

ABSTRACT:

The Garden City Pantomime, 1910: 'The inhabitants of that remote and fantastic town keep holiday...'

The garden suburb of Hellerau is famous for its theatre. Swiss musician and pedagogue Emil Jacques-Dalcroze took up residence there in 1910: Dalcroze's Eurythmic exercises were intended to develop both body and mind; in performance, they were revolutionary experiments in embodied musicality and were fundamental to the development of modern dance.

However, this paper remembers that Hellerau was inspired by the work of England's Ebenezer Howard and the example of the garden city at Letchworth. What, then, was happening with performance at Letchworth in 1910? In contrast to the radiant blankness of Adolphe Appia's groundbreaking scenography at Hellerau, we find that Letchworth sometimes represented itself and the lives of its residents on its amateur stages.

The paper looks at the 'Pantomime' of January 1910, which deliberately and gently mocks the ideals of the garden city and the relationships between classes and genders. The writer (and garden city pioneer and planner) C.B.Purdom commented that 'It was the excellent social feeling in the town which made them possible and enabled them to be treated as an enormous lark' (1913:136). I will consider the role of such performance in acknowledging and reflecting social tensions in the garden city, contrasting it with Hellerau.

Katie Williams, Director of the Centre for Sustainable Planning and Environments, UWE

Professor Williams is an urban theorist, planner and urban designer. She is Director of the Centre for Sustainable Planning and Environments, at the University of the West of England, Bristol. Katie specialises in sustainable urban environments, particularly sustainable urban form, land reuse, and neighbourhood design (in relation to sustainable behaviours and climate change adaptation). She has held over £4 million in research grants from UK research councils, EC, government agencies and industry. She is a Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 sub-panel member for Architecture, Built Environment and Planning.

ABSTRACT:

Re-visioning suburbs in response to agendas of resilience, climate change and sustainability

This paper presents insights from two large research projects that address how the physical fabric of suburbs might need to be adapted to facilitate sustainable lifestyles and become resilient to changes in climate. It sets out normative futures, derived from planning and urban design literature, and contrasts these with empirical findings from the studies, including evidence from stakeholders involved in shaping the physical fabric of suburban neighbourhoods in the UK (i.e. planners, residents, utility managers and so on). The paper argues that a rather specific, and largely uncontested, narrative is currently guiding built environment professionals in their actions to deliver sustainable cities. The model of compact, high density, highly accessible, culturally vibrant towns and cities is favoured over suburbs that are seen resource-rich and culturally 'bland': hence, the agenda to intensify urban areas. The research presented questions this model in terms of delivery and performance. It argues that wholly beneficial 'urban intensification' (as prescribed though 'compact city discourse') may be unachievable, and that, in any case, the model may need reviewing in the light of climate change. In the future, through sensitive evolution (of homes, gardens, and public space), suburbs may become vital elements of the solution to unsustainable cities, facilitating urban liveability.

Reference:

1. The Contribution of Sustainable Neighbourhood Design to Sustainable Lifestyles, part of CityForm (<http://www.city-form.ac.uk>); Suburban Neighbourhood Adaptation for a Changing Climate (SNACC). Both Funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council.

Timotheus Vermeulen, Radboud University, Nijmegen, NL

Timotheus Vermeulen is assistant professor in Cultural Theory at the University of Nijmegen, The Netherlands, where he also directs the Centre for New Aesthetics. He recently published the monograph *Scenes from the Suburbs: The Suburb in Contemporary US Film and Television* with EUP (2014) and is joint editor with Martin Dines of *New Suburban Stories*.

ABSTRACT:

Betty Knows Best: subversion in 1950s sitcoms

In the 1950s, as Americans en masse moved to the suburbs, popular culture moved with them: radio soap operas and family melodramas, youth films and domestic sitcoms all set up shop in the suburbs. Indeed, the correlation between the two is so strong that the word suburb for many evokes the imagery of *Leave it to Beaver*, whilst the films of Douglas Sirk have come to be the equivalent of suburban malaise. In this paper, I wish to take another look at one of these representations: the domestic sitcom *Father Knows Best*. Often presented as a showcase for white, middle-class suburbia, I argue that this sitcom allows for an alternate reading which spells out gender oppression, alienation and pre tense. Focusing on the episode 'Betty, Girl Engineer', I demonstrate that the show uses performance to undermine the narrative, in much the same way Sirkian melodrama employed *mise-en-scene* to subvert its story. As a result, the seemingly straightforward place of the sitcomic suburb is shown to be a surprisingly complex and layered space.

PLENARY PANEL:

Plenary Panel: New Partnerships in Suburban Studies (**Larry Levy**, National Center for Suburban Studies, Hofstra; **Robin Hutchinson**, The Community Brain; **Bridget Bennett**, Imagining the Place of Home, Leeds)

Lawrence Levy is the Executive Dean, National Center for Suburban Studies at Hofstra University®

During his 35 years as a reporter, editorial writer, columnist and PBS public affairs show host, Lawrence Levy won many of journalism's top awards, including Pulitzer Finalist, for in-depth works on suburban politics, education, taxation, housing and other key issues. As a journalist, he was known for his blending of national trends and local perspectives and has covered six presidential campaigns. In his leadership role at the NCSS, which he was invited to create in 2007, he has worked with Hofstra's academic communities to shape an innovative agenda for suburban study, including a new Sustainability Studies degree. He has forged research alliances with other academic institutions, including Columbia, Cornell, Boston College, Virginia Tech, New York University and others, as well as not-for-profit groups, businesses and government agencies and has promoted the importance of studying suburbs nationwide. Levy is a member of a Brookings Institution advisory panel and was a keynote speaker at Brookings 2008 Metro Policy Summit in Washington, DC. The NCSS has collaborated on a number of national and international scale conferences on various aspects of suburban life, from diversity and housing, to education and health care. The center also has participated in major consulting studies on sustainability, demographic change and education and health care challenges in suburbia. Before joining Hofstra, he was Senior Editorial Writer and Chief Political Columnist for Newsday, cohost of the PBS show Face-Off, and remains involved in the world of journalism and politics. Levy has been a guest contributor to BBC.com, CNN.com, Politico, Newsday, Citiwire and in 2008 covered the presidential campaign as a contributor to the New York Times.com Campaign Stops blog. (Most of these articles and some of the media appearances can be found at the NCSS website www.hofstra.edu/ncss) He appears regularly on local and national television. More recently, he has begun to co-author articles for academic publications, two of which are in peer review and editing. He is a graduate of Boston University's School of Communication, holding a BS in communications.

Robin Hutchinson has held a wide range of roles in the public, private and not for profit sectors and is currently a Trustee/Director of Kingston's Rose Theatre and Chair of the charity Creative Youth. An Honorary Doctorate from Kingston University for works in the arts and communities recognises the significant contribution he has made to supporting, developing and nurturing communities through engagement with the arts, education and heritage, not least as Director of the community interest company, The Community Brain.

Bridget Bennett is Professor of American Literature and Culture in the School of English, University of Leeds. She is currently working on a project of home and crisis in the United States from the colonial period to the twentieth century. Her most recent article is "The Crisis of Restoration: Mary Rowlandson's Lost Home" Early American Literature 49.2 Summer 2014. She is the PI on an AHRC Network, "Home, Crisis and the Imagination" <https://www.facebook.com/homecrisisandtheimaginationnetwork?ref=hl> and was previously the PI on an AHRC project, "Imagining the Place of Home"

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/imagininghome>