



IRS SEMINAR

Mike Raco

Bartlett School of Planning, University College London

Mike Raco graduated from Royal Holloway University of London in 1994 with a B.A. Geography. He then completed a Ph.D. in the same department in 1997 on the topic of 'Business Associations and the Politics of Local Economic Development in the UK'. Then he took up lectureships at the Universities of Glasgow (1997-2000), Reading (2000-2005), and King's College London (2005-2011), before taking up his current Chair in the Bartlett School of Planning in August 2011. His writing is mainly on urban regeneration, especially regarding the position of big events. Recently he published on the temporalities of planning as well as on the policisation of Diversity and the politics of intersectionality.



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Friday, 16 November 2018

14:00–16:00, Conference Room

Center for Metropolitan Studies

at TU Berlin

Hardenbergstraße 16–18, 10623 Berlin

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Neither Anywhere nor Somewhere – Local Social Imaginaries and the Politics of Diversity in London

There is a growing sense of urgency to public policy discussions over diversity and migration in western countries. Commentators have been queueing-up to provide broad-brush explanations for the rise of Brexit Britain, the dangers posed by Europe's 'migration crisis', and Trump's election victory. David Goodhardt's (2018) book *The Road to Somewhere* has become particularly influential with its imaginations of societies divided between 'somewheres', who are rooted in places and hostile to globalisation and migration, and 'anywheres', economic and social elites whose members are outward-looking and tolerant and have benefited from globalisation and economic growth. However, the danger of such sweeping approaches is their tendency to look for 'big' explanations of change, whilst downplaying the importance of everyday experiences and the effects of public policy choices in shaping social experiences of encounter and interaction. Drawing on an EU-funded 4-year research project in diverse neighbourhoods in London this presentation argues that if we really want to understand broader questions of integration and public perspectives on the presence of migrants and diversity, then it is to the experiences and understandings generated at the local level that we need to turn our attention. Building on the work of Taylor (2003) and Vertovec (2012) the presentation introduces the term *Local Social Imaginaries* as a conceptual and empirical framework to describe and explain processes of contemporary integration. It examines the conditions that underpin the articulation of these imaginaries, how they come into being in specific geographical contexts, and how they are produced and with what effects. It argues that imaginaries are continually (re)shaped by reflexive subjects through processes of interaction, engagement and encounter in place and can take on a variety of forms, ranging from enhanced mutual understanding and collective social imaginaries to hostility and reinforced senses of 'otherness' and distrust. It makes direct connections between the conditions of encounter(s) that are being created in cities by waves of neo-liberal austerity and rapid urban development.