



**Invitation
to the 6th IRS International Lecture
on Society and Space**

The Politics of Pollution and the Crisis of Automobility in the 1970s

Simon Gunn

Abstract

This lecture explores the politics of urban automobility in Britain and internationally in the 1970s, and the wider disillusion with modernist planning that it embodied. I shall track, firstly, the staccato development of concern about the role of automobiles in promoting lead and other dangerous types of pollution from the 1950s and its relationship to the growing perception of the private car as a public menace. By the early 1970s, disquiet about pollution of many kinds – noise, visual, chemical – contributed to active protest against roads and cars in cities in Britain and across the West, involving a rainbow coalition of groups: residents associations, squatters, women’s groups and environmental activists. This mounting opposition to the idea of ‘automotive cities’, I shall argue, precipitated the resurgence of a micro-politics of local democracy which escalated into a full-blown crisis following the oil hike of 1973. In the process, local activism fused with an international politics which brought mass automobility and the whole project of urban modernism into question.

Discussant: Prof. Dr. Hans-Liudger Dienel (TU Berlin)



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25 June 2015
4.00 pm – 6.00 pm
IRS, Erkner



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Simon Gunn

Vita

Professor Simon Gunn is an Urban Social Historian of the 19th and 20th century city with a major focus on the cities of Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham. He has been a Professor of Urban History at the University of Leicester since 2006 after many years at Leeds Metropolitan, where he was Reader in History. He obtained his doctorate in Modern History at the University of Manchester (1992) having been a Fellow of the Institute of Historical Research, University of London in 1985-86. Professor Simon Gunn is co-editor of the Cambridge University Press journal Urban History.

We kindly ask all participants to register [here](#). Thank you very much.



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