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INAUGURAL STEERING GROUP MEETING

Working Group on Public Space and Diversity: Inaugural Steering Group Meeting

Berlin, May 22-23 2012

- by invitation only -

This two-day event will inaugurate a three-year working group on Public Space and Diversity. This working group is concerned with the physical manifestation, cultural expression, personal experience and socio-political regulation of diversity in the city. Recognising that public space has long played a prominent role in mediating social and cultural differences, this group is particularly concerned with the new types of public space that are emerging in highly diverse urban contexts and what these places tell us about broader patterns of social and political change.

The event will bring together a small selection of invited scholars who are working on these issues in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and Latin America to help us define the contours of this emerging field and debate the prospects for innovative research collaborations. The first day will be devoted to the discussion of a series of prepared statements on the state of the field and participants will help us identify key lines of inter-disciplinary debate and exchange. The second day will be devoted to the discussion of core working group projects and plans for the remaining years.

While this group is in its early stages of development, we have already identified some key ways in which we hope to contribute to the discussion on contemporary public space. First, we aim to develop a cross-disciplinary conversation between *socio-cultural* analyses which commonly emphasise interaction, conviviality and community with *political and economic* analyses that emphasize resource inequalities, lack of representation,



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segregation, social distancing, conflict and control. Second, we hope to expand the geographical focus of the literature, drawing on the detailed and nuanced debates on public space in the Global North, to forge new pathways in less studied but rapidly growing cities in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Third, we propose to develop a more integrated and powerful framework for thinking about as well as planning public space. This event will help to add detail to this overarching research agenda while helping to identify a broader community of scholarship to draw into the working group's agenda.

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