

Call for Papers: RGS-IBG International Conference, London, August 26-29 2014

Session Title: Where Culture Meets Economy: Co-Producing Conceptual Understandings of Curation

Session Conveners:

Brian J. Hraacs, Uppsala University
Priya Vadi, Royal Holloway, University of London
Harriet Hawkins, Royal Holloway, University of London

The concept of curation is attracting increasing levels of interest and engagement from scholars across geography. As the motivations, practices, materialities, spatial dynamics and outcomes of curation encompass the cultural and economic, research is being conducted from a range of perspectives.

Cultural and historical geographers have studied exhibitionary geographies (Hill 2006), explored the curation of art movements, and have recently taken up curatorial practice as part of their research practice. This has seen geographers curating objects, art works, visual culture, documents and digital media in the exploration of disciplinary histories, environmental knowledge and the imaginaries of places, landscapes and peoples (Alfry and Daniels, 2006; De Silvey, 2005; Driver, 2013; Gandy, 2012; Tolia-Kelly, 2012; Yusoff, 2009). If traditionally curation has been associated with spaces of the museum and the gallery, throughout the twentieth century curatorial practices accompanied art works and exhibitions in their move beyond the walls of the museum. With this re-location curation come to concern not just objects but the configuration of experiences of urban space, and of landscapes and the environment, and even as a force in the creation of communities (Cant and Morris, 2006; McNally, forthcoming; Miles, 2009; Rugg, 2012; Warren, 2012; Zebracki, 2012).

For economic geographers, engagement with the processes and spatial dynamics of curation is relatively more recent and has focused on cultural industries such as music, fashion, video games and media where declining entry barriers and digital technologies intensify competition and choice. As global firms and independent producers struggle to 'stand out in the crowd' and consumers become overwhelmed with information and alternative products, co-producers, tastemakers and selectors are more common and important than ever (Foster et al. 2011; Hraacs et al. 2013). Beyond mere buying advice, these curators (institutions, algorithms, paid professionals or amateurs) offer valuable knowledge about how to evaluate, understand, use and select specific products and experiences. Emerging research has focussed on a range of spaces and actors including clerks at record shops and fashion boutiques, events such as festivals and trade shows and digitally mediated actors and spaces such as blogs, social media and algorithms.

To date, however, few attempts have been made to share and integrate these complementary approaches. Therefore, in this session, and in keeping with the conference theme, we look to draw together scholars from across geography to co-produce a more nuanced understanding of curation. We seek contributions from individuals who apply diverse theoretical and methodological approaches to curation and explore the following and related issues:

- The spatialities of curation: within and beyond the gallery and museum, on the streets, but also in shops, homes, in hotels and airports, on websites, and in urban

neighbourhoods as well as encompassing temporary spaces such as mega-events, whether associated with the art world or not.

- The different kinds of value(s) - economic, symbolic, cultural, social etc. - that curators generate
- The materialities and immaterialities of curation: what is being curated by who and how?
- What is being curated (objects, products, art forms?) and for what purpose? (economic, cultural, historical, urban planning etc.).
- The scales of curation: from individual products or art works to entire cultural quarters and city-scapes
- The relationship between curation and experience
- Curation as a skilled and 'vernacular' creative practice
- Curation as aesthetic practice/conceptual practice
- The operations of curation: display, taxonomy, order, discipline, critical spatial practice
- The curation of atmospheres
- Ongoing discussions concerning culture-economy
- The critical interrogation of culture and economy
- In a world where everybody can be a curator who or what legitimises the role of the curator
- How does curation, as a form of cultural intermediation, function as a career? How is it rewarded (economic, social and cultural capital)? how viable is it as a source of full-time employment?
- What are the pressures of attracting and maintaining attention as a curator? what is the impact of new markets and technologies (web 2.0) on cultural-economic practices of curation.
- How has the process of curation changed over time?

Please send abstracts of no more than 250 words to Priya Vadi (priya.vadi.2011@live.rhul.ac.uk)

by 14th February 2014