

2013 Seminar Series

University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life



INSTITUTE FOR CULTURE AND SOCIETY

DATE

Thursday 7 March

TIME

2:00pm–4:30pm

VENUE

Room EB.3.33
Building EB

UWS Parramatta campus
Cnr James Ruse Drive &
Victoria Road, Rydalmere

RSVP

ics@uws.edu.au

INFO

www.uws.edu.au/ics

BOB HODGE ICS/UWS

The Hydra paradox: global disaster management in a world of crises

ABSTRACT

This paper describes an on-going interdisciplinary, international project focused on disasters. This theme is surprisingly under-researched and under-theorised by cultural studies researchers, given the huge impact disasters are having on the planet and its modes of governance, and the connections that can be made with such big issues as globalization, sustainability and climate change. The exposition starts from a new look at the ancient myth of Hydra, still used to capture the intractability of global crises and problems. Hydra represented hyper-complexity and exponential growth, qualities that characterize global problems today. Less obviously, it also presented a fantasy solution which dominant groups have found irresistibly seductive for millennia. The paper explores the dynamics of global crises in the sphere of disasters and their management, against a backdrop of multiple crises that are seen as defining the current condition of globalization, driven by an ongoing dialectic between forces from 'above' and 'below'. The paper draws on forms of chaos theory, treating disasters and their management as a key site in which to examine intersections of crisis and chaos in global processes, colliding with destructive natural events and forces which are still outside dominant systems of control. The team involved in this research includes, from ICS, Professor James Arvanitakis, Dr Gabriela Coronado and Dr Juan Salazar; from UWS School of Management, Dr Greg Teal; from CSU, Dr Val Ingham; and from Mexico, some leading international disaster researchers Professors Teresa Carbo, Virginia Garcia, and Drs Joel Audefroy and Jesus-Manuel Macias.

BIO

Bob Hodge is Research Professor in the Humanities at the Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney, Australia. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities who has researched and published widely in social and cultural research, applying theories of chaos and complexity. His most recent books are *Chaos theory and the larrikin principle* Liber, Copenhagen, 2010 (with Coronado, Duarte and Teal) and *Mexico and its others: a chaos approach* Legas, Ottawa, 2012 (with Coronado).

MICHELE LANCIONE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

Postcards from the city of the homeless subjects

ABSTRACT

The presentation will begin showing some of the materials collected during a ten months ethnographic fieldwork with homeless people in Turin, Italy. These materials will be presented in forms of interconnected stills, or postcards, picturing the relational entanglements that take place between homeless people and the city. The main aim of the presentation is indeed to blur the canonical distinction between the subject and the city: homeless people are neither only subjects who performs the city (as the "performative" scholarships claim), nor only subjected to the policies of the city (as the "punitive approach" tells), but they constitute their complex and heterogeneous subjectivities with the wider urban environment to which they relate. Engaging with the work of Deleuze and Guattari as well as with critical assemblages thinking, the notion of subjectivity adopted in the research will be sketched and the meaning of the postcards unfolded. In this sense, and through the help of more ethnographic materials, three key-points will be highlighted. First, the role of urban objects in affecting homeless people projects and desires. Second, the role of normative policies in creating negative affective atmosphere for homeless people. Third, the importance of recognizing homeless people own capabilities. The research implications and the political consequences of the proposed approached will be sketched in the final phase of the presentation.

BIO

Michele Lancione is a Post-Doctoral Fellow in CMOS (Centre for Management & Organization Studies), UTS, where he investigates the Frank Gehry's designed Dr Chau Chak Wing Building (unfolding its rationales and wider urban impact). During his Ph.D. in Human Geography (Durham University, UK) he spent ten months on an ethnographic fieldwork with homeless people in Turin, Italy, which resulted also in the publication of a novel ("Il Numero 1", Eris Edizioni 2011). His interests include urban space, issues of marginality and diversity, and post-structuralism. (www.michelelancione.eu)