

Drama, Theatre and Performance Research Group Event

Thursday 13th February 2020

Time: 17.30h – 18.30h

Location: Bathway Theatre, University of Greenwich, SE18 6QX

A spatial analysis of culture and urban development: some preliminary findings on the rebranding of Woolwich town centre

Speaker: Dr Peter Vlachos, Principal Lecturer, Department of Marketing, Events, and Tourism, University of Greenwich

The district of Woolwich, in south-east London, has undergone significant changes in its urban fabric in recent years. Previously a largely working-class area with strong connections to the military, Woolwich is now in the process of being rebranded as a more affluent riverside community.

However, Woolwich has not followed the typical path of 'culture-led' urban development. On the contrary, until now, urban development in Woolwich has been fuelled primarily by improvements in public transportation and the unusual availability of a considerable amount riverside land for higher-value residential housing construction. Substantial investment is being made for a new creative district, in contrast to apparent underinvestment in local cultural production previously. Questions thus arise in relation to gentrification and social exclusion on the one hand, and the effects of cultural policy on local vs 'imported' cultural producers and providers on the other.

Adopting a psycho-geographic inspired approach, the paper proposes a simultaneous consumption of cultural experience and urban space. The presentation will draw on both historic and contemporary perspectives to analyse the evolving context of cultural production and consumption in Woolwich, and their impacts of place identity and place branding. Comparisons will be made with developments across the Thames river in nearby east London.

Keywords: cultural mapping; creative industries; place branding; urban revitalisation; psychogeography

About the speaker:

Peter Vlachos is Principal Lecturer in the Department of Marketing, Events, and Tourism. His research examines locational behaviours of creative and cultural workers and firms, and the relationship between cultural production and consumption and the (re)-branding of urban space. He is a fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts and of the Institute of Place Management.