

Workshop



# Writing the city [into the urban]

3 - 4 May 2018

Workshop  
organized by  
**Pushpa Arabindoo**  
(2017-2018 Paris  
IAS fellow), with  
the support of UCL  
Urban Laboratory

**3 MAY**  
Writers Dialogue

**Sarah BUTLER** (writer/  
novelist - Manchester),  
**Nicolas MAISETTI**  
(LATTS - Paris) and  
**Diran ADEBAYO** (writer/  
novelist - London)

**4 MAY**  
Keynote Speech

**Christian SCHMID** (ETH  
Zurich)

Eastern Departures

**Michele LANCIONE**  
(University of Sheffield)  
and **Martin MULLER**  
(IMÉRA)

Asian  
'Exceptionalism'

**Pushpa ARABINDOO**  
(IEA Paris) and  
**Anna DEWAELE** (École  
d'Urbanisme de Paris)

Learning from  
Latin America

**Monika STREULE** (ETH  
Zurich) and **Alejandro  
DE COSS CORZO** (LSE  
London)

African  
Reflections

**Jenny ROBINSON**  
(UCL) and **Philippe  
GERVAIS-LAMBONY**  
(Université Paris Nanterre)



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In the aftermath of the May 1968 uprising in Paris, Henri Lefebvre published in 1970 his classic treatise *La Révolution Urbaine* where he pointedly placed the urban in the centre of this revolution, identifying a theoretical need for the concept of the urban as a planetary possibility, one he considered more appropriate than a redundant notion of the city as a social scientific object. With its English translation in 2003 there has been a renewed interest in his hypothesis of the planetarisation of the urban, triggering a contested debate of planetary urbanisation where the continued relevance of the city has become a moot point. As the resulting city/urban dialectical tension has led to a gratuitous intellectual standoff, there is an urgent need to clear the impasse and seek more fruitful modes of engagement.

This workshop is a step in this direction where, coming 50 years after the backlash of '68, this event aims to establish a conversation between the city and the urban by drawing on the notion of 'ethnographic theorisation' where the theoretical potential of the urban can be harnessed from ethnographic insights of the city. It explores contingent ways in which the city can be written into the urban through manoeuvres that engage with the process of writing the city across disciplines from literary cultures to urban studies. The workshop is thus conceived in two parts: an evening where writers specialising in the 'urban novel' are in dialogue with academics to deliberate on two related writing frames of thinking the urban through the city – provincialism and cosmopolitanism, followed by a full-day workshop where academics reflect on regional city writing practices and what it means for a global urban theory building exercise.

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## Thursday, May 3rd

### 17:00 - 19:00 WRITERS DIALOGUE

#### **WRITING THE PROVINCIAL NOVEL**

**Sarah Butler**, Manchester-based writer/novelist in conversation with **Nicolas Maisetti**, LATTs Paris

#### **WRITING THE COSMOPOLITAN NOVEL**

**Diran Adebayo**, London-based writer/novelist in conversation with tbc

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## Friday, May 4th

### [RE]WRITING THE PROVINCE | [RE]WRITING THROUGH SPECIFICITY | [RE]WRITING A LINGUA-FRANCA

9h30 - 9h40 **INTRODUCTION**

9h40 - 11h00 **SPECIFICITY AND PLANETARY URBANISATION**

**Christian Schmid**, ETH Zurich

11h00 - 11h20 **Break**

11h20 - 13h00 **EASTERN DEPARTURES**

**ENGAGING BUCHAREST. CRAFTING COMMITTED ETHNO-GRAPHY AT THE URBAN MARGINS**

**Michele Lancione**, University of Sheffield

**IMPROVISING EKATERINBURG: THEORISING THE URBAN FROM THE GLOBAL EAST**

**Martin Muller**, IMÉRA

13h00 - 14h00 **Lunch Break**

14h00 - 15h20 **ASIAN 'EXCEPTIONALISM'**

**WRITING CHENNAI AS AN URBAN BIOGRAPHY**

**Pushpa Arabindoo**, Paris IAS

**WRITING KOLKATA BEYOND COMPARISON: PROVINCIAL NARRATIVES FROM THE URBAN FOUNDATIONS OF A CITY**

**Anna Dewaele**, École d'Urbanisme de Paris

15h20 - 15h40 **Break**

15h40 - 17h10 **LEARNING FROM LATIN AMERICA**

**URBAN TERRITORIES OF MEXICO CITY. ETHNOGRAPHIC WRITING AND POSITIONALITY IN TRANSLATION**

**Monika Streule**, ETH Zurich

**WRITING MEXICO CITY FROM THE LEAK SITE: TOWARDS A PATCHWORK THEORISATION OF THE URBAN QUESTION**

**Alejandro De Coss Corzo**, LSE London

17h10 - 18h30 **AFRICAN REFLECTIONS**

**Jenny Robinson**, UCL

**Philippe Gervais-Lambony**, Université Paris Nanterre