

Call for Proposals for a session to be held at the Annual Conference of the Royal Geographical Society, London, 26 to 29 August 2014

Geographies of making: the jazz of participatory fabrication, improvisation and hackerspaces

The Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century introduced the world to mass production and to Fordist production flows. In the late twentieth century, phenomena such as jet travel, the internet, and outsourcing prompted some pundits (eg, Friedman, 2005) to propose metaphors of a flattened world, with concomitant implications on space, geography and the (supposed) death of distance.

As our present century unfolds, technologies and socio-cultural phenomena such as the internet of things, crowd-sourcing, digital fabrication, and wearable computing are not only democratizing the potentialities of participatory design, prototyping and production, but are also becoming increasingly enmeshed with – and breathing new life into – ways of making more associated with cottage industries than with how production has been studied and understood for at least the past hundred years.

As circuits mashup with woodcraft and beadwork, as the clothes we wear identify themselves with their own unique digital signatures, and as interest-groups carve out fabricative spaces of their own across major urban centres worldwide, what might the implications to all we have studied and known about the geographies of industrialization, of industrial location, of urbanization, of regional divides be? What might some of the narratives be behind the emergence of maker cultures and hackerspaces in urban areas from Washington DC to Hong Kong?

This session proposes to tell some of these stories, and to start conversations around such implications. Papers and works-in-progress are invited, around topics and themes such as the following:

- emerging geographies of maker culture and / or hackerspaces
- personal fabrication, participatory fabrication, digital fabrication and / or 3D printing
- the implications of open-source hardware, such as Arduino and Raspberry Pi, on existing geographical flows of design and production
- recasting regional divides and inequalities with respect to the potential democratizing perturbations of participatory fabrication
- craft, woodwork, weaving and apprenticeships in the early twenty-first century

Session organizer:

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Presenters are kindly invited to submit their proposals to the session organizer by the 20th of January 2014. Proposals should minimally comprise the title of the paper, an abstract (of up to 150 words), and full contact details.