

CHASE Network Development Fund

The Network for Research on Home

Summary of the event

The aim of this initiative was to bring together academics from Birkbeck and Essex University with an interest in research on the concept and discourses of home, in order to start a dialogue and discuss possible synergies and future projects. Funds were sought from the CHASE Network Development Fund to enable a group of interested academics from Birkbeck to attend the two-day symposium ‘Thinking Home’, hosted by Essex University on 10-11 July 2015. The first day of the symposium featured invited speakers from a range of disciplines who provided a range of complementary perspectives on ‘home’. The speakers were Professor Renos Papadopoulos (Essex University, psychoanalytic studies), Professor Nigel Rapport (St Andrews, sociology), Professor Lorna Fox O’Mahony (Essex, law), Dr Amy Morris (Cambridge University, literature studies), Professor Anna de Fina (Georgetown University, linguistics), and Professor Jeanine Treffers-Daller¹ (Reading University, linguistics). The programme on the second day included presentations about resources and materials relevant to the theme of the project, given by Fran Baker (John Rylands Library, University of Manchester), Nigel Cochrane (Albert Sloman Library, Essex), Dr Zibiah Alfred Loakthar (Refugee Oral History collection, The Museum of London), and Dr Rosie Cox (Birkbeck), who presented the Bloomsbury HOME book series. Talks were also given by representatives of three organisations working with prisoners, the homeless, and vulnerable children, respectively: Shelter (Shannon Harvey, Head of Research, Shelter England), Safe Ground (Charlotte Weinberg, Executive Director, and Obinna Nwosu, Fundraising and Communications Director), and the Kids Company. This was followed by a short play on the theme of homelessness, written and staged by Theatre and Human Rights students from Essex University.

Following this rich and extraordinarily inspiring programme, the symposium closed with a lively roundtable discussion of academics from Essex and Birkbeck as well as the invited speakers, which focused on the themes raised during the symposium and the possibilities for collaboration in the future. Possible further steps include an edited volume on ‘home’, with interdisciplinary academic contributions as well as policy and practice-oriented contributions, joint project proposals, and joint activities bringing together academics from Birkbeck, Essex, and other universities as well as interested grassroots organisations.

This initial meeting confirmed that ‘home’ is a research theme with great potential for interdisciplinary research and practice-oriented collaboration. This was attested by the wide range of disciplinary backgrounds of the colleagues attending the event, which included four departments from Essex University (Language and Linguistics; Law; Literature, Film and

¹ Professor Treffers-Daller was unfortunately unable to attend due to illness; however, her paper was kindly delivered by Professor Monika Schmidt from Essex University.

Theatre Studies; Psychoanalytical Studies) and six departments from Birkbeck (Applied Linguistics and Communication; Geography, Environment and Development Studies; History, Classics and Archeology; School of Law; Cultures and Languages; Psychosocial Studies) as well as a number of other colleagues from both universities who expressed an interest in joining the Network for Research on Home in the future.

Please contact Dr Bojana Petrić b.petric@bbk.ac.uk to find out more about the network.