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MAIN MENU



Our house, in the middle of our street

29th September 2009

Written by:



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Tagged with: EDUCATION

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Despite hearing that Mercury's current orbit is disrupting our ability to communicate at the present time, I rather fortuitously learned last night that a BBC Radio 4 series has just started looking into the history of private life. I wish I could claim that this coincidence, in terms of content, with my initial blog posting for Connected Communities was all exquisitely planned but the truth is far less strategic on my part.

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The 30 programmes-strong series, which started yesterday, looks at the hidden history of the home over the past 400 years. While a primary reaction might be that this will be of little relevance to us in Connected Communities, on closer inspection a number of interesting ties emerge. In the [half hour discussion used to launch the programme](#), then, Professor Amanda Vickery argues that "households are the founding social and spiritual unit of society in the early modern period" and that they are the platform for our engagement with the public

world. Through her socio-historical analysis of first-hand accounts from letters and diaries, then, we hear that over time distinctions between the private and public spheres have been far from stable.

Moving to the present, anthropologist [Dr Daniel Miller](#) points out the role of media in moderating this relationship between public and private. Specifically, he emphasises the ways that Web 2.0 platforms can expose the intimacies of the private domain to the public, even to strangers. For him, privacy is changing – as a result of the proliferation of new media – in ways that we’ll struggle to keep up with. But at the same time, this ‘privacy’ is being increasingly publicised.

The overarching theme, then, is that relations in the home might not be so much distinct from those taking place out in public, but rather that the former are a microcosm of the latter – interactions in the home are connected with the public world, and vice-versa. Fascinating stuff, and it might just stop me from tuning-in to Five Live for football results every morning!

As a small postscript, I also noted today that forty-five local authorities have approached the national housing and regeneration agency (the Homes and Communities Agency, HCA) to express interest in putting their land into its [new programme for building homes on publicly-owned land](#). While the need for new homes in the UK is great, this rather stark transformation of public into private land (regardless of the grey areas) may have serious implications for our health. This is particularly true if the public land being earmarked is green or ‘natural,’ as I read with interest in [Jonah Lehrer’s article](#) earlier today, or if it could be planted to be so. As we look to provide housing for our growing populations, then, shouldn’t we also be looking to provide the green infrastructure to mitigate the psychological damage of built-up environments? How can this be achieved in the communities in which our project is going to work? I think it’s time for me to look back at the RSA’s long-record of [tree-planting](#) for some of these answers...

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The Bat House Competition

21st November 2007

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ARTS AND SOCIETY ENVIRONMENT

Last night at the RIBA (the Royal Institute of British Architects) the prizes were awarded to the winning entrants of the Bat House Competition and you can see the winning entries on display at the RIBA until the 24th of ...

Private interests, public sphere: learning from the street

25th September 2009

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COMMUNITIES EDUCATION

My name’s Alasdair Jones, and, alongside my colleague Jonathan Rowson, I’m one of the two new researchers on the RSA’s Connected Communities programme.

Live street art/activism all day today @ Southbank

18th July 2009

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EDUCATION

Today. MA mixture of street art/music/activism laid on by Ctrl.Alt.Shift. From 10am onwards, outside the Queen Elizabeth Hall (QEH), street artists go head to head in an open-air competition. At 16.00 the ten finished pieces ...

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