

Call for Papers

**Topographies of Britain**

Annual Conference of the German Society for the Study of British Cultures

November 22-24, 2012

Centre of Competence Cultural Topographies  
English Department  
University of Basel

The aim of the conference is to explore the interaction between identity and space in Britain. In line with recent exciting developments in spatial studies, we are committed to the study of cultural topographies, asking how spaces and places are constructed, represented, performed and contested. In order to understand the intricate relationship between material reality and discourse in the construction of our living environment, the study of British culture needs to be informed by a “geographical sensibility”.<sup>1</sup> We envisage the following three strands of inquiry: Politics and the Lie of the Land (section one), Landscape and Culture (section two) and Practices of Space (section three).

In section one, we want to look at how Britain has developed as a political entity and how devolution and membership of the European Union have changed the political topography of Britain. We will explore how Britain’s geographical location shapes its identity and how this relates to the internal differences. This includes issues of planning, development, modernisation and globalisation.

Section two will focus on landscape and culture. We will address such issues as the relationship between archetypal landscapes and regional as well as national identity, the North/South divide, the tension between ‘the country and the city’, the role of suburbia or the relationship between preservationism and the discourses of modernity.

In section three we will emphasize cultural practices of space and look at both how people shape their living environments and how they are shaped by them. A wide range of practices can be discussed here, such as tourism, commuting, gardening, ecological activism, rambling or psychogeography.

Subjects addressed may include, but are not limited to: Devolution, Political Representation, Regionalism, Britain and Europe, Globalisation, development and planning, urban development, Suburbia, postindustrial society, archetypal landscapes, ruralism, preservationism, ecology and the Organic Movement, Garden Cities, National Trust/English Heritage, The Twentieth Century Society, tourism and travel, commuting and migration, architecture, (landscape) gardening, Land Art,

Psychogeography, literature and film, exhibitions, topographies of gender, class, race or age, religious sites and observances, networks and topologies.

Given the interdisciplinary framework of the conference, we encourage proposals from many different fields, including literary, cultural and film studies, (cultural) geography, history, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, history of art, gender studies etc. While the emphasis is on contemporary developments, we also welcome proposals with a historical focus.

<sup>1</sup> Gilbert, David, David Matless and Brian Short (eds.), *Geographies of British Modernity. Space and Society in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford: Blackwell 2003, 250.

### **Keynote Speakers (confirmed)**

**Gordon MacLeod** (U of Durham) / **Martin Jones** (U of Aberystwyth)

**David Matless** (U of Nottingham)

**Sarah Whatmore** (U of Oxford)

We invite suggestions for 20-minute papers. Please send abstracts of 300 words (including a short biographical note) by **13 April 2012** to [britcult@unibas.ch](mailto:britcult@unibas.ch).

**Conference website:** <http://britcult2012.unibas.ch> (under construction)

**Organizers:** Ina Habermann ([ina.habermann@unibas.ch](mailto:ina.habermann@unibas.ch)); Sabina Horber ([Sabina.horber@unibas.ch](mailto:Sabina.horber@unibas.ch)), Centre of Competence Cultural Topographies / Department of English, University of Basel, Nadelberg 6, CH-4051 Basel

