

3. Alterity in the Developing Urban Subject

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Session Format: Workshop

The field of Alterity Studies is still undertheorized. In the 21st century, eruptions of urban violence and unrest point to changes in the formation of urban identities that may indicate an internalization of social standing as “outside” of standard citizenship and the denial of access to the fruits of social participation. At the same time, an increasing professionalization of social sciences, and its attendant emphasis on quantification, can impoverish the tools of social scientists with respect to theory-building. The work of many theorists such as Guyatri Spivak, Isaac Reed, Pierre Bourdieu, Jeffrey Nealon, Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida, and Immanuel Levinas speaks about the importance of understanding the other in an interdisciplinary way while maintaining focus on the pressing day-to-day privations experienced as a result of urban othering.

From whose perspective does alterity manifest? What is the relation between alterity and power? Is alterity a class, race, regional, psychological, discursive, or other type of phenomenon? In what ways do the evolving conditions in urban areas fuel the development of alterity as a constitutive feature of intersubjective dynamics? This session aims to analyse alterity as a subjective position and asks whether alterity as such can be taken as a constitutive feature of social identity.