

Introduction  
The Personal is Political Revisited: Investigating Notions of Place and Space  
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Good morning and on behalf of the the School of the Arts I would like to welcome everyone to the University of Northampton and to our post-graduate led event The Personal is Political Revisited: Investigating Notions of Place and Space.

While the phrase around which we have titled this event, that is 'the personal is political', is most often associated with the second-wave feminist movement due to its inclusion in the feminist anthology *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation in 1970*, political considerations of space have of course existed across space and time. It is these broader notions of spatial politics that we are interested in examining today.

We are reminded by Carol Hanish in her most recent introduction to the essay 'The Personal is Political' a title in fact accord to her work by the editors Shulie Firestone and Anne Koedt that her use of 'political' does not refer narrowly to electoral politics. It is instead a term that signifies power relationships. It is, therefore, also the avenue through which these power relationships can be dismantled. Similarly, Doreen Massey explains that because "social relations are bearers of power what is at issue [in the study of space] is a geography of power relations in which spatial form is an important element in the construction of power itself." (1992: 22)

Several events in the past year have brought the political implications of space and the built environment to the forefront of international debate. Perhaps the most global of these events is the Occupy Movement, in which individuals used their bodies to physically reclaim space in order to protest the systemic economic and social inequalities of the Capitalist system. This movement created individual physical communities that were united as a broader ideological community. These communities, most of which have now been cleared out after public attention and media interest waned, were spatial representations of a global demand for a more equitable society.

More recently, the feminist art collective Pussy Riot have garnered international attention after their protest prayer in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour landed three of their members in prison under a two year sentence. This event was preceded by other performances that saw the group make use of public space – on top of scaffolding above the metro, on top of buses, in Red Square – to voice concerns about women's secondary status under Putin's government. Their protests interrogate the definition sacred space, public space, and legal space and call attention to their hierarchies implicit in their construction. Although three member remain incarcerated, the group's use of digital video has allowed their polemics to transcend the physical barriers that restrain them personally.

Last month in Britain, the politicization of domestic space attended a very literal incarnation when squatting – that is, occupying the space in a building without permission – became a criminal offence in residential buildings. This change in legislation has attracted a surprising amount of attention for a civil law, and in doing so has provoked national discussion of the legal occupation of domestic space and the privileges accorded to those who own property.

In today's headlines alone there are dozens examples of collective and individual actions that demonstrate the ways in which power relations are spatially manifested. To even refer to them all would take all day; instead, I'm very happy to disperse the discussion of political and space to everyone in this room.

We're delighted that our programme today nearly rivals the international representation of last season's Olympic games; we have speakers here today from India, Serbia, Germany, The Netherlands, America, Australia, Romania, and Britain. While in using 'symposium' to describe the day's events we have chosen an a term with equally antiquarian origins to the Olympiad, we have done so in an effort to emphasise thoughtful discussion and inclusive debate and avoid competition. We have also designed today's programme with the intention of promoting discussions of politicized space across the disciplines in both theory and practice. We are pleased to welcome historians, sociologists, architectural historians, literary scholars, film scholars, artists, economists as well as those who occupy several disciplines at once. We are excited about the generative possibility that will be presented by sharing our research together today.

In order to make space, as it were, for constructive and extended discussion we have integrated a Round Table session into the programme at the end of the day. Anna Sloan's examination of 1950s Hollywood Melodrama will provide a starting point for our consideration of broader themes and concerns hat relate to and unite all of our research.

There will be coffee breaks throughout the day, and lunch served in the adjacent room at 1.00pm. The nearest washrooms are located on this floor, turning right out of this room, and down the corridor to the left. The nearest fire exit, which we will hopefully not need, is the door through which you entered.

Finally, I would just like to thank everyone for their attendance and participation today; I'm sure we're all looking forward to hearing and discussing a topic that is personal to all of us.

Thank you.