

***Lively Temporalities: A Postgraduate Workshop***  
on *Interdependence Day*  
Royal Geographical Society, London  
11.00am, Saturday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006

The Open University



### **Opening Remarks: Matthew Kurtz**

What's the impetus for the temporality theme? It arises because in geography, we seem to be fairly self-conscious about the representations and theorizations of *space* that we use. On the other hand, theorizations of *time* and temporality seem to be given a little less thought. Sometimes in historical geography, where I do a lot of my work, narratives can be laid out as if they were following a train schedule, as if steady, homogeneous time is assumed to be the bedrock on which our geographies is best built. If that is the case, there then seems to be little question about what kind of difference such a linear narrative makes to the understandings that it generates, the difference made by a chronological approach to the stories we tell as historical geographers. It is almost as if it's okay to be somewhat Cartesian with respect to time, even though many geographers withdraw from such a conceptualisation in regard to space.

Of course there are many, many exceptions, not least with Nigel Thrift's and Doreen Massey's work. They both refuse the dichotomy between space and time, a binary around which I have structured this workshop. I put forth the binary, partly, in order to generate conversations about time, times, and multiple temporalities, but I also see my tendency to work with that particular binary opposition – between space and time – as a flaw or hiccup in my own thinking. Perhaps the next hour here might challenge me to think less in terms of theorizations of time and other theorizations of space, and to proceed more, as Massey and Thrift have suggested, to consider both at once, to theorize space and time together.

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I propose that it may be worthwhile to revisit the way we think about and understand temporality. But in the context of today's theme at the Royal Geographic Society, why revisit this theme particularly? My response would be this: the convenors for *Interdependence Day* (Joe Smith and Kathryn Yusoff) noted that it is valuable to attend to "ordinary acts that span great distances." Yet this suggests another charge for *Interdependence Day* as well: to consider how ordinary acts *work through time* and its lively and varied temporalities.