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<b>322</b>	<b>Sandscapes: Geographies of Flux and Flow (1)</b>
<b>Affiliation</b>	Social and Cultural Geography Research Group
<b>Convenor(s)</b>	Julian Brigstocke (Cardiff University, UK) William Jamieson (Royal Holloway, University of London, UK)
<b>Chair(s)</b>	William Jamieson (Royal Holloway, University of London, UK)
<b>Timetable</b>	Friday 31 August 2018, Session 3 (14:40 - 16:20)
<b>Room</b>	Sir Martin Evans Building - Physiology B Lecture Theatre
<b>Session abstract</b>	<p>Sand is the stuff of power. It is a vital material in modern construction. It transgresses borders and thresholds. It connects the elemental to the global. It is at home in land, sea, and air. Yet within human geography, little attention has been paid to the material life of this imaginatively potent material. This session addresses calls for a multiplication of materiality within the discipline (Anderson and Wylie 2009; Whatmore 2006), by delving into the multiplicity of sandscapes that pervade our lives in the context of a global shortage of sand (Peduzzi 2014).</p> <p>Sand, a seemingly mundane material, is an active substrate of the spaces of modernity, and constitutes a vantage point from which to read and write landscapes that are urban, coastal, nomadic; wet and dry; dispersed and fragmented; eroded and reclaimed; political and cultural. What aspects of the production of space slip through our fingers? How do we develop new ways of reading and writing everyday spaces that are intimately entangled with an inherently itinerant material?</p> <p>This session invites papers that engage with the materiality of sandscapes, examining how sand might reinvigorate debates around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• new materialism in human geography;</li> <li>• affective and more-than-human geographies;</li> <li>• new ways of reading and writing landscape;</li> <li>• the materiality of geopolitics;</li> <li>• transnational and migratory geographies;</li> <li>• landscapes of displacement;</li> <li>• planetary urbanization</li> </ul>
<b>Linked Sessions</b>	<a href="#">Sandscapes: Geographies of Flux and Flow (2)</a>

Contact the conference organisers to request a change to session or paper details: [ac2018@rgs.org](mailto:ac2018@rgs.org)

## Shifting sands in Accra, Ghana: The sandy ante-lives of urban form

*Katherine Dawson (London School of Economics, UK)*

From the most decadent of cityscapes, to the humblest of structures, our expanding urban landscapes owe much of their existence to sand (Peduzzi, 2014). Though central to the material (re)production of urban space, little work in human geography has engaged

with the connections between this grainy material and urbanisation, presenting a gap in our understanding of the city as a socio-natural process (Heynen, 2017; Myers, 2016; Lawhon et al, 2013). This paper responds to this gap through empirical research in Ghana's capital city, Accra. In the wider city-region, sand is being unearthed at unprecedented rates, largely for building in the expanding peri-urban landscape. Based on ten months of fieldwork, this paper will excavate the multiple processes taking place ahead of sand finding form in the cityscape as building blocks, unearthing the ways in which sand, though destined for the city, is variously (dis)embedded in a multitude of time-spaces more broadly. Specifically, the paper will detail the shifting locations of sand extraction pits, which, forever moving, bring to light a narrative of Accra's expansion. However, seeking to re-embed the fleeting nature of sand extraction in specific localities, the paper will detail the operation of these sandpits through mobile economies of men and women who relentlessly follow the sands to make a living. The paper will discuss the socio-ecological anxieties emanating from the afterlives of these ephemeral 'postcolonial holes' (de Boeck, 2017) and finally, detail the movement of sand between sites of extraction and destinations, challenging the idea of the easy flow of sand throughout the city by highlighting frictions, encounters and anxieties. Together, these timespaces of sand render visible a sandscape of Accra that goes against the grain of easy narratives of rapid urbanisation and instead offers up a re-reading of the city that centres the contested sandy ante-lives of Accra's urban form.

### **Genealogies of the sand: Imaginaries, materialities and mobilities of violence in the Second World War**

*Isla Forsyth (University of Nottingham, UK)*

Shifting, corrosive, abrasive, fluid, featureless, the North African sands from the British perspective creates hazy auras and uncanny atmospheres, infiltrating bodies and technologies, all the while obscuring and subverting attempts to map, know and control territory. This paper will examine how the materiality and mobility of sand has shaped the ways through which the desert has been framed as a landscape of violence. First, by taking the British Military's intervention in the Second World War, and the example of the Long Range Desert Group it will explore the ways in which the physical geography, geopolitics and cultural imaginaries of the desert were used to legitimise particular forms of military violence that, like sand, shifted and corroded seemingly defined territorial and ethical boundaries. Whereas, the example of the LRDG provides a case study in how the desert has been framed by the West as a space requiring intervention and control, the second example will demonstrate a more distanced and ambivalent sense of responsibility for military violence, yet similarly, it reinforces the situated nature and consequences of warfare that sandscapes were used to legitimise. It explores the spatialities and temporalities of the landmine, a military technology heavily deployed during the North African Campaign. The landmine, taken here to be a complex assemblage of military strategy and technology, environments and law, raises important questions as to how we deal with the legacies of conflict and landscapes of violence. Overall, this paper considers the desert as a space and sand as an element that trouble any neat conceptualisations of territory, instead revealing a fluidity that is not only geographical but also temporal

### **Sand-mining in Southeast Asia: A new economic frontier**

*Robert John (University of Freiburg, Germany)*

Southeast Asia has encountered a vast and dynamic marketization of sand as a construction aggregate. The recent urbanization and real-estate boom has turned sand, a largely unappropriated material in the past, into a strategic resource for the construction industry. Since then, its used as the primary raw material for concrete and asphalt, as well as an infill for land reclamation. The appropriation of sand from its deposits has followed the strategy of an economic frontier, meaning in an ad hoc, unplanned and hazardous manner, disregarding national borders, differing legal standards and good governance. Companies move from one place of extraction to the next, always in search for "cheap nature" (Moore 2015), low cost extraction, and transportation, fuelling a destructive shadow market.

In this paper, I draw on the work of Anna Tsing and David Harvey to understand the marketization of sand in Southeast Asia and Cambodia. Based on empirical research carried out in 2016/17, I argue that instead of a smooth linear marketization in times of neoliberal hegemony, the sand frontier in Cambodia creates deeply contested spaces constantly in the (un)making. The aspired outcome – a functioning market for construction aggregates – need to be locally implemented and enacted, not only against social resistance, but also by aligning the capitalist and technological logics with the biophysical and geological properties of the appropriated material – sand. The process of privatization, commercialization and commodification thereby creates new socio-natures defined by frictions, conflicts and un-predicted events (Bakker 2004). The particular socio-material configurations of the sand frontier in Cambodia and Southeast Asia can thus, only be understood when taking into account the unique beneficial and defying material characteristics of sand in its marketization process.

### **Harena: Sand, Suspension, and Aesthetics**

*Julian Brigstocke (Cardiff University, UK)*

*Victoria Jones (Independent Artist)*

Sand is a vital material of power. Its force emerges from its granularity, its roughness, its consistency and absorbency. This enables it easily to form suspensions in water and air. Sahara sand keeps the Amazon alive. Sand transgresses borders and thresholds. It connects the elemental to the global, and the distant past to the present. Sand's power is ghoulish: shifting form, moving boundaries, deceiving travellers. It has a hyena's laugh. It marks time, decay, and death. Yet when taking forms such as concrete,

asphalt, and glass, sand is also the most important material of the world's urban landscapes. But if sand plays a central role in the materialities of power and authority, what might it mean to develop a critique of modern urbanism through 'sandy' forms of thinking and knowing? Such thinking would be granular, inert, abrasive, plural, shifting, boundary-making and boundary-crossing. Taking inspiration from the Latin 'harena', meaning not just a sandy place but also a space of contest, this paper draws on an art-geography collaboration exploring contemporary sand mining, in order to reconsider the sandy materiality of the contemporary city.