In 2014, *European Urban and Regional Studies* awarded the first Jim Lewis Prize. The prize was established to mark the contributions of the former Editor, Jim Lewis, and to highlight the most innovative paper published in the previous year in the journal (see editorial announcement in volume 21, number 1, 2014). Following nominations from the journal’s Editorial Board members, a shortlist of five papers were considered by the journal’s Editors. Two papers received equal support relating to the criteria for the prize and we are delighted to announce a joint 2017 prize award to Nicky Gregson, Mike Crang, Julie Botticello, Melania Calestani and Anna Krzywoszynska for their paper “Doing the ‘dirty work’ of the green economy: Resource recovery and migrant labour in the EU” *European Urban and Regional Studies* 23(4): 541-555, and to Maria Kaika and Luca Ruggiero for their paper “Land financialization as a ‘lived’ process: The transformation of Milan’s Bicocca by Pirelli” *European Urban and Regional Studies* 23(1): 3–22.

Nicky Henry, Editor-in-Chief

**Nicky Gregson** received both her BA and PhD from Durham University. Her early work was in historical geography but in order to “get a job” she became a social scientist. Her over-arching concerns have been with economies’ edges – first with respect to waged domestic labour (*Servicing the Middle Classes*), then with regard to second-hand goods (*Second-hand Cultures*) and, more recently, in relation to how goods and materials classified as “waste” have become “resources”.

**Mike Crang** got his BA in Geography from Cambridge and PhD from Bristol University. His early work was in social memory, heritage and conservation looking at landscapes, institutions and tourist practices. As part of the collaboration that underpinned this paper he inverted that to look at decay, destruction, disposal and places people would rather not see. Both sides form part of his sustained interest in times and temporalities and their intersections with spaces and spatialities.

**Julie Botticello** is a Senior Lecturer in public health at the University of East London (UEL). An anthropologist, her doctoral research with Yoruba Nigerians in London focused on their global aspirations for wellbeing through local and transnational connections, while her postdoctoral research concerned local knowledge in the context of global trade and global shifts in production. Since coming to UEL, her research has focused on understanding how knowledge, values and power structures impact on healthcare access for marginal communities.

**Melania Calestani** trained as a geographer and anthropologist in Italy and the UK. She received her MSc in Geography from the University of Genoa. She then moved to London, where she received an MSc from University College London (UCL) and a PhD from Goldsmiths. She is currently a Lecturer in Research Methods at Kingston and St George’s, University of London. She has postdoctoral experience in social sciences, medical anthropology and healthcare research. At the moment she is collaborating on a project about spiritual care in healthcare settings, looking at multi-faith spaces within institutional contexts. In particular, she is interested in analysing how space is negotiated among participants of different religious and spiritual affiliations as well as those of none. This piece of work will...
inform on how the sacred and the secular converge in the design and construction of hospitals, contributing not only to the geography of religion but also to the geography of prayer.

Anna Krzywoszynska received her BA from UCL, and obtained her PhD in Geography at the University of Sheffield, where she is currently a Leverhulme Early Career Research Fellow. Her research is concerned with the ways in which human activity is co-produced with environmental entities and matters such as resources, plants and microbes through practices, discourses and ethics. She is particularly interested in the role scientific and other forms of knowledge play in creating these relations, and in knowledge co-production between science and society. Her publications have explored these issues in the context of food production and resource management; her current research engages with these themes to understand how soils are known and managed by scientists and practitioners.

Nicky Gregson, Mike Crang, Julie Botticello, Melania Calestani and Anna Krzywoszynska: On dirty work

We are delighted, pleasantly surprised and honoured that our collective paper is the joint recipient of the 2017 Jim Lewis Prize. For Nicky and Mike, those sentiments go deeper, for Jim was of course a member of staff at Durham and one of the founding editors of the European and Regional Studies journal that has had a long association with Durham University’s Geography department. For our paper to be awarded this prize, then, is in a sense a home-coming – and a strange one at that. For, neither of us has worked centrally in the fields that EURS has defined and we can hear Jim’s ever quick laughter at such an irony. We are therefore “chuffed to bits” (as the saying goes) that the piece from our collaborative programme that we saw as speaking to EURS has had this reception from the journal.

“Dirty work” – as we dubbed it – stems from The Waste of the World Programme, a Large Grant funded by the Economic and Social Research Council between 2006 and 2011 and led by Nicky and Mike. The central concerns of that programme were to examine “wastes” and their connection to recycling economies, both globally (Crang et al., 2013) and within the European Union (EU). One strand of that was looking at two categories of “end-of-life” goods: ships and used clothing. It followed those things. Following those things morphed to become following the myriad materials that these things become – and then the things that these materials in turn become. In so doing, the programme showed, for example, how clapped-out ships ended up on a beach in Bangladesh but then became the raw materials for a whole host of domestic industries, from steel fabrication to textile production, hospitality and catering and consumer goods (Gregson et al., 2010, 2012). Research from the programme therefore up-turned old understandings of the relationship between the consumers of the Global North and producers of the Global South, showing instead that the wastes of the Global North are the raw materials for a whole host of manufacturing activity in the South (Alexander and Reno, 2012; Gregson and Crang, 2015). We also showed the challenges involved when “wastes” are sequestered within borders and stopped from moving around the globe – often for highly valid environmental and political reasons. Chief amongst these is how then to make markets within a territory from secondary materials that have been classified as waste (Gregson et al., 2013, 2015).

All the while that we were following discarded stuff, however, we were also inadvertently bearing witness to recycling work and workers the world over. Some of the conditions of that work have rightly attracted headlines, for all the wrong reasons. Indeed, Bangladesh’s ship breaking industry has long been the poster child of environmental justice campaigners, for whom it is the “dark sun of globalisation” (Crang, 2010). What troubled us, however, is that recycling work was only ever visible as work in the Global South. In the Global North, and particularly in the EU, everything was about “clean and green” recycling businesses. That, combined with a heavily automated labour process, meant that the labour of recycling was erased – something that just was not talked about. It is that process of erasure that the paper is concerned with. We then counter that with an old political tactic, of making visible the kind of labour that we were seeing repeatedly in European ship breaking (or, “recycling”) yards and – in Julie’s case – actually doing it in
a textile recycling warehouse. The point is a simple one, but no less important for all that: whatever the sector, whatever the materials, the work that must go on in order that secondary materials can be recovered for recycling is dirty; not just dirty but really dirty. Indeed, the 24/7 filth, smell and mess associated with these working environments meant that all of us who went to them repeatedly for fieldwork were issued with protective Health and Safety clothing (boots, overalls, gloves, hard hats, etc.). Given that those doing the fieldwork reported on in this paper (Melania, Julie and Anna) are all women, there were moments when the “hi-viz” safety gear spoke volumes for how much we stood out. Further, the work is often dangerous, both in the short term in terms of working conditions and in the long term in terms of health. In addition, because of all those associations, it is simultaneously degrading and demeaning work. As we show in the paper, this has effects in terms of who gets to do the dirty work. When waste materials stay still, as EU policy wishes, it is migrants – EU “migrants”, international migrants – who do the jobs.

So, as we write this retrospective, this landscape is changing for our corner of Europe due to Brexit. The framing of our study and the recycling economies we studied was inevitably EU Waste Policy. The unanswered (and currently unanswerable) questions raised in reading the paper fresh, however, are all to do with the UK’s currently uncertain position with respect to EU Waste Policy and particularly the push towards a circular economy. Given that the green policy agenda has been driven by EU-level environmental politics and the UK, for so long the “dirty man” [sic] of Europe, often hauled kicking and screaming by a need for EU-compliance, how much of this will still apply in the North Western European archipelago? And, for those of us in the UK, given conflicting rhetorics of both continued “environmental standards” but also “reduced regulatory burdens” whilst promising reduced immigration, the question is now very moot about “What will happen to recycling work in the UK, and for who does it?”

References


Maria Kaika holds a PhD in Human Geography from Oxford University, and an MA in Architecture and Planning from the National Technical University of Athens. She is Chair of Urban, Regional and Environmental Planning at the University of Amsterdam, and Professor of Human Geography at the University of Manchester. She was elected Professor of the City of Vienna in 2013, has taught at the Universities of Oxford, Paris Est (LATTs), KULeuven, University of London and TU Vienna, and has acted as Chief co-Editor of the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research (2010–2017). Her research focuses on cities and crisis, land financialisation, the biopolitics of debt and mortgages and radical political ecological imaginaries of cities.

Luca Ruggiero received his BA degree from the University of Catania, MA from the University of Warwick and PhD from the University of Sassari. He is currently Associate Professor of Economic and Political Geography at the Department of Political
Maria Kaika and Luca Ruggiero: The academic article as a collective “labour of love”

We are delighted and deeply honoured to receive the Jim Lewis Prize for our article “Land financialization as a lived process”, and we thank the editors and anonymous referees for their contribution.

As this article was the first output of an incredibly fruitful and enjoyable collaboration between us, the prize gives us the opportunity to highlight here the single most important characteristic that drove the research project from the fieldwork to the writing leading to this publication. This article is truly the “product” of a “labour of love” (Boudreau and Kaika, 2013). What we mean by this, is that the labour necessary for materialising this paper was labour contributed “in excess” of labour paid by academic institutions and “over and above” labour paid by funding bodies. Our fieldwork and meetings were funded by a British Academy small research grant (SG: 45263). However, the intensity of our intellectual dialogue, the involvement with local actors that kept pulling us back to Bicocca, the visits and intricate exchange of documents, articles, book chapters, maps, emails, phone and Skype calls between Catania, Oxford, Milan, Thessaloniki and Manchester stretched continuously into weekends and “holidays” over a period of six years, from 2007 to 2013 when the online version of the article was published.

It was pure joy. It was as close to unalienated labour as one can get. We would like to think of this prize as a reward and recognition for the labour of love that this work represents. It is a type of labour that becomes ever more necessary for conducting independent academic research and writing during times of crisis and massive funding cuts for academic institutions.

However, the labour of love put into this paper was not ours alone. It also came from colleagues (notably Serena Vicari Haddock, Frank Moulaert, Raffaele Cercola, Roberta Sollazzi, Erik Swyngedouw, Matteo Bolocan Goldstein, Tom Bailey, Chiara Tornaghi, Marianna D’Ovidio, Cabirio Cautela and Graham Bowden) as well as the EURS’s editors and reviewers. The most significant contribution to this collective labour came from key informants whom we had the pleasure and honour to engage with and who offered their time generously.

We would like to mention here two people in particular: the late Vito Basilico1 and the late Giovanni Nassi.2 Vito Basilico, a former Pirelli worker and one of the main leaders of the 1968–1971 workers’ movement, introduced us with great passion and emotional investment to another important page of Pirelli’s history: the class struggle over the emblematic industrial land that turned Bicocca into a hotbed of militant class action. Giovanni Nassi, the son of a Pirelli worker who pursued a managerial career with Pirelli, gave us a detailed account of how he pioneered a real estate strategy for the redevelopment of the Bicocca area, which turned industrial land into a financial asset that became instrumental in both saving Pirelli from bankruptcy and in launching it into a new financialised phase.

This prize goes to them, as much as it goes to us.

Conceptually, the paper’s major contribution lies with the depiction of land financialisation as a “lived” and socially embodied process. The paper shifts the focus of enquiry on land financialisation from a quantitative analysis of global capital flows and real estate aggregate data and of the usual suspects of financialisation, to a qualitative analysis of the alliances and struggles between previously neglected actors: namely, local elites and workers who animated the traditional manufacturing sector. By focusing on the role of conflicts and alliances between these actors, we shed light on how mobilising industrial land as a financial asset enabled traditional elites to launch onto a path of financialised transnational competition.

Empirically, the paper pioneered qualitative methods in research and exemplified the “lived” dimension of land financialisation through the side-by-side reading of the histories of a traditional industry (Pirelli), its workers, its land assets (Bicocca) and their relations to local and regional government institutions, and global macro-economic processes.
This article was the first outcome of our collaboration, which began soon after we met through the International Network of Urban Research and Action (INURA). Luca spent a four-month period in 2006 as a visiting researcher at the University of Oxford, School of Geography and the Environment, where Maria was based at the time. During this visit we developed a research proposal that received a British Academy Small Grant in 2007 on “Iconic buildings and the changing ethnography of urban patronage in the 21st century”. This focus emerged from our common interest in addressing empirical and conceptual gaps in academic literature (at the time) on new urban economic elites (Sklair, 2005) and on new forms of urban governance (Moulaert and Nussbaumer, 2005). That literature, we argued, begged the theorisation and empirical substantiation of the relationship between changes in the ethnography of urban elites and changes in the production of urban space. This rationale was in close relation to Maria’s work on “Autistic Architecture” (Kaika, 2011) and the Architecture of Crisis (Kaika, 2010), which focused precisely on examining the dialectics between the “internationalisation” of London’s urban elites and significant changes in the redevelopment of the City of London after the 1990s. During our early conversations we observed striking similarities between the redevelopment of the City of London and the redevelopment of Bicocca, an area north east of Milan, after the 1990s.

Building on the research for this EURS article, we also prepared Kaika and Ruggiero (2015), which focuses more specifically on the importance that class struggle over land played at renegotiating new forms of urbanity at Bicocca in Milan. The conceptual framework developed during this work also informed Luca’s more recent work on competing visions and politics of “the smart city” (Di Bella and Ruggiero, 2015, 2016) and the urban commons (Graziano and Ruggiero, 2017) and Maria’s work on the biopolitics of debt (Kaika, 2017) and mortgaged lives (García-Lamarca and Kaika, 2016).

Notes
2. Giovanni Nassi died in 2010.

References