

Keynote: Big: The Originality Machine and Place

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The advent of new spatially referenced technologies and methodologies is changing how we practice place. I will concentrate on three of these changes: the ability to draw on larger and larger archives of information, the ability to tag more and more things, and the ability to capture and predict movement. I will argue that places are being twisted into new configurations which the distinction between the real and the virtual is inadequate to describe. Instead, I will argue that what we regard as change is itself changing and with it how we depict and use place. I will illustrate my contention by referencing three different arenas which once acted as footnotes to place but have now become active parts of how we practice place: music, indoors, and images as a form of writing. The result is that apprehensions of place are shifting but not in any straightforward manner. Rather, they are being twisted into new shapes.

Nigel was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Warwick from 2006 to 2016. Before coming to Warwick, he held posts at Bristol, Oxford and the University of Wales. After Warwick, Nigel took up the position of Executive Director of Schwarzman Scholars, based in New York and Beijing. He is currently Chair of the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management. He is a leading figure in human geography.