



## **Doreen Massey: Space, Place and Politics**

*Why Geography matters*

### **John Allen**

My name's John Allen. I'm a member of the Open University's Geography Department and I am also a member of the University's new research centre called Open Space. And Open Space is sponsoring this event – Doreen's Lecture. In fact it's our first event for the centre so in one sense this is the launch of the Open Space Research Centre. We only realised that about ten minutes ago I think to be honest. Now we've launched the centre and in a sense today's event's really in the spirit of Doreen's work. The Centre and today is in a sense designed to capture something of Doreen's work and in that I mean it's the Centre and the event are about the rigorous examination and exploration of space, place and nature and why that matters for social science research and politics more generally. It's very much in the spirit of Doreen's work. I mean all of that can be captured in another classic phrase that Doreen's well known for which is "Geography matters". And that's what the Centre's about. Now it's the annual lecture itself is also in line with Doreen's work but it captures something very specific about Doreen's work which is her spatial politics. And what the lecture is designed to do is engage with some of the pressing geographical issues of the day, those geographical issues that really matter to everyone. And that's the kind of spirit we want for the lecture for the Panels and it's something we've set for the lecture every year for the future.

Now there is a reason why it's the Doreen Massey Lecture. Doreen is retiring this year after nearly thirty years at the Open University - I expected a big aaahhh at that moment! Now, putting the words 'Doreen Massey' and 'retirement' in the same sentence is to be honest is a bit of an oxymoron. It's a contradiction in terms. It doesn't really make sense. The idea that when Doreen retires suddenly you know geography doesn't matter any more, you know. And I think you can guarantee that even though Doreen is retiring she'll be still showing us why and how geography matters. But this is Doreen's retirement year. This is not her retirement today. It's the annual lecture. Plenty to go. This is Doreen's actual annual lecture. Now today as you know – those of you who have got the programme – there's two panels this afternoon. The first Panel is looking at some of the core issues around Doreen's geographical ideas. And the second panel, after tea and coffee, is about more of Doreen's political engagement. So it's – you can hardly separate out those two ideas to be honest but it's – that's roughly the broad idea.

Now on the first panel we have three prominent geographers. Professor Ash Amin – make sure I get the designations right – who is Professor of Geography at Durham University and also Director of the Institute of Advanced Studies. And Ash and Doreen have been – how can I put this – battling ideas between each other for probably for the last twenty thirty years really, around cities, regions, place. I mean I could go on. But it is very much that engagement where they bat ideas across each other.

Then we have Professor Jamie Peck who holds a Research Chair in Urban and Regional Political Economy at the University of British Columbia and James over a period of time has been engaging widely with a number of Doreen's economic and geographical ideas.

And then lastly we have Professor Jane Wills - I can just see Jane behind James - who is a Professor of Human Geography at Queen Mary University of London. And Jane has been engaging with Doreen's ideas particularly around work and labour restructuring over the years. And what we are hoping for today is that this kind of engagement between Doreen's ideas over a course of time are widened out. So it's not just about Doreen it's actually capturing that spirit of engaging with the pressing geographical ideas of the day so the panel will widen out some of those ideas. We are going to ask the Speakers to limit themselves to around fifteen minutes each and then Doreen will respond and then we'll open it up for discussion.