How can we understand the intensification and expansion of cultural flows through globalizing cities and their regions?

The Globalization and Culture research program investigates cultural aspects of globalization in its local and global forms in cities across the world.

The program examines the tensions and complexities of transnational cultural flows in terms of homogenization, fragmentation, hybridity and commodification. Analysis is focused on urban arenas for cultural contestation and ideological dissent. The program envisages creative solutions to global challenges by encouraging long-term thinking and designing alternative global futures. This approach enables research in such areas as ethical global visions, global governance, and imaginaries of hope. It brings together theoretical enquiry with empirically grounded and socially engaged research. Program members use diverse methodologies in order to understand how globalization impacts upon cultural expression and how culture manifests in urban settings.

Culture is understood broadly as shared webs of meaning through which we experience and interpret the world around us. Culture manifests in symbolic acts, everyday routines, identities and desires. It shapes our social relations, built environments, and relations with the non-human world. The program investigates culture through a range of social phenomena, institutions and symbolic expressions.
Research Themes

1. Transforming Identities and Subjectivities
This theme concerns the transformation of identities in Asian-Pacific cities through processes of globalization. Cities are nodes in vast global networks of people, governance, ideas and industry as well as distinctly local places that generate diverse responses to globalization. As the world becomes increasingly urbanized, city-life shapes our sense of self in new ways. As we move between cities, we experience new modes of trans-local belonging.

Accordingly, we ask how various global processes such as migration, economic development, or technological change manifest in cities and impact upon our subjectivities. This theme addresses the means through which identities are shaped and contested, from modes of governmentality to forms of artistic expression. The ideologically induced transformation of citizens into neoliberal subjects constitutes one potential area of inquiry. Of equal interest are the social movements and cultural currents that resist subordination to hegemonic norms and enact alternative subjectivities.

2. Culture and Ideology
Key questions in this research theme include: what is the relationship between globalization, culture and ideology? How do social imaginaries, narratives, metaphors, symbols and myths contribute to ideological change? How do language and space intersect in the cultural milieu of Asian-Pacific cities? Hierarchies based on sharp distinctions between local, national, regional and global scales no longer hold in the global age. Established boundaries are defended, erased, or redrawn.

Consequently, we investigate the transformation of our conventional cultural-spatial frameworks into multi-directional constellations and multi-nodal networks. The shifting grounds of discourse emerging in advance of clearly articulated ideological platforms are also key sites of inquiry. This theme recognizes cities as principal hubs for the construction, dissemination and contestation of cultural and ideological discourse.

3. Material Cultures
This theme approaches material culture as an expression of the critical disputes and tensions characterising globalization and global cities. We investigate the conditions for the creation of new cultural spaces and the role of technology in cultural production. How do text and image, art and performance, media and communication combine to construct new cultural forms?

Potential areas of investigation include critical analyses of artworks, urban screens, advertising, global-branding, media representations and alternative forms of communication.

Key Research Projects

Globalization: The Career of a Key Concept
This project will assemble the first comprehensive history of the concept ‘globalization’, one of the most important keywords of our time. Examining relevant texts and conducting interviews with the most prominent experts on the subject from professional communities of practice in the English-speaking world, this research will shed light on which meanings of ‘globalization’ became dominant in public and academic discourse, and how these understandings shape the heated debates on globalization.

Theatre in the Asia-Pacific: Regional Culture in a Modern Global Context
This project examines how theatre and performance in the Asia-Pacific articulate the social, political and material changes that result from globalization in its engagement with the national and the local. Focusing on the region’s diverse traditions of theatre and performance, ranging from traditional pre-modern to contemporary postmodern forms, this study offers a multi-regional perspective on contemporary culture in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Role of Lifestyle Television in Transforming Culture, Citizenship and Selfhood: Australia, China, Taiwan, Singapore and India
Over the past decade or so, TV schedules around the world have undergone something of a lifestyle revolution on primetime television with advice television increasingly directed towards a broader prime-time audience. This study addresses these complex questions through a large-scale comparative study of lifestyle programming in China, India, Taiwan and Singapore. The project applies a three-pronged approach at each national site, focusing on industry, textual and audience analysis.

Irregular Migrants and Political Belonging in Global Cities
This project investigates the transformation of citizenship in four globalizing cities with respect to irregular migration. The project involves case studies and in-depth interviews with irregular migrants in Melbourne, Los Angeles, Berlin and Kuala Lumpur and areas in PNG. We attempt to build new conceptual approaches to belonging and political community that can capture both the agency and vulnerability of irregular migrants’ civic status.

Mapping Justice Globalism: Reassessing the Ideological Landscape of the 21st Century
This project investigates and assesses the ideological status of ‘justice globalism’ – the political ideas and public policy vision associated with the global justice movement. The outcome of this research will be a detailed conceptual mapping and policy analysis of justice globalism that furthers our understanding of the ideas, values, and policy proposals behind one of the major global political forces shaping the 21st century.

A complete list of projects and current researchers can be found on the website www.global-cities.info/content/program/globalization-and-culture

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