

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Wot Culture?

Associate Professor Brett Neilson, Professor Ien Ang and Associate Professor Ned Rossiter of the Centre for Cultural Research are investigating influence on culture through creative labour and social mobilities in the Asian region. They are collaborating with researchers from Lingnan, Tsinghua and Bologna universities and the Calcutta Research Group in China, Italy and India respectively. This project is funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery grant.

'Culture and what it means is in transition', says Professor Neilson. 'Governments and organisations are attempting to redefine culture as being more about job wealth and creation and less about ways of living. This "economy of culture" appears to be at odds with the traditional understanding of culture as defined by the material and spiritual practices of social groups. A number of important questions arise from this: how do these different understandings of culture affect the experiences of people working in the changeable and precarious environments of the creative and cultural arenas such as music, performing arts, film, IT, writing, architecture and design? And since the growth of Australia's creative sector is influenced by competition from the booming economies of China and India and with labour and social mobility a part of modern society, how does this all affect cultural identity and definition? Without an understanding of cultural dynamics on a regional scale, how do we determine the effect of new commercial and social influences and ensure that social exclusion or hierarchies are not the result?'

These questions will be critically examined by interviewing employers, workers and key institutional players in the creative and cultural sectors of the cities of Shanghai, Kolkata (Calcutta) and Sydney. Policy documents, urban social spaces and artistic products will be analysed and migrant



networks and patterns of association will be examined using explorative fieldwork and digital research technologies.

With the Australian Government looking at policy formation related to creative innovation and growth, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and regional integration, it is important to identify the practical challenges in implementing these policies. Policy-makers and businesses need a more detailed picture of these challenges and how to address them in the context of the "Asian Century" and the current and future international and national labour markets.

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