

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



Institute for Culture
and Society

2019-20

Institute for Culture and Society
ANNUAL REVIEW



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Cover image: ICS staff and student pictures, compiled and edited by Katelyn Paech.

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REFLECTIONS FROM THE ICS DIRECTOR

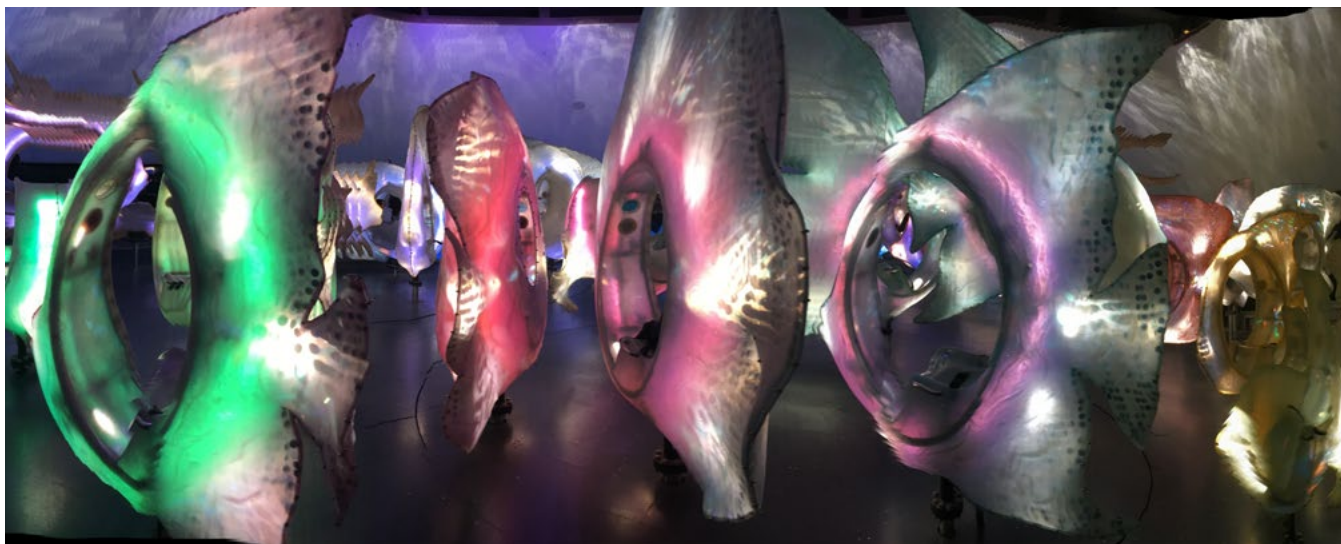
2020 has been a year like no other. With raging bushfires continuing from the summer of 2019, an ominous cinematic haze cast across the city and region. Many of our colleagues who live in the Blue Mountains spent their summer evacuating homes and searching for respite from truly terrifying fires. As we moved into February – my first month as Director – hushed mentions of the spread of a virus quickly amplified and became more concerning by the end of the month. Quarantine protocols began to surface, and our working lives moved to conducting meetings, seminars and teaching on platforms like Zoom. And just as we started to think the pandemic was under control in Australia, our neighbours in Victoria experienced a massive increase in community transmission and extensive lockdown measures ensued. Other states, including New South Wales, closed state borders that have only recently reopened. Bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the Higher Education Reforms passed in October, have significantly impacted our lives and livelihoods. Social inequalities and divisions are on the rise in Australia and these factors have taken a toll on the physical and mental health of our students, colleagues and communities.



Professor Heather Horst

Throughout this period I have witnessed our colleagues, staff and students reach out to support each other and the communities in which we live and work. Our supervisors and HDR community held regular meetings with students overseas unable to return to Australia. Led by our indefatigable Institute Manager Terry Fairclough, our professional

staff stepped up with herculean efforts to support new working from home protocols, increased administrative oversight and a vast array of unanticipated demands. We shifted our seminar series online for the first time in ICS history, a welcome side effect being that our staff, students and colleagues could participate remotely in a core component of



Sea Glass Carousel in Battery Park, Manhattan, December 2018. Photograph by Juan Francisco Salazar.

the ICS culture. Indeed, Zoom enabled a larger audience than usual to join our seminars, with participants from across the country and overseas. We collated a series of teaching resources from our collective research projects to support our staff and colleagues who rapidly shifted to online learning and teaching. We even managed to 'pivot' – to invoke one of the infamous words of 2020 – our research to focus upon how young people were coping with COVID-19 and explored the new 'habits' associated with masks, hygiene, social distancing and the pandemic in our international symposium *Contagion Design: Labour, Economy, Habits, Data*, held over a series of four sessions in October and November.

Yet this has also been an extraordinary year of achievements for the ICS by any objective measure. A number of projects awarded in late 2019 under the wonderful leadership of former ICS Director Paul James commenced. These included four ARC Discovery and Linkage Project grants focused upon issues such as the intersection of AI and disability, the geopolitics of automation, Chinese migrants and everyday citizenship, and Asian migration and cultures of education. In September 2019 Professor Juan Francisco Salazar was awarded a prestigious ARC Future Fellowship investigating socio-technical imaginaries that shape Australian explorations into outer-space.

Our grant success continued into 2020 with the award of a DECRA to Dr. Michelle Fitts and two ARC Discovery Projects – one on social innovation and the circular economy led by Prof. Gay Hawkins and Dr. Stephen Healy, and another led by Dr. Emma Power on shadow infrastructures of care. Dr. Fiona Cameron was also awarded an ARC Linkage Project on museums and climate change. Vice Chancellor's Research Distinguished Professor Ien Ang was also part of a grant team at UNSW for a Linkage Project focused upon developing inclusive museums in regional Australia and Dr. Zelmari Cantillon is a Chief Investigator on an ARC Special Research Initiatives project through Griffith University

on reimagining Norfolk Island history. These successes were complemented by a diverse array of Category 2 and 3 grants that emerged in partnership with a range of organisations like the NSW government that facilitated a number of conversations on disability as well as the launch of key reports with organisations like UNICEF spearheaded by the Young & Resilient Research Centre that officially launched in 2019. They are also a tribute to the exceptional work of 'pre-Award' officers in ICS, Flora Zhong, Dr. Yasmin Tambiah and Kathleen MacDonald.

The Institute also welcomed four new Vice Chancellor's Research Fellows Dr. Zelmari Cantillon, Dr. Benjamin Hancel, Dr. Sukhmani Khorana and Dr. Declan Kuch, a new Senior Research Fellow Dr. Josh Wodak and our Global Professorial Fellows, Professor Jamie Peck and Professor Manfred Steger. We celebrated the influential careers of Professor Kay Anderson and Professor Tony Bennett, who were appointed as Emeritus Professors. ICS also became the home of two ARC Centres of Excellence nodes: the Centre of Excellence for Synthetic Biology and Centre of Excellence in Automated Decision-Making and Society. As you'll read in the report from our Research Director Professor Ned Rossiter, the influx of new staff inspired a reframing of our research programs as new research areas emerge and new issues of pressing contemporary concern demand our attention.

This year we've seen a renaissance of the term 'resilience' in public and academic discourse. Resilience is often used to describe the capacity to recover quickly in the face of difficulty and posits a forward-looking and optimistic orientation to the world. It is also increasingly used as a way to talk about managing risk. As Jeremy Walker and Melinda Cooper's article on the genealogies of resilience illustrates, the use of the term resilience often functions to 'naturalise' and 'neutralise' critical analysis of neoliberal discourses and practices across sectors such as finance capitalism, economic development and environmental management. While we are mindful of this cogent critique, it is

nonetheless true that the ICS has proven to be resilient in 2020. We very quickly became experts at managing platform specific cultures such as Zoom bombing, the joys and necessity of virtual backdrops, automated facial beautification, adapted to new norms of engagement such as raising our hand as a 'participant' in the 'chat', and also repurposed the 'mute sound' and 'stop video' options as essential techniques of task management. Yet, 2020 brought to the fore the rich and vibrant culture that the ICS has honed over many years. The core values of the Institute – cutting edge and engaged research, collaboration, generosity, warmth and commitment – that underpin ICS culture have proven to be as enduring as ever in this highly challenging year. In fact, they have been central to surviving it.

The series of essays, reports and visualisations in the 2019-2020 Annual Review highlights some of the visible and invisible labour that goes into making the ICS what it is today. It begins with an essay that revisits the development of the ICS and provides an account of one of the most successful and long-term projects, Australian Cultural Fields. From the experiences of our Higher Degree Research students and the diverse forms of participation in the ICS by our School-based members, to our approach to partnerships and the contribution the ICS is making to realising the Sustainable Development Goals, the essays are a testament to the ongoing impact of the ICS community and its research.

We hope that 2021 will bring the distribution of vaccines and closure to the global pandemic and the associated economic and social unrest around the world. The ICS will be doing its part to make a difference.

Best wishes,

Heather A. Horst

Director



2019 HIGHLIGHTS



60 RESEARCH STAFF

30 School-based members

30 Institute-based members

39 PHD STUDENTS

10 MRES STUDENTS

41 PhD completions in last 5 years

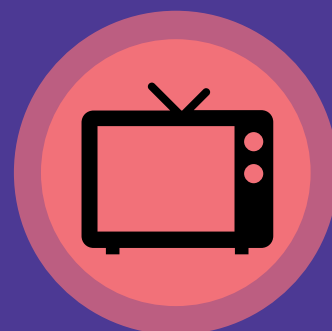
26 Grants Awarded
64 Active Grants including
15 ARC Grants
RESEARCH INCOME OF \$2,287,751*
*indicative result



173 Research Publications

11 New Books

277 Media Engagements
18 Articles in *The Conversation* with
622,452 Views



4 Projects submitted to 2018 ARC Engagement & Impact Assessment

2 projects received three HIGHS in all
three indicators and 2 projects received
two HIGHS



San Francisco 2018.
Photograph by Juan Francisco Salazar.

BUILDING THE INSTITUTE FOR CULTURE AND SOCIETY: A BRIEF HISTORY

Western Sydney University is a young university, established only in 1989. I joined the University as Professor of Cultural Studies in 1996 with a specific mandate to develop the University's research effort, which was embryonic at that time.

A key requirement for research to thrive is the creation of a productive *institutional environment*. This generally takes the form of the establishment of research centres or institutes, where academics can work together and develop an intensive focus on research. At Western, this happened from around 2000 when then Vice-Chancellor Janice Reid decided to consolidate the University's research effort through strategic investment in areas of excellence. This was how the Centre for Cultural Research (CCR) came into being. The University provided the resources to recruit up to four professors who were true international leaders in the field to join the centre and lift its work to high levels of achievement. As a result of this, the Centre was able to gain critical mass, not just at the junior level, but importantly, at the senior, professorial level.

Resources are of course *necessary*, but they are not a *sufficient* investment to build a high-performing research centre. Absolutely crucial is not just to bring together excellent scholars who are cooperative, collegial and broadminded, but also the slow, painstaking work of developing a research culture where such values thrive. We nurtured a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration by organising conferences and seminars on highly topical themes, establishing community partnerships, and of course applying for research grants. Soon we acquired a reputation for being a dynamic, happening place with an excellent international profile, attracting many doctoral students, young postdoctoral researchers and visitors alike.

The University's decision in 2011 to apply the selectivity and concentration strategy even further by establishing research institutes, which would be bigger than centres, led to



Distinguished Professor Ien Ang

the creation of what is now the Institute for Culture and Society (ICS). As one of only half a dozen research institutes at Western, the ICS is testimony to the university's sustained commitment to investing in an interdisciplinary institute in the humanities and social sciences – rare in a time when the lion's share of policy attention is reserved for science and technology.

Western Sydney University has been an enormously beneficial context for the development of a research institute such as the ICS. Being young, it is not steeped in tradition and vested interests, as the large established universities are. Moreover, our geographical context 'out west' has given us a special energy. The University's distinct social mission, its commitment to contributing to the



Building EM, Institute for Culture and Society

social, economic and cultural development of the Western Sydney region, has provided a compelling focus for the work of the ICS. It has cultivated a research ethos that is resolutely outward-looking, collaborative, and always looking out for new ways of understanding the complex challenges facing our rapidly changing culture and society. Our researchers are known both for their deep engagement with a wide range of community partners, and the high quality and impact of their scholarship. We have collaborated with a wide range of organisations from different local governments, cultural and media institutions, businesses, to national and international agencies.

Today, the University has grown up (but it is still young). Moreover, Western Sydney is no longer quite the peripheral region it used to be, but there is still a lot of work to do. The ICS is a fundamentally interdisciplinary research institute whose work sits at the meeting point of a range of disciplines including cultural studies, anthropology, history, sociology, communications, geography, linguistics, the arts, and so on. We focus on addressing some of the most

pressing challenges of our contemporary world: the social and cultural issues facing cities and economies, heritage and the environment, diversity and globalisation, digital life and technological transformation.

As we are confronted with very unsettled and uncertain years and decades ahead, we need a broader, more comprehensive understanding of innovation. People often tend to equate innovation with the inventions of science and technology, but it is absolutely crucial that we also think about innovation in the social and cultural realms. In fact, any new scientific or technological innovation – think the internet, for example, or robots – should also be considered in terms of their social and cultural ramifications.

As the acclaimed writer Yuval Noah Harari has observed in his book *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*:

Humans were always far better at inventing tools than using them wisely. It is easier to manipulate a river by building a dam across it than it is to predict all the complex consequences this will have for the wider ecological system.

Quite so, and this includes the social and cultural ecological system that human beings are living in. This points to the importance not just of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Medicine), but also of HASS (the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences).

In a time of rapid global change, where science and technology play an increasingly pivotal role, there needs to be far more collaboration between STEM and HASS researchers. This requires long-term investment, and the slow and painstaking development of a shared research culture. The ICS will contribute to this by developing innovative, transdisciplinary research that addresses some of the most urgent challenges of the 21st century.

Ian Ang is Distinguished Professor of Cultural Studies and was the founding director of the Institute for Culture and Society.

BEING A HIGHER DEGREE RESEARCH STUDENT AT THE ICS



Jasbeer Musthafa Mamalipurath



Tsvetelina Hristova

Gay Hawkins, Director of Engagement at the ICS and Sally Byrnes, Business Development Officer, talk to Jasbeer Musthafa Mamalipurath (JM) and Tsvetelina Hristova (TH), two recently completed ICS HDRs, about their experiences studying for a PhD at the ICS.

We started off with some background information about when Jasbeer and Tsvetelina came to the ICS and the nature of their postgraduate research projects.

JM: I joined the ICS in 2015 and my thesis explored knowledge production on Islam in the new media landscape, looking at it from

the post-secular framework. I submitted my thesis in 2020.

TH: I also joined the ICS in 2015 and submitted in October 2020. My thesis examined digital infrastructures and the outsourcing of medical services between the US, Europe, Australia, and India. It was an interdisciplinary project which involved field work in India and Australia and analysis of the technical documentation of key data standards in digital healthcare.

Both of you moved to Australia to do your PhDs, Jasbeer from India and Tsvetelina from Bulgaria, why did you choose the ICS?

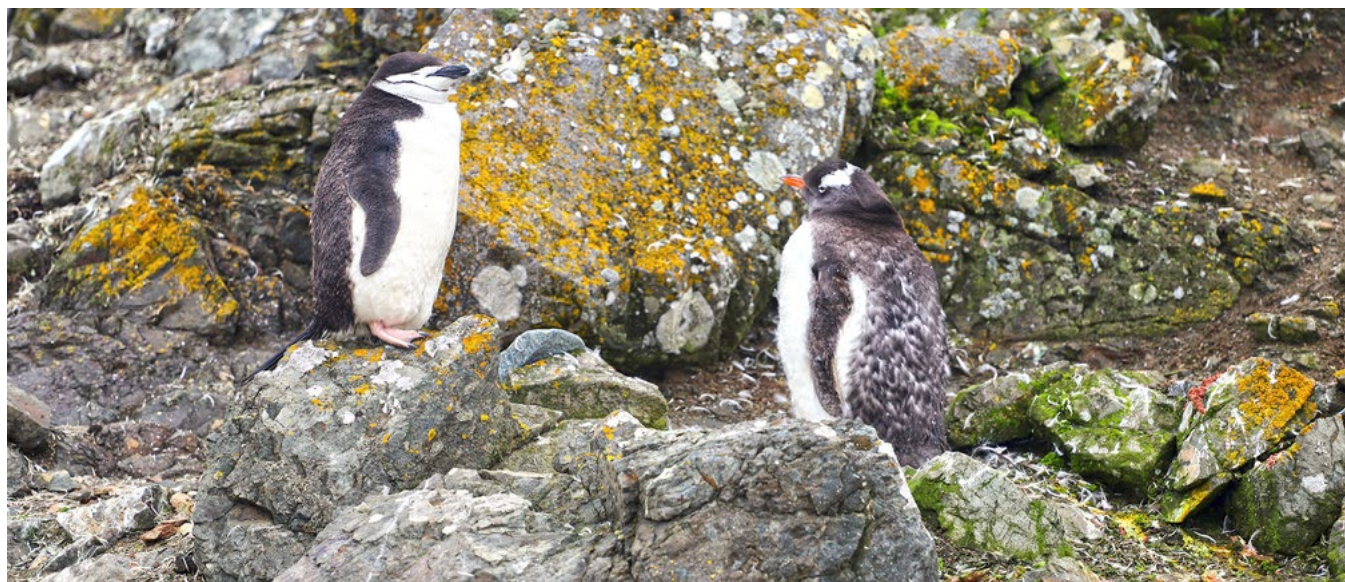
TH: I chose the ICS because of the exciting interdisciplinary research projects undertaken at the Institute. It seemed like a vibrant

environment where academics were doing cutting-edge research. I wanted to do my PhD at a place where I would not be limited by disciplinary conventions.

JM: One of the reasons that attracted me to the Institute was the cohort of the academics. Although many of the academics and their profiles were extremely new to me, I had conversations with a few of the academics when I joined and was able to find great supervisors.

What was it like arriving at the ICS and commencing your studies, how did you make that huge transition to a new country and new academic environment?

JM: Perhaps I should begin by briefly explaining my identities to give a clear



King George Island, Antarctica, taken February 2020 during the Antarctic Cities Youth Expedition. Photograph by Juan Francisco Salazar.

picture of how confronting it was for me to become accustomed to the academic practices at the ICS. I am a Mappila Muslim which is a very small religio-ethnic community from the coastal side of south India. I am also a Dravidian, I say this to describe the distinctiveness of my cultural and ethnic identity as opposed to the broader categorisation as Indian. These two ethno-cultural identities that I embody are also something that are historically revived, reinvented, and reformulated. 2015 was a very challenging year because it was my first encounter with a western academic environment. However, the people at the ICS played a vital role in making me comfortable in all possible ways. For me, the early days at the Institute involved not just an academic induction but a cultural induction. I met and interacted with people from all different walks of life with different skills and expertise.

TH: Yes, coming to Australia was a huge change and I did not know what to expect. My knowledge of Australia was almost entirely limited to *Crocodile Dundee*! However, I felt extremely welcomed and supported from the first day I visited the ICS and met the people there – staff, students, and researchers. Brett Neilson, my supervisor, was very friendly and introduced me to one of his other students, Giulia Dal Maso. Giulia and the rest of the HDRs have been great friends and intellectual companions throughout the years, from my very first week in Sydney. The Institute fosters a great culture of socialising through seminars, lunches, and social events for HDRs but also a lot of the socialising takes place spontaneously and students build great and lasting friendships.

Can you say more about the research environment at the ICS, what role did it play in supporting your research and developing your skills as an academic?

JM: The two best things about doing a PhD at the ICS are the quality of the research community and the opportunity to learn and explore new knowledge. Studying here

gives you the opportunity to interact with world class academics from cultural studies, sociology, economics, geography and digital studies. At the Institute these interactions happen in both formal and informal ways. After the weekly seminar, for example, you might end up in a very rich conversation with a leading academic in the corridors that can lead to a very productive research collaboration. What I really like is the kind of enthusiastic spirit that most academics at the ICS maintain, and the way this leads to very productive knowledge exchange where hierarchy almost becomes irrelevant. Whether you are someone like me who has 1 or 2 academic publications or whether you are someone who has got hundreds of academic publications, what matters is curiosity, the generous exchange of ideas, and a capacity to listen. My studentship at the ICS has helped me to define and articulate the kind of intellectual I have been in search of for many years.

TH: I was inspired and encouraged to be innovative in my research and to draw on theoretical work and methodologies beyond the ones that would be the obvious choice for my project. Apart from that, I was included as a research assistant on a number of projects where I could work alongside more experienced and senior academics and co-author publications with them. This has allowed me to learn and develop skills by observing how senior researchers approach fieldwork, project design, and writing and by receiving immediate feedback from them. Through these projects I gained invaluable hands-on experience and confidence in approaching my own research. I have had the opportunity to work with Liam Magee, Brett Neilson, and Ned Rossiter.

What about the wider culture of the ICS, how do you think doing a PhD here will help your career?

TH: I have a lot of friends who are doing their PhD or have done their PhD in other places around the world and I can definitely see there

is a big difference in how the ICS supports students. I have been involved in a few international and interdisciplinary research projects, which helped build my publication record and introduced me to a network of researchers with similar research interests in critical digital studies around the world. I was given opportunities to build a specific research profile, received great advice about how to do it, and my work was always respected and valued by the senior researchers. Now, when applying for postdoctoral positions, I can see how all this experience in conference organising, publishing, and collaborative international and interdisciplinary research adds to my skills. This means that at the end of my PhD I have a qualification and also diverse and valuable research experience.

JM: I feel that when I graduated from the ICS I didn't just have a degree and a set of critical thinking skills but also techniques to develop a career profile that would be attractive not just to the academic sector but also the non-academic sector. The ICS gave me opportunities to work in many different capacities as a research assistant, HDR representative, seminar committee member, engagement committee member, research impact officer and communications officer. There was a continuous commitment to developing diverse skills and supporting you. At the ICS you are not treated as a student unit you are treated as someone who is valued and contributes to the wider success of the Institute. The Institute is a very generous space, the culture that is maintained at the ICS is extraordinary in so many ways.

Gay Hawkins is a Professor in social and cultural theory and the Director of Engagement at the ICS. Jasbeer Musthafa Mamalipurath and Tsvetelina Hristova have both been PhD candidates at the ICS in 2019-20.

AUSTRALIAN CULTURAL FIELDS: INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AT THE ICS



Covers of the four books released as part of the Australian Cultural Fields project

When the ICS was first established in 2012, its research program consisted, on the one hand, of research themes focused on specific topics: transnational cultural dialogue; globalisation; cultural governance and citizenship; heritage and the environment; and urban cultures. There was also a focus on the relationships between the HASS disciplines, digital research and social change. And, as an integrating device – we called it ‘the program hinge’ – there was the *Australian Cultural Fields* project. This project was charged with the task of conducting ‘a long-term program of research which will provide a comprehensive overview of the organisation of Australian cultural fields and the forces that are reshaping them at a time of extensive global change’.

The last two years have seen the completion of this major project. After a period of intensive planning, a research proposal was submitted to the ARC in 2013 resulting in an award of \$735,000 for the project *Australian Cultural Fields: National and Transnational Dynamics*. This brought together an extraordinary range of interdisciplinary expertise both within the Institute and through the national and international collaborations it orchestrated.

Within the ICS the project drew on David Rowe’s expertise in sport and media; Deborah Stevenson’s in the sociology of art, Tim Rowse’s work in Indigenous studies; Michelle Kelly’s knowledge of literary studies; Greg Noble’s work on Australian multiculturalism; Emma Waterson’s heritage studies expertise; and my own work in cultural studies and cultural sociology. David Carter and Graeme Turner from the University of Queensland joined the team, adding enormous strength to the literary and media studies components of the inquiry. And internationally, Modesto Gayo from the Universidad Diego Portales contributed his skills at the interfaces of sociological field theory and statistical analysis while Fred Myers from New York University brought his expertise in Indigenous art to the project.

The inquiry consisted of five main components. First, we worked on historical materials to identify key changes that have

taken place across the six Australian cultural fields we selected for examination: the visual arts, literary, music, sport, media and heritage fields. Second, we interviewed leading figures in each of these fields. Third, we conducted a national survey of the cultural tastes and activities of Australians across these six cultural fields. This survey was the most comprehensive of its kind ever conducted internationally; and it was the first survey of Australians’ cultural interests to include specific samples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Italian, Lebanese, Chinese and Indian Australians. We then followed up with intensive interviews with a selection of survey respondents to explore the fine texture of their cultural tastes.

The final element of the project consisted of workshops involving other participants to complement and extend our own work. The first workshop was on the theme of *Australian Cultural Fields: Commercialization, Transnationalism and ‘Nationing’*; the theme for the second, focused on Indigenous culture, and was titled *The Difference Identity Makes*; and the third, *Valuing the Arts*, addressed the position of the visual arts.

So what did all this lead to? Well, in quantitative terms, when reporting to the ARC we were able to tell them we had produced 43 book chapters and 19 journal articles, mostly spread across collective outputs – 3 special issues of journals, and four books presenting



Tokyo 2019. Photograph by Ned Rossiter

the collective findings of the research team and other scholars who had been attracted to collaborate with us.

And not just scholars. The first book we published out of the project – *Making Culture: Commercialisation, Transnationalism, and the State of 'Nationing' in Contemporary Australia* – focused on the work of academics. But *The Difference Identity Makes: Indigenous Cultural Capital in Australian Cultural Fields* also involved Indigenous cultural workers and performers. The same was true of *Australian Art Fields: Practices, Policies, Institutions* which included interviews with leading Australian artists spanning Indigenous, feminist, and multicultural arts practices.

But it was the last book published out of the project – *Fields Capitals, Habitus: Australian Culture, Inequalities, and Social Divisions* – that most embodied its collective and interdisciplinary spirit. Including contributions by all members of the research team as well as from other ICS researchers – Ben Dibley, Liam Magee, Anna Cristina Pertierria, and Megan Watkins – it has been judged by the Director of LSE's Social Inequalities Institute to be 'one of the most sophisticated studies of cultural inequality anywhere in the world'.

Public interest in the project has been strong too. It has led to several articles in *The Conversation*. It featured in the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's 2018 *Class*

Acts – a four-part radio series on class in Australia. And it formed the basis for the accompanying quiz – *What Your Habits Reveal about Your Social Class* – that we developed in partnership with the ABC's Digital Stories Innovation team. Recruiting around 750,000 participants in its first few days, it was that team's most popular interactive feature to that date.

None of this would have been possible without the collaborative environment and supportive research infrastructure provided by the ICS. Much of my work before joining Western Sydney University and taking on the role of ICS's foundation Research Director and Director of the *Australia Cultural Fields* project had been in research centres funded by national research councils: as the Director of the Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy across Griffith University QUT and the University of Queensland; and then as a Director of the ESRC's Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change across Manchester University and the Open University. Both centres, like the ICS, operated across a wide range of HASS disciplines.

While I had high hopes in the early stages of developing the ICS that it would be able to operate on the same scale and with the same impact, I also doubted how far this might be possible without research council funding. The quality of its leadership, of its academic and professional staff, and of the supportive

University environment in which it has flourished have, however, more than justified my initial expectations.

This is an important accomplishment not just for the ICS and WSU; it is also one that has left its mark in the contribution both have made to the national HASS research infrastructure. While the single structure of the ARC has many advantages, a capacity to allocate research centre funding to develop a national research infrastructure that supports the HASS sector is not one of them. It is for this reason that Australian universities have a unique role to play in supporting the development of programs, institutes and centres able to plan and deliver projects on the scale that the ICS has demonstrated. And with a Coalition government with its eyes clearly set on reducing student intake into the HASS disciplines, such university support will prove increasingly vital.

Tony Bennett is an Emeritus Professor at the ICS and was the Institute's founding Research Director.

ANNOUNCING THE NEW ICS RESEARCH PROGRAMS



Mural in Eastwood. Photograph by Alexandra Wong.



"Mobile Phones in PNG" By Milan Boie. 2015. Commissioned by the ARC Discovery Project "The Moral and Cultural Economy of Mobile Phones in the Pacific"



POSITIONS Berlin Art Fair 2018, Flughafen Tempelhof. Photograph by Ned Rossiter.

Over the course of this year members of the ICS held planning meetings to reflect upon our research focus and future in light of contemporary debates and emerging global events and conditions. This period of review and renewal was also inspired by the changing staffing profile of the ICS, including four new Vice Chancellor's Research Fellows, a new Senior Research Fellow and the appointment of our new Director. Our consultations eventually led to the development of five new programs:

- **Automated Worlds:** Investigating the cultural and geopolitical stakes of how automation technologies transform economy and society.
- **Borders and Diversity:** Researching contemporary cultural diversity and the intensifying presence of borders that govern labour, life and movement.

- **Cultural Infrastructures:** Exploring cultural institutions and practices as social infrastructures that shape everyday lives across cities and regions.
- **Environment and Technology:** Examining the nexus between environment and technology in order to address crises from the local to the planetary scale.
- **Urban Futures:** Identifying the conditions that make urban areas and regions flourish as spaces of inclusion, care and justice.

The five new programs reflect the breadth and depth of cutting edge research that the ICS is known for. Following our model of engaged research, the new programs are designed to account for, respond to and shape ICS research into the next three to five years. Research Programs are closely aligned with relevant Sustainable Development Goals, which the ICS and WSU are strongly committed to supporting in ways that meaningfully address the impact of issues such as climate change and gender equity.

Less containers than concentrations of activity that cultivate and forge new lines of research, the core themes and interests of the programs intersect in ways that encourage the cross-

fertilization of ideas, plans, projects and teams of researchers. Each program, for example, is led by a senior researcher and early or mid-career researcher, enabling mentorship and the development of leadership skills that will guide the ICS as it transitions new generations of researchers into governance roles in the ICS and across the University.

The new research program leaders and members will also work closely with our HDR cohorts, integrating students into the research activities and projects of the Institute from development to implementation phases. This will ensure a diverse and rich research training experience for HDRs, with additional opportunities to expand their repertoire of research capabilities.

We look forward to kicking off our new research programs in 2021 and we invite you to join the conversation.

Ned Rossiter is Director of Research at the Institute for Culture and Society and Professor of Communication in the School of Humanities and Communication Arts.

ENGAGING WITH THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

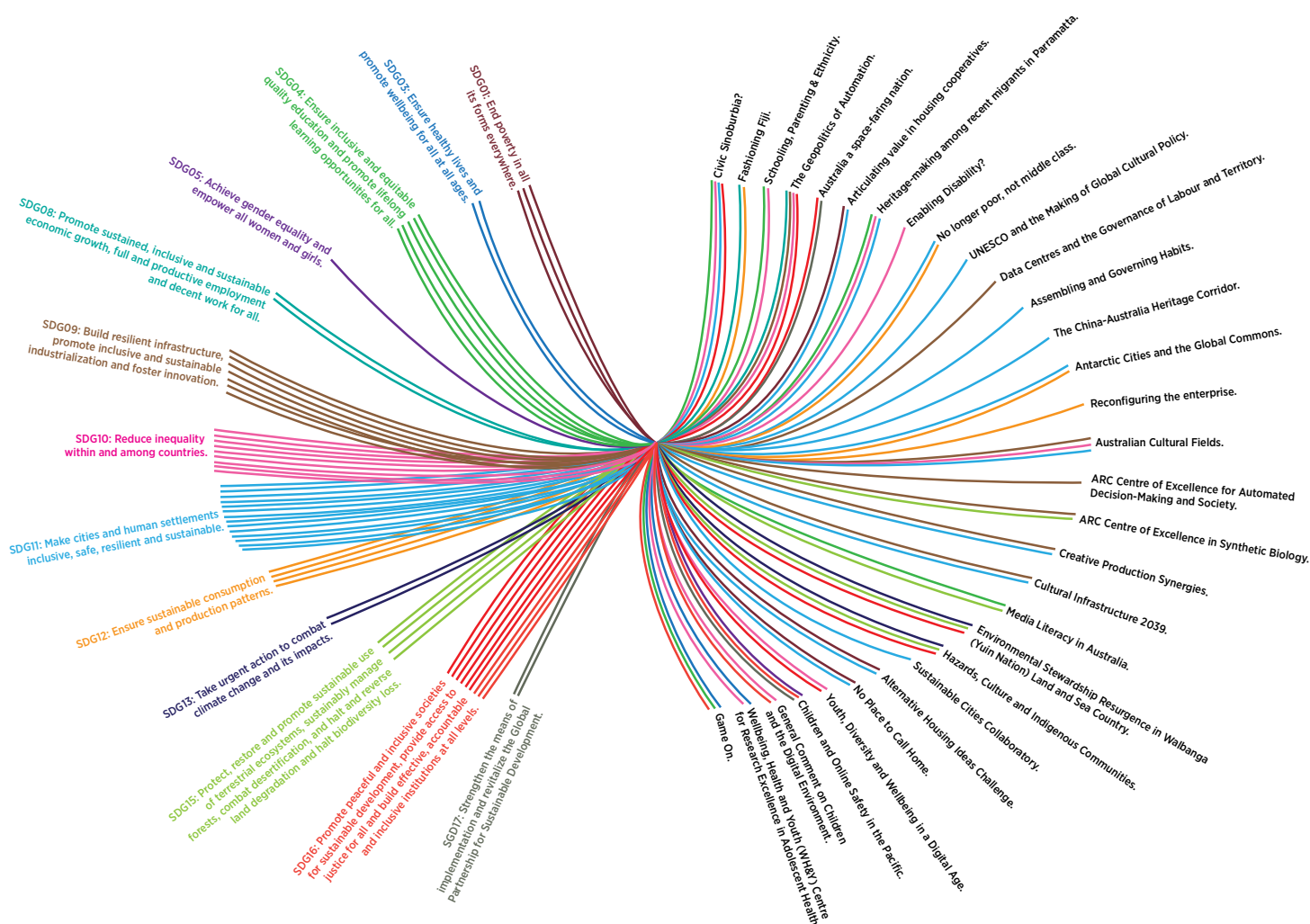
The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. These goals recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth - all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

Western Sydney University, like many universities around the world, has actively

focused on engaging with the SDGs. In 2020 the Times Higher Education University Impact Ranking rated WSU 3rd overall in the world for its contribution to the SDGs. The visualisation below documents how the Institute's research projects contribute to the SDGs.

- GOAL 1: No Poverty
- GOAL 2: Zero Hunger
- GOAL 3: Good Health and Well-being
- GOAL 4: Quality Education
- GOAL 5: Gender Equality
- GOAL 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
- GOAL 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
- GOAL 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

- GOAL 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- GOAL 10: Reduced Inequality
- GOAL 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
- GOAL 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
- GOAL 13: Climate Action
- GOAL 14: Life Below Water
- GOAL 15: Life on Land
- GOAL 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions
- GOAL 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal



BUILDING THE YOUNG AND RESILIENT RESEARCH CENTRE



Young and Resilient Group photo

Established in 2019, the Young and Resilient Research Centre (Y&R) grew out of the ICS Young and Resilient Strategic Research Centre and the work of the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre (2011–2016). Y&R is the ICS's first special research centre and is a result of the Institute's strong approach to engaged research that uses youth-centred, participatory co-research and co-design methods. In this contribution Gay Hawkins interviews Professor Amanda Third and Associate Professor Pip Collin, the co-directors of the Young and Resilient Research Centre.

What are the key objectives of the Young & Resilient Research Centre?

Y&R is working to create a world in which all young people can leverage technology for their resilience and wellbeing. Young people currently face high rates of mental ill health, housing uncertainty and a volatile job market and these factors will be compounded over the next 25 years as rapid and significant technological, economic and social changes

take place across the globe. Greater Western Sydney, in particular, is contending with existing socio-economic inequalities and the potentially compounding effects of these changes could significantly impact young people's quality of life, health and wellbeing.

However, there is significant opportunity to leverage the digital to support the resilience of young people and their communities - specifically empowering them to transform the conditions of social life that produce adversity. In Australia and elsewhere, technology plays an increasing role in young people's everyday lives. Ninety-nine per cent of young Australians are online daily - and this has only intensified in the face of the pandemic. Our research aims to generate the evidence we need to maximise the benefits of technology for resilience.

You are recognised as leaders in engaged research - can you explain your approach to research that is engaged and that has significant social impacts?

Y&R has established an outstanding international reputation for research on how to leverage technology to support the wellbeing and resilience of young people. We approach resilience through four key themes that shape the everyday: education and work; places and platforms; health and wellbeing; and participation and engagement.

We aim to generate research that can help drive social change. But we are also invested

in developing ways to co-research the issues that impact resilience and wellbeing with children, young people and their communities. In doing so, we aim to generate evidence and build communities' capacity to achieve social change.

Our methods are scaffolded into the *Intergener8 Living Lab*, which underpins our research program. A Living Lab is a user-centred, open innovation 'ecosystem' that brings together a broad range of stakeholders in ongoing collaborative cycles of research, design, development, testing, evaluation and delivery; to implement effective responses to complex social issues. Working in this way enables us to design for diversity, to build community buy-in, and to approach the complex issue of young people's resilience systematically, while remaining flexible and responsive to emergent challenges.

We do quantitative forms of research, but we prioritise qualitative research because our experience shows that using creative and participatory methods - everything from brainstorming to making collage and building with Lego blocks - can open up spaces to take a deep dive into people's experiences. We often embed partner representatives in our research teams and have trained young people to participate in research projects. We have found that this way of working supports communities to identify the challenges and opportunities for community resilience.



Green Square Library. Photograph by Alexandra Wong

What are some of the highlights or key achievements of Y & R during 2019/20?

2019 was a big year for Y&R. We were in start-up mode; busy getting the necessary infrastructure in place for the Centre to run and formalising our network of more than 30 Western staff from across seven Schools and Institutes. We hired professional and academic staff, established our first cohort of HDR students, and welcomed two Vice Chancellor's Fellows - Dr Sukhmani Khorana and Dr Benjamin Hanckel - to the Centre.

Of our research projects and initiatives some key highlights of 2019 include:

- Over 1400 young people participated in research along with more than 500 parents or guardians.
- 27 countries were represented; including in depth work in Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, The Philippines and Solomon Islands
- our researchers advised industry, NGOs and government through a variety of policy and advocacy roles, including membership of the Australian Federal Government's

eSafety Advisory Committee, Global Kids Online Expert Advisory, Google Global's Kids and Families Advisory, ASEAN Regional Think Tank on Online Child Protection, the Australian Living Labs Innovation Network, Digitally Connected, UNICEF Australia's Child Rights Taskforce, and the 2168 Children's Parliament Ambassador Group.

- 26 publications were produced including the Wellbeing, Health and Youth Engagement Framework report.
- Amanda Third and Philippa Collin published their book, *Young people in digital society: control/shift*, with Lucas Walsh and Ros Black.

Reflecting on your individual careers, how has the ICS contributed to the development of your own research capacities?

We are incredibly proud to be part of the ICS which has allowed us to develop our own research capacities in a highly supportive and intellectually rich and vibrant culture of research and exchange. We have benefited

enormously from generous colleagues who are leaders in their fields in Australia and internationally, and many ICS researchers have joined our projects and other initiatives. We deeply appreciate the Institute's commitment to fostering innovation, pushing the boundaries and constantly engaging with the question of the role of research in the social world. And we are excited about contributing to the ICS's ongoing endeavours, here in Western Sydney and beyond.

Professor Amanda Third and Associate Professor Philippa Collin are Co-Directors of the Young and Resilient Research Centre and the Intergener8 Living Lab.

PARTICIPATING IN THE ICS AS A SCHOOL BASED MEMBER



Associate Professor Karen Soldatic



Associate Professor Anna Cristina Perterra

One of the not-so-hidden secrets of the ICS is that almost half (30) of the (63) Academic staff working in the Institute in 2020 are school-based members. School-based members are an essential part of the ICS research culture and a vital connection to the schools where they undertake their primary teaching roles at Western Sydney University. Whereas some researchers participate in the ICS as Institute Fellows where their research

and governance activities are associated with the Institute, others have started out in the Institute as researchers on DECRA or other grants and have then moved into continuing positions in schools at the end of these grants. A number of school-based researchers are also long-term scholars at Western Sydney who reach out for research project support and submission and participate in our regular seminar series and other activities.

School-based members of the ICS contribute in diverse ways to the life and research culture of the Institute and here we feature two members experiences with and participation in the ICS. Associate Professor Karen Soldatic is currently an Institute Fellow. Karen joined the Institute in 2016 as an ARC DECRA Fellow to work on a project focused upon "Disability Income Reform & Regional Australia: The Indigenous Experience". Since the completion of her DECRA project in 2019, Karen transitioned to a school-based ICS member who teaches in the Social Work program in the School of Social Sciences. Associate Professor Anna Cristina Perterra teaches in the Cultural and Social Analysis and Arts Program in the School of Humanities and Communication Arts. In contrast to Karen who



MEDIA CULTURES IN LATIN AMERICA

KEY CONCEPTS AND NEW DEBATES

Edited by

Anna Cristina Pertierra and Juan Francisco Salazar



Pertierra, A & Salazar, J, eds, 2020 *Media Cultures in Latin America*, New York: Routledge.



DISABILITY AND NEOLIBERAL STATE FORMATIONS

Karen Soldatic



Soldatic, K, 2018 *Disability and neoliberal state formations*, Routledge.

started her position as a researcher in the ICS, Anna joined the Institute as a school-based member in 2015. In addition, Anna joined the ICS leadership team as the Deputy Director of Research this year.

Anna and Karen are interdisciplinary scholars whose work connects to different research programs and initiatives across the Institute. Anna's research is situated at the intersection of cultural studies, media studies and social anthropology and draws upon extensive ethnographic research in Cuba, Mexico and the Philippines. Anna is currently the first Chief Investigator on a large-scale comparative ARC Discovery Project entitled "No longer poor, not middle class: new consumer cultures in the Global South". Comprised of an all-female team of international investigators, the project explores the ways in which consumer culture is changing in four key countries, China, Brazil, Mexico and the Philippines. Karen's core research focuses upon critical disability research, examining how disability is constructed and how these constructions play out in the regulation of the body and associated welfare systems in marginalized communities in Australia and the global south. As a former policy practitioner, one of Karen's strengths is the translation of her research findings into relevant policies and discussions with those in government making decisions about disability and social services.

One of the strengths of the ICS over the years has been its cultivation of early career researchers into mid-career researchers through research development and grant support, seminar participation and

publications. Anna's new consumer cultures project, for example, emerged alongside her integration into ICS culture. Anna was invited to participate in workshops, seminars and other events associated with the Australian Cultural Fields project led by Tony Bennett. During this time, a series of ICS colleagues closely read Anna's ARC Discovery Project application, providing her with constructive comments over multiple drafts. This targeted support and mentorship ultimately led to a high-quality proposal and, as a result, the award of the grant by the ARC. The project was the first ARC grant that Anna received as a lead investigator.

Like Anna, Karen sees the ICS as a critical research hub for school-based members at Western Sydney University. While working on her DECRA project Karen began a series of conversations with fellow ICS researchers Liam Magee, Shanthi Robertson and Paul James on the role of automation in welfare services, an emergent area of development in Australia. This led to the development and submission of an ARC Linkage "Autonomy, Diversity & Disability: Everyday Practices of Technology (ADDEPT)" that was ultimately awarded at the end of 2019. As Karen describes, the research culture that the ICS has developed is special and has led not only to her own grant success but also fruitful collaborations with other researchers in the Institute. Some of these engagements have come through participation in our regular seminar series and the kinds of informal research culture that is cultivated in these collegial spaces. Moreover, Karen prizes the expertise and experience of the professional

staff team in the Institute who are "smart and savvy" and provide "strategic, professional advice". Karen describes the ICS as "an incredibly rich environment" for research that provides early and mid-career researchers with informal training on "how to be an academic".

School-based members such as Anna and Karen are incredibly important to the ICS and our efforts to explore different research domains, and to strengthen the connection between research and teaching. An exemplar of this approach, one of Anna's recent publications *Media Anthropology for the Digital Age* (Polity Press) was motivated by her desire to write a research-grounded monograph that could be integrated into her undergraduate and graduate teaching practice. This synergy – and our broader commitment to teaching and HDR training – is one that we continue to hone as we respond to the post-COVID realities of Higher Education in Australia. We look forward to continuing to foster a supportive and robust environment for research while also working with our school-based members about the ways in which research and teaching can be creatively co-developed into the future.

Piece written by Professor Heather Horst following an interview.

DEVELOPING PARTNER PATHWAYS



Mural in Hurstville. Photograph by Alexandra Wong

Research partnerships are foundational to the Institute for Culture and Society's mission to undertake research that is engaged, impactful, and connected to the communities it serves.

In this short essay, we outline the establishment and development of one such partnership, the Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre (WSMRC). It is a success story: a relationship that began with a small collaborative project in 2018, and that led to an eventual four year Australian Research Council Linkage Project being awarded in 2019, with the WSMRC as one of four key partners in that award. Equally, it is a story that defies the sometimes formulaic prescriptions for partner development, and highlights the need for sustained, varied and nuanced communication.

In 2017, Professor Paul James was contacted by Iman (Shuman) Partoredjo and Kamalle Dabboussy to co-develop a report on the challenges facing recently arrived migrants and refugees in the City of Liverpool, in Sydney's outer south west. Focussing particularly on migrants and refugees living with disability, the project would identify and assess critical issues in the City: access to transport, cost of living, options for education and employment. Paul assembled a small team that included Associate Professors Karen Soldatic and Liam Magee, and employed a framework, *Circles of Social Life*, that he and Liam had developed and applied in other urban contexts.

Together with the WSMRC, the ICS team held two half-day workshops in early 2018, and a series of follow-up interviews with service providers. A report published late in 2018 and co-authored between the two partners brought together these findings with literature and Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) statistics.

In the course of our work, we noted the rising importance of technology, and its relationship to urban infrastructure for many people with disability from non-English backgrounds. Advances in AI, for example, point to the possibilities of machine translation to and from English on mobile phones; new options for transport and mobility; and 'smart' services that identify objects and hazards for people with vision impairments. At the time – and certainly in the two years since – we were also acutely aware of the pitfalls that technology's intrusion into everyday life might pose. Privacy, security and algorithmic bias have only grown as issues that warrant both community concern and academic attention.

Around this issue, and led by Karen, a team that now included migration scholar Associate Professor Shanthi Robertson set about building a consortium of partners for a larger and more sustained investigation. The new project would now look into how members of Sydney's culturally and linguistically diverse communities who are living with disability



The Northeast Restaurant in Eastwood. Photograph by Christina Ho.

think about and integrate emerging AI-driven technology in their daily lives. Key to our approach was the establishment of a creative and collaborative workshop format that invited experimentation with technology devices and services, and we opted to work with two galleries with strong community connections and expertise for this purpose. Building upon the relationship with the WSMRC, we also engaged as partners Casula Powerhouse, YourSide and Gallery Lane Cove: three organisations, representing service providers and creative industries, in Sydney's south west and north east.

With a group of partners in place, we also invited a former colleague of Liam and Paul's, Lida Ghahremanlou, to join the team as a partner investigator. Now at Microsoft UK, Lida would complement the team's expertise with her specialised knowledge of AI systems and applications. The ARC application was submitted in early 2019 and awarded later that year. Assessors all noted the significance of the prior track record the team had

established with partners, and the particular importance of the pilot study conducted with the WSMRC.

COVID's intervention in 2020 both complicated contractual negotiations – with a number of partners dealing with their own uncertainties about future long-term funding – and also led to delays in the commencement of fieldwork. These complications have required the team to maintain a productive dialogue with partners, and to find new ways to build a community of practice in exceptional times. One example of finding alternative ways to work together has come in the form of a program of webinars held in late 2020, conducted jointly with Western Sydney University's WesternXed program, where researchers, partners and others will respond to topics of migration, technology, service provision, disability and creativity.

Our experiences have shown that keeping our partners' changing needs and priorities central to our research practice matters.

Both the project, and the ongoing cross-sectoral network it seeks to foster, are still in their early stages. Even so, the project already showcases the possibilities for academics to work closely and continuously with community-based organisations, to develop trust, and to begin the longer and complex work of delivering meaningful research back to local communities.

By Associate Professor Liam Magee, Associate Professor Karen Soldatic, Associate Professor Shanthi Robertson, Professor Paul James. The research team are now investigators on the ARC Linkage project: Autonomy, Diversity & Disability: Everyday Practices of Technology (ADDEPT).

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