

ANNUAL REVIEW

2023-2024

Institute for Culture and Society

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



Institute for Culture
and Society

Compiled and edited by: Sally Byrnes, Heather Horst, Deniz Agraz, Ned Rossiter, Kim Pham

Contributors: Sally Byrnes, Stephen Healy, Declan Kuch, Louise Crabtree-Hayes, Neil Perry, Deniz Agraz, Eleanor Robson, Douglas Belton II, Kim Pham, Luke Munn, Gay Hawkins, Deborah Stevenson, Katherine Gibson, Brett Neilson, Indu Balachandran, Ien Ang, Malini Sur, Elisa Loncon, Juan Salazar, Gonzalo Salazar

Cover Image: Valle del Elqui, Chile, December 2022. Photo Credit J.F. Salazar.

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Photo Credit: Atacama Desert, November 2022. J.F. Salazar.

DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, I lived on the central coast of California not far from the Ellwood Monarch Butterfly Grove. The grove is part of a dynamic ecosystem where monarch butterflies rest and take refuge in the temperate climate of the region during their annual migration from Canada to Mexico. In autumn and early winter, the Cyprus and eucalyptus trees in the Ellwood grove are filled with dense clusters of monarchs taking in the sun and, on occasion, it is possible to see a few bright orange, gold and brown wings fluttering above in the trees feeding on nectar and other sources of energy. The monarchs who overwinter, as this period of hibernation is called, typically live up to nine months which is long enough to reach Mexico and lay eggs that will become the next generation of caterpillars that transform into monarchs on the return journey to Canada in the spring and summer.



Photo credit: Sally Byrnes

When I reflect on the past two years at the Institute, I am reminded of the migration of the monarch butterfly, the forms continuity and change that their journey involves and the threat that climate change poses for the monarch's habitat. In this introduction I will highlight how the ICS has continued its original mission to develop ecosystems, infrastructures and insights that support staff, and the University navigate changes in the world.

Over the past two years, we focused upon four strategic priorities – International Connection and Collaboration, Engagement with Indigenous Priorities, the Reinvigoration of Engaged Research and Retaining Research Excellence – amid rapid policy change in the higher education sector. As a University-wide Institute whose work has always been connected to Western's regional mission, this has occurred together with faculty in the schools, many of whom have taken up leadership roles in the Institute.

INTERNATIONAL CONNECTION AND COLLABORATION

One of our first priorities during this period was a focus on international events and partnerships. ICS hosted a series of residential guests and research fellows such as Professor Brent Elder (Canada), Adjunct Professor Robert Foster (USA), Professor Gökçen Karanfil (Turkey), Professor Line Melbøe (Norway), Associate Professor Gonzalo Salazar (Chile) and Associate Professor Victoria Nuviala (Argentina), to name a few of our longer-term visitors. We also welcomed PhD students Stephanie Niu (Fulbright, USA) and First Nations PhD students Jimena Cruz Mamani (Atacameña/Chile) and Luzmarina Huenchucuy (Mapuche/Chile).

In August 2023, a team of ICS researchers travelled to Hsinchu City, Taiwan to attend the first Transit Asia Research Network Conference (see article). Co-chaired by Professor Brett Neilson and Professor Joyce Liu, this event marks the first in a series of reinvigorating research collaborations in the Asia-Pacific. This event led to the addition of two international members, Professors Joyce Liu and Jack Qiu, to our External Advisory Board, which is now led by Indu Balachandran.

ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PRIORITIES

We were particularly proud to develop our ICS Indigenous Strategy, the first in the history of the Institute. We spent time in a small working group that included Associate Professor Jess Weir, Professor Louise Crabtree-Hayes, Professor Phillippa Collin, Professor Juan Francisco Salazar, Professor Corrinne Sullivan and Institute Manager Terry Fairclough. The Strategy was launched with the DVC Indigenous Leadership's support as WSU plans the building of a new Indigenous Centre of Excellence. The strategy involves a commitment for embracing Indigenous speakers and issues in our regular ICS seminars and we hosted our first International Indigenous Visiting Fellow, Mapuche Associate Professor Elisa Loncon from Chile (see article). In 2024 we also published the Institute's Issues Journal edited by Professor Corrinne Sullivan which was dedicated to First Nations knowledge and scholarship in Australia.

Professor Sullivan was also the recipient of several accolades including the receipt of the 'William Jonas Award' by the Institute of Australian Geographers that recognised her



Image: Launch of Biennale of Sydney's rivus: a Glossary of Water book at WSU Parramatta South, March 2022. Photo Credit Sally Tsoutas. From left to right: Felicity Castagna, Barbara Moore, Michelle Trudgett, Juan Salazar, José Roca, Catriona Menzies-Pike, Heather Horst, Anna Pertierra, Deborah Sweeney, and Kate Fagan.

sustained contributions to Indigenous geographies and the award of the title “Indigenous Person of the Year” at the inaugural Western Sydney University NAIDOC Awards 2024. Professor Corinne Sullivan, Professor Karen Soldatic and Dr. Kim Spurway were also commended for “Excellence in Indigenous Research” (2023) for the Dalarinji project and Associate Professor Jessica Weir was recognised for “Excellence in Indigenous Research” at Western (2023) for her collaborative research with Indigenous people and organizations.

REINVIGORATION OF ENGAGED RESEARCH

While many members continued their collaborations with communities during COVID-19, we committed to reinvigorating our commitment to engaged research with communities in the greater Sydney region. In February 2023, ICS researchers launched The China-Australia Migration Corridor: History and Heritage book at the Darling Square Library. Nearly 100 members of the Chinese community and others gathered to share their personal stories as part of a long-term research project into Chinese-Australian history conducted by Professor Denis Byrne, Distinguished Professor Ien Ang, Dr. Phillip Mar, Dr. Alexandra Wong and others. The Institute also hosted our largest conference in years, the Terrestrial Politics in Uncertain Times at the Maldhan Ngurr Ngurra Lithgow Hub and the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo (see article). Co-convened by Associate Professor Stephen Healy and Dr. Declan Kuch, the conference featured discussions of climate change, politics, care and a series of short films by the Archival Futures Collective (ARC Future Fellowship funded PhD Dr. Ceridwen Dovey, School of Humanities and Communication Arts.

2023 and 2024 also saw ICS continuing to build on our strong partnerships with organisations such as Settlement Services International with a new project focussing on refugees with disability led by Professor Gerard Goggin, Associate Professor Liam Magee and Wenqi Tan. We also welcomed new collaborative partners to the Institute including the NSW Environment Trust, the Human Rights Commission and Meta Australia. These projects ranged from a project focused upon industrial hemp led by Professor Neil Perry, Professor Louise Crabtree-Hayes and Associate Professor Stephen Healy, Associate Professor Lucy Nichols' work on trans and gender diverse human rights and Associate Professor Tanya Notley's work on adult media literacy.

Engaged research, particularly with industry, also expanded during this period with the formal launch of one of our Strategic Research Initiatives, the Urban Transformations Research Centre (UTRC). Co-Directed by Professors Nicky Morrison and Greg Morrison, the UTRC opened in November 2022 and has quickly become a hub for multidisciplinary collaborations across Engineering, Social Sciences and other Schools at Western (see article). UTRC has recruited a range of fantastic research fellows including Dr. Thomas Longden who won the WSU Impact Competition Award in 2024. UTRC is moving from strength-to-strength due in large part to the interdisciplinary and industry-engaged nature of their work.

UTRC's areas of strength complement the influential work of Professors Amanda Third, Philippa Collin and other colleagues in the Young and Resilient Research Centre. Alongside being a very public voice against the government's new social media age restriction laws, Young and Resilient won a

WSU Research Collaboration through Industry Partnership Award (2024) and an Excellence and Sustainability Award from WSU (2024). In addition, Amanda Third, Lilly Moody and Girish Lala received a “Real Impact Award” from Emerald Publishing Group. Lilly Moody was also recognized for Excellence in Research Management by WSU in 2024.

RETAINING RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

Alongside the three priority areas, we moved at record pace to support the core business of the Institute: research excellence. Under the leadership of Associate Professor Fiona Cameron (2023) and Associate Professor Malini Sur (2024), we celebrated the graduation of a significant number of HDR students. In 2023, Helen Barcham, Christopher Cheng, Ha Hoang, Emilie Baganz and Clinton Johnson were all awarded doctorates and 2024 saw the award of no less than seven doctorates including Georgia Coe, Yinghua Yu, Vanessa Whittington, Lisa Portolan, Gina Gatarin, Marina Khan and Francesca Sidoti. A testament to our ethos of engaged research, several of our HDR students and alumni moved into academic and industry roles in organizations, ranging from the University of Vermont and Western Sydney University to Inside Policy and the Australian Local Government Association, to name a few (see article).

Many ICS colleagues also were awarded commendations and promotions. Tanya Notley received a WSU award for “Research Excellence Through Industry Collaboration or Partnership” (2023) and Neil Perry was honoured for his “Excellence in Research Leadership and Development” (2023). Melissa Phillips (2023) was promoted to Senior

Lecturer; Benjamin Hanckel (2023), Youqing Fan (2023) and Quah Ee Ling (2024) were promoted to Associate Professor; and Louise Crabtree-Hayes, Ann Dadich, Kate Huppertz, Pejman Sharafi and Corrinne Sullivan and Ann Dadich were all promoted to Professor. In addition, our new colleague Gerard Goggin, who joined the Institute in January 2024 (see article), was promoted to Distinguished Professor in September 2024 in recognition of his outstanding contributions to disability studies, media and communication studies and the academy.

Beyond Western Sydney University, ICS scholars received awards and other accolades. Distinguished Professor Ien Ang was named the winner of the inaugural Martin Bulmer Prize for Article of the Year Award 2022 for her article "On the perils of racialized Chineseness: race, nation and entangled racisms in China and Southeast Asia". Associate Professor Malini Sur received an Honorable Mention for the Bernard S. Cohn Prize for her book *Jungle Passports* from the Association for Asian Studies and Dr. Zelmarié Cantillon was awarded the Mander Jones Award by the Australian Society of Archivists for her project "Zines as Community Archive".

We also achieved success in the nationally recognized Category 1 funding from the Australian Research Council. In 2023, ARC Linkage Project awards included Professor Tanya Notley's "Addressing Misinformation with Media Literacy through Cultural Institutions", Associate Professor Quah Ee Ling's 'Place-based employment and enterprise of newly arrived young migrant women' and Associate Professor Emma Power's "Housing Australia's ageing population: Delivering solutions that meet older people's housing aspirations". ARC Discovery Project grant funding awarded in 2023 included Professor Corrinne Sullivan's "Storying and repairing water places in Wiradjuri Country"; Professor Paul James' "Extinction Imaginaries: Mapping Affective Visual Cultures in Australasia" and Professor Juan Francisco Salazar's "Surfacing wetlands through design ethnography and visualization in two urban renewal sites in Sydney".

In 2024, Professors Corrinne Sullivan and Karen Soldatic received ARC Discovery Indigenous funding for the project, "Indigenous/Pasifika LGBTIQ+ wellbeing & the role of rights-based practices". We also ended the year with an incredible outcome: all three

ARC Discovery Project submissions were awarded with close to full funding. This included Professor Gerard Goggin's project "Disability and Digital Citizenship", Professor Denis Byrne and Emeritus Professor Gay Hawkins' "The legacy of coastal infrastructure: reclamations and seawalls" and Professors Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter's "Transborder Electricity Infrastructures and Geopolitics".

While the talent of our ICS colleagues is certainly one measure of this stellar grant success, two individuals – our Director of Research Ned Rossiter and our Senior Research Officer Dr Hua (Flora) Zhong – have gone above and beyond to coordinate feedback from academic colleagues, research development, income diversification, budget advice and a range of other extraordinary levels of support and strategic planning. One of the notable priorities established in 2024 was the building of a HASS-STEM collaboration Ned initiated across Western Sydney University with support from a dedicated research development scheme. A testament to their commitment, at the end of 2024, Flora was commended for Excellence in Research Management and the Senior DVC Research, Enterprise, and Global, recognized Ned with WSU's Excellence in Research Leadership and Development Award.

Finally, the Institute also said a fond farewell to many of the generation of colleagues involved since the early years of the Institute for Culture and Society including Katherine Gibson, Gay Hawkins, Michelle Kelly, Deborah Stevenson, Megan Watkins and the original founding Director of the Institute Ien Ang. This included a formal farewell for Ien in November 2024 that included reflections from the early days when Ien joined University of Western Sydney in 1996, the formation of the Centre for Cultural Research and the appointment of one of Western's first postdoctoral researchers, Mandy Thomas, who was also awarded an Honorary Doctorate of the Arts from Western Sydney University in October 2024.

As I have often noted over the course of this year, it has been an absolute privilege to be able to lead such a talented group of academic and professional staff members, including our brilliant HDR students. But what may not be as visible is the strong commitment, the creativity, and the collaborative ethos that underpins every successful grant, HDR completion and other achievement. As we had the opportunity to

reflect upon at Ien Ang's farewell event, this interconnected ecosystem has been formally and informally structured and enculturated into the way the Institute operates and is what, at the end of the day, makes the ICS a wonderful and collegial place to work.

With the welcome of our new Vice Chancellor Distinguished Professor George Williams to Western in July 2024 and the retirement of many of our cherished colleagues underway, this is a period of change and continuity at the Institute. This is also marked by my own departure as Director of the Institute as I move on to other exciting challenges beyond Western. While I will miss working with this amazing community of researchers on a daily basis, I am confident that the Institute and my esteemed colleagues under the leadership of Interim Director Juan Salazar are ready to greet the next phase of the Institute with energy and enthusiasm. The successes outlined in introduction and this review reflect the well-developed and intrinsically collaborative strategies of engaged and meaningful research.

With much admiration and gratitude,
Heather A. Horst, FAHA
Director Institute for Culture and Society
(2020-2024).

Heather A. Horst



INSITUTE OF CULTURE AND SOCIETY

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



Institute for Culture
and Society

HIGHLIGHTS 2023 & 2024

RESEARCH INCOME

\$9,515,469

HDR STUDENTS
GRADUATED



13

GRANTS
AWARDED



50

ARC
GRANTS



13

CONVERSATION
ARTICLES



51

CONVERSATION
ARTICLE VIEWS



650,000

RESEARCH
PUBLICATIONS



370

PUBLISHED
BOOKS



28

ICS ADVISORY BOARD

By Brett Neilson

December 2023 marked the end of the two-year term of our previous Advisory Board. We extend our appreciation to Professor Gerard Goggin for his leadership as Chair during the challenging post-COVID period. We are pleased that all previous board members will continue their roles, and we welcome Indu Balachandran as the new Chair of the Advisory Board.

In 2024, we were also pleased to welcome two new members to the team. Professor Joyce Liu (National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan) and Professor Jack Qiu (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore) have joined the Advisory Board. Their academic expertise and regional insights will support the Institute's work, particularly as our research presence in Southeast Asia continues to grow.

Indu Balachandran (Chair) says of our new board:

“The Advisory Board has a unique role to elevate the extraordinary work and the dedicated faculty of ICS. The six members bring interdisciplinary expertise and are committed to weaving together industry, society and academia towards sustainable knowledge production. With new members from Taiwan and Singapore joining our existing complement in community development, technology, culture and climate, we are excited to make our contribution to ICS’s bright future.”



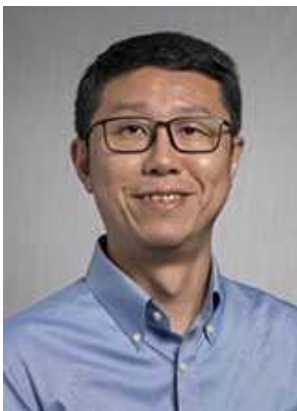
**MS INDU BALACHANDRAN
(CHAIR)**

Indu Balachandran is a consultant who has worked in strategy, program design and delivery, and governance in the social-purpose sector for over 15 years. Her advisory roles include the Kuring-Gai Council's Multicultural Advisory Committee. Her prior leadership roles were at the Aboriginal Housing Office (NSW Gov), the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence and Social Ventures Australia. Indu was a recipient of the UTS Human Rights Award for Reconciliation and is a Global Atlantic Fellow in social equity.



DR MARK CREES

Dr Mark Crees is the Director of Create Infrastructure at Create NSW at the Department of Premier and Cabinet NSW. He has worked in government, arts and cultural organizations for over 25 years and has extensive experience with the strategic and operational management of public, arts and cultural sectors. In the past five years he has focused upon developing policy and long-term strategy for cultural infrastructures and multi-arts precincts. He also holds a PhD in Critical and Cultural Theory.



PROFESSOR JACK QIU

Professor Jack Qiu is The Shaw Foundation Professor in Media Technology at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore and the co-principal investigator for Fairwork Singapore. He works on issues of digital media and social change in relation to labour, class, globalization, and sustainability, especially in the contexts of Asia (e.g., Asian media conglomerates) and the Global South. He has published 10 books in both English and Chinese including *Goodbye iSlave: A Manifesto for Digital Abolition* (University of Illinois Press, 2016), *World Factory in the Information Age* (Guangxi Normal University Press, 2013) and *Working-Class Network Society* (MIT Press, 2009).



PROFESSOR JOYCE LIU

Professor Joyce Liu is Professor at the Institute of Social Research and Cultural Studies, National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan; Director, International Center for Cultural Studies & International Program of Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, University System of Taiwan. Currently, she is leading two research projects: Conflict, Justice, Decolonization: Critical Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, and Migration, Logistics and Unequal Citizens in the Global Context.



DR TAYANNAH O'DONNELL

Dr. Tayannah O'Donnell is a Senior Executive at Deloitte. Under the framework of Future Earth, she has been an active collaborator with some of our key staff in the environment and technology area, including Professor Juan Salazar. Together they have published articles in *The Conversation* and other outlets and she has continued to co-supervise HDR candidates at the ICS.



MR DAVID MASTERS

David Masters is the Director of Global Public Policy at Atlassian. His particular strength is in ICT and telecommunications policy and stakeholder relationships. Prior to joining Atlassian in 2020, he worked at Microsoft as the Director of Corporate Affairs and as the Government Relations and Business Strategy Manager at HP Enterprise Services. He is also a member of the ICT Industry Reference Committee.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR MALINI SUR IN CONVERSATION WITH DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR IEN ANG



Photo credit: Sally Tsoutas

Emeritus Professor Ien Ang is a Professor of Cultural Studies and was the founding Director of the Institute for Culture and Society. She is one of the leaders in cultural studies worldwide, with interdisciplinary work spanning many areas of the humanities and social sciences.

Associate Professor Malini Sur is Director of Higher Degree Research and Teaching at ICS and Associate Professor of Anthropology at School of Social Sciences.

Malini: It is such an honour to be in conversation with you – thank you Ien. I would like to begin by asking you about some of the most significant moments in your long and accomplished career?

Ien: That is a difficult question to answer! There have been many significant moments. To start with, one memorable year was 1985, when my book *Watching Dallas* was published. It was originally my MA thesis, translated from Dutch to English. The book received global accolades, and, as they say, the rest is history. It was a success and opened a lot of doors for me. There were several other key moments in my career as well. For instance, my essay and later book *On Not Speaking Chinese* (2001), which I first presented in Taiwan in 1992, was a pivotal moment. The response, especially from academics in Taiwan, was extraordinary. The conference was organized by Chen Kuan-Hsing, a scholar you may know, who started to take seriously the politics of Chinese identity.

These events in the 1990s, along with several other intellectual exchanges that took place, shifted my focus towards issues like identity

politics, diaspora and hybridity, always with a critical lens and an emphasis on complexity.

Another significant moment for me was the founding of what is now the Institute for Culture and Society. Establishing ICS was crucial to my career, and I can honestly say that I am very proud of it.

Malini: That leads me to my second question: What are some of your most cherished memories from your time at the Centre for Cultural Research (CCR) and ICS that you would like to share with us and the world?

Ien: I have so many cherished memories! The longevity of both CCR and ICS is truly remarkable, and the fact that ICS is still a vibrant institution today is something I take great pride in. In the beginning, I was the only senior academic, and the then Dean, Wayne McKenna, said we needed more senior people. So, we appointed a group of senior academics, including Bob Hodge, and our first appointment was Kay Anderson. Gradually, we built an institution with a strong faculty, one that had a global outlook and whose work was highly regarded.



Photo credit: Sally Tsoutas

Academia may be a vocation for some, but for me, it has always been a profession – one that's about collaboration and growth.

Malini: I particularly admire the way you manage to balance big ideas, an international presence and a deep attention to the local context in which WSU is situated. You seem to move effortlessly across these scales – how do you do it?

Ien: I think it is only possible at a university like Western Sydney, and perhaps in other young, dynamic universities as well – certainly not at the established institutions. That is one reason I never left Western Sydney University. Here, we were given the chance to set something up, and that opportunity was invaluable.

In 2000, the Director of Research Services told us we had to focus on partnerships. Conventional academics tend to write journal articles and books, often working solo. But we embraced the idea of collaboration. Our focus on partnerships and engaged research led us to move beyond thinking of ethnicity as a fixed identity. Instead, we began exploring the complex intersections and hybridity that shape multiculturalism. We started working directly with diverse communities, and our engagement was dynamic – we focused on practices rather than just theory.

It is invigorating to work with people outside of academia, although it is not always easy. We have had to constantly rethink our academic frameworks in the process.

When we first began forming partnerships outside of academia, I thought, “Oh my God, there are entire worlds out there where knowledge circulates that I have no direct access to!” It has been a constant learning process, and these partnerships keep you on your toes.

Malini: Now that you are preparing to relocate from Australia after many decades, what are some of the emerging opportunities you are excited about?

Ien: After 33 years in Australia and a busy, fulfilling career, I have been reflecting on what I will do in retirement. I will not be doing any more academic work, that's for sure. For part of the year, I will be based in France, and I plan to learn to speak French fluently. I want to travel extensively across Europe, mainly by train and car. I might also try my hand at watercolour painting and do a lot of cooking. My cooking is quite eclectic – though, ironically, I do not cook much Asian food;

I lean more toward Middle Eastern cuisine. I will also be doing a lot of cycling, camping and visiting museums. That is the kind of retirement life I envision after working hard for so many years.

I will also remain attached to the University of Amsterdam in an honorary capacity, as many of my former students are now established scholars there.

Malini: Thank you, Ien. It has been an incredible honour to work with you, and I wish you the very best in this exciting new chapter of your life.

REFLECTIONS FROM PROFESSOR ELISA LONCON ON RESEARCH & VISITING ICS

Associate Professor Elisa Loncon (Universidad de Santiago) is a distinguished Mapuche academic and human rights activist. She was ICS inaugural International Indigenous Visiting Scholar in July 2024. In this piece she responds to a short interview by the ICS.



Photo credit: Isidora Torrealba

Q. Can you tell us a bit about your current research/practice?

Here in Chile, I am working on the topic of Azmapu, the Mapuche philosophy of Mother Earth, in three areas. First, deepening knowledge of Azmapu, where I am currently focusing on the concept of Itrofill Mogen which I am developing for a second book. Second, training traditional educators in the framework of Azmapu to support the revitalization of the Mapuche Williche language and ancestral knowledge, as well as to decolonize narratives. And third, the work of women leaders and their connection to Azmapu.

Q. Your opinion/ thoughts about the ICS Indigenous Strategy.

The ICS Indigenous Strategy is an important step toward acknowledging and valuing Indigenous knowledge systems within global and institutional contexts. It demonstrates a willingness to engage with Indigenous perspectives and create spaces for dialogue and collaboration. However, for it to truly succeed, it must go beyond inclusion and actively support the autonomy and self-determination of Indigenous peoples. In my view, the strategy should prioritize co-creation, ensuring that Indigenous voices are not only heard but also shape the direction and implementation of policies. It is crucial that the strategy reflects the holistic and interconnected worldview of Indigenous communities, recognizing the deep relationships between culture, territory and life itself. It is important to work with Indigenous peoples not just through consultation but in

genuine partnerships that empower Indigenous peoples as equal participants in decision-making processes. If these principles are at the core, the ICS Indigenous Strategy has the potential to be transformative for both Indigenous communities and the broader global society.

Q. You are ICS's first International Indigenous Visiting Scholar. Can you tell us a bit about what this role means to you (or how did you engage with ICS during your visit)?

Being ICS's first International Indigenous Visiting Scholar is both an honour and a responsibility. This role represents a significant step in creating spaces where Indigenous voices and worldviews are recognized and valued in academic and institutional settings. It's not just about being present in these spaces; it is about bringing the philosophy and teachings of Azmapu, the interconnectedness of all life and advocating for the knowledge and rights of Indigenous communities.

This was my second visit to Western Sydney University, both invited by Professor Juan Francisco Salazar with whom we have been working in the translation of my 2023 book *Azmapu: Mapuche Philosophy of Care for Mother Earth*. In March 2023 I came to the School of Humanities and Communication Arts. During my visiting position at ICS I was able to share insights from my research and practice, which focuses on Itrofill Mogen (the interconnectedness of all living beings) and the leadership of Indigenous women in cultural and environmental stewardship. This role also allowed me to initiate dialogues on the importance of decolonizing narratives and

fostering genuine collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives.

As in 2023, I appreciated being welcomed by Indigenous academics and researchers who approach Indigenous topics with respect and from decolonial methodologies. I was most interested in learning about the Institute's work with Indigenous communities and it was inspiring to hear from Professor Anthony Uhlmann about the journey of award-winning Indigenous writer Alexis Wright. I gained much from this experience, including insight into the University's plans for greater inclusion and participation of Indigenous peoples through its new planned Indigenous Centre. I feel immense gratitude for the generosity of all scholars. From the perspective of Azmapu and my research on Indigenous women, this role as the ICS International Indigenous Visitor is deeply meaningful. It represents an opportunity to make Indigenous worldviews visible, especially those related to Itrofill Mogen and the philosophy of Azmapu, which establishes an ethical and spiritual balance with the land. This role is not just an academic space; it is an act of cultural and political resistance. Indigenous women have been the guardians of fundamental knowledge about caring for the land and all forms of life. The connection with ICS during my visit reinforces the importance of institutions including Indigenous perspectives in their strategies, which I see as a necessary step toward genuine intercultural recognition and collaboration. However, I believe that such initiatives must move toward co-creating policies and actions that not only invite Indigenous communities but also respect their autonomy and knowledge at their core.

THE ICS ALL-STARS



Photo credit: Sadie Creative

By Deniz Agraz and Kim Pham

PROFESSOR GAY HAWKINS, FAHA

After a long and distinguished academic career, Gay Hawkins will take her place amongst our Emeritus Professors at the Institute. Gay joined the Institute in 2015, after serving as Director for the Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Queensland. Since her arrival at the ICS, she has been a key member and organizer of the ICS seminar series, a co-organizer of the Knowledge/Culture/Ecologies Conference in Santiago, Chile and the Engagement Director where she co-organized the Contagion Design: Labour, Economy, Habits, Data online symposium series and accompanying co-edited book published in the Low Latencies series with Open Humanities Press.

Over the past thirty years, Gay is recognized as a highly esteemed figure in cultural studies and cultural sociology through her research examining culture and governance, environmental humanities and the relationship between markets and materiality. She brings to this research theoretical and empirical

approaches that are concerned with the intersections between everyday cultural and material practices through a focus upon media, animals, waste, water and plastics. For example, her seminal book *The Ethics of Waste: How We Relate to Rubbish* examined the materiality of waste and the ways rubbish makes ethical claims on us. This book, along with her more recent publications focusing on plastic waste, including bottled water, continues to shape the field.

Gay's focus upon the everyday has led to a range of research projects that included collaborations with Sydney Water. She has also worked with the Wagga Wagga Regional Gallery, the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, and SBS and the ABC, and has frequently presented invited keynote addresses internationally. As she moves into retirement, this engaged work continues via her current role as WSU Scholar in Residence at the Powerhouse where she is to develop a major exhibition on plastics in 2025.

Beyond these more formal roles, Gay's passion has led to Gay is a strong advocate for the Humanities and Humanities scholars. Gay was

appointed as a Fellow of the Academy of the Humanities and has played a vital role in several initiatives, including the adoption of the Uluru Statement from the Heart (2017). Closer to home at the Institute, she has been an inspiring mentor to many. For example, Distinguished Professor Ien Ang notes, Gay "has consistently served as a mentor and supporter of younger, early- and mid-career researchers, who have benefited strongly from her ambitious outlook, creative thinking and pastoral care." As her role on the opening event of the Terrestrial Politics in Uncertain Times conference demonstrated, Gay's contributions to the Institute have had a lasting impact in fields of cultural studies, consumption studies and the emerging field of environmental humanities and the collaborative research culture at Western.

Gay's profound influence resonates throughout the Institute, enriching the academic community and shaping the future of interdisciplinary research.

DEBORAH STEVENSON, FASSA

In February 2024 we will welcome Professor Deborah Stevenson to the ranks of Emeritus Professor at the Institute. Deborah retires after a long career at Western Sydney University where she has worked since 2006, first as the Head of the School of Social Sciences and later as Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor, Research and Founding Dean of the Graduate Research School before joining the Institute in 2016.

Throughout her 30-year career, Deborah has investigated urban culture and cultural policy, exploring the intricate ways cultural policy shapes our society. An urban sociologist by discipline, Deborah's enthusiasm for and understanding of the landscape of cultural policy is exemplified by her ground-breaking publications. For example, her book, *Art and Organisation: Making Australian Cultural Policy* (2000), has become the cornerstone of debates around Australian cultural policy. As Emeritus Professor Tony Bennett described this work,

“This [Art and Organisation] rapidly established itself as a leading text in Australian cultural policy debates with a specific focus on the arts sector, a focus which Professor Stevenson has since both deepened and extended in making signal contributions to broader cultural policy debates both in Australia and internationally.”

Indeed, her most recent book, *Cultural Policy Beyond the Economy: Work, Value and the Social* (2023), and her ARC Discovery Project on UNESCO's role as a key international cultural policy agency are testimonies to the continuing contribution she has made to debates and scholarship in this area.

Her scholarship and contributions to the sociology, urban studies and cultural policy is reflected in her appointment as a Fellow of the

Academy of Social Sciences in Australia in 2021. In addition, she also received the Wiley Publishing Prize for her paper “Privatising the suburbs: examining the trends and implications of 20 years of private residential development in Sydney, Australia,” amongst many other honours.

During her time at the Institute, Deborah has been the Chief Investigator on a range of seminal grants with UNESCO, the Australian Cultural Fields project and the Collaborative Museums project with the Powerhouse. However, her impact extends far beyond her academic achievements. Deborah's research has shaped policies at the local, state and federal levels, where she has worked as an advisor and consultant. She has also been a member of the Ministerial Reference Group for the NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework.

For those of us at the Institute for Culture and Society, Deborah has played a crucial role as a senior staff member and research professor, offering her strategic institutional expertise through different directors. She has also been instrumental in shaping the careers of our Higher Degree Research (HDR) students Emilie Baganz, Ozgur Sahin and Jian Lin through her dedicated supervision.

Deborah's legacy of commitment and academic excellence will undoubtedly continue to inspire and guide us all in the years to come.



Photo credit: Yann Le Berre

PROFESSOR KATHERINE GIBSON

Following an illustrious academic career, Professor Katherine Gibson is now recognized as an Emeritus Professor at the Institute.

Katherine is internationally renowned for her pioneering research on rethinking economies as sites of ethical action. As a human geographer specializing in political economy, she has over 30 years of experience working alongside communities to foster resilient economies. Her distinctive approach to economic geography blends feminism, post-structuralism, anti-essentialist Marxism and action research.

She co-founded the “Community Economies Collective,” a dynamic collaboration that connects academic and community researchers and activists across Australia, North America, Europe and Southeast Asia. Katherine is a Fellow of both the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia and the British Academy, and she has received prestigious accolades, including the Australia-International

Medal from the Institute of Australian Geographers in 2010 and Distinguished Scholarship Honours from the Association of American Geographers in 2018.

Before joining Western Sydney University, Katherine served as Professor and Head of the Department of Human Geography at the Australian National University (1999–2008) and directed Women's Studies at Monash University (1992–1995). She has led impactful action research projects with communities in Australia, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and the Philippines, focusing on alternative economic development pathways. These experiences have shaped her unique “Community Partnering Approach to Local Development.” In 2008, she produced a compelling 50-minute film showcasing social enterprise development as a local development strategy in the Philippines. Katherine is also a prolific author, with eleven influential monographs and edited collections that have left a mark on the global stage. Her

work has taken her from Harvard to Hamburg, and she has published around 100 book chapters and 80 journal articles, further highlighting her extensive reach and impact in the field. Emeritus Professor Gay Hawkins sums up her influence, stating, “I have no hesitation in claiming that Katherine Gibson is currently Australia's most eminent geographer. Her work across three key fields: economic geography, regional and urban studies, and feminist theory has been groundbreaking. Not only has it challenged orthodoxies it has also provoked whole new fields of inquiry that have significantly transformed thinking.”

Katherine joined Western Sydney University in 2009 as a Professorial Research Fellow Centre for Citizenship and Public Policy and led the Community Economies Initiative in the School of Humanities and Communication Arts. In 2013, she took her expertise to the Institute for Culture and Society in 2013 where she has been a foundational member of the Institute and Western's national profile in the discipline of Geography. Since joining Western Sydney she has been the Deputy Director of ICS (2019–2022), Co-leader of the ICS Community Economies Strategic Initiative (2015–2024), international experience have been instrumental in shaping strategic planning initiatives, fostering collaboration and enhancing research impact, all of which have significantly enriched the University community and its engagement with global challenges.

In addition to building a strong research training program for Master's and PhD students, Professor Gibson is a well-known and committed HDR supervisor. Since joining Western, she has successfully guided eight candidates to completion, with two more currently in the submission process ahead of her retirement in June 2024. Many students were attracted to the Institute and Western because of Professor Gibson's esteemed global reputation. A number of these students have actively participated in the Community Economies Initiative, which she co-founded with Julie Graham, further enriching their academic experience and connection to this innovative work.

Katherine's substantial impact will keep enriching the academic community and shaping the landscape of interdisciplinary research. Her legacy continues to inspire a new generation of scholars who are dedicated to ethical action and innovative economic thinking.



Photo credit: Sally Tsoutas

THE TERRESTRIAL POLITICS IN UNCERTAIN TIMES CONFERENCE

By Stephen Healy and Declan Kuch

Terrestrial Politics in Uncertain Times was a three-day conference organized by the ICS in collaboration with the Powerhouse Museum between 25-27 October 2023. Co-chaired by Stephen Healy and Declan Kuch, the event was supported by WSU's Environment and Sustainability Theme champions and the Maldhan Ngurr Ngurra – Lithgow Hub.

In a world where 4 in 5 Australians have directly experienced climate change-related disasters, we are all now confronted with a new reality of the climate as a shared matter of concern. Latour's book *Down to Earth* inspired *Terrestrial Politics* urged a political shift that acknowledges and responds to the Earth's ecological boundaries. This approach emphasizes coexistence with non-human worlds and challenges modern distinctions between local and global.

Stephen Muecke encapsulates Latour's vision as encouraging people to see themselves as 'earth-bound,' entwined with the planet in multiple ways. This contrasts with ideas of detachment seen in fantasies of Martian colonies or ideologies of free-market capitalism. The critical question becomes:

How are we bound to the earth and each other? Particularly, what does this mean for Australia and Aotearoa (New Zealand)?

How do we learn to be neighbours again, acquainted with one another and the places we live?



Photo credit: Sadie Creative



Photo credit: Sadie Creative

Held at the Maldhun Ngurr Ngurr hub in Lithgow, the first day of the event delved into the entanglements between settler colonialism and escape ideologies. Wiradjuri elder Aunty Sharon Riley focused upon the climate emergency and the need for culturally based mental health programs and firefighting training. Aunty Sharon Riley, who named the hub in Lithgow, shared insights into her efforts, including firefighter training and cultural burning courses for emerging Wiradjuri leaders. Her initiatives highlighted a grassroots approach to addressing the climate emergency, emphasizing the importance of cultural practices and community resilience. The connection between survival, place, and communal ties was echoed by David Conyers' recounting of the "Fridgeys for Eugowra"

project which delivered a disaster relief mission to re-air condition an entire town through \$400k volunteer services and products following an inland tsunami in November 2022 that impacted the town's mostly elderly population. Jason de Santolo's talk explored the politics of Indigenous methodologies and decolonization practices. In doing so he deftly drew out a theme that spanned all three talks: emphasizing intergenerational learning and the vital role of relationships in shaping a future where social and environmental justice can be pursued. Inspired by the work of Louise Crabtree-Hayes, Neil Perry and a team on the NSW Bushfire Recovery grant, Cameron Tonkinwise ably led an afternoon of co-designing futures for the region.

The second day of the event involved a Masterclass at The Powerhouse Museum session, led by Maria Bargh and Kelly Dombroski, focused upon authority and knowledge production. Drawing on Māori philosophy, decolonial theories, and indigenous ontologies, participants explore the earth-bound nature of knowledge creation. In the evening we were treated to a plenary session expertly guided by Gay Hawkins in dialogue a plenary session with luminaries Dipesh Chakrabarty, Stephen Muecke and Sophie Chao. The session explored the concept of "terrestrial politics" in the context of Bruno Latour's intellectual legacy in disciplines spanning anthropology, cultural studies, museum studies and the relationship with our planet and the cosmos.

Declan Kuch kicked off our third day with a humorous take on terrestrial politics with an inflight pre-departure announcement about the delays to a market-based energy transition. Maria Bargh explicated recent experiences of the energy transition in regional Aotearoa/New Zealand an indigenous ontology and how it can inform a different conception of rights with her Tika Transition toolkit and Darren Sharp outlined a place-based approach to the energy transition with his research on Net Zero Cities and the localization of energy politics around Monash University's Clayton Campus.

The middle session on the Friday featured a screening of the Archival Futures Collectives

Outer Space Film Quartet developed by filmmaker and WSU alumnus Ceridwen Dovey. The quartet of short experimental films explored ethics and emotion in outer space. Professor Juan Francisco Salazar then led a Q&A discussion between the filmmaker Ceridwen Dovey and Powerhouse Research Director and ICS Adjunct Fellow Deborah Lawler-Dormer.

The day concluded with discussions on the role of care in terrestrial politics. Emma Power advocated for more caring and equitable urban spaces, emphasizing the interconnectedness of ecological concerns with human well-being. Kelly Dombroski's efforts in transitioning to caring economies in

Aotearoa New Zealand and the Asia Pacific aligned with the necessity of reorienting politics and economics towards localized, caring systems. Miriam Williams explicated the concept of Care-full Justice in urban commons, grounding politics in the terrestrial.

As the co-organizers highlighted, Terrestrial Politics stands as a call for a profound reorientation in political thinking, advocating for a connectedness to the Earth and each other, emphasizing localized care, and acknowledging the entanglements of colonial legacies with ideologies of escape. As uncertainty looms, neighbourliness, according to Latour, becomes the guiding principle in navigating our shared terrestrial existence.



Photo credit: Sadie Creative

HDR INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION

By Deniz Agraz

Industry PhD programs play a crucial role in enhancing collaboration between academic institutions and industry, effectively narrowing the divide between theoretical research and its practical implementation. These programs empower higher degree research (HDR) students to engage in studies that not only hold academic merit but are also of direct relevance and benefit to the industry, thereby enriching both the partnering organizations and the broader society.

We interviewed two of our Industry PhD students, Eleanor Robson and Douglas William Belton II, to learn more about their experiences in this innovative space.

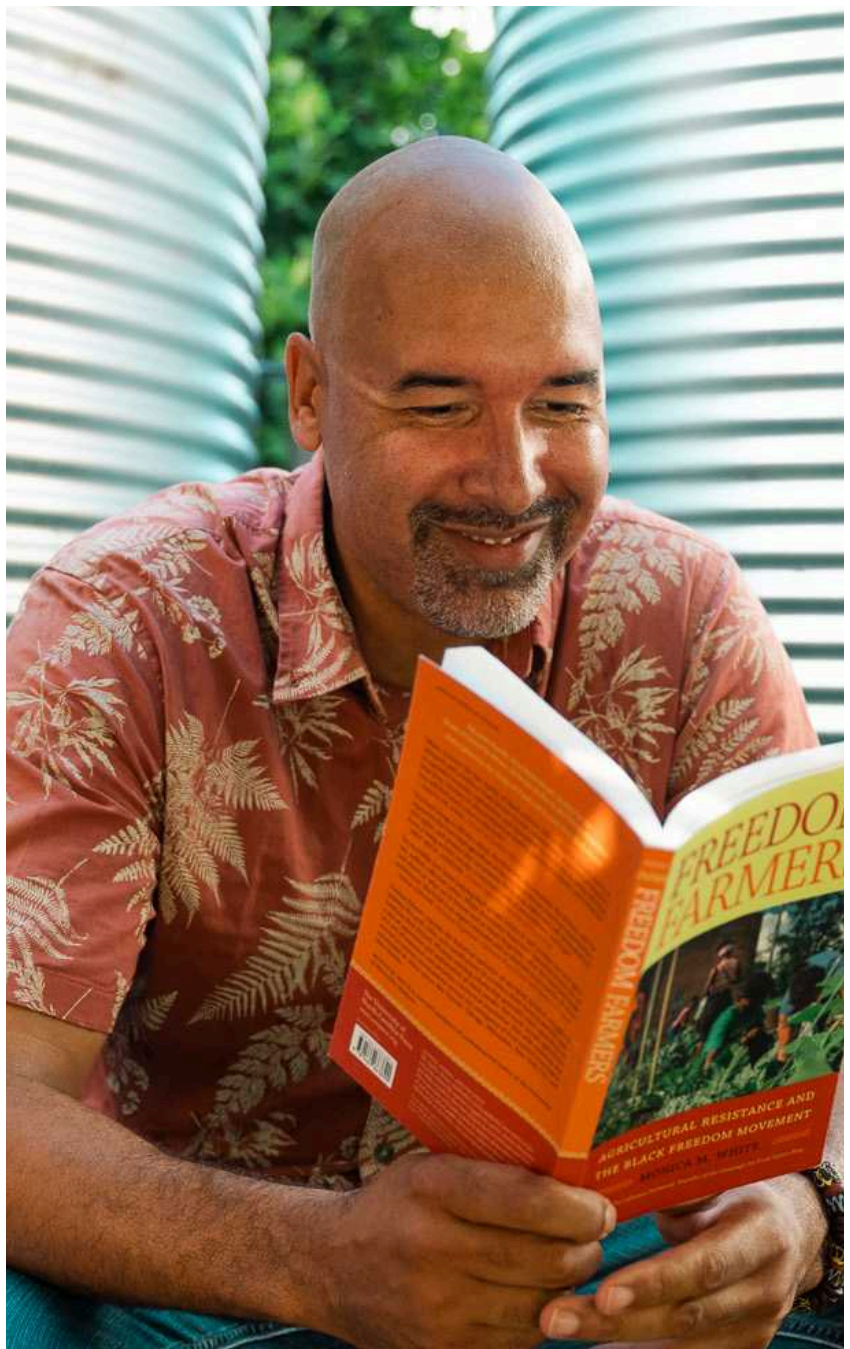


Image: Douglas Belton

ELEANOR ROBSON

In 2016, Eleanor Robson found herself at a crossroads. She had just completed her Honours degree in Human Ecology and was considering pursuing a PhD. After careful contemplation, she decided she wasn't interested in a full-time academic role and transitioned into the professional domain.

When an opportunity for an Industry PhD presented itself, Eleanor found herself intrigued by the idea of using her theoretical knowledge to solve real-world problems. Her decision to apply for the PhD program became another turning point in her career.

"I enjoyed doing my Honours in Human Ecology. But I was always more interested in the applied aspects of sustainability, translating conceptual ideas into practical applications, and generating momentum for these ideas," Eleanor says.

Since 2019, Eleanor has been working on her PhD project titled "Contemporary Approaches to Sustainability Governance by Australian Local Governments: Planetary Health in the Blue Mountains," funded by the Blue Mountains City Council and the Institute under the supervision of Juan Francisco Salazar, Louise Crabtree-Hayes and Tayanah O'Donnell. O'Donnell is an ICS alumnus who is also a member of the ICS Advisory Board. As Eleanor describes the decision to carry out an Industry co-funded PhD with the ICS:

"In 2019, I was working at the Australian Academy of Science, where I observed various trends emerging in the field of sustainability. The concept of planetary health was a new idea bubbling up on the horizon, yet I hadn't seen instances where it had been picked up outside academic circles and used outside of a health context," recounts Eleanor.

"I loved the prospect of having dedicated time and space to dive deep into the subject and the possibility of applying new ideas, so I seized the opportunity to apply for this scholarship. I am grateful that I get to collaborate with the Blue Mountains City Council and have the support of my supervisors."

"What appealed to me the most about this scholarship was that it had a government partner attached to it," Eleanor recalls.

In the project's early days, Eleanor regularly met with the Council to get a view of their primary concern and what they were looking to get out of this research.

"I wanted to understand their priorities, funding motivations and challenges they hoped the research could address," she says.

"It has always been intended that the Council would be shaping the research in terms of setting up for me what the problem space is and what the research has to respond to," Eleanor says while stressing the importance of making her research practically relevant to the Council's goals and acknowledging the realities of the issues they seek to address.

Eleanor conducted research that intersected advancing scholarly knowledge of planetary health with the practical objectives of the Blue Mountains City Council. The Council, which has been vocal about the need for substantial changes in sustainability practices, stands out from typical government entities by prioritizing fundamental shifts, rather than incremental improvements. The Council adopted planetary health to create new ways to discuss nature, health and changes required for the future. However, the question remained as to whether the broader community would be interested in planetary health and whether it could foster discussion about new ideas to tackle local priorities. Eleanor's research sought to create a first view of how Blue Mountains residents think about their health, how people value nature and believe nature's health affects their own and future opportunities and challenges for the Council in implementing planetary health in collaboration with the community.

Eleanor's findings underscore the importance of local governments understanding the diverse perspectives and values for how individuals connect with nature to enhance their well-being. She found that most Blue Mountains people she spoke to agree planetary health is important and have different ways of expressing their nature-health relationships in their daily lives.

"I hope my research will help Blue Mountains City Council to embrace and articulate the different ways people relate to nature for their well-being. Setting up and enabling many different pathways to achieve impact or success is crucial," she says and adds:

"Welcoming community partnership in shaping the Councils' planetary health initiative could lead to the Blue Mountains becoming an international case study for successful approaches to the relationship between nature, health and community development. It is relatively rare to see a local government funding new thinking. In research circles, people are interested to see how my research can help translate theory into practice with a partner in the throes of implementation."

Throughout the process Eleanor has developed the skills to write with her partner through co-authorship or reports and articles with the Director and Manager of Planning at Blue Mountains City Council, and her supervisors and ICS staff. As she notes, it was important that

"The council's voice was threaded through in that first piece of work, which explained the current concerns and state of play in the Blue Mountains. I could then come in with what implementing planetary health means, the community's attitude towards it, and what implications might arise for the way that the Blue Mountains City Council implements it in the future."



Image: Eleanor Robson

DOUGLAS BELTON II

Douglas Belton II is a Social Technology Researcher completing an Industry PhD project at the Institute. Through his research project, *Re-worlding the Real World: Community-led Innovations in Food and Human Settlement Innovation*, Douglas has been integrating his academic interests with his passions for eco-social constructs and community engagement.

A native of Minneapolis, USA, Douglas has lived in Sydney since 2014, where he has embedded himself in the local culture and academic community. In 2023, under the supervision of Stephen Healy, Louise Crabtree-Hayes and Michelle Mak (agricultural science), Douglas set out to apply principles of just sustainability in community settings. His work is supported by key industry partnerships, including collaborations with the Mount Druitt Ethnic Agency (MECA) in Western Sydney and Lyceum Partners in Minneapolis, Minnesota, illustrating his commitment to connecting insights and methodologies across global communities.

"Re-worlding the Real World: Community-led Innovations in Food and Human Settlement Innovation explores the co-development of regenerative, community-centric food and human settlement systems with racially and socio-economically minoritized communities living in Mount Druitt, Sydney, and Minneapolis," Douglas explains.

He recalls that the idea to collaborate and contribute to local food security efforts came during one of his discussions with Daniel Gobena, CEO of the Mount Druitt Ethnic Agency (MECA) following the murder of George Floyd, which occurred just a few blocks away from where he was raised in Minneapolis.

"I knew that MECA was running an award-winning community garden and doing great work with the community, and that they served people refugees and other migrants, including those from the African diaspora. So, I reached out to MECA to enquire about working together on their food security initiatives. My aim was to contribute to local efforts in response to the incident. Through this collaboration, I wanted to focus on providing services to the BIPOC communities in the area, which led to the development of my PhD project."

Douglas explains that his primary goal is to gain insights into the activities and dynamics of effective social technologies aimed at community-led food and human settlement system innovation in these two locations, specifically from the perspective of minoritized community members who are often left out in the decision-making processes. The project focuses on identifying

the barriers and enablers of these kinds of social technologies taking shape and being implemented in Western Sydney and Minneapolis.

Conventionally, Industry Partnership PhD research projects are co-designed by industry partners and PhD supervisors at the Institute, and the PhD candidates are identified later. However, Douglas re-oriented the process by designing the project and seeking partnerships to support and benefit from his project through his connections in "industry" and the Institute.

He explains, "MECA has a history of partnering with the Institute, and there was mutual trust."

While pursuing his PhD at the Institute, Douglas actively collaborates with both MECA in Western Sydney, and Lyceum Partners, ensuring his research has a practical impact on the ground in Minneapolis as well.

At Lyceum Partners in Minneapolis, he has been instrumental in organizing and leading workshops with BIPOC farmers. His contributions include introducing innovative and equitable land access strategies to BIPOC and emerging farmers, drawing on the community land trust research expertise of Louise Crabtree-Hayes.

"We collaborated with local institutions to connect farmers with resources and contacts. I also participated in a culturally relevant emergency food project with the Somali community in Minneapolis during the pandemic," Douglas says. He explains that this project assessed the impact of providing culturally specific meals to residents, which addressed immediate nutritional needs and supported the maintenance of cultural practices during widespread disruption.

"At MECA, I am currently focusing on operational activities at the agency and writing grants to secure funding for activities. I am also running a program called 'Lyricist Lab,' an open mic event held monthly in Mount Druitt for young artists."

Douglas states that the program was named "Lyricist Lab" to establish a foundation for storytelling, aiming to create a space where young people could experiment with their lyrics and the impact they wished to make, whether commercial, social or environmental. He states that this approach has allowed him to apply storytelling principles to his research.

"I'm deeply intrigued by making information accessible, especially through creative expression. I find that art can be a useful tool in bridging the gap, as it involves creatively merging practical work, operational strategies, and community initiatives."

Douglas emphasizes the value of actively engaging with the community and gaining hands-on experience before researching community initiatives to ensure that his research is grounded in real-world contexts, builds on community assets and addresses the actual needs of the communities involved.

Douglas is excited about the practical impact that his project will bring to community organisations.

"I hope this research project serves as a launchpad for further development and implementation toward the project's goal of helping community's lead more of the planning and development decisions that affect them, especially as they relate to sustainable food and human settlement systems."



Image: Douglas Belton

LIFE AFTER A PHD

By Kim Pham

LUKE MUNN'S ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY: FROM ARTIST TO RESEARCH FELLOW IN DIGITAL CULTURES

Luke Munn's career trajectory offers a compelling narrative of interdisciplinary exploration, spanning from the creative arts to critical research on digital technologies. Currently a Research Fellow at the Centre for Digital Cultures and Societies at the University of Queensland (UQ), Luke's work is situated at the intersection of technology, society, and power.

Before embarking on his academic journey, Luke had a background in the creative arts. His undergraduate studies were in fine arts, where he majored in interactive design with an emphasis on video games and new media art. After completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA), Luke moved to Berlin, where he immersed himself in sound experimental music and sound art for five years. This period marked a formative phase in his exploration of contemporary technologies and their cultural implications, which later influenced his academic trajectory. Upon returning to New Zealand, Luke pursued a Master's in Creative Technologies, which served as a bridge into academia. Luke's intellectual interests have long been concerned with the ways in which technology shapes society, with particular attention to power dynamics and the role of critique in engaging with emerging technologies. These interests would later inform the focus of his doctoral research.

Luke's PhD, entitled "Approaching Algorithmic Power," won the inaugural Western Sydney University Deputy Vice-Chancellor Prize for Doctoral Thesis Excellence 2020. His doctoral work introduced a novel methodology for analysing algorithms, which he then applied to four case studies, including platforms like Airbnb and Uber, to test the robustness of his framework. His research contributed to the growing body of scholarship concerned with the social, cultural and political ramifications of algorithmic systems.

When asked for advice for new PhD graduates, Luke emphasises the realities of a highly competitive job market and stresses the importance of focusing on the quality of one's PhD research and encourages students to take "proactive steps" toward career development during their studies which includes "publishing journal articles, contributing to edited volumes, presenting at conferences and collaborating with others." By building these



Image: Automation is a Myth book cover by Luke Munn

"small wins," Luke believes PhD candidates can better position themselves for future opportunities. Luke recalls the significant role that Professor Ned Rossiter played in guiding his early career by encouraging to take the much needed "proactive steps": "Ned not only provided critical scholarly feedback but also helped me navigate the professional world of academia ... encouraging me to network, attend conferences, and build a community of like-minded scholars which is pretty rare in some places."

Despite completing his PhD remotely, Luke found the seminars and workshops at ICS invaluable. He appreciated the Institute's strong focus on critical theory, which contrasted with the more narrowly technical approaches found in fields like computer science. This critical foundation remains central to Luke's ongoing research, particularly in how digital technologies are understood and critiqued in broader cultural contexts. Luke credits ICS for offering a unique approach, fostering critical thinking and a broad, interdisciplinary perspective, "unlike many departments that tend to be more narrowly focused, ICS is expansive," which allows scholars to engage with a wide range of topics and integrate insights from "media studies, cultural studies, political science, history, philosophy" and more. This interdisciplinary flexibility is a valuable skill, as it enables researchers to connect ideas across fields, rather than becoming overly specialized in one narrow area and unable to address broader issues.

Luke graduated in late 2019, just before the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the global academic landscape. In early 2020, he began his postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Queensland, coinciding with the onset of the

pandemic. This period also saw him undertake remote projects for the Young & Resilient Research Centre, an organization with which he had a longstanding collaboration through ICS. Working with Professor Amanda Third and the Y&R team, Luke contributed to various projects, blending academic research with industry and NGO-focused work. This experience provided him with exposure to new forms of research, emphasizing practical, real-world applications rather than purely academic output. Additionally, Luke collaborated with UNICEF in the Asia Pacific region, where he balanced research with project management responsibilities. In mid-2022, after a period of job searching and interviews, Luke secured his current position as a Research Fellow at the University of Queensland. His work at UQ continues to explore the sociocultural implications of emerging technologies, with a focus on AI and digital labour. His contract extension through 2026 registers the success and relevance of his research in addressing pressing contemporary issues related to technology and society.

Luke's journey, moving from the creative arts to critical scholarship in digital cultures, reflects a deep curiosity about how technology shapes and transforms society. With a background spanning art, music, creative technologies and academia, he has developed a unique, interdisciplinary lens through which he examines issues like digital labour, AI and algorithmic systems. At ICS, where critical theory intersects with fields such as media studies, philosophy and political theory, Luke was able to expand his thinking and gain fresh insights into the broader cultural and societal impacts of technology.

FROM ACADEMIA TO ADVOCACY: ELEANOR ROBSON'S TRANSITION FROM PHD TO PROFESSIONAL WORK

Eighteen months after our first interview with Eleanor Robson we held another conversation to follow up with her career shifts. In her new role as Policy Director at the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA), Eleanor Robson leads environment, climate and waste policy. She is responsible for collaborating with state, territory and local government associations and councils to assess how Commonwealth proposals impact local communities, particularly in areas of climate change, the environment and waste management. This new chapter in her career follows an academic journey that has taken an interesting turn while remaining rooted in her dedication to sustainability, environmental policy and the wellbeing of communities.

Eleanor is eager to point out that the technical skills and methodologies she gained through her PhD prove useful in her professional sphere. She explains, "My PhD provided a

deeper understanding of the day-to-day operational and strategic concerns that local governments face. It's helped me understand not only the policy proposals being put forward and how we might respond, but also the long-term historical and critical conceptual perspectives. This has given me a much stronger ability to think strategically for the future. And I think it has really helped me to do my job better than if I hadn't done it."

In Eleanor's previous consulting job, her in-depth understanding of sustainability issues and policy frameworks were crucial in addressing complex, real-world challenges. She notes that in industries such as sustainability, where misinformation and oversimplification can often dominate the conversation, having someone with "research background and technical expertise is highly valued" for the credibility and depth it brings.

Looking ahead, Eleanor aims to stay connected to academia with a pragmatic, strategic approach. She admires mentors like Professor Juan Francisco Salazar and Professor Louise Crabtree-Hayes, who successfully balance academic work with

practical, policy-driven efforts, bridging the two worlds. For Eleanor, contributing to academia is not necessarily about publishing extensively but about ensuring that the real-world issues she works on can inform and shape academic discourse. Her journey from academia to a professional career in sustainability policy and advocacy underscores the flexibility and value of a PhD in real-world applications. While the transition can be challenging, Eleanor's story exemplifies how academic expertise can be seamlessly integrated into the professional world, particularly in sectors where deep knowledge and evidence-based insights are crucial for driving meaningful change.



Image: Eleanor Robson's Graduation. Photo Credit Sally Tsoutas. From left to right: Professor Juan F Salazar; Mark Greenhill, Mayor of the City of Blue Mountains, Eleanor Robson, and Professor Louise Crabtree-Hayes. Note this graduation was in 2025!

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS: THE TRANSIT ASIA RESEARCH NETWORK

By Brett Neilson

The Transit Asia Research Network (TARN) was launched in August 2023 at the Association for Cultural Studies Institute on Decolonization in the Twenty-First Century staged at National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University (NYCU), Taiwan. ICS is a founding member of this transnational research network, which stems from partnerships initiated as part of the Global Humanities Institute on Migration, Global Logistics and Unequal Citizens in Contemporary Global Context (2019–2022) supported by the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes (CHCI) and the Mellon Foundation.

TARN has the aim of creating collaborative research opportunities for researchers, students, artists and NGO participants from Asia and beyond. While the network's steering committee and primary in-person activities are Asia-based, its agenda addresses a wide spectrum of conflict and social inequality questions transcending regional boundaries and spanning continents. The intention is to cultivate a membership that mirrors the significant transformation of Asia-centric geopolitical conditions while having global implications.

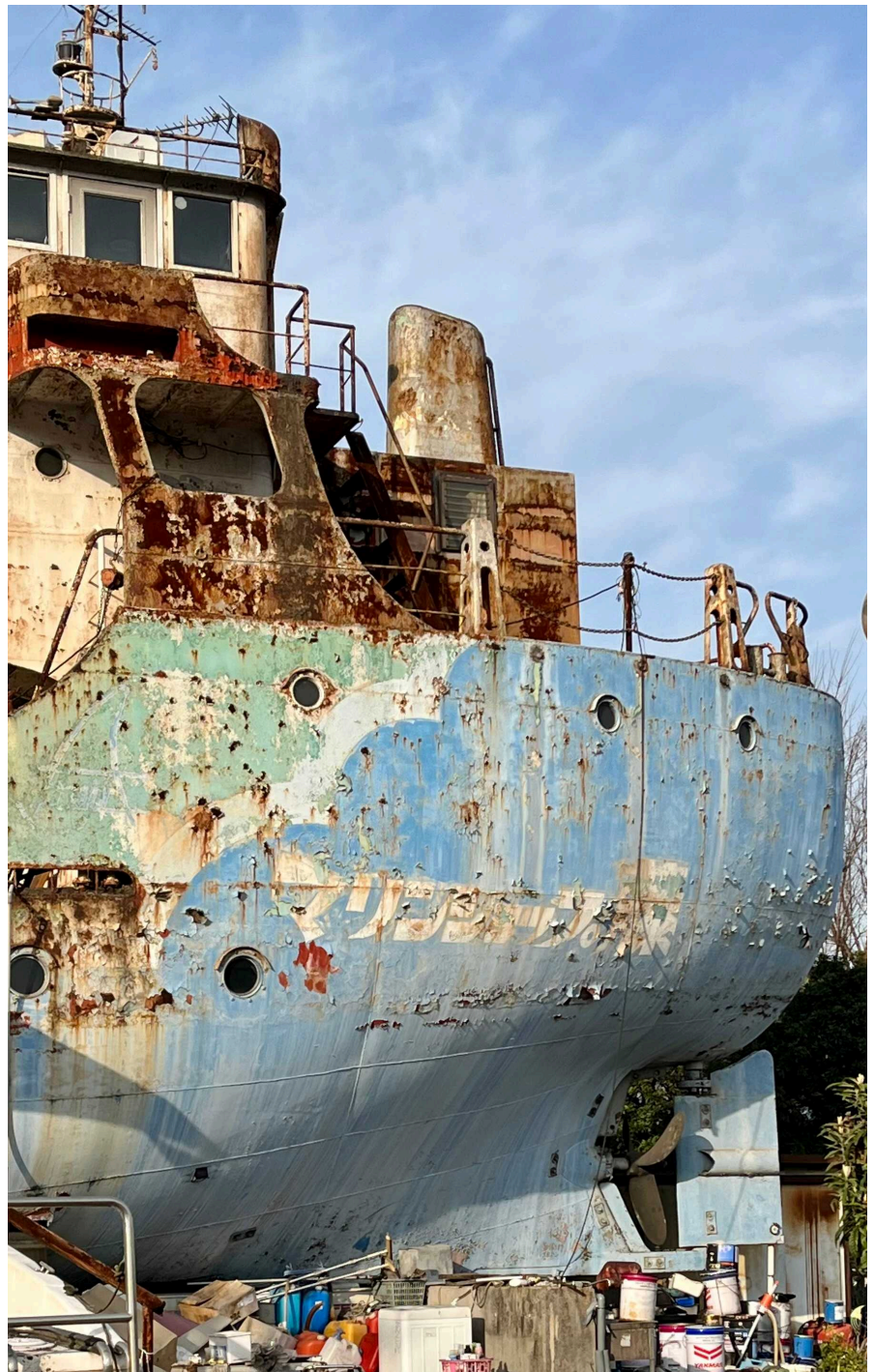


Image: Stranded boat in Japan by Denis Byrne

Asia has significantly transformed as the post-Cold War era progresses into the twenty-first century. The emergence of China as a global power has posed a challenge to previous models of globalization and fundamentally reshaped China's relationships not only with Asian countries but also with the United States, Europe, Africa, and beyond. Current geopolitical tensions have heightened risks on multiple fronts. Moreover, the past two decades have witnessed the rapid rise of cybersurveillance, platform capitalism, algorithmic logistics, ubiquitous computing, digital governance and the financialization of the virtual world.

These developments in globalization have also led to an escalation in the international migratory labour force, contributing to the issue of statelessness. This phenomenon is evident in the statistics, with over 100 million international migrants from Asia and 83 million migrating within Asia alone. In many parts of Asia, migrant workers and stateless individuals face severe discrimination and inhumane treatment due to their non-citizen status.

Simultaneously, the relentless pursuit of infrastructure construction and natural resource extraction has had detrimental effects on the environment, resulting in climate change and environmental crises. Within colonized or Indigenous cultures, there is often a lack of recognition for the distinction between human and nonhuman, sentient and insentient and lives worthy of respect versus those disregarded. Indifference to these outlooks and perspectives on the part of colonizing cultures perpetuates existing inequalities and injustices.

These concerns with geopolitics, migration and environment inform TARN's research agenda. Formally, the network identifies four primary research themes:

1. Global capitalism and technologies of governance
2. Migratory labour, unequal citizens and critical legal studies
3. Environmental crises and multispecies equality
4. Social engagement and art intervention

Apart from ICS, founding TARN members are Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies, NYCU; Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, India; Department of Cultural Studies, Lingnan University, Hong Kong; Department of Applied Art, Hanyang University, South Korea; Centre for Artistic Research, Tunku Abdul Rahman University, Malaysia; Gender Studies Program, University of Malaya, Malaysia; Center on Gender and Forced Displacement, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand; Faculty of Sociology, Vietnam National University, Vietnam; and Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ton Duc Thang University, Vietnam.

Initial network activities include event organization, book editorship, HDR supervision collaboration, online student publications, cross-institutional mobility and funding applications. Participation in TARN is a primary arm of ICS's internationalization efforts, responding to national and institutional demands for greater research collaboration in the Asian region.



Photo credit: Stephen Healy

PROFILE: DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR GERARD GOGGIN

By Kim Pham

In recognition of his exceptional scholarship and influence in the field, Professor Gerard Goggin has been appointed to the esteemed position of Distinguished Professor.

Gerard is a scholar of international acclaim, recognized for his foundational contributions to our understanding of the key dynamics in contemporary digital media, communications and culture. He is widely regarded as a pioneer in mobile communication research and a leading authority on digital inclusion, inequalities and rights with a focus on disability, accessibility and inclusive design. Gerard has been described by Professor Rich Ling as a “central scholar in the mobile communication research community.”

Before joining Western Sydney University in 2013, Gerard built a diverse career that combined policy and academia. He began as a policy advisor at Consumers Telecommunications and then served as deputy chair and public member of the Telephone Information Service Standards Council from 2002 to 2008. His commitment to consumer advocacy continued as he became a founding board member of the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network in 2009, and he is currently a member of the Australian e-Research Infrastructure Council (AeRIC).

Gerard's academic journey has taken him to several prestigious institutions, including Southern Cross University, the University of Queensland and the University of Sydney. In 2007, he broadened his international experience as a visiting professor at the Centre d'Estudis Australians at the University of Barcelona. He later returned to Australia, where he served as a professor of digital communication and deputy director of the Journalism and Media Research Centre at the University of New South Wales.

From 2014 to 2018, Gerard held the position of Australian Research Council Future Fellow, which allowed him to further his research. He then took on leadership roles at the University of Sydney, first as Chair of the Department of Media and Communications and later as Head of the School of Literature, Art and Media in 2018. His significant contributions to the field were recognized when he was elected a fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in November 2017. In 2019, he was appointed the Wee Kim Wee Professor of Communication Studies, a prestigious role that underscores his impact on media studies and digital communication.

Throughout his distinguished career, Gerard Goggin has made a remarkable impact on the fields of media and communication, authoring 24 books and over 200 research papers and chapters. His influential works have appeared in leading journals such as *New Media & Society*, *The Information Society*, and *Information, Communication & Society*. Notable titles include *Mobile Media Methods* (2023), *Apps* (2021), *Global Mobile Media* (2011), *Cell Phone Culture* (2006) and *Digital Disability* (2003).

Gerard is also a founding editor of the journal *Internet Histories* and co-editor of significant volumes like the *Routledge Companion to Global Internet Histories* (2017) and *Oral Histories of the Internet and Web* (2023). His long-standing interest in the intersections of disability, media and rights is evident in key publications such as the *Routledge Companion to Disability and Media* (2020) and *Disability and the Media* (2015). Collaborating with Christopher Newell, he co-authored *Digital Disability* (2003) and *Disability in Australia* (2005), the latter winning the Human Rights Commission Arts Non-Fiction Award.

In recognition of his contributions, Gerard is a Fellow of the International Communication Association (ICA) and the Australian Academy of the Humanities. He currently serves as the Secretary-General of the International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), further underscoring his leadership in the field.

A hallmark of Gerard's work is his engagement with civil society, government, industry and other sectors. Among other things, he was a founding board member of the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN). He is a member of the Australian Research Council's College of Experts (2024–2026). He is also a Fellow of the International Communication Association (ICA); Secretary General of the International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR); and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities (AAH). Over his career, his research has attracted significant funding from Australian, Canadian and Singaporean grant agencies, totalling over A\$6 million, reflecting his impactful contributions to the field.

Professor Gerard Goggin's appointment as Distinguished Professor highlights his extensive contributions to digital media and communication, particularly in areas such as mobile communication and digital inclusion. His research has not only advanced academic discourse but also positively impacted policy and practice, paving the way for future innovations in the field.



Image: Professor Gerard Goggin

RETHINKING TRANSITION: COLLABORATION, RECIPROCITY, AND MULTISPECIES JUSTICE

By Louise Crabtree-Hayes and Stephen Healy

Louise Crabtree-Hayes and Stephen Healy sat down with Gonzalo Salazar who joined us from his homeland of Chile for a year-long fellowship at ICS. As an Associate Professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile (UC-Chile), Gonzalo has spent the past decade directing the UC Center for Local Development (CEDEL-UC), contributing to three Centres of Excellence in Chile, and leading over 15 research projects centred on socio-ecological transitions for sustainability.

He describes this year as a pivotal moment for reflecting on past achievements as he concludes his tenure as director of CEDEL-UC, advances his ongoing research projects, and develops a strategic plan to guide international collaboration over the next decade. An academic commonality between us all, was a concern with how “transition” has become a focal point in thinking about sustainability and urban and regional futures in Australia, in Chile and elsewhere. At the same time, it is also a term that describes a process in our own life, one where tension, happenstance, chance encounter and accident come together.



Photo credit: Louise Crabtree-Hayes

Speaking to the broader meaning of the term, Gonzalo observed that transition is a term that risks becoming a shallow framework focused on technocratic fixes. Gonzalo, an academic deeply engaged in the study of sustainability and interconnected global communities, challenges this limited perspective. What emerged in the course of our conversation was an alternative formation of transition as a profound, collaborative, and ethical process that integrates diversity, reciprocity, and multispecies justice to foster global well-being. In reflecting on this topic, he saw parallels between his activities at UC-Chile and the Institute.

COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITIES AS THE FOUNDATION OF TRANSITION

Gonzalo emphasizes that meaningful transitions must originate in collaborative communities, particularly within academic institutions like the Institute for Culture and Society (ICS). He praises ICS for fostering a platform where transdisciplinary dialogues flourish, enabling researchers to examine diverse aspects of social and environmental justice. Such spaces, he argues, are rare but crucial for addressing the civilizational crises we face. Through this lens, diversity – whether cultural, ecological or epistemological – is essential for crafting solutions that are inclusive and rooted in local contexts.

In contrast to commodified academic environments that prioritize outputs over substance, Gonzalo sees ICS as a beacon of engaged research. Here, diversity is not only studied but actively created through projects and dialogues that address topics like solidarity economies, Indigenous rights and planetary healing. This work demonstrates that academia's role extends beyond knowledge production; it involves co-creating pathways toward sustainable futures.

RECIPROCITY AND MULTISPECIES COLLABORATION

A key concept in Gonzalo's current work is reciprocity, which he describes as an ethical framework for reimagining human relationships with each other and the more-than-human world. Drawing from Indigenous practices, he critiques anthropocentric approaches like ecosystem services, which view nature as a resource to exploit. Instead, reciprocity calls for a paradigm shift: humans must live through the Earth rather than over it, acknowledging the interconnectedness of all life forms.

This perspective reshapes sustainability into a relational practice that values collaboration with more-than-human beings. Gonzalo advocates for a transition model that integrates multispecies justice, urging institutions like ICS to embrace this expanded vision. Incorporating multispecies diversity into social and environmental justice frameworks, he believes, will foster ethical sustainability practices grounded in mutual respect and coexistence.

FROM LOCAL TO PLANETARY SCALES

While Gonzalo's work is deeply rooted in local contexts, he underscores the importance of scaling these insights to a global level. Local transitions, often guided by community-driven sustainability efforts, hold immense potential for addressing planetary crises. However, these efforts must be interconnected to create a robust, multilateral dialogue that transcends traditional power structures.

He critiques the neoliberal influence on global sustainability agendas, which often co-opt terms like "green economy" to maintain existing hierarchies. Instead, he envisions alternative forms of collaboration that foster solidarity between communities across the Global South and the Asia-Pacific. This approach would prioritize ethical, place-based transitions, while facilitating transdisciplinary exchanges to address shared challenges.

BRIDGING ACADEMIA AND ACTION

Gonzalo's vision for transition includes practical strategies for fostering global collaborations. He proposes creating a transdisciplinary lab focused on community-driven sustainability, connecting academic institutions, local governments and grassroots organizations. Such a lab would serve as a platform for knowledge exchange, resource sharing, and the development of innovative methodologies to accelerate local transitions.

Central to this initiative is the idea of reciprocity in knowledge sharing. Gonzalo rejects the notion that solutions developed in one context should be replicated uniformly elsewhere. Instead, he advocates for exchanges that respect the unique circumstances of each community while fostering mutual learning. This approach challenges the modernist logic of efficiency and uniformity, replacing it with a pluralistic ethos of diversity, adaptability and co-creation.

ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF TRANSITION

Ultimately, Gonzalo argues that sustainability is not merely a technological challenge but an ethical one. While innovations like zero-carbon technologies are essential, they must be guided by deeper ethical questions about humanity's role within the biosphere. If the ethical dimension is neglected, technological solutions risk becoming ends in themselves, disconnected from their true purpose of fostering sustainable and just societies.

In this context, Gonzalo sees reciprocity as a way to re-centre ethics within sustainability practices. By fostering relationships rooted in mutual respect and collaboration, humans can co-create futures that prioritize the well-being of all life forms. This vision aligns with broader efforts at ICS and beyond to integrate ethical, epistemological and political questions into sustainability discourse.

TOWARD A SHARED FUTURE

Transition, as Gonzalo envisions it, is a deeply collaborative process that requires creativity, inclusivity and a commitment to justice. By interconnecting local practices and scaling them to a planetary level, humanity can address the intertwined crises of climate change, inequality, and ecological degradation. This work requires building bridges – between disciplines, institutions and communities – guided by the principles of diversity, reciprocity and multispecies justice. These are all themes embedded in the ongoing work of ICS members, including through Maldhan Ngurr Ngurra – the Lithgow Transformation Hub. Through initiatives like exploring the basis for a transdisciplinary lab and global networks of solidarity, Gonzalo's work aims to reimagine sustainability as a shared endeavour. This work challenges conventional paradigms and offers a hopeful vision of a world where transitions are driven not by commodification but by ethical collaboration and mutual care.



Image: Screening of Juan F. Salazar's film *Cosmographies* in the Lickanantay Indigenous community of Toconao, Atacama, Chile, November 2024. Photo Credit: Louise Crabtree-Hayes.

THE LITHGOW URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS HUB

By Louise Crabtree-Hayes and Neil Perry

A longstanding centre for mining, energy generation, and industrial production, contributing significantly to Australia's industrial history, Lithgow is experiencing a remarkable transformation. Over 2021-24, this positive transition was shaped by Maldhan Ngurr Ngurra – the Lithgow Transformation Hub – a collaborative venture between the Lithgow community, Lithgow City Council and Western Sydney University.

Established in 2021, Maldhan Ngurr Ngurra – the Lithgow Transformation Hub (the Hub) was situated in the Charles Hoskins Memorial Institute, sitting on Wiradjuri land. Initially used by the University from 2014 to 2018, the building served as a teaching facility for The College's Diploma of Nursing programs. After reopening as the Hub, it became a vibrant site of community engagement, hosting diverse activities ranging from science exposure workshops for school kids to film festivals to acting as a regular meeting space for local organizations. The Hub's walls, decorated with artworks by skilled local artists, resounded with the community's voices and encapsulated the essence of Lithgow's diverse history, lively present, and promising future.

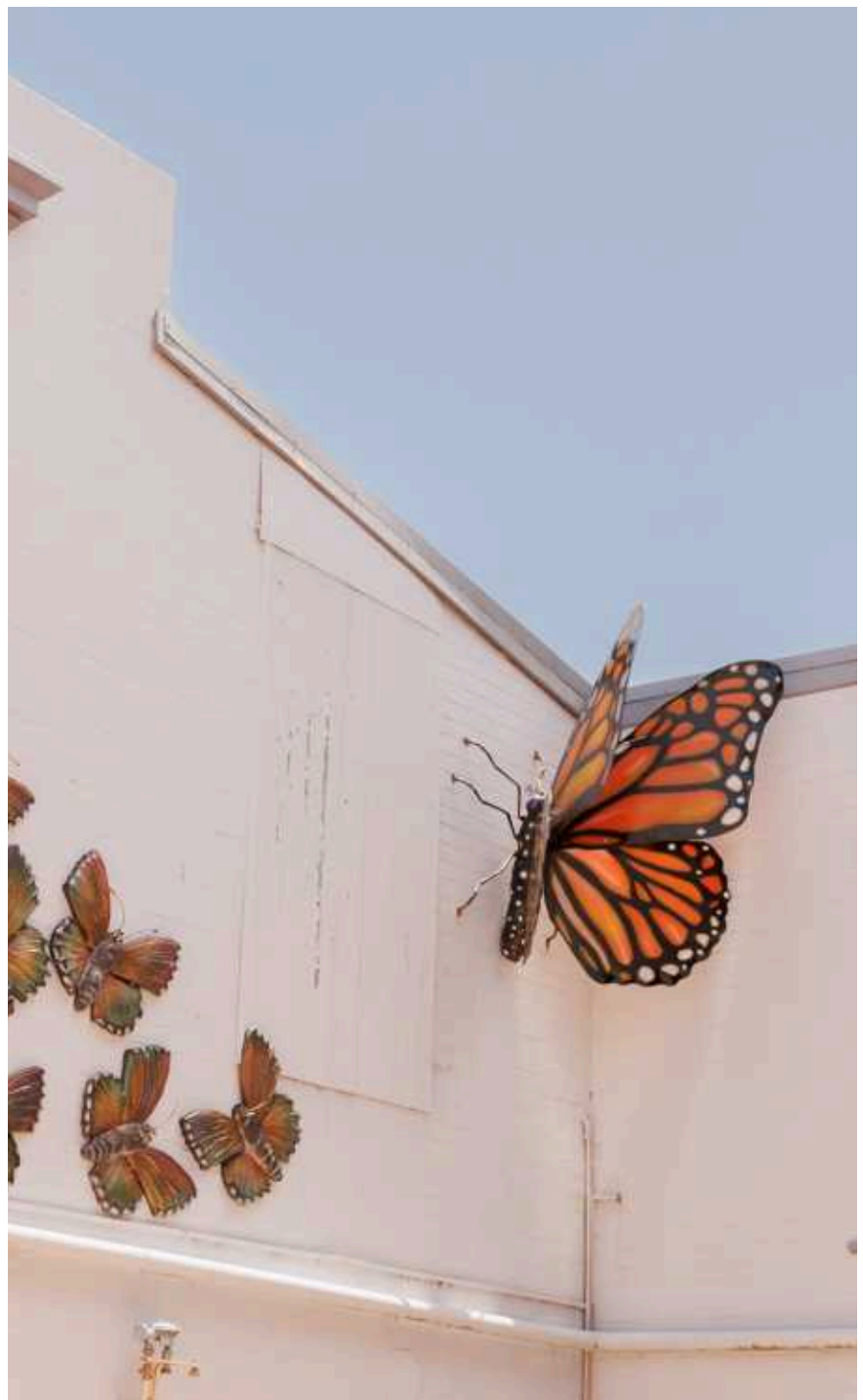


Photo credit: Maja Baska



Photo credit: Maja Baska

THE BEGINNINGS

The birth of the Hub emerged from a discussion between Louise Crabtree-Hayes, Neil Perry, Jen Dollin, and Stephen Healy in mid-2018, which revolved around the university's role in demonstrating sustainable futures and exploring how the university could leverage its infrastructure to contribute to such vision.

"We thought we should be using one of our campuses to actually demonstrate this vision and make it into something that is so good that people will want to come and visit it, learn from it, and replicate it," Louise says.

During this period, Neil was working on a project addressing the economic transition in Hunter Valley, impacted by a decline in coal mining. There, he had observed the challenges of bringing together diverse groups within a regional town to drive economic transition.

"Many times, I've noticed that when community organizations gather, they come up with fantastic ideas. However, even though there's a lot of potential for progress, things often don't move forward because there's a lack of coordination in taking those ideas to the next level" Neil says.

"With the Lithgow site becoming available, I was really interested in how the University could play a role in bringing everyone together and acting as an 'integrator'. It felt like this could be the solution to the issues we faced in the Hunter. In Lithgow, the ownership was with the community, but the University took on the job of coordinating and bringing these groups together."

Towards the end of 2018, following the closure of the Western campus in Lithgow, Louise attended business lunch run by Lithgow City Council, at which she initiated discussions about the University's prospective role in the region and began establishing connections with local organizations. "It basically snowballed from there and we decided to get on the ground and start talking to folk about what could be done," she says.

With funding from the Vice Chancellor, the initial engagement workshop brought together Council and other government officials, industry representatives, community members, education professionals, school students, and University stakeholders.

The purpose of the workshop was to identify crucial issues affecting Lithgow and establish a framework for the Hub, guided by the objectives of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

"The workshop was incredibly well attended and included high school students with excellent ideas about what they wanted to see in the region," remembers Louise.

The strategy drafted during this workshop proved instrumental in securing grant funding and served as the Hub's guiding framework.

GATEWAY TO WIRADJURI COUNTRY

At the end of the initial workshop, Wiradjuri Elder Auntie Sharon Riley gifted the Hub the name Maldhan Ngurr Ngurra, meaning "workmanship together, side by side" in Wiradjuri. It's a fitting name, reflecting the

Hub's purpose to be a space where community, industry, government, and education organisations can come together with the University, share what they know, and work towards a sustainable and thriving future.

Lithgow serves as the gateway to Wiradjuri Country, the largest tribal lands in New South Wales. During the workshop, it was decided that one of the main objectives of the Hub was to highlight Lithgow's place on Wiradjuri Country and the Hub's firm dedication to incorporating Wiradjuri knowledge.

"Since its opening, the Hub housed brilliant moments celebrating the First Nations presence in the region, such as activities during NAIDOC week and National Sorry Day," Louise states.

In July 2023, a significant information session on the First Nations Voice took place at the Hub, drawing a substantial attendance. Also, the Hub's Media Lab offered guidance, inspiration and technical support specifically tailored for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander creatives, filmmakers, and content creators aiming to participate in SF3's Flick Fest 2023.

"For me, one of the most important events the Hub held so far has been the screening of the feature film 'Smoke Between Trees', a reconciliation story of a blended family featuring First Nations and Non-First Nations cast," says Louise.

"The screening was followed by a Q&A session with some of the cast and crew members. It was a powerful evening because it involved truth-telling about colonisation around Lithgow."



Photo credit: Maja Baska

TRANSFORMING LITHGOW

Throughout 2021-2024, Maldhan Ngurr Ngurra – the Lithgow Transformation Hub hosted a variety of workshops, events, and meetings, contributing to the ongoing development of Lithgow by skilling up its residents and offering resources.

“Having the space offering spaces where community, industry, government, and the University can connect and engage in the region’s future, and enables Lithgow’s young people to experience University life and understand themselves as emerging thinkers,” Louise explains.

An illustrative example of this occurred in the early days of the Hub when the team organized an information session for the Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants Program. During this session, diverse community groups came together to share their ideas and develop their proposals. This fostered a more coordinated ecosystem of approaches to regional issues, with a high success rate among the submitted grants enabling the funded projects to then work in synergy.

“In terms of transitioning economies, the Hub aimed to create conditions for the emergence of new industries, setting itself apart from the efforts of State Governments or Local Councils that might cherry-pick industries that they think should be developed. In contrast to ‘top down’ approaches, the Hub focused on aspirational

change and community ambition, working with diverse partners on the ground, to allow the future of Lithgow to emerge,” Neil says.

The Hub hosted a myriad of programs with the overarching goal of helping individuals perceive the realm of possibilities, with a particular emphasis on enabling younger generations. Part of this transformative charge was the First Foot Forward initiative, designed to captivate young minds by engaging them in immersive science activities, ultimately expanding their horizons about their future career paths. Complementing this initiative, exposure and immersion programs offered younger people a first-hand encounter with diverse professionals such as scientists, film set designers, scriptwriters, and medical practitioners.

But that was not all! Citizen science events enabled the community to see and learn about energy efficiency in their homes, regional water ecology issues, and regional biodiversity, while the Hub’s media lab supported young individuals to create media content and find their creative voice. Hub events on housing, planning, and regional development also informed Lithgow City Council’s Evolving Economy Plan and community strategic planning priorities. Additionally, the Hub hosted a multi-sector co-working space to facilitate collaborative partnerships between emerging startups and scale up enterprises in Lithgow.

“This was all thanks to the dedicated team on the ground,” state both Louise and Neil, highlighting the collaborative efforts of the team working on the ground and the importance of having locals as team members who drove and materialized the projects.

“I loved watching the school kids leaving the space after they attended a workshop,” Neil says.

“It was awesome to hear them running through corridors, talking about something they’d just seen or done, and you could just see their minds ticking over. It was wonderful to see the Hub changing people’s minds and visions.”

Contact information
(02) 9685 9600
ics@westernsydney.edu.au

Western Sydney University
Locked Bag 1797
Penrith NSW 2751 Australia



WESTERNSYDNEY.EDU.AU