

**“Transcultural mappings:  
emerging issues in comparative, transnational and area studies”  
International conference, University of Sydney, 9-11 April 2010**

The idea of transculturation was coined by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in 1940, to describe a process of transition from one culture to another. It has come to the fore once again in our globalised and glocalised third millennium, where concepts such as *international* and *crosscultural*, based on an idea of nations and cultures as relatively stable and clearly delimitable entities, have become, if not obsolete, then inadequate. The ideas of the *transnational* and *transcultural* have been put forward in recent years as conceptual frameworks that enable us to develop new interdisciplinary (or indeed *transdisciplinary*) epistemologies of the global, the local, and the “glocal”.

The development of postcolonial and crosscultural studies concepts such as the interstitial and the hybrid have begged the question of how these notions are determined (e.g. interstitial between what and what?). Technically *all* cultures are hybrid, so when we discuss border crossings and hybridities (in relation, for example, to postcolonial or area studies or to comparative cultural studies), on what cultural, political and historical premises are we basing such discussions? Are we positing some mythical idea of an original cultural homogeneity as a mooring from which we embark towards intercultural discovery? Does this then in turn render the idea of cultural mappings, or the discussion of an identifiable “culture” associated with a language, nature or region, superfluous? In which case, how can we continue to have intelligible conversations about distinctive locations of groups and individuals, constructed historically, geopolitically, culturally, socioeconomically and indeed ideologically? Assumptions about such constructions and their impacts, even as we challenge them, continue to inform our analyses and debates.

In short, we continue to *map* the world, sociopolitically and culturally as much as physically. Indeed, physical mappings still largely inform our geopolitical and cultural mappings, through identification of nations and subnational or supranational (and sometimes transnational) regions.

What conceptual tools, then, might emerge from an exercise of “transcultural mappings”? Can it represent a possible way through a certain postmodern and postcolonial impasse? What factors might determine how these mappings occur and how they evolve? On what assumptions and consenses (or questionings and discords) might they be based? The term itself is paradoxical: mapping is an exercise in plotting, delimiting, demarcating. The transcultural, like its cousin the transnational, destabilises the certainties of maps, much as Peter has destabilised Mercator. It fuzzes the edges, shifts the foci, changes the shapes.

This conference aims to track why and how such debates have gained prominence in transnational, area and comparative cultural studies as well as to consider the methodological and ideological implications of such theoretical reworkings. Specific themes might include:

- Locating culture in the glocalised third millennium: can it be done?
- Mapping and culture: complementary or mutually exclusive terms?
- Cultural identity, hybridity and border(zones)
- “Trans-”, “post” “inter-” and academic discourse
- Postcoloniality and postmodernity: is the discussion over?
- The geopolitics of culture / culture and globalisation / hegemonic cultures
- Culture, translation and the production, trafficking and negotiation of meanings
- Ethics, power and the challenges of conceptualising culture
- The South/North debate and the West/East debate
- Diasporas and comparative cultural studies
- Identity politics and area studies
- Interdisciplinarity, pluridisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity: definitions and demarcations

We invite scholars to submit 200 word abstracts for individual presentations (20 minutes) or panel proposals (90-120 minutes) that address these issues either theoretically or through case studies. Abstracts, along with your affiliation, contact information and a short biography should be sent as an email attachment in Microsoft Word by 30 November, 2009 to [tcm.10@usyd.edu.au](mailto:tcm.10@usyd.edu.au). Enquiries should also be sent to this address. If you wish your paper to be considered for refereed publication, it should be submitted by 1 March 2010.