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Applied Cultural Studies

Cultural Studies is emerging as a discipline with its own degree programmes, research centre, refereed journals, and a vital place in learned Academies. Often taken to be about popular culture (a key theme of British work in the 1980s) and issues of cultural identity (typically in the 1990s, race, gender, sexuality and colonialism), Cultural Studies is now especially widely concerned with specific real-life *problems* arising at the interface of “culture and society” (Raymond Williams), with the factors that generate them, and with people’s complex responses (with practices from ideology to action) to them. Thus, for example, much Asia-based research in the field focuses on the impact and related pragmatic problems in local and national contexts of the cross-border, region-forming cultural flows enabled by new technologies, new social movements and new public policy settings.

Problem-based research of this kind requires historical perspective and the ability to draw on the findings of other fields through multi-disciplinary work. In order to integrate the perspectives arising from a spectrum of work articulating this new problematic to what might be called “Applied Cultural Studies” area of research cast in local social contexts, a special panel could begin to map and describe a new direction for Cultural Studies in this orientation through a sample of critical projects and endeavours. To be clear, ‘applied’ here does not express here an intention to bring a preferred set of Cultural Studies theories to bear on local contexts, not least in the Asia-Pacific region. Rather, they are *applied* in the technical, contextually-pragmatic sense of *linking academic research and training to the needs of socio-cultural challenges and (non-academic) cultural institutions and community organization*.