

Flew, Terry, Queensland University of Technology, Australia

Challenges of Suburban Cultural Research: Can we generalize from the Australian Case?

In this paper I will provide an overview of what can be termed pro-suburban and anti-suburban strands in Australian cultural research as it has developed from the 1960s to the present. In doing so, the paper will consider some of the implications of enmeshing strategies associated with cultural research with work coming out of other disciplines that has been related to Australian suburbs, such as economic geography, cultural geography, the political economy of housing and land use, urban cultural policy, and recent discussions about the nature of elites in sociology and political studies. The paper will draw attention to the limits of a discourse of suburban despair and the counter-discourse of suburban romanticism, and draw out some methodological ways forward, based on current research being undertaken into creative workers in the outer suburbs of the Australian cities of Melbourne and Brisbane. The paper will also consider whether there is scope to develop such findings outside of the Australian context, particularly in relation to creative cities discourses as they have been promoted by the World Bank and others in East Asia.