

Decolonising cities: participatory approaches to transcultural placemaking

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Instrument

Collaborative research project

Description

Based on the urgency to develop effective models for the development of cultural and academic initiatives that may be able to decolonise cities in sophisticated and nuanced ways, this project focuses specifically on Italian colonial legacies within contemporary cities in Italy as well as two of the main centres of Italian mass migration (New York and Melbourne). In Italy, we aim to analyse the legacy of Italian imperialism within small to medium sized town (Padova and Prato), and how artists, academics and activists have questioned the collective representation of Italians as “good people”; in the USA, through a collaboration with local scholars, artists and activists at the Calandra Institute CUNY, we will be looking at the role of Columbus in the celebration of Italian American identities, and how this has recently been challenged by activists, community leaders and academics; in Melbourne, we will be looking at the work of artists of mixed Indigenous and Italian heritage, as they make sense of their family history, the complicity of Italian migrants in settler colonialism, and the legacy of colonisation within a multicultural context. These three different case studies will provide an important comparative analysis of different contexts of decolonisation and different ways in which contemporary cities can be decolonised through participatory approaches involving migrant communities.

Expected results

The project will produce three main outputs:

- an online seminar in which scholars from Italy, the US and Australia will develop a theoretical, methodological, and historically-based analyses of participatory approaches to decolonising contemporary cities;
- the seminar will be recorded, and integrate with individual interviews to the scholars, artists and activists involved, in order to produce a short documentary video, which will then be used to both divulgate the research and seek external funding;
- the project feeds into Horizon Europe Cluster 2: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive society; will thus facilitate the creation of new grant applications in this area.

This project aligns with the Thriving Communities objective of the Monash Impact 2030 agenda. The project will have a significant impact in the development of a participatory and decolonial approach to Italian transnational and transcultural studies. It will be part of a broader decolonising agenda within transcultural studies worldwide, and will provide a model for comparative work in this field of research across different countries and continents through a focus on diaspora communities.