

OWRI Panel

A Comparative Study of Modernities in a Global Context

16-17 November 2019

Hangzhou, China

The Panel *A Comparative Study of Modernities in a Global Context* will be held in Hangzhou, China, 16-17 November 2019. The panel aims to examine the transmission of the ideas of modernity from the west to the rest of the world. It is organised by Durham University, UK, in collaboration with Zhejiang University during *The 8th International Conference on Marxist Aesthetics: Contemporary Aesthetics and the Study of Material Culture* in Hangzhou.

The panel focuses on the role of language in the process of transmission of modern ideas contextualised in the dynamics of non-western local historical conditions. The idea of 'modern' as we understand it arose since the fifteenth century in western Europe as the outcome of a number of processes and histories. As Sturt Hall argues, the term 'modern' does not mean the phenomenon is recent, but that it carries specific theoretical values and is related to a conceptual model. The defining characteristics of modernity include the conception of sovereignty and legitimacy associated with the structure of nation-state; a large scale of production and consumption of commodities for the market; the decline of traditional social order with its fixed social hierarchies; and the rise of secular, materialist culture based on individualistic, rationalistic and instrumental impulses. These practices, institutions and values have not only transformed European societies, but have been actively promoted in the European expansion to the rest of the world over centuries with profound, complex and often destabilising consequences.

This panel looks in particular at the process of interactions between externally-introduced 'modern' ideas and the practices of non-western local societies. It investigates how new worldviews as fresh values mediated and negotiated with local traditions, faiths, practices, institutions and assumptions through the role of language in a transcultural, trans-civilizational context. It highlights the histories and consequences of the encounter between two vastly different 'conceptual maps' encoded in the linguistic system and how they are manifested in the use and circulation of language. Papers presented at the panel consider diverse aspects of language use in local adaption of modernity such as the emergence of fresh terms, concepts, new usages of existing vocabularies, translation of western ideas in local vernacular in different fields in culture, society, politics and economy. The working language of the panel is English and Chinese.