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Institute for Culture
and Society

Data Centres and the Governance of Labour and Territory

The project

Without data centres, today's world stops. Flights are grounded, Wall Street closes, and the internet grinds to a halt. Data centres accommodate computer and network systems that store, process and transfer digital information in high volume and at high speeds. These infrastructures are the core components of a rapidly expanding but rarely discussed digital storage and management industry that has become critical to our global economy and society.

This project explores the social, economic, cultural and political implications of data centres. Focusing on data centres in Singapore, Hong Kong and Sydney, the research aims to advance understandings of how these facilities are contributing to, challenging and transforming ways of living and working in Asia.

The design and function of data centres raise concerns relating to energy and the environment, consumer versus corporate rights, as well as new methods for the production and control of knowledge. Probing these concerns will open new circuits of knowledge exchange and supply means of charting the changing forms of economic, social and political power.

The research will use digital methods to: 1) build innovative platforms for broadening debates and research practices concerning digital culture, labour and globalisation, and 2) provide a software application that can produce knowledge about these facilities, particularly in regards to their technical operations, social and cultural effects, and the legal and political geography of data.

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It champions collaborative engaged research in the humanities and social sciences for a globalising digital age, and is the largest dedicated research concentration of its kind in Australia.

The Institute encourages collaboration from Australian and international institutions, and students interested in postgraduate studies.