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International Cultural Relations has not become a successful academic discipline, like International Relations (IR); to date, we may find scholarly research on ICR within Political Science, Cultural Studies, or History (particularly in the context of nation statehood, the evolution of political institutions, governance, global political economy, and so forth). Moreover, the professional competencies of ICR tend to be agency-specific, which is to say, tend to belong to specific organisations (whether government or governmental or national cultural institutes, or the numerous organisations that are involved in cultural development internationally). There is a sense that International Cultural Relations is not a discrete subject at all — it potentially refers to any cultural activity outside of national borders – whether de facto, by default, or by any other means (our cultural exports, trade fairs, concerts and touring, exhibitions or even artists living abroad, may all count as ICR in one way or another). However, in this presentation I will further our project, as Cultural Policy researchers, and try to make ICR more specific as a research subject – or at least, identify the parameters or lines of activity that may represent ICR as a sub-field of academic knowledge.

I begin with maps of the world [PowerPoint images], and for two reasons: the first reason is to make the obvious point, that every project or activity of ICR there is implied a broader field of ‘relations’, whether economic, political or security-based. This, we may call, the geopolitical order, which is a macro-economic structure of global governance with its many agencies of authority, legitimacy and value production. This ‘field’ of power is always around us as well as ‘out there’. Secondly, the map [we are looking at right now], of course, is an out of date map of the ‘three worlds’ of the Cold War, which dissolved in the early 1990s. This is the map of the world of my school years as a child, and today it’s a map that reminds us of the role of representation in global geopolitics — that every agency (government, country or even IR project), will work with a map (actual or assumed) of the world or explicit perception of a location for its actions. Such work of representation speaks of an understanding of the complexity of ‘relations’ that make up what we call geopolitics, but also acts as a means of identifying all the other actors and agencies of whom, spatially, it should remain aware (work alongside, with or against).

My second map is more appealing – it is the UNDP’s Human Development Index (HDI) map (since 1991, renewed annually). Of course, it remains a map of nation state boundaries, with national statistic implying relatively homogenous populations — given that the limits of the UN’s vision of the global is limited to the positive alliances between its member states. But, it is also a world map that speaks of people, not territory: it’s a way of representing the dimensions of life that matter to all individuals (social, cultural and economic-based growth in ‘capabilities’ and freedom to choose). It is appropriate for us, cultural policy researchers, as ICR is routinely defined as the dimension of cultural diplomacy that is ‘beyond organisations’, or operates ‘person to person’. ICR is usually defined in terms of the interaction of
people through culture, and from that creating together something of value to types of ‘relations’ that are politically defined or advantageous to a broader political project.

In the conclusion of this presentation, I will recommend some research sources: the British Council now have a large collection of commissioned research papers and reports on ‘Cultural Relations’ and I also recommend its published documents from a collaboration with the Goethe Institut and the Open University (UK) on some methodology-based research — i.e. this methodology being focused on the question of cultural value. This, I find interesting, given my past research in aesthetics and art history: the role of culture in signifying meaning and attracting attributions of value is context-specific, obviously; a cultural expression or object when taken from one culture and placed in another, does not simply maintain a commanding power over how it is viewed, experienced or interpreted. It is a socio-empirical fact that cultural forms or objects, such as works of art, ‘inhabit’ place-specific discourses, however internationalised that ‘place’ has become (during the 1960s, the art scene of New York City, for example, projected its discourse around many capital cities of the world and indelibly influenced the so-called ‘art scenes’ of each city, forming the basic cognitive conditions for what we now refer to as ‘international contemporary art’). For ICR, the role of culture in signifying meaning and attracting attributions of value can be complex — not least as the kinds of cultural producers and agencies involved in ICR may not have a deep knowledge of the art and aesthetics of the countries they work in. There is little research on how art, specifically, is used by ICR transculturally, and the theoretical issues this raises concerning perception and communication.

Indeed, constructing or working in ‘international’ contexts (especially constructed programmes, schemes or special events) tends to be preferred for this reason. For a work of art to be a ‘powerful experience’, or intelligible at all, is contingent upon its ability to function (aesthetically, or epistemically) outside its own cultural system or a socio-cultural environment — and this may be a matter of presentation, display or educational context (i.e. down to a curator, a producer, an education official or a programmer commissioning work appropriate to certain events or policy aims). Heritage-based culture is less problematic, as it is expected to remain embedded within certain place-based historical narratives, and so come with a necessary communications-based pedagogy that a given audience will be expecting. Contemporary artistic culture, rather, is a range of institutional hierarchies of meaning and value, which define what an form of culture or art is, how it is to be interpreted, and how it is of significance in the ICR context it is experienced, and in need of very specific kinds of management.

This issue emerged recently in the context of ‘decolonialism’, the charges against ‘cultural appropriation’ and the promotion of what is regarded as cultural hegemony. While this opens a range of questions I will not broach here, it is important to note that ICR itself opens a range of social complexities, not least interpretative and even moral. And given how culture is formed by specific issues or concerns, discursive frameworks, lexicons of meaning, canonical or institutionally embedded historical reference, it is very easy to confuse, offend, or appear arrogant, when presenting cultural forms or art in other countries or (international) contexts. The question of ‘value’ is one (partially) considered by the publications I reference, added to which the online library of the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa) is now extensive and impressive — a huge resource to student and professional alike.

I now draw attention to two categories of organisation important to ICR. The first is membership-based international cultural organisations (like IFACCA, the International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies, or the IFCCCD, International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity, or even UNESCO’s
Creative Cities Network). For ICR, these organisations tend to be specialist and profession-based. The second type of organisation is where its principal aims actually involve international cultural relations; it includes the Asia-Europe Foundation or Anna Lindh Foundation (even though they both do more than just ‘culture’) and, of course, the NCI’s come in this category (our national cultural institutes). Whether many of them are involved in ‘relations’ is a point of debate: some tend to stick to an established routine of ‘showcase and promote’ official versions of national culture, which is now regarded as a bit out of date.

As I indicated in my opening sentence, the concept of ICR is not substantive in a scholarly sense, and nor a policy sense: it is a generic term encompassing a range of activities and defined differently in all kinds of contexts. In surveying the literature represented at the end of this paper, I will hazard a general observation on what may be a consensus on ICR as a cultural-political project, and this is articulated by my diagram below. The established term ‘Cultural Diplomacy’ (and even Public Diplomacy) suggests a more explicit relation to foreign policy than does ‘ICR’, and so it makes sense to see them on a continuum – ICR representing activities that take place beyond or outside of specific State-oriented policy objectives. This is surely true when the activities are motivated purely by artistic or intellectual concerns, are religious or ‘special interest’, or even exclusively business-oriented (like a lot of international creative industries). My emphasis (in red) serves to indicate what I see as the distinctiveness of ICR — where its locus of meaning is invested in the culture (i.e. what is produced and not in political or economic capital or policy-based agreement). By way of observation I would say that the professionals I have met working in ICR tend to be intellectually invested in the quality and efficacy (the value) of their cultural activity – not principally in any political outcome or official line of diplomacy that may or may not be set up within its orbit. But then of course, this is paradoxical, as ICR as a professional activity (more often than not funded or sponsored by an agency with more substantive political interests) will always operate on a continuum of political values (like ‘democracy’) and so will work to advance more strategic objectives. I will elaborate on this later.

![Image of diagram: Cultural Diplomacy or Relations?](image)

But before we proceed any further, any talk of ‘relations’ and ‘diplomacy’ evokes the interdisciplinary uncertainty of our assumptions (we are using terms not internal to
cultural policy or cultural studies, but to political science). It would be useful for you, as students, to remain aware of how ICR and cultural diplomacy needs to draw on a range of politics and international relations theory as well as debates, theoretical and methodological interdisciplinarity. I won’t mention it now, but the role of neo-realism, neo-constructivism, postmodernism and critical discourse approaches to IR, are significant to recent research in cultural policy, and you should read up on these (by way of forming your own theoretical commitments). In the meantime, there are some obvious assumptions which define the subject of ICR before we begin referring to any examples.

Firstly: ‘Culture’ is a concept that always needs qualification (hopefully not a laborious and ill-fated definition): culture is now internal to social identity, political values, and the rise of what is referred to as ‘civilisational states’. In other words, culture cannot be defined in terms of some national ontology or homogenous realm of national expression — and needs to remain critical of how the traditional ‘showcase-promotion’ ICR can instrumentalise culture by using the visual rhetoric of official national heritage as the means by which statecraft is communicated. Indeed, the status of nation states as cultural entities is in perpetual question. This issue morphs into questions on ‘post-nationalism’, multiculturalism, pluralism and globalisation, and the rise in bi/multi lateral and regional agreements around the world.

Secondly, in this more complex landscape of theoretical terms, the so-called ‘New Diplomacy’ emphasises the role of knowledge and communication, dialogue and participatory-based relations (and so Public Diplomacy has gained a synergy with media and communication studies and academically a larger profile). This is constructive in the sense that it responds to, and represents the ideological shifts in, the management of power and interests within the global political economy of nation states – facilitated in part by the rise of supranational and global organisations.

Thirdly, and following from this, there has been a rise in media ‘spectacle’ within diplomacy and ICR agendas (in part driven by fast-moving social media responding to political situations that far exceed individual nation states — from severe geopolitical conflict to planetary crisis in climate change). This also draws attention to shifts in spheres of influence, attraction and association — away from hard national interests and towards coalition or collaborative interests, new international hierarchies, alliances and collaborative arrangements (rise in security as equal priority to markets; and new impetus for global alliances; post Brexit; Ukraine and Nato; Gaza, etc.). National Cultural Institutes (British Council; Goethe) – can be semi-independent of State foreign policy interests. A web survey will quickly turn up all kinds of contemporary examples of ICR, and begs the question on whether we require very different frameworks to understand and evaluate each of these spheres of cultural activity.

• National Cultural institutions (e.g. British Museum) using professional expertise in ‘collegiate’ transnational collaboration (e.g. conservation, collections and exhibitions).
• Research and Education (‘Knowledge Diplomacy’; ‘Science Diplomacy’, partnerships) initiated by individual universities, independent scientific projects, associations and alliances, or used as part of broader diplomacy packages.
• NGOs and charities playing increasingly diverse roles (e.g. Development Aid; humanitarian assistance; human Rights Diplomacy, advocacy and lobbying; mediation – religious; peace-making; volunteering).
• Artistic Projects (e.g. from translation to art collaborations) can play a role in celebrating differences and not just commonalities (e.g. heritage; indigenous culture).
Of course, we must not be fixated on the agency or genre of ICR activity, as many of these may share the same modus operandi — which can be itemised as the following: (i) representation, attraction and persuasion through culture; (ii) Mediation or communication; (iii) Advocacy or promotion; (iv) Business networking, (v) marketing or strategising; (vi) Pedagogy, distribution or dissemination of exemplar products, knowledge, models and templates, and so on. I emphasises these individually by way of emphasising the lack of detailed ICR research on cases or strategy examples of each of these. Like culture’s role in international development, it is voluminous and yet researchers face an intractable problem because of a chronic lack of case-based research, data, archived documentation and evaluation reporting. With ICR, events, projects and huge budgets can come and go, with little follow-up research, evaluation and strategy development.

And, with this diversification of ICR in the face of rapid global change, we must not forget the enduring role of nation statehood on the way cultural production (or even ‘business culture’ or other areas of social life) is defined. Our countries remain, historically, a discursively preeminent field of knowledge and practice and a space in which distinctiveness and difference is cultivated, as well as commonality. It is in the face of the enduring productivity of the enterprise of the nation state that the UNESCO Constitution of 1945, and the ‘Declaration of Principles of International Cultural Co-operation’ (1966) remains strangely apposite (‘strange’, in the sense, that it is more fashionable to laud the decline of the nation state and with it these old or post-War frameworks of internationalism: I would say not).

The Article IV of the 1966 Declaration is worth quoting here, as it can still serve to inform a contemporary definition of ICR:

“The aims of international cultural co-operation in its various forms, bilateral or multilateral; regional or universal, shall be:

• 1. To spread knowledge, to stimulate talent and to enrich cultures;
• 2. To develop peaceful relations and friendship among the peoples and bring about a better understanding of each other's way of life;
• 3. To contribute to the application of the principles set out in the United Nations Declarations that are recalled in the Preamble to this Declaration;
• 4. To enable, everyone to have access to knowledge, to enjoy the arts and literature of all peoples, to share in advances made in science in all parts of the world and in the resulting benefits, and to contribute to the enrichment of cultural life;
• 5. To raise the level of the spiritual and material life of man in all parts of the world.”

Of course, we are immediately aware of the outmoded assumptions of such a statement; at the same time, its aspirations remain largely unfulfilled by multicultural globalisation. And yes, the political optimism of this statement is positively excruciating when we think of the history of IR in the last seventy years and present day intractable geopolitical conflicts. Yet it also indicates a potentially fruitful range of cultural activity, and to illustrate this I quote the British Council ‘Spectrum’ table (below) — which is an attempt to clarify the terminology around ICR. The table is structured by the now common binary of ‘soft and hard’ power. This, by itself, is problematic, given how the realms of defence and security can appear ‘hard’ but involve a lot of the ‘soft’ (indeed the other end of the table — Development Aid and language — often surely features as part of any ‘coercive’ impact of ‘hard’ power; and hard power agencies (an army, for example) are sometimes commissioners of culture and surely wield symbolic cultural power in terms of the behaviour and
horizon of political expectation that is established in their presence). Even so, this spectrum table allows us to connect all the various activities involved in ICR, even if only to raise questions (which I will do with some examples). My question is on the empirical assumption that ‘Defence and Security’ are not already embedded in the ‘soft’ dimension (of culture, and political discourse) but that ‘hard’ is not a separate category or opposite to, but a dimension of, the ‘soft’ (of values, political aspirations and the imaginary of international projection). In this way, ‘hard’ extends its work through actual material conditions of aid, resources, institutions and professional discourses of knowledge and communication. Even during colonial times, the bureaucratic systems of governance were a crucial dimension of the ‘hard’ power of colonial rule.

My first example is perhaps an obvious one: it is the organisation ‘The Commonwealth of Nations’, established in 1949, when the British Empire was still a reasonable size. It is a large operation in terms of its programme, covering all kinds of ‘relations’ based activity involving 56 countries. Indeed, the Commonwealth’s programme of activities seem something like a Development aid project with its emphasis on learning and the improvement of basic social and economic institutions (from education, to governance and law, to trade and economic activity). Traditionally, with the British Monarch as its symbolic head, the Commonwealth represented itself as a mutual society or even cooperative, but in one sense can be defined as a de facto ‘hard’ power (in its capacity as an organisational alliance of national representatives), and yet is always self-defined as a soft power (as non-governmental). The political rhetoric of ‘commonwealth’ is a means of defining power purely in terms of cooperative development (value) and hence building a strong sense of legitimacy: it is future-oriented and so an ideological guard against continual scrutiny of historical injustice. Indeed, the ‘soft’ programme of cooperative development supplants the ‘hard’ role of historical narrative (of colonial subjugation and inferiority) in their identification of the material conditions of political efficacy.

My second example is the recent British Museum’s ‘Iraq Scheme’ (2015-2020), involving the London-based national museum with counterparts in Iraq & Syria following the destruction of major heritage sites by the Islamic State (ISIS or Da'ish) terrorist group in 2015. Again, a ‘hard’ dimension appears in terms of a situation
where museum and heritage professionals in Iraq & Syria were powerless and dependent on foreign aid, following foreign political and military intervention. The Scheme — which was indeed constructive, generous and impressive in its impact — was a professional and collegiate means of sharing and training so as to equip professionals in Iraq & Syria in a way that was adequate to their urgent and severe challenge. In one strong sense, I see the scheme in terms of a soft power project (developing professional competencies) as hard power — as the projection of a Western professional authority in ways compatible with Western security interests (if we now understand culture as being involved in the security agenda).

My third example is the world famous Nobel Prize scheme (est. 1901, Stockholm, Sweden). The various prizes, while giving a ceremonial visibility to the symbolic power of the Swedish state, Swedish Academy and occasionally its Royal family, are deliberately awarded within an explicitly internationalised series of values and aspirations. State power per se is not thematic within the symbolic landscape of the Prize scheme (and the most celebrated Peace Prize is awarded in Oslo, Norway), or rather, Sweden's projection of itself as a principal advocate of a global common good, is entirely converted into a soft power of ethically universal ends. The ‘soft’ in terms of the cultural event of prizes and the recognition of achievement, is most immediately thematised as a European political project, advancing democracy and human rights in the world. While this may seem entirely right and reasonable, the Prize ‘as soft power’ is a form of political capital, and over the last 100 years (or even 50 years) has gradually re-defined its original basis of validation (of a discipline-specific attainment) and now is one major actor in a transnational effort to establish a politically normative framework for global cultural production. Illustrating this, on the official Prizes website this year [2023] and concerning the Nobel Peace Prize 2023, it states that “This year’s Peace Prize recognizes all the brave women in Iran, and around the world, who fight for basic human rights.” i.e. there is currently no actual peace to be found in Iran (in part down to the West's hard power inaction and lack of support for Iran’s democracy movement), and no specific achievement or unique model of progress is identified. It is a form of recognition that is common to any human rights or political advocacy agency. While again, this can hardly be objected to, it represents an homogenisation and universalisation of values that extends to all the arts-based prizes — that they support an ethical universalist project that implicitly claims that its principles should become the soft power that is the basis of hard power priorities.

I have two further supplementary examples that also illustrate how non-state actors are engaging in ICR, and in ways that provoke questions on our framework of understanding. The first is the Gulf Labour Artist Coalition, first established in New York in 2011, and successful in drawing attention to the exploited labour used in mega-museum location in non-democratic countries (notably, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and later the city of Helsinki as partner in the museum's international expansion). My second example is the ‘Fly the Flag’ project (2018 – , London) initiated by a London-based arts agency, Fuel, who commissioned the Chinese dissident artist Ai Wei Wei to design a flag on the occasion of the 70th year anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the UDHR of 1948).

Both these projects exemplify forms of independent (or ‘civil’) ICR, who, by acting on the basis of rights-based political values alone (with no actual agenda for culture itself), are presenting something quite new and different for ICR. The Fly the Flag design emerged as a light blue background with a dotted pattern of a footprint. The backstory of this design was that Chinese artist Ai Wei Wei’s visited the Rohingya refugees in 2017, where they had fled to Bangladesh from persecution in Myanmar. Where many or most of the Rohingya were barefooted, Wei Wei took many prints
and impressions and combined them to make a powerful footprint symbol of the poor, fleeing, dispossessed refugee – it is powerful, conceptually speaking, but visually it is intentionally weak and muted. The project aims were simply to inspire local motivation to obtain and ‘fly the flag’ on the allotted day; it has spread internationally and is now an annual cultural event in many cities (supported by many city authorities).

These two examples see ICR in terms of a multi-location, dynamic and issue-based focus on the application of universal rights. It challenges us to consider how ICR can be completely detached from cultural diplomacy (‘interests’-based foreign cultural engagement). Indeed, many years ago, Paul Robeson (the famous US singer, actor, celebrity) arrived in Moscow (1958) on a cultural trip that was politically scandalous in the context of the Cold War yet demonstrated an embryonic form of this kind of ICR — a ‘dissenting’ ICR.

For the final section of my paper, I will focus on our initial challenge — defining ICR in a way that produces a useful analytical framework, or at least a more specific categorisation than we possess hitherto. This will enable us to do away with the loose presumption that ‘relations’ is simply ‘the culture without the diplomacy’, and so not requiring any actual political attention as to its salience within an environment of serious diplomatic or IR issues. I propose an ICR typology of three categories of cultural relations:

A: ‘Relations of Trust’ — a range of recognition-based activities, from event or performance touring to institutional cultural engagement to celebratory or convivial events – where friendship, goodwill and respect may be without explicit interests-based conditions (or where culture can be described in relatively straightforward terms as an ‘ethical soft power’ – for reasons of recognition, not altruism).
B: ‘Relations of Association’ — from traditional bilateral ‘showcase-promotion’ activities, to participation in an alliance or broader group affiliation (e.g. multi-partner or group aimed at expressing allegiance to broader aims).
C: ‘Relations of Transaction’ – patronage or membership of a circle of influence with strategic gain: often conducted by a more powerful sponsor, and with membership obligations (often involving an obligatory transmission of values, a supporting role in international institutions – UN voting, for example; and where one’s assets, resources, legal rights and restrictions, become open to the circle sponsor).

Development Aid can feature in all three above categories; and most forms of cultural diplomacy can feature, use, or exploit all three. My examples are chosen as I have had some direct contact with each project, and so have attributed each case to a category with some preliminary observational familiarity.

The first example is from my own university, and is an education project called ‘Warwick in Africa’ — the project, begun in 2006, aims simply to allow University education students experience in school-level teaching, and so contribute to local educational provision and development in the designated African countries (which varies). Largely philanthropy-funded, the project has grown to a larger individually branded project: it can be argued that this is a non-invasive, post-colonial, collaborative project, creating opportunities for UK as well as Africa. Its identified locus of value is educational and not exploited for any other purpose.
My Case B is [translated as] ‘Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders’ (Nanjing, China). This is a memorial museum — located on the site of a notable military massacre of civilians by the forces of Imperial Japan in 1937. It is involved in collating significant documentation and evidence, and demonstrating leadership in research-based approaches to the curating of historical material on significant past conflict. The museum is now associated with terms like ‘memory diplomacy’, where the historical events are particularly complex, extreme and potentially inflammatory within a contemporary IR context, because of the enduring impact of the atrocities involved. The museum is interconnected with university-based projects that use knowledge to form a community of practice in memory-based culture, which includes caring for survivors or families, maintaining individual documentation as well as monuments, developing pedagogy for children, and scholarly activities including a Research center with a public policy and international public peace diplomacy function.

My Case C is the well-known ‘One Belt One Road’ infrastructure project undertaken by China, of which cultural policies are less known. In fact the cultural policy is a core operation of the ‘One Belt One Road’ — as “Cooperation Priorities,” that of “people-to-people” connections. President Xi Jinping is quoted as saying that the project will “promote inter-civilization exchanges to build bridges of friendship for our people, drive human development and safeguard peace of the world.” (Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference, 2015). While, on the face of it, the cultural policies involve the heritage places and artifacts that are impacted by the huge land-based construction invasion through Asia into Europe, looking in more detail, the heritage is a gateway for the rewriting historical narratives of Chinese culture, governance of regional...
culture, and forms of political cooperation required for such an investment and membership.

These three examples, I hope, serve to indicate three quite different dimensions of ICR as currently practiced — indicating three quite distinct projects for scholarly research, analysis and interpretation, involving very different alignments of cultural research, and political science or IR and geopolitics.

Throughout this paper, I have simply outlined the concept of international cultural relations or ICR as it remains in a process of consolidation as an official term designating a specific region of knowledge and professional practice. As I noted, its past diversity can crowd our vision in situating it among the cluster of concepts that have become established — cultural diplomacy, soft power, public diplomacy and so on. Yet, historically, international cultural relations was a term substantive enough to be used in the planning for the establishment of the British Council in the mid-1930s. But, referring to your challenge as students, I conclude with some questions, identifying new lines of inquiry for your studies.

1: How do we define the value of ‘relations’ – in ways that can register in a substantive way in policy contexts and institutional practice? In the arts, frameworks of value are critical to the credibility of the artist and works of art — for too long, the use of art and culture in international relations contexts has been dismissed as a form of instrumentalism and tolerating low-levels of quality (a fate suffered in a parallel way by national Community Arts).
2: Can ICR locate international or global spaces for creativity and culture outside of geopolitics (and its use of universalist ethics or human rights) – i.e. spaces for alternative values (and outside of revived tribalism, or nationalism, or fundamentalist religion)?
3: Where is government foreign policy not representing its public – how can this inspire alternative representations of national regional or local culture to our counterparts in other countries or parts of the world?
4: ‘Decolonisation’ is a trending term – are the legacies of colonialism specific enough to be a basis for a cultural relations?

Theorisation is becoming important: what is ICR ‘knowledge’, and representations of truth? How is trust and credibility constructed on the basis of what we know to be true, and what we are persuaded of to be common aims? What units or agents of ‘relations’ can we identify: we are often still working with post-WW2 institutions, so how will these take us through a digital, Covid and climate-change world? We need to integrate the causal, empirical and practical world data with a normative critical reflection on values and conditions. We need a problem solving approach to normativity (a ‘pracademic’, praxiographic – pragmatic critical theoretical analysis).

The world in which the dichotomy of diplomatic-governmental and the cultural were distinct, is no longer with us, we need another, perhaps more synthetic and transdisciplinary, approach. Culture itself is now entirely embedded in economic and institutional systems of reproduction and cannot be assumed to neutral or an ‘essential’ core to a society’s distinctiveness. Culture can be agency and also commodification or as a highly politised value system. Academically, we need to think transdisciplinary alliances and ‘global intellectual citizenship’ as fundamental yet not as an abstract universal — many people have no substantive relation to the universals of human rights as a form of legal practice, and have no ‘essential’ relation to their own culture even, or are losing their culture (territorially, economically, socially, educationally, as community or place-based ways of life). Both nationalism and local ecosystems are enduring, but in a kind of ‘zombie’ form, as if they are
always in a process in ‘disembling’ (Jessop) or dissolving over longer periods of time. We need to understand ICR ‘relations’ as a global intellectual discourse (not merely academic), cultural informal economy, a extension of post-War internationalism, as research-based dialogue, knowledge-sharing, a political imaginary of state funded arm’s length bodies and their role in global civil society, a range of value-driven agendas, and so forth. Good luck!

Recommended Introductory Bibliography

(i): Websites

Fly the Flag  
https://flytheflag.org.uk/
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End of paper