

**THE SYMBOLIC CONSTRUCTION OF THE GLOBAL IMAGINARY
IN SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE**

An exegesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Declaration

I certify that, except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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INTRODUCTION

This exegesis constitutes the theoretical and methodological framework that complements my book of images, entitled *The Symbolic Construction of the Global Imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne*. The book of images is a creative work and I produced it as the main output of a research project that draws from my long-term practice in fine art and my recent experience in the field of academic research. Although this exegesis is not intended as a critical review of the book of images, it nonetheless includes multiple-case study of visual evidence taken from the fieldwork. It also discusses the literature on the subject of the social imaginary (Chapter 1) and factors that contribute to the concept of visual thinking and to the critical approach to images. Most importantly, this exegesis provides an insight into the working process carried out by a visual artist when engaged in academic research. Chapter 2 is dedicated to the theory and includes a reflection on photography as research tool for academic investigation. Chapter 3 is dedicated to methodology and it explains the methods used to approach and understand the symbolic construction of the ‘global imaginary’. Chapter 4 covers a multiple-case study to better understand how precisely the ‘global’ is symbolically injected into both the ‘local’ and ‘national’ in Australia’s global cities; Sydney and Melbourne. The exegesis conclusions constitute the grounds for possible further developments of my project.

The book of images and the exegesis

The book of images and the exegesis constitute two parts of the research project, playing distinct and complementary roles. While the book of images represents the creative work on which the study is grounded, the exegesis is its formal articulation as academic research. The book of images displays photographs taken in Sydney and Melbourne, which depict the circulation and interaction of symbolic forms in space-time. More precisely, those photographs portray details of lived space in the two cities’ central business districts (CBDs) from the point of view of the researcher gaze. Collected during three years of fieldwork observations and measurements in Sydney and Melbourne, these images are part of a solid

collection of digital still photographs stored in a digital visual archive of ‘condensation symbols’ (see my discussion pp. 14-15), on which both the book of images and the exegesis rely.

The book of images represents my personal contribution to a better understanding of how the global imaginary is symbolically and socially produced. This visual evidence is subjective, selective and limited; however it is a crucial key to accessing the global imaginary. More precisely, the purpose of the book of images is to show, through a choice of selected images from the two cities under investigation, how the global imaginary is symbolically produced. My focus is both on the ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ level as it applies to people’s everyday life in these two major Australian cities. The image selection criteria I adopted to produce the book of images is based on my personal taste and my understanding of what I perceived. It must be considered that image structures are not naturally generated but are symbolically produced in space-time through socio-spatial practices of what Michel Foucault defines as a particular discursive ‘regime of truth’. (1972)

Thus the book of images constitutes a visual diary of a complex subjective process involving the visual-ideological dimension of globalization represented in a tangible way. In order to better understand the role played by the researcher at the site of production and reception, images need to be analysed and interpreted by referring to the socio-historical context of production and interpretation. If the book of images represents my creative contribution to a better understanding of the subjective production of the new common sense of the global, then the multiple-case study covered by the exegesis offers explanations of how precisely the ‘global’ is symbolically injected in the ‘local-national’ and why it matters socially. In short, this analysis and interpretation of pertinent images represents my own theoretical and methodological contribution to the ongoing academic explorations of the subjective dimensions of globalization.

Context, background and importance of the topic

Although globalization has been presented in the mainstream academic literature primarily as an economic phenomenon, it must be emphasized that its cultural and ideological aspects are of equal significance. Pervading and altering the urban social fabric through media representations, the global imaginary shapes urban spaces. While the scholarship on globalization as an objective phenomenon has greatly proliferated, too little attention has been paid to its subjective dimensions. In particular, there is a dearth of research related to the textual-visual dynamics of globalization—the images, metaphors, and symbols through which the global is projected onto concrete local-urban landscapes of what are increasingly referred to as ‘global cities’. Focusing on this crucial process of symbolic production, my project takes as its point of departure the following two central research questions:

- 1) How do condensation symbols appearing in neoliberal image-texts construct and articulate the global imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne?
- 2) How can phenomenological–interpretive methodologies illuminate the symbolic and social roles of condensation symbols in image-texts?

As suggested by these principal research questions, this study understands globalization as a both material and ideational process. Indeed, it seeks to overcome the problematic binary of ‘matter’ versus ‘ideas’ that has plagued the history of political and social philosophy in the West. It employs a non-dualistic aesthetic approach to understanding the rise of the global imaginary in two major Australian cities. The visual formations collected in the accompanying book of images are the product of discourses and practices; therefore they are embedded with systems of values and ideologies. On this basis, this study acknowledges that aesthetic transformations underway in the global age involve changes on the level of both the social imaginary and material culture.

The book of images uses photographs as research tools to critically investigate, detect and interpret ‘objective’ manifestations of globalization processes invoked by the dominant ideology of ‘market globalism’ and its neoliberal economic message (Steger 2009a).

Supporting my creative work of images, this exegesis focuses on issues related both to the development of the book of images and the literature review of those theoretical and methodological concerns that underpin my work. The images subjected to analysis are a limited, selective and highly subjective representation of concepts associated with structures, places and identity; in this sense they are not unproblematic. However, they are crucial keys to making sense of how the global imaginary is symbolically and socially produced (Steger 2008). Thus analyzing and interpreting a selected body of ‘condensation symbols’ (Edelman 1985; Steger 2011) from my creative work in the book of images, the primary research aim of this exegesis is to investigate how, precisely, the global reconfigures the local and national in neoliberal text-images that are on prominent everyday display in the urban landscapes of Sydney and Melbourne.

The production, circulation and reception of these images have dramatically changed during the past decade. The ubiquitous presence of image-mediating, hand-held digital devices like iPhones or iPads, for example, attests to the increasing significance of visuality in the everyday life of urban residents. Through the ongoing processes of globalization that go hand-in-hand with rapid urbanization, people are subjected to—and to some extent interpellated by—global flows of visual images that are continuously disseminated by new media technology, smart phones, satellite TV and the internet. Thus, the global pervades and alters the urban social fabric through visual-symbolic forms that have the power to reshape urban spaces. Seeking to understand these dramatic transformations of the global age, scholars of globalization increasingly employ new transdisciplinary frameworks to explore the subjective dimensions of the growing ‘global consciousness’ (Castells 2011; Harvey 1991; Robertson 2000; Steger 2008).

Indeed, some of these new ‘global studies’ experts have argued that we are witnessing the rise of the ‘global imaginary’ and the concomitant transformation of an ideological landscape rooted in the national imaginaries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Robertson 2000; Appadurai 2005; Steger 2008). Manfred Steger defines the ‘global

imaginary' as a new collective consciousness in which various conceptions of the 'global' assume a more and more prominent role as they bind the national and local to their meaning orbits (Steger 2008, p. 6, 2011). The social imaginary reflects the symbolic dimension of the social world (Bourdieu 1989, 1991; Thompson 1984) through which we human beings create and represent social lives. Charles Taylor defines the 'modern social imaginary' as an 'implicit background understanding' of the way in which ordinary people imagine their social existence, the way in which they imagine and fit together (Taylor 2007).

Expanding and complementing Taylor's reading of the Western imaginary, Steger (2008) detects a shift from the 'national' to the 'global' imaginary as a result of the multidimensional processes of globalization. This reconfiguration of the national and local around the rising global imaginary is the result of the re-shaping of cultural identities and the destabilization of nation-states due to the acceleration, intensification and spread of global cultural flows and networks after World War II. The increased circulation of images, people and materials across national boundaries after the fall of the Berlin Wall created this new common sense of the 'global' (Steger 2008, p. 10). Focusing primarily on the role of language, Steger's pioneering work on the symbolic construction of the global imaginary needs to be extended to include images and other visual phenomena. In short, his investigation of how the global destabilizes, complements, and reconfigures conventional understandings of both the local and the national requires a visual dimension. It is on this crucial point that the current exegesis seeks to make its principal contribution. Indeed, the primary significance and innovative quality of the present project lies in its capacity to extend Steger's work on the global imaginary and thus explore in more detail the subjective dimension of the phenomenon of globalization. Furthermore, my project adds to the new pertinent literature of global, urban, and media studies by offering an alternative way of looking at contemporary transformations on a social level. Establishing alternative theoretical frameworks and perspectives, this study relies on a number of key terms.

Before continuing, it is useful to clarify that my study does not deal with ‘visual politics’ nor does it consider political events. Rather, as per the two research questions previously posed (see Introduction Chapter, Context, background and importance of the topic), it investigates textual-visual formations related to globalization dynamics available and collected in space-time in the urban social fabrics of Sydney and Melbourne, Australia through the articulation of market globalism. Furthermore, in the stage of analysis and interpretation, I detect the systems of values and ideologies embedded in that particular type of visual formations defined as ‘condensation symbols’. In doing that, I attempt to make visible the socio-political and cultural implication (Chapter 4).

Explanation of key terms

‘Image-text’ is one of the key terms appearing throughout this study. Originating with W. J. T. Mitchell’s path-breaking work on ‘iconology’ (1987), an image-text could also be described as ‘hybrid cultural assemblages’ (Pieterse 2009) of dominant neoliberal texts and images circulating in rich and dense formations in global cities. As Mitchell observes, the image-text is ‘neither a method nor guarantee of historical discovery; it is more like an aperture or cleavage in representation, a place where history might slip through the cracks’ (Mitchell 1995, p. 104). This exegesis is particularly indebted to Mitchell’s exploration of images across media in the global age (Mitchell 1987, 1995) where he defines the image as an ‘object in a world, as representation, as analytic tool, as rhetorical device, as figure’ (Mitchell 1987, p. 205). Moreover, Mitchell’s insistence that social researchers consider pictures as ‘living things’ (Mitchell 1995) has done much to inspire the theoretical and methodological framework of my present inquiry, which is rooted in the dialectic relationship between words and images. As Mitchell puts it, this dialectic ‘reflects, within the realm of representation, signification, and communication, the relations we posit between symbols and the world, signs and their meanings’ (Mitchell 1987, p. 43). In this respect, I agree with Rudolf Arnheim’s observation that ‘[Mitchell] undertakes to explore the nature of images by

comparing them with words, or, more precisely, by looking at them from the viewpoint of verbal language' (this quote appears on the back cover of Mitchell's book, 1987). Following Mitchell and Arnheim, I approach images and visual imagery as if they were a text—hence the key term 'text-images'.

In the global age, symbols affect urban social space as well as structures and 'power relations' at unprecedented speed. By 'power relations' I mean not only those relations that always exist throughout a society, but also those in place wherever there is an ability of one individual or group to coerce, oblige or influence the lives of others. In this sense I mainly draw on Michael Foucault's body of work (Foucault 1991) and his idea that 'power is everywhere'—diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge, and 'regimes of truth'. I also draw on Pierre Bourdieu's work (1989, p.20), which suggests that 'social space tends to function as a symbolic space. A space of lifestyles and status groups characterized by different lifestyles.'

Drawing on Mitchell's conceptualization of image-text, I also use the term 'visual formation' to describe particular forms of cultural objects mainly made of texts and images in which images lead the whole meaning of the representation. Thus, I transcend the ideational boundaries between text and images by reversing Mitchell's perspective and approaching visual formations not necessarily for what they share with text, but as tangible visual creations in which images dominate the meaning(s) of the representation. In this way I try to go beyond a somewhat incestuous ideational relationship between word and image. I look at visual formations as generating a 'new' symbolic system of communication that is an expression of what I can understand as the shift made by new media technology. This gives rise to what I describe as the new visual economy of the global. I observe that, as 'symbolic animals', humans communicate through symbolic forms that are media representations. By the term 'symbolic animals', I am not merely referring to the philosophical question on the relation between mind, world and images, but, importantly, to the capacity of human beings to produce and use symbolic systems of representation such as text and images. I use this term

because the notions of symbol, meaning, representation, information and action are at the heart of an understanding of the symbolic systems. I define ‘symbol’ as something used for or regarded as representing something else; a material object representing something, often something immaterial; a word, phrase, image, or sign that has a complex of associated set of shared meanings that change over time.

I shall address two additional key concepts that shape the present exegesis: ‘market globalism’ and ‘condensation symbols’. Both of these terms will be utilized in more detail in Chapter 1. Following Steger’s (2008) and Michael Freeden’s (2005) ‘neutral’ understanding of ideology, I consider political ideologies to be ideational structures that translate and articulate underlying social imaginaries into concrete political agendas and programs (Steger 2009, p. 6). Concurring with Steger’s notion that ‘market globalism’ represents the dominant ideology of the global age in the early 21st century, I claim that it corresponds to the material imperatives of today’s consumer-oriented economy (Bauman 2011) and its neoliberal individualistic and conservative system of values (Friedman 2002; Smith 2009). Neoliberalism—the economistic core of market globalism—reflects the social, political and cultural significance of the market. This exegesis suggests that the symbolic construction of the global imaginary cannot be analysed adequately without investigating the crucial visual aspects of neoliberal ‘market globalism’.

Borrowing Murray Edelman’s term ‘condensation symbols’ (1985), I refer to particular visual formations made of text and images with the power to ‘condense’ local and national meanings into the global and vice-versa (Steger 2011). In other words, condensation symbols play a crucial role in helping global studies researchers understand how the local and national are symbolically reconfigured around the global. While Edelman sees condensation symbols as powerful symbolic representations that carry implicit assumptions of worldviews and evoke associated emotions (Edelman 1985, p. 11), my study goes beyond his psychological investigation of the symbolic manifestations, purposes and uses of politics.

My use of ‘condensation symbols’ follows more closely Steger’s attempt (2011) to grasp textual visual formations related to globalization dynamics. Condensation symbols are an important analytical tool because they condense spatial-symbolic scales of the ‘local-national’ and the ‘global’ into single visual formations. I am aware that the body of visual evidence under investigation is a limited, subjective and selective representation of the aesthetic transformations occurring in the urban social fabric of Sydney and Melbourne. When I use the term ‘limited’, I mean first of all that the visual material is limited to two urban fabrics and that they are limited by the frequency of collection determined by the research method and finally that they are ideologically framed because they portray selected sections of the urban landscape. I define the images as subjective because, beyond the awareness of being inside a ‘discourse’, my negotiation of the images is carried out through an approach that looks at the aesthetics of global change. This approach identifies some space of freedom outside the social constraints of producing/interpreting images. The images are also selective because they have been chosen according to the specific criteria of my research. In particular they need to have the required characteristics to ‘condense’ spatial-symbolic scales of the local, national and global. Furthermore they need to match the classification as ideological markers of globality.

Naturally, these symbols of the global are not entirely unproblematic in their representations of the cultural identity of place—even if they are effective keys to understand globalization as both a material and imaginary process.

Given this exegesis’ focus on globalization dynamics as they apply to Sydney and Melbourne, it might be useful to provide a brief sketch of the post-war socio-historical dynamics of the two cities under investigation. After all, this period significantly reshaped Australian culture and the national identity with its social national imaginary that constitutes the ground of a more significant social change in the global age.

From its eighteenth-century origins as a remote penal colony of the British Empire, today’s Sydney is recognized as a world leading financial center (Government of New South

Wales 2013), a global tourist destination and part of the global cities network (Globalization and World City 2009, 2010, 2013). With a settlement history different from Melbourne, its population, still predominantly British and Irish, has been influenced by immigrants from Europe and Asia. In particular a big wave of Vietnamese people arrived in Australia following the takeover of South Vietnam by the North Vietnamese communist government in April 1975, Australia being a signatory to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (United Nations 1951, 1967). After the initial intake of refugees in the late 1970s, there was a second immigration peak in 1983-84, as a result of the 1982 agreement between the Australian and Vietnamese governments, the Orderly Departure Program (ODP) that allowed relatives of Vietnamese Australians to leave Vietnam and migrate to Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006). This long wave of Vietnamese immigration, as well as the Chinese one, strongly re-shaped the city of Melbourne through their symbolic communication, lifestyles, Asian-style shops and restaurants, partially eclipsing the more visible, but less exotic, pre-existing European settlements. About 140 other cultures are represented in Melbourne (City of Melbourne 2013), from Victoria's original indigenous inhabitants to the most recent migrants from Asia and Africa. Some ethnic groups, such as Chinese, Greeks and Italians, came early in Melbourne's history and significantly contributed to the city's growing identity. After World War II a massive European immigration reached 'the fatal shore' of Australia (Hughes 2003) giving rise to a sort of 'ideal' multiethnic society where diverse ethnic groups interacted without coalescing, maintaining distinctive, national or group cultural identities. However this ethnic diversity was still influenced by the pre-existing 'White Australia Policy' (Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2013), based on the superiority of people with 'white skin' over ethnic groups with a different skin colour. This racist policy, generating discrimination and xenophobia, was dismantled only recently and the side effects are still alive in the Australian culture.

The multi-ethnic composition of contemporary Australian society is undoubtedly an overcoming of this past policy, but I cannot avoid commenting that the plurality of cultural

identities also tends to undermine social solidarity. Multiculturalism is a policy stance which actively encourages the promotion of separate cultural units within Australia. As a relatively recent immigrant, I perceive multiculturalism as a strategic political device that not only acknowledges cultural diversity but also harbours the potential to segregate and discourage immigrant members of ethnic minorities to integrate into mainstream 'Australian' culture. This culture of 'distinctiveness' created a destabilization of local-national meaning in Sydney and Melbourne following World War II. This occurred by creating the global imaginary in a single place as a result of multicultural distinctiveness. Interestingly, the collected visual evidence that constitutes my book of images seems to suggest that it is now Asia, rather than North America or Europe, which appears to be the primary globalizing force in Australia.

Methodological and personal reflections

An understanding of the relationship between theory and method is useful to develop any research project and even more those ones that explore cultural phenomena by making use of visual images. This investigation of the global imaginary is carried out through a phenomenological-interpretative approach. Utilizing multiple-case study analysis, this exegesis interprets a given body of condensation symbols identified as visual evidence of globality through the lens of social and political theory. Thus, I employ a methodological approach that strategically combines different methods of analysis and interpretation. As I will discuss in Chapter 2, my methodological approach allows for a better understanding of the complex phenomenon of globalization as both a material process and a social imaginary.

Let me note that my interest in this methodological approach is related to my life experience. Since 1975 I have been working as professional visual artist, spending the first 25 years of my career in Europe. My study is deeply rooted in my background as an award-winning visual artist, which I always combined with my interest in history, theory of art, aesthetics and philosophy. The latter contributed to the interdisciplinary investigation of divergent fields of my practices and to widen my knowledge in the perspective of a more

comprehensive understanding of the world. The combination of these studies and my recent approach to the themes of globalization led me to develop my knowledge in the wider transdisciplinary frame of the new global, urban and media studies through the lens of political theory.

As an artist and researcher investigating visual formations in Melbourne and Sydney, I have a strong affinity with Walter Benjamin's brilliant city portraits of Naples and Moscow (Benjamin 2009). Of special significance for my work is his unfinished exploration of Paris known by its working title as the 'Arcades Project' [*Das Passagenwerk*] (Benjamin 2002). Indeed, Benjamin's experience of the city as a 'spatial practice' emerges from the visual rather than the textual. More precisely, it stimulates perceptions and visions that approach changes in the patterns of urban experience by taking into consideration a description of historical visual data. Testing the limit of philosophy by putting into question the relationship between philosophical reflection and its object, Benjamin's analysis of experience through aesthetics lies at the core of both his and my research interests and is therefore appropriate for the development of my project.

At the same time, however, my investigation of the symbolic construction of the global imaginary in a context of global cultural flows and new media digital technology is necessarily more complex and problematic than Benjamin's experience of the urban fabric of Naples or Paris in the early twentieth century. In the digital global age, analysis of the urban landscape requires an articulated, transdisciplinary approach, one that is capable of dealing with complex phenomena such as integrated media technology. More precisely, traversing the urban landscape in the era of global capitalism and the connected reshaping of the 'social production of space' (Lefebvre 2008) requires experiencing the city as a discreet series of 'spatial practices' (de Certeau 1988).

It is my hope that this research will contribute to a better understanding of how the global reconfigures both local and national meanings and thus helps to illuminate the reasons that crucial transformations in our global age matter both culturally and socially.

Short chapter outline

Chapter 1 provides a critical review of the relevant literature on globalization and especially the global imaginary. The chapter focuses on the achievements and limitations of the few previous studies on the subject.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to theory. More than a description of relevant themes appearing in this study, this section frames them in a way that indicates their importance for my narrative. It also provides explanations about the necessity of a visual investigation of condensation symbols and text-images embedded in the larger ideological formation of market globalism.

Chapter 3 presents my research design for a study of the symbolic construction of the global imaginary in the urban fabric of Sydney and Melbourne. It explains why specific research methods were chosen and how they correspond to my main research questions. Finally, the chapter articulates how the visual data of the cities under investigation were gathered, selected, and analysed.

Chapter 4 covers the interpretation of selected images that are part of the book of images and constitute a multiple-case study on how the global imaginary is symbolically produced in Sydney and Melbourne. The analytical-theoretical framework employed in this study fosters a better explanation of how, precisely, the global imaginary is represented by condensation symbols linked to market globalism.

The concluding remarks present the main findings of my enquiry into the symbolic construction of the global imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne. It also includes recommendations for further research and a comprehensive bibliography of works referenced in this exegesis.

CHAPTER 1. GLOBALIZATION AND THE REGIME OF SIGNIFICATION

The national imaginary and the rise of the global imaginary

As a critical review of the literature on the social imaginary, this chapter acknowledges the challenging complexity of the different and multidimensional sociological components of the globalization process.

In the last two decades an epochal change has occurred in the way in which human beings imagine and build what philosophers call our phenomenological existence—our everyday life. Swiftly changing production, circulation and consumption of images, signs and symbols dominate the world and have the symbolic power to transform urban spaces. As a consequence, the symbolic domain of the visual has been recognized as being as important as that of language and theory since, ‘[i]mages are active players in the game of establishing and changing values. They are capable of introducing new values into the world and thus of threatening old ones’ (Mitchell 2005, p. 105).

In this context, major scholars in the field of global, urban and media studies are raising questions about the ways in which people shape realities, fit together with others and build communities. In other words, they are exploring the ‘social imaginary’ (Anderson 2006; Lacan 1997; Taylor 2007). The ‘social imaginary’ is a modern concept of the twentieth-century resulting from Western culture’s attempt to define its theoretical status after the birth of psychoanalysis (Freud 1999; Lacan 1977). Psychoanalysis disclosed the prominent, pervasive and meaningful role that symbols play in our life; sociology (Durkheim 2008) introduced the concept of collective representation, while philosophical phenomenology (Husserl 1980) connected perception and imagination by establishing a new ontology of ‘visual perception’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 2008). In the meantime, the modern scenario of change called for a theoretical re-definition of two of the key concepts of Western culture: ‘image’ and ‘imagination’. These two concepts are intimately intertwined with the concept of ‘reality’ itself through a dialectic relationship of inclusion and exclusion. John Thompson in

his study of the 'theory of ideology' observes that the social imaginary is 'the creative and symbolic dimension of the social world, the dimension through which human beings create their ways of living together and their ways of representing their collective life' (Thompson 1984, p. 6). In other words, it can be said that the imaginary, or social imaginary is the set of values, institutions, norms, images and symbols common to a particular social group and corresponding to defined societies.

The 'social imaginary', as a prereflexive state of our mind, while not constituting an established reality, nevertheless is the historical consciousness of society and represents the system of meanings that underlies and drives a given social structure. As a consequence, the imaginary is to be understood as a socio-historical and cultural construct because it is defined by the interactions of individuals/subjects in society. In that sense, the imaginary is not necessarily 'real'; however, it can be grasped and detected through its concrete tracks and thus turned into something quite real. It can be asserted, therefore, that the social imaginary acquires the status of ontology. Indeed, while some scholars (Taylor 2007) ascribe to it only a social or imagined reality, others (Steger 2008) define it as quite real, a 'deep matrix' that can contribute to a better understanding of the socio-political and cultural order, regardless of whether it is 'national' or 'global'.

Taylor uses the term 'social imaginary' (2007) in his work and points out that he is far from a social theory or an ideology. In his formulation of the concept of the 'social imaginary', Taylor has acknowledged the influence of Benedict Anderson. Anderson defined the nation as an 'imagined political community'; imagined, here, as both inherently 'limited and sovereign' (Anderson 2010, p. 224). Taylor says:

[by] social imaginary, I mean something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am thinking, rather, of the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the

expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations. (Taylor 2007, p. 23)

Taylor argues that social imaginary is the way in which ordinary people imagine and share their social existence. Often this is not expressed in theoretical terms, but rather through images, stories and myths:

[t]here are important differences between social imaginary and social theory. I adopt the term imaginary (i) because my focus is on the way ordinary people "imagine" their social surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms, but is carried in images, stories, and legends. It is also the case that (ii) theory is often the possession of a small minority, whereas what is interesting in the social imaginary is that it is shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society. Which leads to a third difference: (iii) the social imaginary is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy. (2007, p. 23)

In his account of 'modern social imaginaries', Taylor sets a broad understanding of the way in which a given group of people imagine their collective social life. He is a major contributor to contemporary debates surrounding the self and the concerns of modernity, such as the link between identity, language, and moral values, democracy and multiculturalism. Additionally, his work extends to the conflict between secular and non-secular spirituality, and the principle of the horizontal structure of modern society.

Taylor's contribution to the philosophy of social sciences approaches the key questions of modernity, with particular regard to the 'public sphere'. Market economy, public sphere and self-governance are the social forms of the 'new moral order' (Taylor 2007, p.3), which is transformed into the social imaginary of Western modernity. The imaginary is something intangible, untouchable, and Taylor defines it as the pre-reflexive state of the mind, mainly constituted of dreams, aspirations, and immaterial ideas, which may not necessarily become true in the reality. Taylor expands the transformation of social imaginary into the

principle of ‘modern horizontal society’ that is what distinguishes the pre-modern model of ‘hierarchical’ society from the modern one. Taylor argues that:

[t]he principle of a modern horizontal society is radically different. Each of us is equidistant from the center; we are immediate to the whole. This describes what we could call a direct-access society. We have moved from a hierarchical order of personalized links to an impersonal egalitarian one; from a vertical world of mediated access to horizontal, direct access societies. (2007, p. 158)

Taylor’s liberal principle of equality is extended over the different groups and in a horizontal way through modern society. His argument clearly links the liberal principle of equality to the principles of North-American liberalism (Keynes 2009). In spite of Taylor’s claims, I cannot help but observe that even today this social reconfiguration on a horizontal scale is still based on a gap between people and power, that distance between the circumference and the centre that generates inequality. Society is characterized, more than ever, by very sophisticated ‘relations of power’ (Foucault 1984), inequality, and by a dominant ideology (Gramsci 2008) linked to the neoliberal belief system and values (Steger and Roy 2010). Due to the ongoing globalization process, Western societies (but not exclusively) therefore reveal large gaps between the surface of change and their actual structures. Taylor’s exploration of ‘modern social imaginaries’ sees its final form as the ‘invention’ of the people—‘the public sphere’, while it can be said that ‘popular sovereignty’ remains at an imaginary state in the people’s mind

Exploring the history of Western modernity, Taylor traces the development of a distinct social imaginary supported by the idea of a ‘moral order’ based on the mutual benefit for all. Three key cultural forms define Taylor’s account of Western social imaginary: the economy, the public sphere, and the self-governance. Taylor’s exploration of these three cultural trajectories provides a philosophical-theoretical frame through which to understand Western modernity and, in turn, how we come to imagine society. Taylor’s exploration aims ‘to sketch an account of the forms of social imaginary that have underpinned the rise of

Western modernity' (Taylor 2007, p. 2). Although his work remains significant in depicting the transformation of moral order from the pre-modern to modern society, such a frame constitutes an unavoidable limitation to an understanding of the complexities of twenty-first century society. Furthermore, where Taylor does identify elements of the modern social imaginary and the significance of images, he does not explain how we can access this imaginary and how a detection of these images can be carried out.

Drawing from Taylor's theorizations of the 'social imaginary' and expanding and complementing his reading of the Western imaginary, Steger explores the concept of the 'modern social imaginary' and its evolution into a 'global imaginary' (2008). More precisely, Steger argues that we should understand globalization in terms of a 'dominant imaginary', in contrast to the 'national imaginary' of the modern self-contained nation-state. He sees the rise of the 'global imaginary' as the emergence of the 'global society' with respect to the dominance of the nation-state from the French Revolution to the end of the World War II. Steger considers how the material process of globalization shapes the new global society through transcontinental circulation of goods, images, people, technology and information and through the creation of new social networks.

While Steger shares Taylor's understanding of the modern social imaginary as the reciprocity of the subject/individual and the community, the way in which they imagine their social existence, he marks a further stage in our understanding of the social imaginary in detecting the shift from the national to the global. In Steger's understanding of globalization as a material and imaginary process, the 'global imaginary' destabilizes Taylor's modern geopolitical boundaries of the self-contained nation-state. In this respect, Steger, drawing upon Taylor, acknowledges the importance of the social imaginary to a better understanding of the socio-political order of the nation-state. He also points out that this new public consciousness of being-in-an-interconnected-global-world (what we can broadly perceive and understand as the common sense of the 'global') is deeply rooted in the people's historical

consciousness, rather than in ideology. However Steger strongly underscores the importance of ideology with respect to the underlying social imaginary.

Working from a rigorous historical base, Steger investigates the nature of globalization and the central questions connected with the multidimensional process. As he observes, ‘currently dominant economic and technological approaches must be complemented by sustained explorations of the political, cultural, and ideological dimensions of globalization’ (Steger 2004, p. 6). In his account of the rise of the global imaginary, Steger (2008) deals with the different trajectories or articulations of the global imaginary. He continues the exploration of the role played by ideologies, from the French Revolution to the global war on terror,¹ in helping to translate these imaginaries into everyday political agendas. In doing so, Steger rejects the assumption that we are at ‘the end of the political ideologies’ (Bell 2000):

[t]he defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 enticed scores of Western commentators to relegate ‘ideology’ to the dustbin of history. Proclaiming a radically new era in human history, they argued that ideology had ended with the final triumph of liberal capitalism (Steger 2009e, p 1).

On the contrary, he asserts that dominant belief about globalization constitutes a ideological system in itself, what he describes as ‘market globalism’ (Steger 2009a). Furthermore, Steger argues that Taylor’s definition of ‘modern social imaginary’ defined as neither a theory or ideology but rather as ‘that common understanding which makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy’ (Taylor 2007, p. 23), is in itself flawed.

Steger understands the social imaginary as a ‘deep matrix’ (2008, p. 6) that plays an important role in translating ideational systems of the national imaginary into the modern political nationalistic ideology (pp. 1-15). By linking political ideologies to their overarching

¹ Steger suggests that the historical transition from the self-contained nation-state, lasting from the French Revolution to the 1960s, to the rise of a global society is mostly represented by a shift in imaginaries. He suggests that today’s ideologies are increasingly translating the shifting global imaginary into concrete terms and political agendas. Arguing that there is something new in today’s political belief systems, the book draws on the concept of social imaginaries to make sense of the changing nature of the ideological landscape at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

social imaginary, Steger sees the latter as the mapping of social and political space through which we perceive, judge, and act in the world. More importantly, this deep-seated mode of understanding provides general parameters within which people imagine their communal existence.

In defining this new global public consciousness, Steger argues that ‘the global is nobody’s exclusive property. It inhabits class, race, and gender, but belongs to none of these’ (2008, p. ix-7). Thus Steger articulates the shift from national cultural narratives of the imagined communities of the modern era (Anderson 2010; Taylor 2007) to those of global age, which destabilize modern nationalistic ideologies (Steger 2008). What we call social reality is thus the translation of the collective social imaginary, and as a result, the social imaginary of a nation can be defined as the totality of culture, religion, beliefs, myths, traditions, single and collective wishes and aspirations, which can be ascribed to a specific culture.

The social imaginary is, then, the product of history, the fusion of various individual and collective practices within a specific socio-cultural context. Whilst imaginaries can greatly differ from one another; what gives rise to the collective imaginary is the meeting of the imaginaries in a common dimension of widely-shared feelings and perceptions. Examples of this are the self-contained idea of the modern nation-state with its social ideational imaginary, or, in a de-contested way, political ideologies (Freeden 2001).

Steger theorizes the shift from the ‘national’ to the ‘global’ as the new public consciousness of being in an interconnected global world, which constitutes what he defines as the ‘global imaginary’. He suggests that the public consciousness of an epochal rupture with the past, after World War II, was similar to that which occurred at the time of the French Revolution, due to the spread of new ideas facilitated by new technologies which penetrated the national imaginary. The contemporary process destabilized the self-contained modern nation-state and, therefore, the identities based on national membership:

[t]he rising global imaginary erupts with increasing frequency within and onto the familiar framework of the national, spewing its fiery lava across all geographical scales. Stoked, among other things, by technological change and scientific innovation, the global imaginary destabilizes the grand political ideologies codified by social elites during the national age (Steger 2008, p. viii).

Thus, the perception of being part of the world-as-a-whole, together with the idea of a single and free market and the spread of consumerist values, give rise to what Steger defines as the global imaginary. As Steger observes:

[t]he rising global imaginary finds its political articulation in the ideological claims of contemporary social elites who reside in the privileged spaces of our global cities and also fuels the hopes, disappointments, and demands of migrants who traverse national boundaries in search of their piece of the global promise (Steger 2008, p. ix)

The identification of the shift from the nationally framed modern social imaginary to the global imaginary and the exploration of relationships between social imaginary and political ideologies are certainly the most powerful outcomes of Steger's understanding of the globalization process (2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d, 2009e, 2009f, 2010; Steger and James 2010). At the same time Steger's theorizing of this new public consciousness seems to occur through a superimposition of the global on the conventional form of the modern self-contained nation-state. This is probably due to the fact that Steger's account of the rise of the global imaginary is mainly focused on the historical-ideological dimension of globalization rather than on the investigation through its tangible traces of how the global imaginary is symbolically and socially produced. In this context it is useful to think of the social imaginary as *sēnsus commūnis*—common sense. In this study I make use of the concept of 'common sense' according to Antonio Gramsci's understanding of it, as a cultural context where the dominant ideology is practiced and spread (2008). Gramsci suggests that capitalism and political power do not maintain control just through violence and economic coercion, but also through ideology. This happens through a dominant culture in which the system of values of a

particular group becomes the ‘common sense’ value for the majority of people, while helping to maintain the status quo.

I observe that, however deeply rooted in people’s historical consciousness, it seems that Steger’s understanding of the dominant imaginary—the global imaginary—in some ways plays the same role of Gramsci’s dominant ideology. This positioning helps to understand the role ideology plays for Steger in translating the underlying social imaginary into the definite terms and political plans of our daily life.

To sum up, the social imaginary is the basic ‘identity’ of a society and is structured as a field of meanings like metaphors, symbols, images embedded with systems of values and ideologies. A social imaginary is, therefore, a practice by which a society reproduces and ‘represents’ itself. In this respect, Taylor and Steger offer two different understandings of social imaginary, the former defining it as an ‘implicit background’ and the latter viewing it as a ‘deep matrix’ that constitutes the social and political space through which we perceive, judge, and act in the world (Steger 2008, p. 6). Steger’s exploration of the articulation between political ideologies and their underlying social imaginary constitute the main source of interest and stimulus for the conception and the development of my research project. Extending the two different positions to better understand how the construction of the global imaginary is symbolically and socially produced, I intend to expose the ideologies that are embedded in the production, circulation and consumption of symbolic forms generated in the neoliberal socio-historical context of Sydney and Melbourne.

The global imaginary, market globalism and symbolic forms

Just as the formation of nation-states is associated with ideologies of the national imaginary, globalization is associated with ideologies of the global imaginary. The relationship between social practices and ideas is complicated and mutually constitutive.

This doctoral research is carried out through the identification, collection, selection, display and interpretation of some crucial tangible traces that illustrate how the global

imaginary is socially produced. In particular I focus on those visual formations consisting of both text and image which I identify as ideological markers of globality. These tracks are not produced in a vacuum but rather they are produced, circulated and consumed through systems of value and ideologies within the world of meaning in which we live.

I utilize the concept of ‘market globalism’ to better understand how the global imaginary is symbolically and socially produced. The term ‘ideology’ is adopted by following Steger’s definition of ‘ideology’ as a ‘neutral’ tool of investigation (2008, p. 5). Such a ‘neutral’ perspective makes it possible to use the investigation of ideology as a critical tool for interpreting the social world. However, understanding ideology as a ‘neutral’ term does not disentangle it from politics, rather, as Freeden argues, it can be observed that ideologies are not optional extras of political practices, but the codes that organize them all (2005, p. 262).

In approaching ideology as a tool of critical investigation, I understand ideology not as a misleading or illusory system of ideas—the ‘false consciousness’ thesis (Engels 1968)—but rather as a possibility that allows human beings to give meaning to the various and disconnected experiences of the social world. In this study the idea that ideology is intrinsically ‘false’ has been overcome by the appreciation that reality is socially constructed through the ideologies that inevitably shape the way in which we perceive and understand the world. (Berger, 1963; Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Bill, 1981; Mitchell, 1987; Searle, 2010; Steger, 2009e) Ideologies are considered instruments for fashioning collective decisions, and thus they have socio-political and cultural implications. This notion underpins my investigation of the symbolic construction of the global imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne, and affirms my decision to explore the articulation of ‘market globalism’:

Using ‘ideology’ as a critical tool of investigation it is therefore important to understand Freeden’s notions of ‘decontestation’:

[a]n ideology attempts to end the inevitable contention over concepts by decontesting them, by removing their meanings from contest. ‘This is what justice means,’ announces one ideology, and that is ‘what democracy entails.’ By trying to convince

us that they are right and that they speak the truth, ideologies become devices for coping with the indeterminacy of meaning. That is their semantic role. [...] Ideologies also need to decontest the concepts they use because they are instruments for fashioning collective decisions. That is their political role (2003 pp. 54-5).

By acknowledging Freeden's concept of 'decontestation', I follow Steger's definition of the term ideology, which he describes 'as comprehensive belief system composed of patterned ideas and claims of truth' (Steger 2008, p. 5). Furthermore, the concept of ideology as a 'neutral' tool of investigation offers me a standpoint to take 'seriously the indispensable functions of political belief systems irrespective of their particular contents or particular orientations' (2008, p. 4).

Steger considers political ideologies as a system of thoughts that structures people's idea of 'the real' without altering or masking it. Steger's thesis is that today's ideologies translated the rising global imaginary into concrete terms and political agendas. As Steger observes:

... political ideas are not just pale reflections of economics or technology, but powerful forces capable of affecting profound social change at the opportune moment. Nevertheless, we must not fall into the idealist trap of treating political ideas as metaphysical entities floating above material practices and social institutions. Neither idealist reductionism nor materialism determinism can capture the complexities of our globalizing world (2008, p. x).

In this respect, Steger does not disdain to assess 'globalism' as a new category of ideology with a political status. However the interpretation of globalisms as ideological systems is a controversial issue and some scholars (Freeden included) understand 'globalism' as a process and a condition, not as a set of ideas and thus not as ideology. Freeden observes that 'the liberal-capitalism currently making a bid for "globalism" is not really an individuated ideology' (2003). Rather, according to Steger, "globalism" 'not only represents a set of political ideas and beliefs, a system coherent enough to warrant the status of a new ideology,

but also constitutes the dominant political belief system of our time against which all of its challengers must define themselves' (2005). Steger's thesis on contemporary ideologies shares with Freedden an understanding of 'ideology as evolving and malleable political belief systems' (Steger 2009e). He suggests a view of political ideologies as ideational structures linked to overarching social imaginaries and classifies the contemporary political ideologies into 'market globalism', 'justice globalism', and 'jihadist or religious globalism' (Steger 2009a, p. 6).

Based on the identification of these trajectories, I decided to approach the detection of the symbolic construction of global imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne as a visual-ideological phenomenon through both the analysis of condensation symbols and market globalism. This latter tool helps to detect and understand dominant political ideologies underpinning the market dynamics within the context of multiple modernities. With the term multiple modernities (Gaonkar 2001; Eisenstadt 2000) I overcome a vision of modernity as the homogenization and hegemony of Western culture. Instead I look at it as something multiple, that means approaching the local-national from a transnational and transcultural—global perspective. 'Western discourse of modernity is a shifting, hybrid configuration consisting of different, often conflicting theories, norms, historical experiences, utopic fantasies, and ideological commitments'. (Gaonkar 2001, p. 15) This is an important point in the study of contemporary societies as the Western consumerist oriented economy, to which the neoliberal market globalism ideology is linked, lies at its heart. Capitalism, the economic system linked to neoliberal ideology, encourages people to buy services and goods regardless of whether they need them, thus setting the context for discussing the material process of globalization as inextricably embedded with the ideologies of globalization (Steger 2005, p. 45).

Since 'we produce, disseminate, and consume ideologies all our lives, whether we are aware of it or not' (Freedden 2003, p. 12) and since ideologies are spread through symbolic systems, my investigation of the symbolic construction of the global imaginary also takes into

consideration the role that ideologies play in translating the underlying global imaginary into concrete terms and political agendas. Steger observes that '[t]he ideologies dominating the world today are no longer exclusively articulations of the national imaginary but reconfigured ideational systems that constitute potent translations of the dawning global imaginary' (2008). With the spread of new media technologies that characterize the global age, people share ideologies on a global and interconnected scale by affinity and not by proximity. Therefore I assume that economic and political values, as well as belief systems are embedded with the symbolic forms we produce, exchange and consume within this technological context. By orienting people in time and space across the globe, ideologies help to generate this social process and common sense of the 'global'. In this respect, symbolic systems have the power to construct symbols that are highly abstracted from our daily life experience and at the same time to bring these symbols back as objectively real elements of it (Berger and Luckmann 1991, p. 55). As a result, symbolic systems are fundamental constituents of the reality of everyday life and of an understanding of the common sense of the global. This occurs by encouraging the viewer/consumer to accept values and ideas about globalization as certain and naturally derived, even though these values are culturally constructed. Due to the fact that ideologies can be understood as comprehensive belief systems that combine 'patterned ideas and claims to truth', according to Steger, 'all political belief systems are historically contingent and, therefore, must be analyzed with reference to a particular context that connects their origins and developments to specific time and spaces' (2008, p. 5).

Furthermore, since ideologies, while globally shared, are actually intimately related to the context and to the space in which they are generated; with space not being understood as an abstract concept or as a neutral context. On the contrary, space is regarded as 'political in itself since it contains our shared interpretation of places shaped through historically contingent social relations'. (Steger and McNevin 2010)

Thus, I also need to critically understand the ideologies that inform my own

perception of the world and the spaces I inhabit. Informed by theory, I use the concepts of 'space' and 'spatial practice' as part of my research project, both at theoretical and empirical level. In particular I focus on the urban-local-national scale of Sydney and Melbourne to better understand globalization as both a material and imaginary process. In doing so, I take into consideration local lived spaces in their interaction with the cultural global flow of media representations and people's use of the urban fabric.

Since the global imaginary emerges through a series of symbolic changes at the levels of representation, meaning and structure, it is important to uncover significant visual-ideological aspects of globalization through media representations. Symbolic changes occur in the light of 24/7 global media flows and the central role played by images in these new 'hybrid cultural assemblages' (Pieterse 2009). Compared to the twentieth century, the production, circulation and consumption of symbolic forms today have become extremely thick in structure and rich in meaning. I use the term 'hybrid cultural assemblages' to describe the condensation in a single visual formation of different spatial-symbolic scales of the 'local-national and the 'global'. In doing so, I am in debt to Jan Nederveen Pieterse's concept of 'hybridity', which he describes as the effect of globalization on cultural identities (2009, pp. 65-89). In other words, hybridity can be understood as the space in between, where the cultures blend and come together.

This doctoral research project draws from and attempts to expand on Steger's understanding of globalization as a material and imaginary process by stressing the importance of the visual dimension of globalization itself. More precisely, the project aims to investigate the visual-ideological dimension of the symbolic construction of the global imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne. In doing so, it acknowledges that, due to its intangible nature, the imaginary is something that can be detected and decoded only through its tangible traces. In this research those concrete manifestations are gathered by means of digital still photographs that depict symbolic forms mainly made of texts and images, such as logos, advertisements or other types of hybrid media representations, identified as condensation

symbols of globality. These particular symbolic forms condense in one visual formation to offer different layers of meaning represented by the condensation of the spatial-symbolic scales. Although the identification and interpretation of these spatial-symbolic scales of the 'global' is not an unproblematic process, these images are crucial keys to accessing the visual-ideological dimension of the global imaginary. Due to the particular nature of my inquiry, in the next chapter I will outline those theoretical elements that concern me most. For the same reason I have developed a research strategy with the purpose of identifying, selecting, displaying and interpreting the collected visual materials that is the subject of Chapter 3 which is specifically dedicated to methodology.

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Theory

In acknowledging the existing literature on the rise of the global imaginary, this chapter aims to define those theoretical elements needed to understand the symbolic construction of the social imaginary as a visual-ideological phenomenon. As Steger observes, '[t]he first rays of the rising global imaginary have provided enough light to capture the contours of a profoundly altered ideological landscape' (2008, p. 248). In my exegesis theory and practice are assumed as part of the same transaction and, according to Terry Eagleton, '[just] as all social life is theoretical so all theory is a real social practice' (1990, p. 24).

In order to define the limits of my study, this chapter explores the theories which frame my exploration and offer alternative approaches and concepts in order to better understand how the global imaginary is symbolically and socially produced.

In my own creative practice, theory would not be necessary for what is obviously or clearly expressed in the given body of collected condensation symbols; in this instance the book of images. Yet, within the context of a research project theory is required to articulate and make visible those implications that are of socio-political and cultural nature and that are embedded with the select condensation symbols. Therefore, since theory itself intermingles ideas from philosophy, linguistics, history, political theory and psychoanalysis (Culler 2000), it can be said that the theory I refer to is a complex body of knowledge that is transdisciplinary, analytical and critical-reflexive.

My entire enquiry can be broken down into the following components:

- 1) A critical approach to existing literature and theories on national-global imaginary;
- 2) The identification, collection and selection of photographs taken in the neoliberal visual context of Sydney and Melbourne through the articulation of market globalism and the theoretical framework of condensation symbols;
- 3) The production of a book of images made up of a selection of condensation symbols displayed in their own right;

- 4) The production of an exegesis that theoretically and methodologically frames the research project and includes a multiple-case study of a selected body of visual evidence to better understand how the ‘global’ is symbolically injected in the ‘local-national’.

As a visual artist I am concerned with the socially constructed nature of ‘seeing’ and am influenced by Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s account of the ‘philosophy of the visual’ (1964, 1969, 2002, 2008) as the ontology of the perception which comes to frame my approach to research as a phenomenological process through which to view globalization as a visual-ideological phenomenon.

Merleau-Ponty’s exploration of the structural dimension of perception and the meaningfulness that we perceive in the world contributed to my interpretation of a non-conventional ‘subjective’-‘objective’ understanding of globalization phenomenon as a material process and an imaginary. Drawing from Merleau-Ponty’s account of ‘perception’ and ‘vision’ (2002), I have developed a phenomenological approach, which embraces continuity (‘continuum’) between scientific understanding and qualitative experience that recognises the value of this continuum. As Merleau-Ponty observes, ‘[t]he perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence. This thesis does not destroy either rationality or the absolute. It only tries to bring them down to earth’ (2002, p. 13). Thus vision is not self-contradictory or irrational, but rather the subjective visual experience and its scientific redescription are part of the same ‘order of signification’ in which humanity was embedded. (Jay 1994, p.303)

Although Rudolf Arnheim’s understanding of visual perception as ‘visual thinking’ (2004, p. 14) echoes Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological method to approach and investigate the world (2002, pp. 235-403), there are some differences, and, to support my inquiry, I also consider Arnheim’s exploration of ‘visual thinking’ that sees perceptions as the primary form of ‘objectification’. He challenges the ancient distinctions between ‘thinking’ and ‘perceiving’, and between ‘intellect’ and ‘intuition’, contending that ‘all perceiving is also

thinking, all reasoning is also intuition, all observation is also invention' (2004, p. 5). He questioned the established assumptions that words, not images, are the primary ingredient of thinking, and that language precedes perception, arguing that 'the remarkable mechanisms by which the senses understand the environment are all but identical with the operations described by the psychology of thinking' (Arnheim 2004, p. v).

Arnheim's reflection on the rhetoric of the visual describes the three functions of images, where '[i]mages can serve as pictures or as symbols; they can also be used as mere signs' (2004, p. 137). As a consequence, it is the viewer, the researcher in my case, and the context of the image, Sydney and Melbourne CBDs, that determine the images' symbolic meanings. This is in keeping with Arnheim's work in that: [i]t is the context that will decide whether a cross is to be read as a religious or an arithmetical sign or symbol or whether no semantic function at all is intended, as in the crossbars of a window (2004, p. 143).

Arnheim explains how images often function simultaneously as pictures and symbols, stating that '[e]xplicitly symbolic representations are common in all cultures... In a picture, the abstraction level of the image is higher than that of the experience it represents; in a symbol the opposite is the case' (2004, p. 150). In particular, his reasoning also takes into consideration the symbolic importance and the peculiar character of highly abstract patterns such as corporate trademarks, logotypes and brandmarks (2004, p. 144). Arnheim argues that:

... trademarks and other such emblems cannot identify a particular product or producer. Identification can only be obtained by what the men in the trade call "strong penetration" that is, insistent re-enforcement of the association of signifier and referent, as exemplified by religious emblems (Cross, Star of David), flag designs (Canada's maple leaf, Japan's rising sun), or the Red Cross (2004, p. 145).

Thus Arnheim's visual thinking theory, and in particular his reflection on 'Pictures, Symbols, and Signs' (2004, pp. 135-152), helps to structure the symbolic dimension of the phenomenon of globalization and the important role visual images play, suggesting, supporting and

sustaining the shift from the national to the global through the articulation of market globalism.

In my case I pay attention to logo brands, logotypes, and media representations in general and particularly to their spatial settings. As a consequence, following Arnheim's argument, there is an 'Image Scale' and an 'Experience Scale', both of which work together to determine the function and value associated with images. This suggests that images can be simultaneously representations and abstractions, while symbols evoke emotions associated with situations. This crucial distinction is illustrated within my study where representations are identified as condensation symbols of globalization.

In establishing my investigation into the symbolic construction of the global imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne, I am specifically concerned with the detection of its concrete manifestations as symbolic forms. I focus on symbolic forms that suggest a shift from the 'national' to the 'global', seeking to discover visual formations of text and images that can be identified as condensation symbols of globality. I analyse these images to discover particular ontological structures that condense spatial-symbolic scales of 'urban-local-national' and the 'global' as they are available in the narrative and images of the urban social fabric.

In doing so, my project also considers the ideological markers of globalization and as a result, it is important to note that in its early stage, capitalism sharply separated the symbolic from economics, at the dawn of our new century economics deeply penetrates the symbolic realm itself (Eagleton 2011, p. 373).

The discursive and the visual

To approach globalization as a visual-ideological phenomenon, the body of works by Walter Benjamin (2002) and by Michael Foucault (2011) contribute to establishing the theoretical and methodological frame of my project. From different perspectives, both theorists look at ruptures, breaks, changes, and transformations — including marginal discourses and scraps — to understand the production of meaning and knowledge. I consider Foucault's theory of

‘discourse’ (2011) as a way of representing knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment, in a defined context and ‘regime of truth’. Foucault’s body of work has been influential in explaining how ‘discourse’ is linked to the spread and use of ideological power in society.

In relation to Foucault’s notion of discourse and my suggestion that the global imaginary should be considered from a subjective interpretative standpoint, I would make the point that this study does not understand the relationship between ‘subject’ and ‘object’ as dualistic, nor as ideologically clashing because I am approaching the global imaginary from an aesthetics of change perspective. On the contrary, my study understands this relationship as a fluid articulation, in a sense that I understand the relationship between subject and object as part of the same transaction, as a continuum. Therefore, my choice of ‘discourse analysis’ as one of the main tool of analysis and interpretation of a given body of visual evidence (Chapter 4) is not in contradiction with my ‘subjective’—phenomenological-interpretative approach to the global imaginary.

To further clarify, for early Foucault, the ‘subject’ is reduced to a function of ‘discourse’, while in later Foucault ‘freedom’ is understood as the power to question what is currently taken for granted. (2011) In my understanding this also implies the capacity of the subject-individual to change himself/herself, and, possibly, the context in which he/she is bound. Thus, it can be said that, while Foucault rejects the Enlightenment idea of an ‘autonomous subject’ – the Cartesian’s subject -, he also speaks about ‘freedom’ and ‘action’, two notions that do not suggest the disappearance or the ‘death’ of the subject-individual. Furthermore, he never denied the subject’s consciousness and the capacity for doing things. (Foucault, 1971, 2011) As a consequence, Foucault’s notion of subject-individual is not seen as a merely passive product of power relations (discourse).

The relationship between subject and object can, therefore, be regarded as fluid. It is on this fluid interaction that my doctoral research project is focused, aiming to investigate how the social imaginary is symbolically and socially produced.

I utilize this concept of discourse to focus on the spread of ideologies through symbolic systems of texts and images to understand the relations of power embedded with the relations of meaning. I do that by collecting, selecting, analyzing and interpreting a selected body of this evidence related to globalization dynamics. Within this context, photography (the main tool I use for the production of the book of images) is only one of the many media, which can be understood as constituting contemporary discourses. Furthermore, Foucault's theory of 'regimes of truth' can be understood as a historically specific mechanism, which produces discourses that function as true in particular time-space. This suggests that discourse produces knowledge that is imbued with the systems of values and ideologies of the time.

Such a realisation helps define how the symbolic construction of the global imaginary (this broad common sense of the 'global') is socially produced through particular types of visual formations consisting of text and images. In particular, it helps articulate the role that embedded ideologies play through discourse and the relations of power that discourses establishes, since they are saturated with power and are always rooted in particular contexts and histories. As a result, a better understanding of 'discourse analysis' may be required to underpin further analysis.

Discourse analysis is mainly focused on textuality/statements that understand power not just as economic (Marx 1992) or as status (Weber 1978). Instead discourse analysis sees power widespread throughout our social system (Foucault 1980; Gramsci 2008), concretely represented by rules, languages, images and institutions as product of discourses and practices. Discourse analysis rejects the idea that language is simply a neutral means of reflecting or describing the world and gives it a central importance in social life construction. In particular, discourse analysis underwrites the fact that 'discourses' are not something direct or unmediated; rather they are created, spread and sustained by those who have the power and the means of communication.

In the context of my research, the identification of 'discourse' within the collected visual evidence frames the social context of images as it is through this understanding that we

consider representation which in itself is understood as mediation of the world through media. Therefore what is framed, emphasized and omitted in my collected images can be said to be determined by ‘discourse’, which is in itself structured by ideology. As a consequence considering ‘discourse’ in the collected visual evidence helps to illustrate both embedded ideological values and those at the site of reception. This is in keeping with Gillian Rose’s (2010) methods of analyses, where ‘discourse analysis 1’, considers the intertextual connection between images and text, and ‘discourse analysis 2’, refers to the institutions that produce and spread them.

I have therefore adopted a strategy of ‘text’ analysis that combines two different perspectives. The first looks at the way in which text is presented; the second investigates how text is organized within a rhetorical frame. I pay close attention to the capacity that these visual formations have to persuade beyond what is expressly declared, by attempting to make visible links and pathways between the expressed and non-expressed elements. The links and pathways are embedded with the collected condensation symbols establishing a set of ‘bridging assumptions’ (Fairclough 2005) that are both at the site of production and at the site of reception.

In this perspective, one important aspect of my phenomenological-interpretative approach to the global imaginary is the notion of ‘audience reception’. (Hall, 2005) ‘Audience reception’ theory is an approach to textual analysis (literary analysis), which emphasises the role played by the reader (audience), in the construction of the ‘meaning’ of a literary work that is made at the moment of reception/consumption. As Stuart Hall observes:

[r]eality exists outside language, but it is constantly *mediated* [italic is mine] by and through language: and what we can know and say has to be produced in and through discourse. Discursive “knowledge” is the product not of the transparent representation of the “real” in language but of the articulation of language on real relations and conditions. (2005: 55)

Reception theory states that the author-producer ‘encodes’ media texts; therefore, it can be appreciated that they are embedded with values and ideologies. As a result, texts are then ‘decoded’ by readers. However, different readers-spectators will decode (interpret) these texts in different ways, perhaps not in the way the producer intended. This is applicable also to the images I collected and particularly to those ones I subsequently interpreted.

The individual audience member considers the representations presented to them in the context of their own system of beliefs and values, ideologies and experiences. Therefore, people with similar socio-cultural backgrounds are likely to make similar readings of the same work of arts-texts. As a result, if the audience’s values and experiences are similar to the author’s ones, then they are likely to read the meaning of the text in a way very close to the author’s intentions. Thus, concurring with Hall:

‘[w]e should perhaps learn to think of meaning less in terms of ‘accuracy’ and ‘truth’ and more in terms of effective exchange – a process of *translation*, which facilitates cultural communications while always recognizing the persistence of difference and power between different ‘speakers’ within the same cultural circuit. (2009:11)

For this structure to be successful, it is assumed that the ‘freedom’ to negotiate meaning from image to text and vice versa is required at the site of reception to create a coherent link between different elements of the communication. This assumption helps direct what can be understood, for example, as the feeling of ‘freedom’ of the viewer/consumer/researcher throughout the meaning-making process.

The concept of ‘freedom’ is a central claim of neoliberalism and in turn, the economic core of a market globalism though it is sometimes mistaken for the notion of ‘democracy’. Both the concepts of ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’ most frequently appear confused within dominant American mythological narratives which relate to the symbolic trinity of global capitalism: privatization, deregulation and globalization of markets.

Unlike these mythologies, the economic implications of my project are not related to the economic origin of the production and consumption of symbolic forms; rather they are

understood as the expression and representation of ‘the economy in its culture’ (Benjamin 2002, p. 460) This happens in the light of an understanding of my position as a researcher-*flâneur* who aims to view things in accordance with their cultural and socio-political implications, rather than merely consume them as a visual experience. This concept frames my understanding of the way in which the global imaginary is symbolically and socially produced and is explored in more detail in Chapter 3.

As Foucault points out, ‘truth’ and ‘meaning’ are created through ‘discourse’, and in the case of this research project, photography is the instrument of its realization. At the same time, discourse comes to include books, newspapers, speeches, TV programs and websites. Discourses therefore cannot be analysed outside their intimate articulation with power/knowledge (Foucault 1980) thus helping to understand how the symbolic power of the ‘global’ is achieved.

In my investigation I refer to Foucault’s discursive practice to show power relations that occur through cultural representations. Discursive practices offer an understanding of the way in which social and political values intersect and collude in the control and manipulation of human beings. Since my project includes the production of the book of images as a creative work, discourse analysis helps to understand the way in which language and visual images in particular are used with respect to the object of my research questions.

In order to make visible the links and pathways embedded with the collected visual evidence in the book of images, and more specifically with the given body of visual evidence presented in this exegesis, I need to move to the level of social analysis to consider the socio-political and cultural implications of the collected body of condensation symbols identified as ideological markers of globalization.

Shared assumptions and meaning making

Media representations have been shown to exercise symbolic power to influence and shape people’s decisions and they are increasingly part of the social power of dominant elite groups

in the public sphere at the local-global scale. This helps to explain why implicit assumptions are related to ideologies.

Assumptions are related to ideologies because they are a way of achieving symbolic power and a dominant position in society. Ideologies work best when meanings are widely accepted. This is a characteristic most usefully explored in advertising and marketing and one which can be applied to the detection of symbolic construction of the global imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne. According to Rose, 'there is no point in researching any aspect of the visual unless the power of the visual is acknowledged' (2010, p. 51). My research acknowledges that text and images are embedded in social practices as part of 'discourses' and, as a consequence, are imbued with systems of values, ideologies and thus power relations. I assume that discourse analysis meaningfully expands my understanding of the socio-political and cultural implications of the production, circulation and consumption of symbolic forms with regard to globalization dynamics (Chapter 4) gathered in defined space-time under a defined 'regime of truth'.

As a consequence, it can be said that every social practice has a discursive aspect, including the act of collecting photos in Sydney and Melbourne or selecting and displaying them in a book of images. Given this discursive aspect, the selected body of visual evidence is not exclusively a lucky catch—embodying a moment in time—of a history. Rather, the investigation is carried out through observation/measurements, as I will explain in the section dedicated to methodology. The visual evidence is understood as documentation to which a society is inextricably linked (Foucault 2011). It can be said that I approach the visual evidence in terms of cultural significance, social practices and power relations. This happens in the light of an understanding of the visual as a key concept in the cultural construction of social life in contemporary Western societies (Rose 2010).

Unlike verbal language or text, a characteristic of visual images is the fact that they do not have an equivalent of word and sentence structures, while spatial-temporal connections in a text are an explicit syntax for expressing analogies or contrast or any other kind of claims.

By reversing the problem, it can be asserted that the absence of a coded structure of the visual image is also what gives the image itself its ‘surplus of values’ (Mitchell 2005). In accordance, I argue that visual images are powerful vehicles that can convey and spread ideologies due to their seductive and pervasive qualities, to their indeterminacy and also due to their power to generate meaning. This is particularly true today as new media technology has given rise to the ‘new’ symbolic system of internet, with its interactive availability playing out in a context of the primacy of the visual over the verbal. This means that visuality acquires a more significant role and power since images, with their ‘surplus of value’, dominate the world. In Mitchell’s words, ‘[m]ere images dominate the world. They seem to simulate everything, and therefore they must be exposed as mere nothing... What happens to an image when it is the focus of both over -(and under)- estimation, when it has some form of "surplus value"?’ (2005, p. 76)

The relation between visual images and value is therefore among one of the central issues of contemporary criticism and part of academic and professional discourse (Baudrillard 1983; Benjamin 2002; Jay 1994).

In the last two decades the continuous spread of global media flows has made obvious the dominance of the image and as a result, has given rise to a critique of the ‘value’ of images. What Mitchell describes as the ‘pictorial turn’ (Mitchell 1995) has occurred across several academic disciplines. The key question surrounding ‘images and value’ has become: how does one evaluate images with respect to concepts of ‘false’ and ‘true’?

In my investigation photographic images are considered as symbolic forms and are understood not because they convey or stand for a metaphysical truth, but rather because they represent the concrete tracks, the ideological markers of the phenomenon of globalization through which meanings (however changed over time) are created, circulated and consumed. Thus, this ‘surplus of value’ that resides within images can help us to better understand how the ‘global’ is symbolically injected into the local-national and its socio-political and cultural implications. This will be further elaborated in the multiple-case study (Chapter 4).

Furthermore, an appreciation of the ‘surplus of value’ of a selected body of images—their ideological dimension—is also what can be defined as the political ‘value’ of my study. Arguing about the function of images, Mitchell states, ‘[t]he main function of images is to awaken the desire, to provoke a sense of lack and craving by giving us the apparent presence of something and taking it away in the same gesture’ (2005, p. 80). I assert that it is just in the space between ourselves and the images, in this emotionally charged sense of lack, that ideology finds its place of election and its strength in orienting people’s lives. In this respect, ideology helps to turn the ‘deep matrix’ of the underlying social imaginary into the definite programmes of our daily life. Images could be said to be turning into something ‘insignificant’ and it is in this space of insignificance, ‘historically occupied by the taste’ (Mitchell 2005, p. 80), that embedded ideologies play their crucial role in suggesting, supporting and sustaining a new shifting mindset, a new global public consciousness.

Viewed in this way, images have the power to destabilize local-national meanings and, as a result, are important tools to better understand how the global imaginary is symbolically and socially produced. According to Mitchell, ‘we need ... to grasp both sides of the paradox of the image: that it is alive – but also dead; powerful – but also weak; meaningful – but also meaningless’ (2005). Since images are representations of an analogue world, from a philosophical standpoint it can be said that the historical roots of my understanding refer back to Aristotle (1997) and Heidegger’s definition of ‘representation’ (2008, 1978) as a human’s way of being-in-the world (*Dasein* [being there]), rather than Plato’s understanding of ‘representation’ as the world of illusion leading people away from ‘the real things’, as the philosopher puts it in ‘The Allegory of the Cave’ (Plato 2007). Heidegger’s problematic of representation understands it in an extended sense, that of temporality. He understands representation as a relationship of the past with future. In other words, he understands media representation in terms of space-time arrangements. Yet, Aristotle and Heidegger’s accounts of representation do not exhaust our understanding of the term in the global age. This is because the production and consumption of meanings spread through new media technology

are more complex and often meanings are ‘hypertexts’ subject to high frequency reproduction and translation. Therefore, my theoretical approach to the detection of the symbolic construction of the global imaginary as a visual-ideological phenomenon follows Michael Shapiro’s and Mitchell’s understanding of the term.

Shapiro’s philosophical reflection on the political nature of all forms of ‘representation’ and his definition of ‘representation’ as ‘a practice through which things take on meaning and value’ rather than as a medium for the imitation of the reality’ (1988, p. xi) constitutes a significant grounding for my theoretical approach and understanding of media representation. As a result, in this exegesis, it is worth considering how we come ‘to read the real as a text that has been produced’, that is, to look at language as a kind of practice and at documents, texts or visual images, not on the basis of ‘truth-value’ but on the basis of their capacity for ‘value creation’ in human relations (Foucault 1980; Shapiro 1988).

Accordingly, reading the real is an essential political activity. In accordance with Shapiro’s understanding of ‘representation’, Mitchell’s definition of the term ‘representation’ (albeit, from the different perspective of literary criticism) is not too far from Shapiro’s. Mitchell defines ‘representation’ as a particular kind of object, ‘as relationship, as process, as the relay mechanism in exchanges of power, value, and publicity’ (1995, p. 420).

In my exegesis I understand symbolic forms not as floating, abstract images, but rather as concrete manifestations of our being-in-the-world and as such, they need to be analyzed and critically interpreted through the lens of political theory. This special lens helps to understand the social world as a political realm rather than a simple cultural world of flows. In his body of work on the importance of visual images and pictures in contemporary culture, Mitchell provides deep argumentation about the historical, cross-cultural and theoretical implications of the power of visual images themselves (1980, 1987, 1992, 1995). Mitchell observes that what we are experiencing, what he defines as ‘the pictorial turn’, is a postlinguistic, postsemiotic turn. This constitutes a rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visibility, apparatus, institutions, discourse and bodies (Mitchell 1994, p.

16). In other words, whatever the 'pictorial turn' is, it is quite clear that it is not a step back to the classic approach to 'mimesis' or representation theories (Aristotle 1997; Heidegger 1978, 2002; Plato 2007); rather it is the rediscovery of the power of visual images in the global age.

Mitchell's conceptualization of 'pictorial turn' (1992, 2007) stresses the importance of visual images in contemporary culture and at the same time the importance of a critical approach to visual culture. As a result I approach textual-visual dynamics of globalization from an alternative and critical standpoint to one of contemporary aesthetics. However, while I attempt to transcend the ideological boundaries between subjectivity and objectivity, text and images, I am deeply aware that I can understand visual images as a text only to a limited extent

Mitchell's understanding of the 'pictorial turn' is problematic because, rather than celebrating a cultural phenomenon in which images have come to play a dominant role in contemporary cultures, his reading of the 'pictorial turn' displays the complexity of an understanding of images. Visual literacy appears today more complex and problematic than the way in which it was perceived previously because visual images do not merely reflect the world, but actively contribute to shaping the ways in which we see, approach and understand it.

As Mitchell observes, the current model of textuality employed to understand and study images is not sufficient, considering the complexity of visual culture (2005, p. 16). He suggests that one looks at pictures and all media as 'image-texts' since there is no pure image and the idea of a pure, silent, illegible visibility is a modernist utopia. Such a utopia is impossible to realize because of the 'allegorical' significances that 'linguistic' or 'textual' elements carry must be repressed or eliminated in order to reach the paramount of the pure abstraction, and this, in itself, is nothing more than an ideology.

According to Mitchell, pictures and all media need to be understood as 'image-text' in a sense that there is no 'pure image', an image purified from the contamination of language due to the irreducible impurity and heterogeneity of media (1995, pp. 96-97). Furthermore he

states that dividing writing and image is nothing more than an ‘ideology, a complex of desire and fear, power and interest’ (1995, p. 96).

Therefore, my understanding of the collected images is intimately articulated within Mitchell’s ‘picture theory’ and related to the metalanguage of image/text, where the metalanguage of the image/text is understood ‘as a body of figures for the irreducible impurity and heterogeneity of media’ (1995, p. 96). Although I assume that text and image are both visual media, in my project I explore particular visual formations constructed from text and images and understood as ideological markers of globalization process. In these visual formations ‘images’ lead the meaning creation in the visual evidence. However, to negotiate meaning I make use of concepts such as symbols, textual-visual metaphors and stereotypes that are without any doubt intimately related to the literary, textual, linguistic dimension. I argue that representing something through text or through image makes a significant difference in the meaning-making process at the site of production as well as at the site of reception.

Through the continuous spread of global media flows, the increasing availability of visual images at the local-global scale makes them obvious but also open to ambiguity due to their hybridity. This happens in an urban scenario where interactions between transnational symbols, images and signs are available through public digital displays and personal devices thus making context increasingly important.

If context gives meaning to a text, a statement or a speech, by extension it gives meaning to images as well. As a consequence, the role of the context in my case study of Sydney and Melbourne CBDs, and my personal experience of it as a spatial practice, has been turned into key factors for the collection, display and disambiguation of the visual material as analyzed and interpreted in Chapter 3.

My project is shaped around gathering photographs of the circulation, interaction and consumption of symbolic forms in the lived spaces of Sydney and Melbourne. Experiencing the urban social fabric of Australia’s two major cities takes into consideration the social

production of space and the spatial practice—walking in the urban fabrics, since they are intimately intertwined and connected. As the spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre observes, city plans exist as representations of space while, at the same time, urban space itself is constituted by the spatial practices of everyday life (2008). Accordingly, the process of contemporary globalization effectively reshapes spatial conceptions and geographical imaginations by accentuating the significance of space. The role of space and what is defined as the ‘spatial turn’, with all its socio-political and cultural implications (de Certeau 1988; Harvey 2006; Lefebvre 2008; Massey 1994), emphasizes the power relations implicit in the social urban fabric that are fundamental to an understating of the ‘global’ as ‘local’ in the city.

Approaching the symbolic construction of the global imaginary as a visual-ideological phenomenon allows me to gain access to some central questions of Western-European thought (social, political and ethical) and to grasp the intimate objective-subjective relationship between taste and consumption. This latter relationship is constitutive of the meaning-making process at the sites of production and reception of condensation symbols appearing in neoliberal visual formations with regard to globalization dynamics in Sydney and Melbourne.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This Chapter explores the methodology I have used to approach globalization as a visual-ideological phenomenon. In particular, it explains how condensation symbols in visual formations constructed of texts and images can be studied by using phenomenological-interpretative methods. However, to analyze globalization as a material and imaginary process, it has been necessary to tailor a methodology that strategically combines thinking-tools, methods, and tasks.

Globalization as a visual-ideological phenomenon

In this section I describe how the data has been collected before explaining the analytical tools I used, how I reached my conclusions, and why these conclusions answer my research questions.

The multidimensional process of contemporary globalization is changing a spatial conception and geographical imagination by accentuating the significance of ‘space’. As a consequence, ‘space’, has been recognized as fundamental to an understanding of the globalization process (de Certeau 1988; Harvey 2006; Massey 1994). This is due to the rearticulation of social imaginary towards a local-global trajectory that sees the ‘national’ as the grounding place of the increasingly symbolic power of the global. Therefore, due to the increased production, exchange and consumption of symbolic forms, the politics of ‘space’ has become central to a better understanding of globalization as a material and imaginary process.

In this study ‘space’ is understood not as a specialised disciplinary perspective of art history, architecture, or human geography, but as a symbolic place. I consider space as the place of ideation, production, exchanges and consumption of symbolic forms. Within this context, space, with all its implications, is the place where social imaginaries are produced

and transformed into the social world and common sense of our everyday life practices. In my investigation I consider Lefebvre's account of 'the production of space', and in particular his definition of 'social space' and 'spatial code' (2008). Indeed, his investigation of the various kinds of spaces and modality within a single meta-theory remains a unique contribution to an understanding of the modern social production of space. As Lefebvre observes:

[a] social space cannot be adequately accounted for either by nature (climate, site) or by its previous history. Nor does the growth of the forces of production give rise in any direct casual fashion to a particular space or a particular time. Mediations, and mediators, have to be taken into consideration: the action of groups, factors within knowledge, within ideology, or within the domain of representations. Social space contains a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, including the networks and pathways, which facilitate the exchange of material things and information. Such 'objects' are thus not only things but also relations. (2008, p. 77)

However, I should note that in the changed context of a world undergoing an intensified process of globalization, a new form of social space and society challenges Lefebvre's effort to dialectically bridge the gap between the realm of theory and the sphere of practice; to fill the gap between the mental and social space, between philosophy and theory, reality and practice. Therefore I consider Michel de Certeau's 'spatial practices' (1988), the idea of walking in the city and the rhetoric that accompanies it, as the tactic available to individuals to reclaim their own autonomy from the all-pervasive economic, political and cultural forces. In this respect de Certeau observes:

[t]oday, whatever the avatars of this concept [of the city] may have been, we have to acknowledge that if in discourse the city serves as a totalizing and almost mythical landmark for socioeconomics and political strategies, urban life increasingly permits the re-emergence of the element that the urbanistic project excluded (p. 93).

De Certeau's body of work related to 'the practice of everyday life' is useful for the development of my research project because 'walking in the city', despite corresponding to manipulations of the basic elements of a constructed order, actually, at symbolic level, represents an individual way of being in the world (pp. 101-2).

In my project the 'uses' and 'manipulations' of the city experience particularly occurs when, due to the utilization of still photograph as a research tool, a selected part of the city is framed by my camera, with the consequent disappearance of the rest of the urban landscape excluded by the framing. Thus, Lefebvre's theorization of the production of social space and de Certeau's spatial practices are at the core of my methodological approach and understanding of the city because they represent an important aspect of the changing nature of social space.

If globalization is the process of extending social relations across world-space, time-space compression manifests itself not only as an objective phenomenon but also at the subjective level of individual processes (Steger 2004, p.2). As a consequence, contemporary globalization does not necessarily need to be understood and investigated through the twentieth-century hierarchy of nation-state or geography of scales. Rather, the 'global' can be investigated in a context of urban sub-settings understood as 'global microplaces' (Sassen 2007). In fact urban-local microplaces are transformed into transnational spaces by the denationalizing dynamics of the multidimensional process of globalization that 'destabilize existing meanings and systems' (Sassen 2006).

Phenomenology provides the basis for what is generally defined interpretative research, due to the assumption that the social world can be understood through social constructions. This approach helps to frame the nature, the ontological aspect of the phenomenon, in space-time through empirical observations. Aware that it is seeing that establishes our place in the surrounding world, we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relationship between what we see and what we know is never settled. (Berger 1972, p. 7).

Based on the assumption that the production of symbolic forms, texts and images, are rooted in places and objects that are the tangible traces of historical change, I investigate the circulation of these symbolic forms within the social urban fabrics of Sydney and Melbourne CBDs through the medium of photography. The photographic media, understood as a critical research tool of investigation (Hall, 1997; King, 1991; Linder, 2010; Tagg, 1988; 1991), is at the core of my approach and understanding of globalization as a visual-ideological phenomenon.

My approach to photography relies on two main notions: the relationship between photographic image and 'reality' and the production of a book of images; and also the related analysis and interpretation. Photography includes a large variety of manifestations such as the 'scientific', 'social scientific' and aesthetic. I consider the use of photograph as evidence since I understand photographs as representations of something that can be interpreted in different ways (Burke 2008). Thus, I assume that this type of evidence deserves the same credibility as the trustiness of a written document, a text. However I am aware that similarity-photography does not replace reality. Photographs do not provide us with unbiased, objective documentation of the social and material world. However, they can be understood to show characteristic attributes of people, objects and events that often elude even the most skilled wordsmiths (Prosser 2006).

I consider that photographs provide a degree of tangible detail with a sense of 'being there' in space-time that is difficult to convey through a social practice, that is, language as different from the visual. Furthermore I use photographs because photography in itself represents a significantly changing medium through which we 'sense' and experience the world. Photography is at the core of the production, circulation and consumption of media representations and, as a consequence, it is at the core of the digital shift produced by the new media technology.

In saying this, I am fully aware that there is no separation between object and subject, and that representation, even when achieved through a technological tool such as the digital

camera, is not unproblematic because photographs are produced inside a discursive practice. In this respect I deem it necessary to clarify that, as previously acknowledged, even though my understanding of ‘subjectivity’ is that it is socially constructed (Foucault), this does not mean that there is a contradiction between my ‘subjective’ phenomenological-interpretative approach to the social imaginary and the idea that the ‘subject’ is already social (Foucault). In particular, this study understands the relationship between subject and object as fluid. This is the reason I approached the investigation of the symbolic construction of the global imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne from an aesthetics of global change perspective. Aesthetics gives me the opportunity to overcome the clash between, ‘subject’ and ‘object’, between ‘matters’ and ‘ideas’ (see the Introduction chapter the Sections, Context, background and importance of the topic and Methodology and personal reflexion; also see Chapter 2, section Shared assumptions and meaning-making). This is also the reason why my collected images are understood as a particular source of complex data or as a ‘visual diary’. Therefore, they are not regarded as ‘technical documentation’ or a ‘photographic record’.

As part of my tailored methodology to investigate the global imaginary, I extended Hall’s theory of audience reception (see Chapter 2, Theoretical Frameworks, The discursive and the visual) related to the literary text and cultural representations to an understanding of the cultural hybrid assemblage of texts, symbols, and images identified as condensation symbols of globality. Furthermore, audience reception also helps to better understand why visual images are a powerful force that reshapes our perception of the world and ourselves.

In analysing and interpreting the selected visual evidence I take into consideration three things: 1) taking each image seriously; 2) thinking about the social conditions and effects of visual objects; and 3) considering my own way of looking at images. Before moving on, a consideration needs to be made of the number of cities I have investigated in this research, which, in itself is the main limitation of my inquiry. I recognise that a larger number of cities and collected evidence, covering the Asia-Pacific region, although not exclusively, would give a more precise picture of the leading edge of the symbolic

construction of the global imaginary at the dawn of the twenty-first century. For the purpose of this doctoral research, I am necessarily limited to cities which I have had easy and continuous access to. Furthermore, the analysis and interpretation of the selected body of condensation symbols is carried out through the case study method, and this does not represent to any extent a deep hermeneutical approach to the given body of evidence or an exhaustive study of the visual evidence of the phenomenon under investigation. On the contrary, my intent is to detect a clearly structured trend around the phenomenon of the symbolic condensation of the ‘local-national’ and ‘global’ in order to better understand how the global imaginary is symbolically and socially produced.

The analytical frameworks of condensation symbols and market globalism

Because of the complexity of deciphering how the social imaginary ties the subject to the membership of the urban-local-national while orienting it towards the ‘global’, an effort needs to be made to imagine ‘new’ theoretical frameworks. To detect the consciousness of being-in-an-interconnected-global-world, the global imaginary, I draw from Edelman (1985) and Steger (2011) the idea of establishing condensation symbols as the main analytical framework of my investigation. Edelman’s account of the symbolic character of politics sees all political actions as characterized by a double nature: the instrumental dimension and the expressive dimension, the latter one being dramaturgically symbolic (1985). His body of work is particularly useful for my investigation since he clearly reformulated the symbolic dimension of politics by working on the recognition of symbolic forms in the political process.

Moreover, in Edelman’s major works he links art to politics explaining that, if we seek to learn something about expressive political symbols, we must learn from aesthetics theory ‘since an art form consists of condensation symbols’ (p. 11). His exploration of condensation symbols is fundamental to an understanding of the symbolic construction of collective meaning made in texts, speeches and settings as they appear in the United States. This understanding originates from a psychoanalytical perspective, looking at the power of

emotional negotiation of symbols in politics. As Edelman observes, '[o]nce the forms of symbolic interplay in politics are specified and their political functions examined, it becomes clear that some common social psychological mechanisms tie them together.' (p. 188) He supports his theory by showing us the various ways in which the American political elite employs symbols to distract people from their involvement in the democratic process.

While I am in debt to Edelman's definition of condensation symbols, I am following Steger's first attempt to use them to grasp the textual-visual dynamics of globalization (2011). My investigation also uses Steger's concept of market globalism (2002, 2009b) as an additional analytical lens, as broadly discussed in Section 2 of Chapter 1. Thus, informed by theory and research questions, I selected two methods to identify, collect, select, analyze and interpret this particular type of visual formation that I define as condensation symbols and ideological markers of globality.

The main tools of analysis and interpretation I chose to critically approach globalization as a visual-ideological phenomenon are discourse analysis (Foucault 2011; Rose 2010) and iconology (Gombrich 1982; Mitchell 1987; Panofsky 1972). I chose discourse analysis because it goes beyond an understanding of language and textual sentences. Discourse analysis is an important tool for my investigation because it mediates linguistic and sociocultural knowledge by stressing the context dependence nature of discourse. Since discourse analysis deals with how people construct their accounts of the social world, it is an appropriate method for analyzing and interpreting the selected body of visual evidence. It helps to define the role image-texts play in market globalism's circulation of the rising global imaginary. Discourse analysis is an important thinking-tool for carrying out my investigation because it understands power not just as economic (Marx 1992) or as status (Weber 1978). Instead, discourse analysis sees power spreads throughout our entire social system (Gramsci 2008; Foucault 1980), concretely represented by rules, languages, images and institutions as product of discourses and practices.

However, in order to analyse and interpret the selected body of condensation symbols under investigation, discourse analysis does not suffice, but needs reinforcement by other analytical tools specifically focused on the interpretation of visual imagery. My choice is related to the iconological method extended to an understanding of global images. Iconology proves to be a very useful method for working with this particular type of visual formation due to the leading role that images play in the selected body of condensation symbols I am dealing with. Therefore, I am combining discourse analysis and iconology while also making use of other methods of analysis and interpretation.

I draw iconology from the history of art to help with an understanding of the meaning-making process of visual images (Argan 1975; Gombrich 1972, 1981, 1982; Mitchell 1987; Panofsky 1957, 1972), because they work and are produced in very different ways from text. In doing so, I extend the use of iconology from the study of artworks to that of the interpretation of contemporary global cultural flow of visual images. Hence, I make use of the iconological method to approach the transdisciplinary field of global, urban and media studies where my investigation lies.

This approach helps us to better understand the socio-political and cultural implications of the production of visual formations with regard to globalization dynamics at the subjective level of the production and consumption of symbolic forms. I turn iconology into a sort of ‘urban iconology’ that helps to approach and understand the different ‘visual grammar’ on which the given body of selected condensation symbols under investigation rely.

I am deeply conscious that a visual image can only be understood to a more or less limited extent, because meanings belong to culture, rather than to a specific semiotic mode. Furthermore, due to the unique nature of my research project and, although in the stage of interpretation I will make some uses of semiotics, this later one does not appear to be one of the main methods of investigation within my research project. Although the semiotic analysis of a photograph is a perfectly legitimate method of interpretation, the intention of this study is to underline the specificity of pictorial meaning and the way in which meanings are conveyed

by visual images. That is very different from the way in which they are transmitted by language.

Deeply aware of the limitations of the disciplinary methods in connection with this investigation, my approach to the identification, collection, selection, display, analysis and interpretation of the visual material is made through a research strategy that combines different methods, tools and tasks. Thus, as previously acknowledged, this exegesis calls for a tailored methodology. It is a methodology that combines discourse analysis, iconology and audience reception theory but also makes use of other different methods of analysis and interpretation.

In the stage of analysis and interpretation (Chapter 4), carried out through the multiple-case study method, I privilege discourse analysis combined with iconology and audience reception. I find the case study method very appropriate for the purpose of my investigation. The case study method assists me by locating my investigation in a single topic; the global imaginary. Through multiple-case study and cross-case analysis and interpretation, informed by theory and research questions, I investigate the symbolic construction of the global imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne (Chapter 4). I take into consideration divergent perspectives, while making the required adjustments when needed. I detect, identify, and evaluate the significance of settings, cultural objects, and spatial relationships through a logical process in order to negotiate meaning and better understand how the global imaginary is symbolically and socially produced.

I chose a selected body of images to be investigated through multiple-case study because they represent the concrete tracks and ideological markers of globalization process. In that sense, they condense spatial-symbolic scales of the local-national and the global. Although they are a limited and a subjective selection, they are crucial to accessing the social (global) imaginary because they align with the guidelines I established to identify the condensation symbols of globality as articulated by market globalism. In analyzing and interpreting the selected condensation symbols, I follow Rose's understanding of the

production of meaning of an image. According to Rose, there are three sites at which the meanings of an image are made, and three modalities, or aspects of the image (2010, p. 16). The three sites are: 1) the site of the image's production; 2) the site of the image itself; and 3) the site where the image is seen by various audiences. The three interlinking modalities are: 1) technological (a painting, photographs, cinema, the web); 2) compositional (what the image contains - its subject matter – the way the image is set out, the dynamic range and gamut); and 3) social (an overarching term that encompasses all the factors which influence how an image is viewed).

Images are not produced and circulated in a *vacuum*; thus the production of the image(s) is never innocent. Images are not 'transparent windows' but rather they interpret the world. Hence, in analyzing and interpreting the selected visual evidence, I take into consideration three questions related to the methodological aspect of my investigation on globalization as a visual-ideological phenomenon: 1) Why is it important to consider visual images with regard to globalization dynamics? 2) Why do I need to be critical about those images? 3) Why is it important to reflect on my critique?

Rose systematically analyses a number of theoretical frameworks along with relevant methodologies to describe how, why and when we can use visual technologies as research supporting tools, or even as the foundation of the research itself, as in my case. Furthermore, Rose's theories of visual methodologies emphasize the ubiquity of visual materials in today's culture and thus they aid my investigation of how ocularcentrism affects modern Western cultural societies and its evolution into the 'simulacrum' (Baudrillard 1995) in the postmodern era (Rose 2010).

I believe that media representations are very much at the core of our social relations; therefore, they are not 'simulacra' at all because they do not refer to some metaphysical truth, rather, they are socially and culturally constructed and, for this reason, they have socio-political and cultural implications. (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Bourdieu, 1989; Durkheim, 2008; Moscovici, 2000; Markova, 2003; Searle, 2010; Sismondo, 1995; Thompson, 1990,

1995) As a consequence, it can be said that the media representations at the core of my investigation are very much the concrete tracks and the ideological markers of globality. Since media representations are at the core of our social life for their implications, they need to be critically approached and not metaphysically understood or defined. This process, supported by my own extensive creative practice and underpinned by my two research questions, helps to identify, select, display, analyze and interpret the condensation symbols in terms of their cultural significance, social practices and power relations.

During the selection stage of the collected visual evidence, I identified three-condensation symbol patterns. In Chapter 4 I analyze and interpret a selected body of visual evidence consisting of six condensation symbols collected in Sydney and Melbourne CBD, five of which are drawn from the book of images. Images are displayed in the book in their own right and constitute an example of what surrounds our everyday life. To support my interpretation I argue that, in the course of people's daily exposure to this visual dimension, average viewers usually do not approach images from a theoretical, ideological or critical perspective. Thus, I found it useful to enrich my exegesis with a multiple-case study to better understand how precisely the 'global' is symbolically injected into the 'local-national' and to detect the ideologies embedded with these particular types of visual formations by making visible their links and pathways.

Research design

My research project is structured in four main stages. The first stage provides the identification and the development of a tailored methodology to approach globalization as visual-ideological phenomena, together with the theoretical frame and critical literary review of the study. The second stage has been carried out in the following ways:

- 1) Identifying and gathering photographs in the defined fieldwork of Sydney and Melbourne CBDs and by collecting condensation symbols from selected daily newspapers, magazines, and internet;
- 2) Creating an archive/database, namely The Visual Archive Project of the Global Imaginary – Condensation Symbols (from this point forward as VAPGI), which is part of this project in digital format on CD.
- 3) Selecting, analysing and interpreting the collected visual evidence drawn from the digital archive/database to produce a book of images that displays the condensation of spatial-symbolic scales of the local-national and the ‘global’ in their own right.
- 4) Interpreting in this exegesis a selected body of visual evidence through multiple-case study method.

The book of images constitutes the visual exploration and the groundwork of my investigation. As a further support to my hypotheses, I take into consideration the visual evidence collected through different media, internet included, that constitute the multiple-case study (Chapter 4). The multiple-case study helps to better understand precisely how the ‘global’ is symbolically injected into the local-national and it constitutes my contribution to the literature on the subject.

Fieldwork: the urban fabric of Sydney and Melbourne

The empirical stage of my investigation relies mainly on a number of condensation symbols gathered in Sydney and Melbourne’s CBDs, collected in the book of images. My investigation is structured to detect the symbolic construction of the global imaginary through media representation, and it is imagined as research questions about and personal experience of the social world as ‘objectively a symbolic system’ (Bourdieu 1989).

I selected Sydney and Melbourne for the following reasons: 1) they are Australia’s major cities, and they are also located in the Asia-Pacific region, which is a fast-growing region with a significant role in the global economy; 2) I considered the role played by

Sydney in the last two/three decades as an Alpha+ ‘world city’ (Globalization and World City 2008, 2010) and by Melbourne as Australia’s fastest growing capital city (Victorian Government 2012); and 3) the two major cities play a significant economic role in the geopolitical area of Asia-Pacific region. Australia, as a modern nation-state, is a country strongly rooted in Western European culture, and these two cities are visibly shaped by it.

Sydney provides an example of a global city, and Melbourne is an example of a globalizing city, with the distinction being based on the definitions used by several studies, such as the Globalization and World Cities Research Network (GaWC) of Loughborough University in the UK (Globalization and World City 2010). It is relevant to notice that the two cities brand their official image and profile—in the respective municipal/state advertising and abroad—by targeting lifestyle models that greatly differ from each other. Therefore, although my choice of the two cities was grounded on their ‘global’ character and claims (City of Sydney 2011; City of Melbourne 2012), their very different ‘urban personalities’ also offered me a richer and more stimulating scenario for the data collection and the general development of my inquiry. I also needed at least two different sites of investigation for the purpose of a wider and more varied collection of visual data. In doing so, I find it worth sketching a brief contour of the two cities.

Historical contexts: Sydney and Melbourne

In 2011 Melbourne and Sydney were ranked in the Global Innovation Cities Index respectively as the 17th and 20th city economies (Innovation Cities Program 2011). In modern times, the shift made by global media, communication and marketing, with its historical implications, no longer position the city of Sydney as far away from the financial world, trade and affairs (Morris 2010). Indeed, Sydney appears strategically situated in the Asia Pacific-Rim, which includes China and India as leading-countries of the global economy. Melbourne’s main airport, after Sydney, is the busiest in Australia and its seaport is Australia's busiest for containerized and general cargo (Dowling 2011; Victorian Government

2006). These elements indicate the growing globalization process occurring in Melbourne, with no other city in Australia having ever recorded growth of this size (Colebatch 2011).

Considering cultural identity in cosmopolitan places like Sydney and Melbourne is a complex and not unproblematic issue, particularly for the latter. If identity is a crucial aspect for people, products and places, Melbourne reveals all types of products and many places (like Piazza Italia in Carlton or the Chinese Museum in Melbourne Chinatown) that help citizens to symbolically identify themselves with their cultural roots. However, the multicultural Australia of few decades ago has changed again (O'Donnell and Johnstone 1997) and the government's multicultural philosophy seems to strategically control the whole Australian society through its ethnic cultural and political interfaces on the top of which the Anglo-Celtic outnumbers all others (Hage and Johnson 1993, pp. 113-134; O'Donnell and Johnstone 1997, p. 11).

At the same time, Australia's international outlook has changed in the past decade and the focus is increasingly on Asia. This has been a gradual change although the rate of change has varied for different sectors of Australian society (Australian Bureau of Statistic 2006). The countries leading the global economy are mainly based in Asia, with unprecedented and strong implications for Australia; implications that are, depending on the standpoint from which we look at it, not only of economic but also of a socio-political and cultural nature that is profoundly affecting cultural identities.

The two cities were also selected because they are places of representational ideological intensity, due to the huge circulation and consumption of hybrid cultural assemblages that condense spatial-symbolic scales of the urban-local-national and the global. The choice of the two cities and the media selection for the collection of crucial evidence identified as condensation symbols of globality help us to understand how the global imaginary can be traced in Sydney and Melbourne.

My research project includes the theoretical and methodological study of the empirical activities and the building of a visual archive/database of condensation symbols. The

empirical activities are structured in samplings of condensation symbols twice a year, for a period of two years during the months of January-February and July-August, from July 2010 to February 2013. Each sampling has a duration of two months and consists of collecting visual data in the CBDs of the two cities and from the selected media. Behind the implicit imagery of social theory and the sociological power of seeing, this study looks at the collected evidence as ‘new’ symbolic forms deriving from the digital shift of contemporary globalization processes.

In establishing the selection criteria I chose visual material for this study, I considered that images were eligible to be classified as condensation symbols of globalization when they showed the condensation of spatial-symbolic scales of the ‘local-national’ and the ‘global’ in one visual formation. The interpretative strategies I adopted in the multiple-case study to analyze and interpret the given body of visual evidence are as follows: 1) identifying key themes in my sources; 2) examining their effect of persuasion; and 3) making visible links and pathways.

In particular, during the stage of analysis and interpretation I considered the way in which the ‘global’ is symbolically injected into the ‘local-national’. The following are the key visual constructs I am looking for:

- 1) The photographic, graphic or pictorial visualization of the globe shape, as well as the words or catchphrases evoking it;
- 2) The presence of images, texts and graphs standing for the local-national and global;
- 3) The visual formations that represent the collapse of the different spatial-symbolic scales of the ‘local- national’ and the ‘global’;
- 4) All the less obvious, signs and symbols that evoke or suggest the destabilization of the local-national through textual and visual metaphors.

By visual metaphors I refer to a representation through images that evokes a particular association of visually conveyed meanings.

For the collection of visual evidence in their interaction with urban spaces, this study considers a large variety of devices such as urban screens, digital displays and interfaces, led-signs, plasma screens, projection boards, information terminals, new intelligent architectural surfaces that are wi-fi web based, new media buildings and public squares. All these elements are pertinent to my inquiry because digital technology, on which new media rely, is increasingly transforming the 'nature' of our cities through its integration with private and public urban spaces and the development of the wireless technology.

Visual data is also collected from daily newspapers and magazines circulating in Sydney and Melbourne, as well as from Australian based on-line magazines produced in the two cities. I selected the following sources that cover a heterogeneous area of consumption. Firstly, I choose The Daily Telegraph, which is owned by News Corporation, a multinational mass media corporation headquartered in New York City of which the chairman and chief executive officer is Rupert Murdoch. It is a global vertically integrated media company with properties in film, television, cable, magazines, newspapers, publishing which exerts a significant influence on a global scale (News Corporation 2013). The Daily Telegraph is politically and culturally broadly conservative and centre-right positioned. The newspaper is also available on-line.

Secondly, I chose The Age, Melbourne (Fairfax Media 2012). The Age is a daily newspaper, which has been published in Melbourne since 1854, and has undergone a structural and physical transformation. From a broadsheet, the largest of the various newspaper formats characterized by long vertical pages, it was recently turned into tabloid format as well as into digital multimedia format, which includes moving images and video clips, too. Since tabloids are smaller, their stories tend to be shorter than those found in broadsheets, and this has some cultural implications also due to the massive use of visual images.

My third selection is the newspaperworks.com.au (The Newspaper Works), a Sydney based organisation that represents the interests of the newspaper industry by producing an

online weekly magazine that promotes newspapers across all print and digital platforms to target advertisers, consumers, governments, shareholders, and the newspaper industry. I chose it because it gives a broader perspective of the Australian media industry related to newspapers from the different standpoint of their production, circulation and consumption.

To further support my investigation, I also selected a few web-search-engines used to collect data on internet. They are the following: 1) Google search engine; 2) Yahoo! Search engine; 3) Web Wombat. This latter is an Australian based search engine which shows a contradiction in its own name, being on the World Wide Web while attempting to symbolically resist globalization with national connotation.

The book of images

The book of images is the creative output of my project. The images were chosen from the Visual Archive Project of the Global Imaginary dedicate to condensation symbols and put in a sequence exclusively according to my experience as a visual artist. The book is the result of my subjective approach to the symbolic construction of the global imaginary and aims to re-create spatial practice in Sydney and Melbourne through my perspective and the framing of my camera lens. The book displays images in their own right that, when detached from the critical analysis of the exegesis, should offer a kaleidoscopic tour of urban lived spaces caught in moments of representational ideological intensity. This will help to better understand at the site of reception how in our everyday life images work to re-shape cultural identities and nation-state at local-global scale.

The book offers an experience similar to that one people usually have walking in the city, when they exchange and consume symbolic forms without approaching them through a theoretical-critical or ideological perspective. Walking in the cities of Sydney and Melbourne, as I did, means engaging with the totality of the cities' history. The collected visual evidence displayed in the book of images depicts cultural hybridization as a result of the undergoing process of globalization.

I imagined, designed and constructed the book of images as a collection of photographs of the two cities that become visual fragments of a larger urban body. This happens through an arrangement of the visual material that simulates the cultural hybridization represented by the various texts, images, goods and lived spaces of multiple origins that I, the researcher-*flâneur*, observed in the streets, shopping centres and store window-installations across Sydney and Melbourne's CBDs.

Through the book of images I aim to offer the viewers/readers a similar visual-perceptive experience and allow them to appreciate how the 'global' is symbolically and socially produced. In this way the book of images is intimately and deeply connected with the exegesis, but, at the same time, it can be regarded as a separate body that gives the viewers the opportunity to consume it by looking at the images on their own. Of course the consumption of the book of images in association with the contents of the exegesis will allow the viewers to retrace the researcher's footsteps towards a theorization of the meaning-making process of the symbolic and social construction of the global imaginary and how precisely the global is symbolically injected into the local-national. However, looking at the book of images as an autonomous work, I do believe that the viewer does not need guidelines on how to read the images, since, when we walk around, strolling across the mediatized landscape of our cities, everyone approaches the urban fabric without any organized toolbox, and, we must admit, without paying much attention to what happens.

It is in here, in this unarmed city crossing, that the disorienting neoliberal ideological flows of texts and images submerge all of us. Consumer goods and related brands are promoted through strategic advertising campaigns, and these campaigns, as it clearly appears from the book of images, saturate the urban social fabric of our cities through the increasing circulation of symbolic forms of texts and images. As viewers, we have a range of tactics to interpret the images, to negotiate their meanings, or to ignore them.

Although the viewer is free to approach my book of images as an autonomous work, one of the aims of the book is to identify new figures of knowledge such as the global

stereotypes. The book contents display alternative forms of historical and cultural understanding related to the representation and construction of the global imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne. This happens as a result of the encounter, together with the possible unexpected juxtapositions and connections, of cultural transnational symbols with local places expressing defined identities.

More precisely the images suggest how aspects of proximity and distance are intertwined in the two urban fabrics by creating the global imaginary in a single place. Although the concept of ‘global microspaces’ (Sassen 2007, p. 7) is a contradiction in terms because globality suggests precisely the opposite of what local is, these places are hybrid spaces in a defined socio-historical context that combine both local and global meanings. Looking at the collection of condensation symbols in the book invites the viewer to decipher the image ‘surplus of values’ (meanings, links, pathways), soliciting interpretation. Store logotypes, advertising displays, as well as simple signs and images, are interwoven and condensed into visual formations where intertextuality articulations between visual local landmarks and symbolic forms create the global imaginary in a single place. With the book of images viewers will be exposed to the new figure of knowledge that I define as global stereotype.

Looking at how the global stereotype works, we should consider that culture is based on symbols and symbols tie people together. As already observed, today language is increasingly eclipsed by visibility, by images that represent ideas and objects. However, beyond the ideological boundaries of the two main symbolic systems, text and images, meanings change over time. Thus, those cultural generalizations and approximations represented by global stereotypes need to be understood not as absolute representations but as socio-historically determined. In particular, the global stereotypes I identified refer to some of the values of a neoliberal economic oriented worldview that is at the core of market globalism.

Because of the importance of stereotyping in media communication and political ideologies, I created the book of images as visual evidence of the cultural fragmentation and

re-composition process of the ideological urban landscape of the two cities. I also display how this process makes use of cultural visual generalizations and approximations embedded in neoliberal ideology as global stereotypes. These new figures of knowledge have socio-political and cultural implications because they suggest, support and sustain the symbolic construction of the global imaginary at urban-local-national scale of Sydney and Melbourne in Australia.

From a technical point of view, the production of the book of images is the result of a combination of digital technology (layout design, photographs and pigment inkjet printing and digital manipulation) and craftship (binding).

The visual archive

The purpose of the visual archive/database is to collect visual images (still digital files) made up of photographs and also images from other media, such as newspapers, magazines and the internet, to investigate the symbolic and social construction of the global imaginary at local-national scale of Sydney and Melbourne. The visual archive/database is characterized by a subjective-interpretative approach to globalization as a visual-ideological phenomenon. The collected evidence, saved on CD as a PDF file, has the potential to be further investigated to better understand how precisely the 'global' mediates 'local-national' meanings, paving the way to possible future exploration of other cities in Australia and in the Asia-Pacific region.

CHAPTER 4. NEW APPROACH TO THE AESTHETICS OF GLOBALIZATION

Multiple-case study overview

This chapter constitutes my contribution to the academic literature on the subject analysis and interpretation of a selected body of condensation symbols identified as the concrete tracks and ideological markers of the process of globalization. This stage of my research aims to better understand how the global imaginary is symbolically and socially produced within the real life contexts of Sydney and Melbourne and this is carried out through multiple-case study.

This investigation includes six examples of visual evidence as observed and gathered in the two cities under investigation. Images are characterized by the condensation of spatial-symbolic scales that used to be fixed on the national but are now increasingly reflecting multiple levels mediated by the ‘global’.

Before starting with the analysis and interpretation of the selected body of visual evidence, I point out that in this study the media representations are analysed and interpreted in relation to their actual forms. In other words, I take into consideration the actual symbols: signs, figures, images, narratives and words—the material forms in which meaning is circulated.

The visual evidence was gathered in Sydney and Melbourne by means of digital photography and by collecting materials from various media, including from the internet (Chapter 3) to further support my claims. Together, the media representations constitute ‘The Visual Archive Project of the Global Imaginary – Condensation Symbols’ which is the base of the whole project. This chapter considers the visual evidence that is part of the book of images plus one image, Sportsgirl ‘Go Global!’ webpage, taken from the visual archive. This latter image is included in the exegesis due to the strategic integrated marketing campaign it refers to and to further support my arguments.

In the selection stage of the project I identified three condensation symbol pattern types that guided the eligibility criteria and the classification of the collected material, as detailed in Chapter 3. In doing so, this study evaluates, analyzes and interprets the visual evidence under investigation by following two guiding questions:

- 1) What roles do condensation symbols appearing in neoliberal image-texts play in the construction of the global imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne?
- 2) How can condensation symbols in image-texts be studied by using phenomenological–interpretive methods?

Analysis and interpretation of selected condensation symbols

The first three cases discussed in this section relate to condensation symbols collected in Sydney.

Figure 1. Sydney, University of New South Wales Global, Promotional bag, 2012



By looking at Figure 1 University of New South Wales Global (UNSWG), I observe that this university defines itself as a ‘global’ institution by adding the adjective ‘global’ to its own historical logo, as it is visible by the promotional bag in the picture. I assert that the UNSWG suggests, supports and sustains the symbolic construction of the global imaginary at the local-

national scale of Sydney through the discourse of the global knowledge economy and therefore reflects and contributes to the symbolic construction of the global imaginary in a single place. This happens by means of the narrative related to the word ‘global’ that qualifies the UNSWG and displays how the academic world, through its institutions, is a substantial and active player of the global phenomena of change and transformations at the material level of the process, as well as at the level of the new shifting mindset, the global imaginary.

This can be negotiated from the ‘global’ qualifier that suggests an idea of the ‘global’ as naturally given. For these reasons the UNSWG promotional bag can be considered as a tangible trace of the global imaginary and therefore a political fact, rather than a simple advertisement.

Similarly to Case 1, the GE-TX Global Transportation (Figure 2) absorbed the adjective ‘global’ in its own logo.

Figure 2. Sydney, GT-EX Global Transportation, car advertisement, 2012



As with the UNSWG logo, the qualifier word ‘global’ here works as an ideological constraint. Through the world ‘global’ the viewer/consumer is facilitated in negotiating the whole

meaning of the visual formations by bridging text and images, since they reinforce, explain and reflect each other. Figure 2 is the photograph of GT-EX Global Transportation car advertisement in Sydney CBD. The advertisement clearly states that the company offers courier services to local, national and global destinations. The logo brand located on the right side of the car advertisement makes use of the concept of 'global' as its own, as already observed in the University of New South Wales Global logo brand. However in this case GT-EX Global Transportation also makes use of the visual metaphor of the globe map. In addition to the already clear definition of the 'global' aspect of the company, a sentence on the left side of the car states that they cover 'local-national-global' destinations. In doing so, the GT-EX Global Transportation advertisement offers an example of how the global imaginary captures, adapts and alters local-national meanings by re-configuring them around the 'global'.

Figure 3 depicts a detail of the Westfield Sydney Shopping Centre where Gucci and Prada showroom advertisements can be seen, as well as a view of David Jones retail store in Pitt Street mall. This central Sydney shopping centre complex is one of the major fashion, food and lifestyle spaces in Australia, dedicated to consumption and leisure.

Figure 3. Sydney, Gucci, Prada and David Jones, Sydney Pitt Street mall, 2011



Looking at this photograph, it can be appreciated that it depicts a condensation of spatial-symbolic scales of 'local-national' and 'global'. More precisely, in this photograph Gucci and

Prada brands, rooted in the long-history of the Italian fashion industry, symbolically stand for and represent a transcultural global dimension. The Italian clothing tradition is based on handmade, high quality goods, details and craftsmanship. The Italian fashion industry embodies Italian culture by stylizing its past and turning it into new products. As a result, Italian fashion clothes are assumed as aesthetic practice promoting a lifestyle of visual pleasure. It can be said that Gucci and Prada, through their Sydney stores, produce a new alluring landscape of aesthetic experiences for the viewer/consumers. However, by making use of the Italian symbolic capital represented by the high quality of Italian craftsmanship, Gucci and Prada are concerned with global up-market fashion audience to sell examples of their 'Italian style' mythology.

This has economic, socio-political and cultural consequences because in the last decades Italian fashion, which encompasses designers and companies like Armani, Zegna, Gucci, Prada, just to quote a few of them, has become a dominant force in the fashion world (Steele 2003). It has represented economic power, international relations and is seen as a cultural global catalyzer capable of attracting all genders through the mix of elegance, provocation and the excellence of fabrics and manufacturing process.

However, the symbolic power of the Italian style in the production and marketing of clothes and accessories cannot be understood without taking into consideration the tradition in art and sculpture going back to the Italian Renaissance with its humanistic culture and the perception of man as a measure of all things. The new masters of the twenty-century are fashion designers (Seeling 2010) who, from the 1980s in particular, generated the contemporary post-World War II Italian fashion industry through strategic marketing communication that combines eroticism, sex appeal and aesthetics. All these elements are rooted in the Italian traditions of the past centuries, and expressed in a shift made possible by the development of new technologies, textile innovations and global media, as well as by the globalization of markets. The Italian fashion industry has been an important player in the global capitalism of the last decades through the articulation of neoliberal market ideology.

In contrast to the retail outlets of Gucci and Prada that stand for the global dimension, in the background of Figure 3 we can see David Jones, a well-known Australian department store that stands for the local-national. David Jones department store was born in 1883 and claims to be the oldest continuously operating department store in the world still trading under its original name (David Jones 2013). However in this image it seems that David Jones, compared with Gucci and Prada, is symbolically relegated to play a marginal role with respect to the symbolic power of the global represented by two of the most acclaimed Italian labels of the global fashion system. It is necessary to clarify that David Jones, colloquially known as DJs, is broadly recognized as an up-market Australian department store that sells globally acclaimed brands such as Giorgio Armani, Hugo Boss and Versace.

In these three media representations (Figures 1, 2 and 3) texts and images articulate the local-global dynamics by supporting each other. As a result, a new shifting mindset, the global imaginary, is represented as 'natural' and taken for granted. Thus, being in-a-global-interconnected-world implicitly means to experience the world by buying and wearing Gucci and Prada fashion clothes and accessories. If Figure 3 displays a symbolic collapse of the 'global' into the 'local-national', a similar process happens with the UNSWG logo (Figure 1), through the symbolic qualifier 'global' collapsing into the local dimension of Sydney, and with the GT-EX logo-advertisement (Figure 2), even if in the latter one we identify a different and clearer distinction of the geographic scales of the 'local-national-global'. As a consequence, it can be asserted that UNSWG, GT-EX Global Transportation and Gucci and Prada stores in Sydney are all examples of the symbolic collapse of the global into the 'local-national', Sydney, Australia because they are symbols of economic, social-political and cultural change.

Due to these elements, this visual evidence must be considered, without any doubt, as a crucial track and ideological marker of globality. In other words, looking at these visual formations, it can be understood that they are located in Sydney, Australia, and that are part of a network that operates globally. This has socio-political implications that affect cultural

identities and nation-state through the mediation of the local-national meanings. Thus, out of any incidental or unconscious behaviour at the site of production of these symbolic forms, the UNSWG promotional bag (Figure 1), the GT-EX car (Figure 2) and Gucci and Prada stores (Figure 3) clearly depict a shift of social imaginary from the national to the global.

Through a combination of text and images, these visual formations contribute and reflect the global systems of interconnections we call globalization. This can be negotiated from the condensation of the spatial-symbolic scales of the Sydney setting in the photographs 1, 2 and 3, from the word 'Sydney' in the university logo, and from the word 'global' in both Figure 1 and 2.

In particular, in Figure 2 the symbol of the globe of the earth defines and leads the whole meaning of the condensation symbol. Furthermore, the UNSWG logo clearly depicts a new shifting mindset, a new global public consciousness that, beyond 'academic freedom', represents the university as an ideological apparatus that contributes to the translation of the global imaginary into explicit terms and political agenda at the local-global scale of Sydney, Australia.

Similarly, GT-EX suggests global interconnections and performs a crucial role with respect to the economic driven force of globalization, which relies on the transnational circulation of products, goods and services. It can be asserted that this visual evidence suggests to the viewer/consumer the feeling of being everywhere in the world while staying in one place. This can be obtained by choosing those particular types of services, products and commodities. In other words these visual formations act as symbols of social change by suggesting a new global public consciousness linked to the dominant market globalism ideology. Thus, it can be appreciated that in the examples above the socio-political implications are produced in a frame of consumerism-oriented economy of which the imperative of profit of global capitalism also makes visible the neoliberal ideology—the economic core of market globalism, embedded within.

The next cases deal with visual material collected in Melbourne. The first two visual formations (Figures 4 and 5) are from the Sportsgirl integrated advertising campaign ‘Go Global!’ Sportsgirl is an Australian clothing chain of clothes for young woman. Figure 4 portrays a window-installation as it was available in one of the Sportsgirl stores in Melbourne in August 2010.

Figure 4. Melbourne, Sportsgirl ‘Go Global!’ , store window-installation, 2010



At a first glance this figure displays a hybrid cultural assemblage made of text, images and symbols linked to specific countries and to their national cultural identities, like the United States of America and the United Kingdom. In particular, this condensation symbol is made of: large scale posters in the shape of postage stamp depicting mannequins wearing Sportsgirl clothes and accessories; wallpaper in the background with map patterns; a three-dimensional globe map; an English red bus labeled London; a representation of the New York Statue of Liberty and the sentence ‘Go Global!’

The combination of all these elements makes concrete what we understand in our everyday life as the common sense of the ‘global’, while the slogan ‘Go Global!’ drives the viewer/consumer into bridging the different objects with the text-catchphrase to create the whole meaning of the representation. The ‘Go Global!’ slogan clearly places the emphasis on the emotions of the viewer/consumer, instead of focusing on the quality of the clothing and accessories. What counts here is the consumer’s possibility of feeling part of a global-interconnected-world, implying that this transformation occurs when you buy and wear Sportsgirl products.

Figure 5 is not part of the book of images. It is included in the VAPGI but, due to the integrated nature of Sportsgirl’s ‘Go Global!’ strategic marketing campaign (Sportsgirl 2010), I incorporated it into this study to further support to my arguments. Due to the utilization of the internet as Sportsgirl’s virtual extension of business activity and ‘Go Global!’ advertising campaign, I found it useful for analyzing their online store homepage as well.

Figure 5. Internet, Sportsgirl ‘Go Global!’ home page, 2010



The same structure of hybrid cultural assemblage considered in Figure 4 can be identified also in Sportsgirl’s ‘Go Global!’ webpage (Figure 5). In the webpage context, the ‘Go Global!’

campaign acquires a cosmopolitan appeal. This happens through the use of the Italian language with the sentence ‘Ciao, Bella’, that welcomes the viewer/consumer in an artificial setting of Italian style *trattoria* [tavern].

Among the visual stereotypes of Italian lifestyle of the sixties we can identify the ‘Vespa’ scooter, immortalized in the romantic comedy directed by William Wyler, ‘Vacanze Romane’ [Roman Holidays] (1953), starring Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn. This element of the visual communication suggests an even more emotionally charged meaning negotiation because it offers the feeling of a global interconnection with a specific cultural, national reference. The national-global link is achieved through a set of visual stereotypes that are also imbued with the cultural importance of the Italian fashion industry. As previously acknowledged in Case 3, the Italian fashion industry allows the Italian tradition to ‘preserve’ an ancient history by turning it into market commodities: clothes and accessories. In this way, the Sportsgirl advertisement turns the act of buying and consuming mass-products into an individual-subjective experience and personal lifestyle through the suggestion of a national-global link.

This helps to better understand how exactly, at subjective-individual level, the global imaginary acts on the local-national meanings. Figures 4 and 5 clearly display how the global imaginary captures, adapts and alters local-national meanings by re-configuring the latter ones around the ‘global’. Although the Sportsgirl brand (Figures 4 and 5), and those ones of Gucci, Prada and David Jones (Figure 3), sell and market fashion in an apparently similar way, they are very different in their style of communication. Rather than explaining the qualities of their clothes and accessories, Sportsgirl, Gucci and Prada focus their campaign on advertisements that work with powerful images. However, while Sportsgirl makes use of visual stereotypes and city landmarks, Gucci and Prada play with sophisticated seductive and almost ideologically trans-gendered models wearing their luxury clothes and accessories. In this group of condensation symbols, only Sportsgirl encapsulates a text-slogan that works as an

ideological constraint, while Gucci and Prada exclusively use their logotypes as text, relying on their symbolic capital.

Beyond the different structure of the considered visual formations, it can be said that Sportsgirl fashion industry, with the advertising campaign 'Go Global!' (Figures 4 and 5), and Gucci and Prada, with their Sydney stores (Figure 3), try to produce a new tempting landscape of aesthetic experiences and visual pleasure (Mulvey 2009). This is achieved by referring to generic Italian lifestyle through visual stereotypes and by relying on the reputation of single brands where the consolidated mythology surrounding Italian culture is in itself a source of stereotypes capable of generating aesthetics at zero cost.

As a consequence the exhibition of Sportsgirl's 'Italianness' gives the Australian based brand the advantage of symbolic capital related to the mythology of the Italian culture and lifestyle, independently from the real place of production of garments and accessories. The location of production activities in China and other countries of the Global South is concealed information and does not contribute to the formation of the audience imaginary. Sportsgirl's Australian fashion brand, through a strategic integrated marketing campaign, that in their website makes use of visual stereotypes related to 'Italianness', has socio-political and cultural implications that affect cultural identity and nation-state at local-national scale.

Another interesting, although apparently obvious, example of condensation symbols is the photo that depicts the opening of a new gathering place in Melbourne, the China Bar Signature (Figure 6). This is a place developed to operate on multiple levels in the core of the city CBD on the corner of Little Bourke Street and Russell Street. Located in the Chinese cultural precinct, at first glance the restaurant seems just part of the city landscape and therefore looks quite 'natural'. However, this 'Asian buffet', as the new bar is advertised, is part of the consolidation of the phenomenon of the Asian-Chinese retail business in Melbourne, which is increasingly reshaping the urban fabric and affecting the 'multicultural' character of the city.

Figure 6. Melbourne, China Bar Signature, poster advertisement, 2011



A close-up of this condensation symbol shows a large-size poster covering the new bar's entrance. The poster portrays a seductive, submissive young woman whose only connection with the concept of food is her hair style, which consists of a pair of chopsticks and a sushi roll. This macro-detail makes the difference by catching the viewer/consumer attention. In this context the ideological gendered male gaze suggests a visual pleasure that links food and female allure. The young woman displays a mix of Western beauty and Chinese fashion and the media representation, on the whole, approaches the viewer/consumer through a hybrid combination of English and Chinese language.

Similar to what I have already observed in the Sportsgirl, Gucci and Prada advertisements, China Bar Signature is not focused on the quality of the consumer goods: the 'Asian buffet' experience is strongly related to an emotionally charged lifestyle that articulates local-national meanings. In doing so, the China Bar Signature media representation affects cultural identity and nation state at local-national scale. In other words, this media

representation clearly shows us how the global imaginary captures, adapts and alters local-national meanings by transforming local places into a global microplace.

When critically approached, this visual evidence makes visible links and pathways that are crucial for grasping the role that condensation symbols appearing in neoliberal visual formations play in the construction of the global imaginary, the consciousness of being-in-a-global-interconnected-world. The links and pathways that are unveiled between these visual formations, and the discursive 'regime of truth' in which they are produced, discloses the macro-power channeled through these particular types of visual formations. More precisely, in these selected images the condensation of spatial-symbolic scales of local-national and the 'global' transcends the geopolitical borders of Australia. In doing so, they contribute to changing, reorienting and altering the self-contained Australian nation-state through the spread of transcultural media flows.

To sum up, the interpretation of the select body of condensation symbols highlights various elements, such as settings, city landmarks, visual stereotypes and the presence of transnational logo brands that reveal the spatial-symbolic condensation of the local-national and the global in a single visual formation. More precisely, they disclose the symbolic collapse of the 'global' into the local-national or a mediation of it at level of the meaning-making process. I observe that the utilization of stereotypes is often a tool to preserve social and symbolic power through a process of simplification by limiting concepts to a few obvious and superficial characteristics, such as the Italianess in Sportsgirl website.

Stereotypes are perceived as naturally given while they are actually social constructions. Stereotyping is a form of symbolic power intimately linked with the social production of knowledge, with 'practices'. 'Power/knowledge' (Foucault 1980) is the production of knowledge and meaning through discourse understood as a system of representation and entangled with power. Therefore stereotyping is a key element in the production of symbolic power as well as a tool for understanding how the construction of the global imaginary is symbolically and socially produced.

What clearly arises from this multiple-case study is a trend that sees condensation symbols taking shape through the visual stereotypes. It is interesting to note that in some instances they are creating new stereotypes.

For example, the Euro-Asian woman (Figure 6) would have never been on a billboard two-three decades ago in Melbourne, even though Chinese restaurants have been operating in Melbourne since 1863 (Nichol 2012). Figure 6 depicts a visual formation that relies on the glamour of reimagined Chinese and more broadly Asian food, through which we detect the fragmentation and re-composition through hybrid cultural assemblage of cultural identities at local-global scale. The image of the Euro-Asian woman is of indeterminate ethnic origin. Similarly, the 'Italianness' of the Sportsgirl webpage advertisement is a relatively new phenomenon especially in the light of the fact that Sportsgirl does not sell Italian clothes, but clothes designed in Australia and made in China and elsewhere in the Global South. Analysis of similar advertisements in the past 30 years would have shown mainly surfer guys and blondes. Indeed, visual stereotypes are recurrent figures of knowledge in almost all the selected and investigated condensation symbols and they show how the symbolic construction of the global imaginary is socially produced. The shift from the national to the global involves the production of hybrid meaning structures that condense the local-national and the global. Stereotyping, as a signifying practice, is central to the strategy of advertising communication because of its symbolic power to condense meanings.

According to Roland Barthes, 'all official institutions of language are repeating machines: school, sports, advertising, popular songs, news, all continually repeat the same structure, the same meaning, often the same words: the stereotype is a political fact, the major figure of ideology' (2000, p. 40). Beyond Barthes' statement, what is interesting with these new figures of knowledge, these global stereotypes, is that more than repeating something they actually contribute to the creation of new imaginaries.

I detect a representational shift that is revealed by three main elements:

- 1) The multicultural aesthetics emanating from the city, widely expressed by the book of images and by the multiple-case study;
- 2) The integration of the condensation symbols into everyday life;
- 3) The establishment of new stereotypes; the global stereotypes.

Furthermore, through stereotypes, local-national settings and a mix of Western and Asian cultural models of fashion-beauty, food and lifestyles are projected onto a global scale. Thus, beyond some apparently innocent media representations, the condensation symbols show us all their symbolic power and their embedded system of values—their ideologies.

The selected visual formations, with their power of meaning negotiated from image to text and vice versa, can help us to better understand the shift of the social imaginary from the national to the global. It appears quite clear how the ‘deep matrix’ of the global imaginary is translated into concrete terms through media representations with the central role played by the viewer/consumer at the site of reception. This happens through the spread of new and changing aesthetic values into the system of production and re-production of media representations. More precisely, through the articulation of market globalism and the role played by the viewer/consumer in the meaning-making process, ideology helps to translate the overarching social imaginary into actual plans of our everyday life at the local-global scale.

This multiple-case study, informed by theory and research questions, confirms my hypothesis. As a result, the new and shifting mindset, the global imaginary, was detected through a process of identification, collection, display and interpretation of selected visual evidence. This has been possible through the condensation symbols collected in the book of images and with those ones investigated and explained in this chapter.

During my analysis and interpretation of the selected visual evidence I appreciated that logo brands and advertisements often incorporate various cultural elements. These elements can range from city landmarks to visual stereotypes and art, to ideological, gendered representations and linguistic exoticism. Independently from the interest the

viewer/consumers, or, as in my case, the researcher, may have in the topics of the visual formations, or the interest in the very specific systems of values, the embedded ideologies remain a precondition in order to gain access to the social imaginary.

As I have already had the opportunity to observe through their different symbolic elements, the selected body of visual evidence calls for the viewer/reader/audience's participation to bridge texts and images to achieve the whole meaning of the visual formation. When critically approached, this body of visual evidence clearly displays the relations of power embedded with the relations of meaning, while however showing symbolic forms of resistance. This also explains the problematic nature of the visual evidence. In particular, symbolic resistance occurs through the production, circulation, exchange and consumption of symbolic forms related to the Australian national imaginary. These symbolic forms range from consumer goods to clothes and decorative objects that make use of the Australian flag colours and signs, the Coat of Arms symbols or, alternatively, nationalistic catchphrases. Examples of the catchphrases used as signs, advertisements or labels are: 'Proud Australian Family Owned Business', 'Proudly 100% Australian Owned', 'Proudly Australian owned and operated since...'.

Following Foucault's arguments, the condensation symbols I have selected reflect and contribute to the socio-cultural and economic change through the most dominant political ideology of our time, neoliberalism, of which market globalism (the idea that unregulated capitalism is the ultimate, inescapable and desirable fate of successful economies), appears to be the most powerful articulation. Thus, all the condensation symbols that are part of the book of images and those ones selected in this case study are identified as contributing to the symbolic construction of the global imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne. Of course this understanding through a subjective meaning-making process of negotiation from image to text and vice versa entirely remains at the site of reception. However I cannot avoid observing that the private companies and corporations standing behind the selected visual evidence (as well as the other actors of domestic and national/global market), are undoubtedly powerful

agents in the creation of this environment but at the same time must deal with the aggressive competition that this process generates. Nonetheless, profit still remains the imperative of neoliberal ideology as market globalism, and this makes them not only part of the socio-political and cultural change but also active players in global capitalism.

CONCLUSION

In the course of this study we became familiar with ideas such as the global imaginary, condensation symbols and market globalism. In this final chapter it is perhaps appropriate to go back to the issue of how I achieved the result conceptualized in the methodology (Chapter 3), and more importantly what I discovered and learned.

My investigation aimed to better understand how the construction of the global imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne is symbolically and socially produced. In this respect, I understood globalization as a material and imaginary process, and I approached it as a visual-ideological phenomenon. I planned to achieve this objective through systematic observations carried out via fieldwork in Sydney and Melbourne, with the purpose of identifying, collecting, selecting, displaying and subsequently interpreting a given body of visual evidence to support my arguments. The body of condensation symbols, as they were available in the images and narratives of the urban social fabric of the two cities under investigation, were collected and stored in the VAPGI in so far as they were identified as the concrete tracks and ideological markers of globality (Chapter 2 Section 2). A selection of images was displayed in their own right and consolidated in a book that is the creative output of the project, while this exegesis constitutes the theoretical and methodological framework designed to complement the book of images.

To further support my claims I also decided to add to the exegesis Chapter 4, which is dedicated to a multiple-case study that constitutes an additional support research project and provided a demonstration of how the theory could be verified through practice. In that chapter I analysed directly selected visual evidence to explain how precisely the global is symbolically injected into the local-national. In particular, the multiple-case study detected the trend and helped to explain how the local-national, when symbolically mediated by the global, gives in turn more symbolic power to the global itself. The inquiry has addressed and answered the following research questions: 1) How do condensation symbols appearing in neoliberal image-texts construct and articulate the global imaginary in Sydney and

Melbourne? 2) How can phenomenological–interpretive methodologies illuminate the symbolic and social roles of condensation symbols in image-texts?

Subjective dimension of globalization

This study began with the consideration that, while there is an increasingly growing interest in the pertinent literature on globalization as an ‘objective’ phenomenon, so far not much attention has been paid to the features of its ‘subjective’ dimension, the realm of increasing global consciousness. Acknowledging that globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of world-time and world-space, and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole, the main argument of my exegesis was that, if we want to better understand the epochal process of change and transformations we are witnessing, we must take into consideration also its visual-ideological dimension. This means acknowledging the acceleration of the global interdependencies of people, structures and discourses and the rise of the global imaginary. This is a new public consciousness, that of being-in-a-global-interconnected-world, what in our everyday life is broadly understood as a new sense of the global. That is the standpoint from which I approached and attempted to grasp and explain the global imaginary as a visual-ideological phenomenon.

From a broadly theoretical standpoint I am deeply aware that there is an enormous amount of literature on the visual in the various fields of study, ranging from sociology to cultural studies, also investigating new media and addressing the issue of globalization. (Burke, 2008 Hariman and Lucates 2011; Strauss, 2005) However I note that there is a dearth of published research that deals with the visual-ideological dimension of globalisation as a material and imaginary processes. In particular, there is lack of research to explain how the social (global) imaginary, with the support of ideology, is translated into the concrete terms and political agendas at local-global scale of Sydney and Melbourne. Such is my specific contribution to the pertinent literature on globalisation as a visual phenomenon. However this research project can only touch the surface of what could be an extensive investigation and an

evolving research agenda on how the global imaginary is symbolically and socially produced. My image-driven project has aimed to contribute to knowledge by beginning to fill this specific gap in the pertinent literature on the subject and giving empirical demonstration (book of images) of how the global has informed the deep mediation of the local-national meanings in Sydney and Melbourne. Furthermore, it also shows the material power of ideology, market globalism. My study approached this gap from its location at the crossroads of the new global, urban and media studies, and in the space between history and theory.

Furthermore, I investigated a given body of visual evidence (Chapter 4) identified as the tangible trace of the globalization phenomena through the lens of social and political theory. In particular, the study looked at how certain visual formations, identified as condensation symbols of globality, are contributing to the symbolic construction of the global imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne. I then explained (Chapter 34) how the socio-political and cultural implications of the collected, displayed and interpreted images are affecting cultural identities, while contributing to the weakening of the self-contained modern nation-state in the major Australia cities.

The global imaginary: Sydney and Melbourne

Informed by theory and research questions, this study extended Steger's body of work on the ideological articulation of the global imaginary to the urban-local-national scale of Sydney and Melbourne. I chose these two cities mainly on the basis of my observation of the increasingly growing production, circulation and consumption of hybrid cultural assemblages in their urban social fabric, and also because of the existing literature on the subject that defines Sydney as part of the global cities network and Melbourne as the fastest growing and globalizing city of Australia. In the stage of analysis and interpretation I observed and explained how the production, circulation and consumption of hybrid cultural assemblages is a side-effect of the neoliberal economic globalization process and of the new global order. In doing so, I paid attention to how the distinction between the 'global' and the 'national' is

increasingly becoming very complex and problematic, due to the contradictory nature of the ‘global’ and of the affected national identities. This is clearly evidenced by the book of images that depicts how urban spaces in Sydney and Melbourne are re-shaped into global spaces of interaction and consumption. The two cities differ in their general flavour and ambience. The collected visual evidence shows that while Sydney displays a marked orientation to a Western American-European culture, Melbourne today seems to be looking to Asia in the general fabric of its symbolic environment.

The hybridization of cultures, as a consequence of modern ‘fluid’ subjective identities linked to the nationalistic ideologies, and the new shifting mindset of the global imaginary are all elements to be investigated for an understanding of how this new global public consciousness is symbolically and socially produced. I needed new thinking tools to better analyse the production of visual formations identified as condensation symbols of globality, and as expressions of new forms of social interconnections, relations and interactions.

Market globalism and condensation symbols

The theoretical framework of market globalism, combined with the idea of condensation symbols, has the precise methodological purpose in my study of making visible symbolic, ideological meanings in the service of power. The frame of market globalism helped to make visible the links and pathways related to condensation symbols appearing in neoliberal visual formations and to understand how they are constructed and articulated the global imaginary of Sydney and Melbourne by disclosing the symbolic power of the global. Thus, through the interpretation of ideology we can bring to light the links between the meanings mobilized by symbolic forms and the relations of power that those meanings serve to maintain or change.

This exegesis understands the term ideology as a ‘neutral’ concept, not squarely political. Of course, this does not mean that detected ideologies do not have political implications. On the contrary, in an attempt to grasp the surface of the collected visual evidence, this study has appreciated that, beyond their apparent ingenuity, the embedded

ideologies operate to orient towards the viewer/consumer ‘freedom’ of choice. The collected and selected visual formations offered the possibility to understand how capitalistic logic, mobilized by neoliberal worldview, suggests, supports and sustains the new shifting mindset of the global imaginary.

The interpretation of the selected visual evidence clearly displays how market globalism, the dominant corporate ideology of our time, visually works to shape a new global consciousness. This is a crucial point of my study that helps to better understand how market globalism articulates/depicts the underlying global imaginary.

In the selected condensation symbols, which are part of my book of images and of the subjects of the multiple-case study (Chapter 4), the images constitute the dominant symbolic system of representation. They were identified, selected and interpreted for their political and epistemological power and their value as ideological markers of globality. Condensation symbols were identified as analytical frameworks since these particular visual formations are crucial keys to access the global imaginary. However, they are not unproblematic because they condense different cultural symbols that are still grounded or linked to the modern self-contained nation-state, thus condensing spatial-symbolic scales of local-national and the global. That is exactly the way in which, through a mix of different cultures, shared meanings and the mediation of the local-national, the global imaginary, this new common sense of the global, is symbolically and socially produced.

Globalization as an ideational phenomenon

This study was based on the claim that an important aspect of globalization is that it is also a visual phenomenon, and as a consequence, it needs to be understood as a visual-ideological phenomenon. I assumed that special types of images could assist in accessing the global imaginary to better understand not only the imaginary dimension but also the material process that underpin the epochal phenomenon of globalization. This investigation’s results confirmed that the project’s assumptions were well grounded. I also tested market globalism as a

foundational concept for the investigation, based on the assumption that all meanings, because of their symbolic nature as texts or images, are socially constructed and therefore embedded with ideologies.

In doing so, the book of images displays the effects of the production, circulation and consumption of global hybrid cultural assemblages in Sydney and Melbourne. Furthermore, from the investigation of the given body of selected condensation symbols, I interpreted and explained the dominant ideology embedded within this visual evidence. As a result, market globalism was identified and confirmed as the dominant articulation of the global imaginary embedded and made visible in the condensation symbols appearing in neoliberal visual formations.

However I am deeply aware that other approaches and understandings are possible. As previously acknowledged in Chapter 4, and since my discoveries answered the research questions, this could be a stimulus for further developments of this research project. The identification and conceptualization of three pattern types of condensation symbols also contributes to better defining this analytical tool of investigation with regard to textual-visual formations related to globalization dynamics.

This study highlights the importance of an understanding of globalization as an ongoing process of change that sees the production, circulation and consumption of symbolic forms as being fragmented and recomposed in the shape of hybrid cultural assemblages that affect cultural identities and nation-states at local-national scale. The detection of a dominant ideology with regard to the body of visual evidence was based on the supposition that the principles behind the society should be similar to the ones that constitute the social structure itself.

These principles are constructed by an ideology that refers to a social understanding sustained by the goal of power and, as it appears quite clear (Chapter 4), by the imperative of profit. Although globalization is producing new emerging and competing ideologies, this study arguably detected a dominant one, the neoliberal market globalism, which appears to

inform all the visual evidence. In this respect, media representations were understood to create or construct meaning at the site of the production as well as at that one of the reception.

A new figure of knowledge: the global stereotype

As briefly acknowledged at the end of Chapter 4, I identified and attempted to conceptualize the production, circulation and consumption of ‘global stereotypes’. Stereotypes, of course, are not new and they are very common in any kind of culture. It can be said that even the concept of ‘stereotype’ is a stereotype in itself due to the different assumptions people can hold about stereotypes. This particular type of condensation symbol, which I define as the ‘global stereotype’, displays tautological repetition of the concept of ‘global’. Tautology, from the Greek *tauto*, ‘the same’, and *logos*, ‘word/idea’, is an unnecessary repetition of meaning, and, at the same time, a strategic visual ‘war-machine’. Thus a tautological approach means a reiteration, a repetition of the ideological meaning embedded in the media representations to persuade the viewer/consumer through a repetitive, pervasive, subtle and emotionally charged communication.

I identified stereotyping as a particular type of communication practice that suggests, supports and sustains the symbolic construction of the global imaginary. Thus, the global stereotype can be understood as a signifying system that, from the standpoint of the media production and re-production of integrated marketing communication, functions as a powerful shorthand, while at the site of reception it appears to be a very useful new figure of knowledge. Although stereotypes are usually perceived with a negative meaning, they are not necessarily incomplete or false. In this study they are understood as particular visual formations that condense spatial-symbolic scales of the global by making reiterated use of visual stereotypes through texts and images.

Stereotypes have their origin in the social world and therefore they are socio-political textual-visual formations that need to be critically approached. But what is really important to me in my project is that the visual global stereotypes, being socially constructed, are an

expression of the dominant ideology. In particular, these global stereotypes work to naturalize symbolic power relations in society. As a consequence they have a hegemonic function.

The global stereotype constitutes the identification of a new figure of knowledge, which can be also understood as a political fact, since stereotypes are at the core of myths, systems of values and political ideologies. More precisely, stereotypes represent the major rhetorical figure of political ideologies of the twenty-century and are linked to the national social imaginary. The identification of the global stereotype also partly fills a gap in the field of visual literacy, by redefining theoretical frameworks with regard to the production, circulation and consumption of symbolic forms related to globalization dynamics.

What results from the book of images and the multiple-case study (Chapter 4) is that, beyond the links of the given body of visual evidence with the Western-centred neoliberal market globalism, Asia currently appears to be the globalizing force in Sydney and Melbourne. The identification through visual evidence of Asia as a globalizing force in Australia is not something really new, particularly if we look at the relationships from an economic perspective. Nevertheless I stressed the importance of the evidence represented by the collected condensation symbols that display how this globalizing force is creating the global imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne. This also helps to better understand the changing global aesthetics represented by the ongoing processes of globalization.

Asia as a globalizing force in Australia

Looking at the collected visual evidence, the process appears to be less dominated by American cultural imperialism, less affected by the Americanization of people and places than in the recent past. American cultural imperialism, combined with US military strategy in the Asia-Pacific region, still plays an important role in Australia. However, phenomenological-interpretative methodologies helped to clarify the symbolic and social roles of condensation symbols in visual formations with regard to globalization dynamics. As a result, Asia appears to be the new globalizing economic and cultural force in Australia. This

is also confirmed by the large amount of visual data I have collected in the two cities and the literature on the two places. It can be easily perceived by going through the book of images and can be negotiated from the multiple-case study (Chapter 4). It is also evident that Sydney remains a global address due to the city's strategic planning and geographical positioning in the Asia-Pacific region. Furthermore, both Sydney and Melbourne are able to integrate their working-time-zone with those of Europe and North America, enabling global corporations to maximise their potential by operating 24/7 (City of Sydney 2011, 2012; City of Melbourne 2012). Due to their longitude positioning, they play an important role in the globalization process and orientation to Asian cities. This also helps to better understand that, within the contemporary globalization process, location and position not only do not disappear but, on the contrary, are even more important in a global perspective.

The visual-ideological dimension of globalization

As previously acknowledged, globalization is generally perceived and understood as an economically driven process and mainly as an abstract concept since it does not refer to a concrete object but to an interpretation of social processes. As a consequence, globalization remains open to various interpretations, often highly contested. My decision to approach globalization from the cultural perspective as a visual-ideological phenomenon arose from the consideration that globalisation scholarship mainly approaches it through its 'objective' dynamics. In particular, it approaches the phenomenon as a textual, historical-philosophical object of study. What we know about globalization is, therefore, largely based on theoretical studies that investigate the objective trajectories and dynamics of the process. Through a subjective-interpretative approach to global dynamics, my study has the ambition of challenging previous scholarship on the subject.

This occurs through an attempt to extend Steger's first work on the symbolic construction of the global imaginary by adding, with this project, the important visual dimension of ideologies. Furthermore, understanding globalization through media

representations needs to take into consideration that it is not a one-way process. I claimed that currently it appears almost impossible to understand the multidimensional globalisation process without taking into consideration the condensation symbols appearing in neoliberal textual-visual formations related to its dynamics and identified as the concrete tracks and ideological markers of globality.

My aim to better understand how precisely the ‘global’ is injected into the ‘local-national’ has given me the opportunity to challenge the existing scholarship and to contribute to fill a gap in the literature on the modern social imaginary by making visible how the global imaginary is symbolically and socially produced.

Limitations of my study

Although my study contributes to an investigation of the phenomenon as a multidimensional and complex process, there are obvious limitations that need to be investigated and explained. These limitations are due, for the most part, to practical constraints. In particular, this inquiry cannot provide a comprehensive review, analysis and interpretation of all the collected visual material. Furthermore, the reader should bear in mind that this investigation is based on a subjective, limited and selected given body of visual evidence. The visual evidence, limited to the two major Australian cities, is represented by the material collected in the book of images and in the visual archive/database available as digital files on CD.

Although a comprehensive visual documentation and discussion of the symbolic construction of the global imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne lies beyond the aim of this study, some of the important cultural changes undergoing in Sydney and Melbourne have been identified, investigated and explained. More precisely, this study explained how the rise of a global consumerist culture affects the production, circulation and consumption of new symbolic forms of hybrid cultural assemblages, and also how condensation symbols appearing in neoliberal image-texts construct and articulate the global imaginary in Sydney

and Melbourne. This particular type of visual formations was also identified as a new figure of knowledge; global stereotypes.

This investigation indicates that looking into the local-national and taking into consideration symbolic resistance is important for further research development of the visual-ideological dimension of globalization process. This will help to better understand how the global imaginary is socially produced. It is also a contribution to attempts to make visible the dominant ideology that informs the production, circulation, exchange and consumption of meanings in the investigated cities.

Recommendations

Some of the visual formations I investigated displayed transnational symbols that are mainly logo-brands, or logotypes actually understood as global players in the market-driven multidimensional process, such as Hertz and McDonalds, Microsoft and Coca-Cola, to name just a few. My study supports the idea that these corporate players and their media representations should no longer be coded and understood as ‘national’ because they are already absorbed as symbols of the global. For this reason I avoided taking into consideration what can be understood as an obviously ‘global’ representation. I assert that, due to the impact of globalization on our everyday life and the resulting contemporary contradictory nature of national cultural identity, it is still necessary to understand what is coded as ‘national’ in order to better understand the ‘global’.

During the course of my study I detected two key concepts that need to be taken into consideration for further research when approaching textual-visual formations with regards to globalization dynamics. The first one is the concept of ‘condensation’, that stands for something getting smaller and denser. In my inquiry this is understood as the ‘condensation’ of spatial-symbolic scales of the local-national and the global in a single visual formation. The second concept is stereotyping, understood as the exemplification and generalization

about certain characteristics of spaces, cultures, races and genders that can occur in some crucial media representations.

Finally, this project demonstrates that looking at globalization as a material and imaginary process through a 'scientific' lens in search of its 'objective' dynamics is an incomplete *modus operandi*. On the contrary, an image-driven project such as this one, reveals the very local nature of the symbolic construction and power of the global.

In conclusion, it can be said that the visual evidence from the book of images and the multiple-case study, when critically approached, clearly display how the global imaginary is symbolically and socially produced. As a consequence, the global imaginary is not an abstract phenomenon; rather it can be detected through its tangible manifestations, as the book of images and this exegesis witness. From the selected condensation symbols, that represent only a limited and not unproblematic example of how the global imaginary is socially produced, the global appears to symbolically collapse, or increasingly mediate, local-national meanings that in turn give more and more symbolic power to the global.

Although the shift from the national to the global in Sydney and Melbourne could theoretically indicate the rise of cultural homogenization, this study shows a different outcome. I observed that the process of globalization entails both the stretching of a defined culture to its world-spanning limits, and its' grounding in the urban-local-national. Associated with these dynamics is a process of integration, fragmentation, re-composition and eventually of hybridization that supports, suggests and sustains the symbolic construction of the global imaginary.

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