THE SYMBOLIC CONSTRUCTION
OF THE GLOBAL IMAGINARY
IN SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE

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Globalisation is a visual phenomenon, as much as an economic or cultural force. The ‘global’ pervades the urban social fabric in visual form and has the power to transform urban spaces. Sydney and Melbourne are two cities in which the global has invaded the urban space, creating a new affective dimension that is simultaneously global and ‘local-national’. This phenomenon has been observed and represented here by creating a visual narrative through media representations that can condense global meanings in the context of a specific ‘local-national’ environment. This book covers a selection of original still images gathered by the author in Sydney and Melbourne from July 2010 to August 2012. The aim of this collection is to examine the power of ‘condensation symbols’ in creating a global imaginary at local scale.

These symbols of the global, however, may not be entirely unproblematic in their representations of the cultural identity of place. They can be considered triggers to understand globalisation as both a material process and an imaginary phenomenon. In this book I use visual images in their own right, moments captured in time to examine the ways in which we interpret activities in space. As a consequence, the images are representative of the social theory described in the text. This book offers a snapshot of the reconfiguration of the local-national around the global by demonstrating the symbolic power that the global exerts in Australia’s major cities, Sydney and Melbourne, at the dawn of the twenty-first century. This visual exploration is supported by an exegesis on ‘The Symbolic Construction of the Global Imaginary in Sydney and Melbourne’ that attempts to grasp and make visible how the ‘global’ is symbolically injected in the ‘local-national’.