

Lecture Series

Scale

September 2024 –
June 2025

All talks start at 19:30 and will be in English.

ici KULTURLABOR
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Monday, 30 September 2024
Carlos Spoerhase

Monday, 21 October 2024
Bettina Malcomess

Wednesday, 6 November 2024
Daniel Brooks

Monday, 9 December 2024
Michael Taussig

Monday, 20 January 2025
Michael Lempert

17 March 2025
Rosalind C. Morris

Monday, 12 May 2025
Derek Woods

Monday, 2 June 2025
Elisabeth Strowick

Monday, 23 June 2025
Ben Nichols

Scales are used to quantify properties such as length and temperature, or also to measure popularity and affect. But as Alice discovers in Wonderland, a change of scale can also have dramatic qualitative consequences. It disrupts customary ways of perceiving, acting, and being – to the point of feeling as ‘queer’ to her as a caterpillar’s metamorphoses. Helped by the arguably inextricable intertwining of different meanings and aspects of scale, Alice’s experiences continue to provide apt metaphors for the disorienting importance and effects of scale and scaling at a time of hyperglobalization and the so-called anthropocene.

Scale is indeed a highly ambiguous notion, even when one only considers the meanings deriving from the Latin or Italian *scala*, ladder. It simultaneously denotes the whole ladder, one of its steps, and the relation between two steps: The scale of a cartographic map is the ratio between a distance on the map and a distance on the ground, but any particular length also defines a scale, and the range of scales from the subatomic to the planetary scale is part of the spatial scale. Paradoxically recursive, scale combines and helps mediate quantity and quality, as well as subjective perception, objective material properties, and contingent construction.

If different disciplines, discourses, and dispositives each have their privileged scales to which they tend to reduce others, what may be gained by thinking them together, acknowledging both the relative autonomy of particular scales – each with their own affordances, limitations, rules, even laws and ontologies – and their interdependence – each affecting and being affected by other scales? What is the critical purchase of developing multiscale architectures or patchworks of scale-specific, mutually inconsistent and irreducible descriptions, theories, and models? How might the tensions be made productive where they overlap or come into contact? The ICI’s Lecture Series ‘Scale’ will address such questions by reflecting upon the critical role of scale within and across a wide range of different fields.