



UTS
ePRESS

PORTAL Journal of
Multidisciplinary
International Studies

Vol. 20, No. 1/2
December 2024



© 2024 by the author(s). This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), allowing third parties to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format and to remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially, provided the original work is properly cited and states its license.

Citation: Manganas, N. 2024. Horizons: On Discovering Other Worlds. *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies*, 20:1/2, 59–61. <https://doi.org/10.5130/pjmis.v20i1-2.9438>

ISSN 1449-2490 | Published by UTS ePRESS | <http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/ojs/index.php/portal>

ESSAYS

Horizons: On Discovering Other Worlds

Nicholas Manganas

University of Technology Sydney

Corresponding author: Dr Nicholas Manganas, School of International Studies and Education, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Technology Sydney, Australia, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6121-2531>, Nicholas.Manganas@uts.edu.au

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5130/pjmis.v20i1-2.9438>

Article History: Received 01/10/2024; Accepted 01/10/2024; Published 26/12/2024

Abstract

This reflection explores the metaphorical significance of the horizon in inspiring ventures beyond the familiar. Through the lens of the International Studies program at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), it examines how students engage with new cultural and intellectual frontiers, expanding their 'space of experience' and 'horizon of expectation' in line with Reinhard Koselleck's theoretical framework. This transformative journey challenges students to confront personal limitations, fostering growth and cultivating hope through meaningful encounters with otherness. Ultimately, the horizon is depicted not just as a boundary but as an invitation to discover new perspectives and worlds.

Keywords

UTS; International Studies; Cultural Frontiers; Reinhard Koselleck; Encounters with Otherness

The horizon has always served as a compelling metaphor in everyday life, symbolizing that boundary between the visible world and the spaces beyond our immediate perception. It urges me—and others—to push past the familiar and explore what lies just out of reach. Michael Pickering captures this sentiment beautifully, suggesting that the horizon represents the broadening of our personal and intellectual limitations through experiences like education, travel, or other transformative events (2004: 272–273). He argues that these activities compel us to extend our understanding and perceptions, effectively moving us beyond the confines of our everyday lives. As he eloquently puts it: 'The metaphorical strength of the term derives from the exhilaration we feel when we look at the horizon, particularly at the pure, unbroken,

panoramic line of the horizon on the open sea, for it is there that the magnitude of the earth and sky meet in an uninterrupted vastness' (2004: 273). In this depiction, the horizon, especially as seen over the open sea, evokes a sensation of infinite potential, free from the physical barriers typical of urban or mountainous environments. The horizon, while delineating a boundary, paradoxically also represents 'the supreme locus of promise and possibility' (Pickering 2004: 273). This dual nature of the horizon—as both a boundary and a gateway—reveals not just the limits of our current understanding, but also our relentless pursuit of the unknown.

The pedagogical journey that students undergo during the International Studies program at UTS subtly mirrors the dual nature of the horizon—it is an expansive experience that continuously guides students toward ever-evolving boundaries, encouraging them to explore and redefine their academic and personal horizons. This is not just about the physical act of crossing geographical borders; it also encompasses the exploration of metaphorical frontiers. These frontiers extend into realms of cultural understanding and intellectual engagement, encouraging students to engage with diverse perspectives and far-reaching global issues. As educators, we facilitate this journey, guiding our students towards expanding their knowledge and perspective, while also embarking on our own continuous journey of learning and discovery. This reciprocal process of teaching and learning reveals the dynamic and iterative nature of international education—it is a collaborative process where each new insight and encounter pushes the horizon further, inviting ongoing exploration and engagement.

To understand this process more deeply, I often reflect on Reinhard Koselleck's distinction between the 'space of experience' and the 'horizon of expectation' (1985: 271–276). According to Koselleck, the space of experience encompasses all past and present experiences we carry with us—a reservoir of knowledge informing our perceptions of the world. When students immerse themselves in new cultural settings, their space of experience expands, enriched by interactions and events that challenge their preconceived notions and learned behaviours. Conversely, the horizon of expectation represents the future—the realm of possibilities yet to be experienced. For students studying abroad, this horizon stretches infinitely as they encounter unforeseen challenges and opportunities that redefine their expectations. Koselleck suggests there's a fundamental symbiosis between experience and expectation: 'there can be no expectation without experience; no experience without expectation' (Koselleck 1985: 270). This gentle interaction—where the known experiences meet the unknown expectations—mirrors the literal and metaphorical crossing of horizons that emerge in study abroad experiences, in which both elements shape how individuals perceive and engage with the world.

As students arrive in their host city, they find themselves immersed in a new culture and language, often accompanied by initial feelings of disorientation and uncertainty. They must navigate the demands of daily life in a different linguistic and cultural landscape, grappling with the challenges of understanding and being understood. Consequently, the horizon of their experience extends as students often become unwittingly entangled in the political narratives and events of their host cities. From my perspective, as their supervisor, I also find myself learning about the political fault lines of each location, watching students traverse the streets and engage with the local dynamics of global forces. One year, my students in Buenos Aires voiced their frustration over the difficulty of maintaining local friendships, as one after another, their friends would leave the city, driven by economic instability to seek opportunities elsewhere, like Barcelona. Similarly, students in Barcelona recounted how their Catalan acquaintances were also leaving but heading towards Berlin. They were part of what is known in Spain as the 'lost generation,' young people fleeing the harsh realities of the Global Financial Crisis. These experiences prompted my students to engage in critical reflections on how their personal spaces of experience and horizons of expectation were being reshaped by the sobering realities of economic migration and cultural displacement they encountered.

Students' engagements with new languages and cultures are not just educational exercises; they are meaningful engagements with the concept of hope itself. Philosophers like Alain Badiou have framed

hope as something that must be actively learned and practiced, characterising it as a blend of patience and persistence—a ‘principle of tenacity, of obstinacy,’ which merges desire with expectancy (2003: 93). Terry Eagleton (2015: 84) further elaborates that there is a sense that hope is both ‘performative as well as optative,’ suggesting that hope is something done, not just felt. The act of learning to communicate in a new language, of engaging with local customs, and of forming friendships in an unfamiliar cultural context embodies this hope towards the future. Students begin to see that their actions and efforts can lead to successful integration and meaningful exchanges. Each small triumph—whether a successfully understood conversation, a shared meal with new friends, or insights gained from a local event—reinforces their hope, teaching them that their aspirations for intercultural understanding and personal growth are within reach. Indeed, the study abroad experience is arguably the most liberative learning experience, the most appealing in its concern with otherness, in finding one’s voice and having it accepted as authentic.

Area Studies as a discipline has often been critiqued for potentially limiting students’ understanding by focusing narrowly on specific regions, rather than fostering a broader global perspective. However, the UTS approach to Area Studies in its International Studies program aims to avoid this limitation. Instead of fragmenting experience, the emphasis is on the discovery of other worlds—*possible* worlds—and incommensurable spaces that challenge and enrich the learner’s worldview. The experience is a journey of constant negotiation and renegotiation between what has been learned, what is being encountered, and what will be carried forward into the future. It is a perpetual expansion of horizons, both seen and unseen, that shapes students into global citizens who are at once rooted in rich experiences and propelled by boundless expectations. It is about cultivating a unique sense of belonging everywhere and nowhere simultaneously, echoing the transient nature of the horizon itself.

The anchoring of my teaching philosophy in a critical and reflective engagement with the horizon, is an attempt to reposition the horizon not just as geographical or intellectual frontier, but as a space where new forms of understanding and being can emerge. In guiding students across these horizons, I am constantly reminded of the responsibility we hold as educators to not only impart knowledge but to foster environments where hope may be witnessed, enacted, and performed. This horizon is not naive or unfounded; it is firmly grounded in the pragmatic and often challenging realities of global interconnectivity and cultural exchanges. It requires a steadfast belief in the transformative power of education to not just navigate but also bridge the diverse worlds we inhabit. As students step into unfamiliar territories, both literally and metaphorically, they perform hope by actively participating in the creation of their narratives, shaping their identities in relation to the worlds they encounter. It is in these moments that the horizon reappears, not as a distant line to be reached, but as a living, breathing space of possibilities that reinvigorates our commitment to education and to each other. What students take from this journey ultimately rests with them. But for me, personally, it continually reenergises me to keep looking towards that horizon, especially at times when I feel it is no longer in sight.

References

- Badiou, A. 2003, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*. Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Eagleton, T. 2015, *Hope Without Optimism*. Yale University Press, New York and London.
- Koselleck, R. 1985, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. K. Tribe, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London.
- Pickering, M. 2004, ‘Experience as Horizon: Koselleck, Expectation and Historical Time,’ *Cultural Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2–3: 211–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0950238042000201518>