

ABOUT THE ASIA RESEARCH INSTITUTE (ARI)

The Asia Research Institute (ARI) was established as a university-level institute in July 2001. Building on NUS's academic reputation and geographical location, the Asia Research Institute seeks to nurture and support inter-disciplinary scholarship between and beyond disciplines, addressing some of the key intellectual puzzles and practical challenges facing the Asian region. ARI is a historically aware, culturally engaged and outward-looking research centre that embeds and seeks to illuminate the Asian region in the context of contemporary global processes and debates, using the knowledge generated to contribute in scholarly and practical ways to their interpretation, understanding and solution.

Research Clusters and Their Focus

1) The **Asian Migration** cluster maintains research interest in a broad range of human migrations, mobilities and interconnectivities within and beyond Asia. The cluster currently has three priority research themes and is also interested in developing a fourth. The first theme draws attention to the material processes and discourses of globalization and transnationalism as they intersect in Asian cities. The focus is on exploring new knowledge frameworks through which to understand the complex and diverse linkages *between global change and transnational migration*. The second research theme explores the relationship between *human aspiration, migration and development* in Southeast Asia, with a focus on the development impact of migration in sending communities as well as the costs and risks of migration for the poor. A third research theme highlights the *organization and constitution of transnational (im)mobility* as a means of (re)conceptualizing different mobile practices, rhythms and rationalities that characterize people on the move in Asia. The fourth emerging theme considers *ageing, care circulation and global care chains*. This research theme focuses on the webs of care evinced when migrants move to care for older people as well as when older people migrate in order to care for family members or to receive care.

2) The **Asian Urbanisms** cluster explores Asia's diverse urban experiences historically, contemporaneously, and toward the future. It seeks to contribute to theory and applied research on the reflexivity of society-space relationships in the built environment and city life from local to global scales, in diverse contexts in Asia, and through comparative studies with other world regions. The orientation of the cluster is towards research that speaks in transformative ways to urban-related theories, debates and public policy issues in and beyond Asia. Avenues for research include (but are not limited to): (1) urban heritage and the vernacular city; (2) spaces of hope, including urban discontents, insurgencies and mobilizations for alternative production of space; (3) urban environment and well-being; and (4) urban practice and solutions with a particular focus on vulnerable groups.

3) The **Changing Family in Asia** cluster explores the dimensions of family change in the region, their causes and implications. These dimensions include rising ages at marriage and decreasing non-marriage, declining fertility and declining size of the nuclear family, increase in one-person households and alternative family forms, changing gender roles within families, and changes in family structures consequent on population ageing. These have implications for gender

relations, the life patterns of the post-adolescent unmarried, the role of the elderly in the family, child-raising patterns and social policy.

4) **The Identities** cluster is devoted to advancing broadly conceived conceptual, theoretical, and methodological approaches to identities in Asia. Research on any sort of identity is welcomed: national, ethnic, religious, racial, sexual, gender, political, generational, and others are of interest. Questions of concern include how identities are produced; where they come from; how they are reproduced and maintained; the processes and mechanisms by which they change or evolve over time and space; and what kinds of effects they produce, such as political and social conflict or cooperation. All kinds of methodological and inter/disciplinary approaches to questions such as these are encouraged: cross-cultural experimental psychology; historical and cultural sociology and anthropology; social and cultural history and geography; ethnographic case studies; behavioral economics; and large-n quantitative analysis of original data sets. Research can range from deep immersion in a single site to a comparative study of the same research question in different Asian countries, to comparisons of Asia with other areas of the world.

5) **The Religion and Globalization** cluster is dedicated to exploring global reconfigurations of religion and its diverse manifestations in Asian contexts. Our work examines dynamics of secularization and religion in the modern period, as well as related issues of authority and tradition in contemporary religious discourse and practice. The main research focus of the cluster is the *Comparative Study of Religious Networks*. The networks project seeks to explore how religious actors develop local institutions and create networks, and how they invent new ritual, economic, and media strategies to survive and flourish in different cultural and political contexts. Many religious networks connect diasporic and migrant groups with their home communities in South Asia or China or the Middle East, and with related groups across Southeast Asia or around the globe, even as these temples, mosques and churches become embedded in local society. The cluster welcomes scholars interested in theories of ritual, affect, network analysis, and emergent community, and those working on ethics, everyday economics, and technologies of the self in relation to religion and ritual.

6) **The Science, Technology, and Society** cluster explores techno-scientific institutions, practices, and knowledge-making regimes within Asian societies and cultures. We have particular strengths in biotechnology/bioscience/ biomedicine and society; interactive and digital media; and disaster studies. Methodologically we are open to a range of approaches, including historical, sociological, anthropological, geographical, and media or cultural studies based initiatives. Applicants' advanced degrees must be in one of the social sciences or humanities, however. We also expect candidates to devote some of their time to grant-writing and, if the need and opportunity arises, to undergraduate teaching. Candidates are encouraged to explore their own topics, but are also part of a team, and will be expected to participate in the life of the cluster and contribute to its health and reputation. New PhDs are particularly encouraged to apply.

7) **The Inter-Asia Engagements cluster** views Asia as a non-monolithic construct, referencing the region to spaces outside Asia as well as in terms of the connectivities and complex relationships, historical and contemporary, that bind and shape the region itself. With increasing interconnectedness, interdependence and the rise of Global Asia, the region needs to be placed at centre stage, but utilizing a mode of thinking that emphasizes linkages instead of regionally-exclusive units. Focusing on transnational, transregional and intra-regional

connectivities, the cluster pays attention to the links between Southeast Asia and the Arabian Peninsula, South Asia and the Indian Ocean, Central Asia, and East Asia and the South China Sea. Research on the Arabian Peninsula is associated with the ARI Muhammad Alagil Arabia Asia Studies Endowment while the wider initiative is informed by the Inter-Asia Initiative spearheaded by the US SSRC and its consortium of university partners, including ARI. The current research agenda of the Inter-Asia Engagements cluster uses these circuits, connections and interdependencies to explore empirical and conceptual issues relating to a range of related themes, including: regional and locality challenges to contemporary global capitalism, dilemmas of environment-society relations, dynamics of Arabian-Indian-Chinese diasporas, circulatory and transnational flows in the reframing of sovereignty and nationalism, as well as reconfigurations of contact zones and frontier assemblages. The cluster is also host to a large Singapore Social Science Research Council grant on the Sustainable Governance of Transboundary Environmental Commons in Southeast Asia.