

# ARI news



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# WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

PROF TIM BUNNELL

My previous Word was written in September 2021, at the beginning of a series of virtual roundtables to celebrate ARI's twentieth anniversary year. Each ARI research cluster and programme organised at least one such event over the subsequent two months. The series culminated in a finale virtual roundtable held on 11 November.

In terms of attendance numbers, the series was clearly a big success: a majority of the ten virtual roundtable events attracted three-figure audiences, amounting to a cumulative total of over 1,100 people. Best attended of all was the virtual roundtable organised by ARI's Asian Peace Programme. Almost 200 people tuned in to listen to Prof Wang Gungwu, Ambassador Chan Heng Chee and Prof Kanti Bajpai discuss 'The Idea of Peace in Asia'.

Beyond the total number of audience members, their geographical dispersal and diversity of relations to ARI are worthy of further comment. In the case of the finale roundtable event alone, people (virtually) attended in time zones stretching from Berkeley to Bristol to Brunei, and beyond (regrettably, for my attempt at a globe-spanning alliteration, those tuning in from Australia were based in places that did not begin with the letter 'B!'). Participants also varied from former researchers and Asian Graduate Student Fellowship alumni to current members of ARI's International Advisory Board (themselves dispersed across several continents) and Management Board. Not everything proceeded smoothly: both Prof Tan Tai Yong (who expertly moderated the finale event) and I were unplugged mid-discussion by an unexpected brief disruption to Internet connectivity across the NUS campus. Overall, however, the finale roundtable—and the wider series of virtual ARI20 events—mobilised Zoom technology in a way that enabled many people in many places to (re)engage

with ARI during anniversary year despite ongoing pandemic-related travel restrictions.

I wish to draw particular attention to the Changing Family in Asia Cluster's contribution to the ARI20 anniversary series that was held across two days in mid-October. With that cluster winding down in 2021, its longstanding leader Prof Jean Yeung, together with Jeofrey Abalos, the last postdoctoral fellow recruited into the cluster, used the opportunity to commemorate some 18 years of research on the 'changing family' theme at ARI. Changing Family in Asia's founding cluster leader, Prof Gavin Jones, delivered a keynote speech discussing divorce trends for Muslim and non-Muslim populations in Southeast Asia, and an impressive line-up of other cluster alumni presented on different aspects of family transformation in Asian countries over six themed panels. The event not only showcased the remarkable scholarly productivity of the Changing Family in Asia Cluster since 2003, but also showed that this remains an exciting and vibrant field of study. My thanks to Jean Yeung for her leadership of the Changing Family in Asia Cluster since 2011, and wider contributions to ARI stretching back to 2008. I note that many former members or associates of the Changing Family in Asia Cluster who contributed to the success of the commemorative workshop are continuing their interdisciplinary research in the Centre for Family and Population Research (CFPR), which Jean also founded.

For those of you who were not able to attend the twentieth anniversary events live in 2021, a variety of related resources are available at the Institute's website: <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/about-ari/ari-20th-anniversary/>. Highlights include a video that was specially commissioned for anniversary year, an online map plotting ARI's global institutional reach in humanities and social science research, and a video interview 'in conversation' with ARI's founding Director, Prof Anthony Reid.

While it is important to remember and reflect upon foundational achievements, the overall orientation of ARI20 was to consider future trajectories and strategic directions as the Institute enters its third decade. A key institutional component of that concerns which themes and areas to take forward in the line-up of ARI's research clusters. Following the closure of Changing Family in Asia, in late 2021 the Institute put out a Call for Expressions of Interest in establishing a new research cluster at ARI. At the time of writing (in March 2022), that selection process is still ongoing.

Given that such processes of renewal coincide with a period during which ARI's core funding is being reduced incrementally, external grant-getting activity is more important than ever. I ended my previous Newsletter word with news of an unprecedented double success for ARI in a single round of grant awards from MOE's Tier 2 Academic Research Fund. Although there are no further Tier 2 fund awards to report at this point, four research Whitepapers have been submitted or resubmitted during the past six months. I am also happy to note new research funding for ARI via involvement in international collaboration. Through Prof Brenda Yeoh, ARI's Asian Migration

Cluster is part of a Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) project on *Bolstering Partnerships to Study the Impact of China's Belt and Road*. This SSHRC funding will support a postdoctoral fellow at ARI to work with partners at Nazarbayev University (in Kazakhstan) as well as at the University of Toronto, where the Canadian lead grant applicant is based.

Finally, on day to day operational matters, I am hopeful that 2022 will allow ARI to rejuvenate in-person research activity. More and more colleagues are returning to the offices and corridors of our home on the 7th floor of the AS8 building.

While it is essential that we all continue to follow Covid-19-related protocols, the current plan is for the Institute to resume some on-site events in the second quarter of the year, starting with just our own staff and then with people elsewhere on campus. If that goes well, we will then continue to expand outwards with the aim of eventually welcoming international visitors back to our workshops and conferences. Upgrades to ARI's meeting room as well as to the 4th floor seminar room will soon be ready for hosting high quality 'hybrid' events. I really look forward to seeing more of you in and around AS8 as well as in virtual space.

# ARI20: COMMEMORATING ARI'S TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY IN 2021

PROF NAKO SHIMAZU  
CHAIR OF OUTREACH AND STAKEHOLDER DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
CLUSTER LEADER, INTER-ASIA ENGAGEMENTS



2021 marked the twentieth anniversary of the Asia Research Institute (ARI), now under the directorship of Professor Tim Bunnell who is the fifth director.

In 2020, Prof Bunnell set up the Outreach and Stakeholder Development Committee (OSDC) and appointed the following ARI colleagues (Mairii Aung Thwin, Greg Clancey, Yi'en Cheng, Michelle Tsai, Liz Chee, Echo Wang, Patrick Quinton-Brown, Valerie Yeo, Clair Hurford, Sharlene Anthony, and me as Chair) with the primary purpose of organising the twentieth-anniversary events. The committee reported to the ARI Director, who asked the Chair of the committee to update regularly the Steering Committee on its recommendations. The onset of Covid-19 in early 2020 meant that the planning and finalising of ARI20 anniversary events faced repeated challenges. However, this also meant that we had to be resourceful and make the best of what we can do given the precarious times in which we lived. This meant that the entire anniversary series would be virtual.

One of the first things the committee decided was to come up with an anniversary logo which had to be ready for use from January 2021. Even seemingly a simple task required more organisation and consultation than I ever realised. From the word go, I realised as the Chair of the committee that we had to rely very heavily on the resourcefulness, dedication, and commitment to perfection of ARI's administrative staff. They all worked full on over many months, including those who are not officially members of the OSDC, such as Sharon Ong and Tay Minghua. Valerie Yeo has known ARI before its

conception, and such a rock for all of us. We also decided on coming up with two virtual outputs to commemorate the anniversary. We contracted Kontinentalist to create a digital map to illuminate our global networks and our research projects in Asia writ large. This required an enormous amount of detailed information gathering of the data points used to create the digital map. This is now accessible at <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/about-ari/ari-20th-anniversary/>. Above all, I'd like to make a special mention of Clair Hurford whose insightful cajoling, coupled with her patience and perseverance made it possible.

Another output we decided on was to produce an ARI promotional video which was the first of its kind for the Institute, contracted out to NEO. It was exciting to see the interviews of some of ARI alumni, including the founding Director Prof Anthony Reid and Prof Biao Xiang (Max Planck Institute). It was launched on 11 November 2021 which marked the finale to the special series of anniversary roundtables (on which more are below). As a newcomer to the world of virtual outputs, it was a steep learning curve to discover the amount of dedicated effort and time, coupled with an exacting eye to detail, required to produce them.

From the start, we wanted ARI20 to be about the future, where ARI was going in five years, whilst celebrating our achievements of the past two



decades. ARI has already an enviable network of alumni, who have gone on to forge research careers on Asia in all corners of the world. However, we wanted to engage seriously with the key stakeholders in Singapore, such as the government ministries, especially the Ministry of Education and the Social Science Research Council of Singapore, as well as strengthen ties within the National University of Singapore faculties and research institutions, including ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Middle East Institute, East Asia Institute, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, for instance. Ideally, a gala event with the key stakeholders would have been a suitable climax to commemorate the twentieth anniversary, but because of Covid-19 restrictions, we designed an anniversary roundtable series in which each of the research clusters would host one or two roundtable panels from August to November 2021. This was intended to illuminate ARI's agenda setting role in Asia research.

The first three in the ARI20 Anniversary Roundtable series took place in September, starting with 'Identities Research in Asia: Past, Present, and Future Directions' (Identities Cluster, 7 September), followed by 'Migration Futures and Transnationalism Scholarship: Pandemic Times, Uncertain Mobilities and the End of the "Age of Migration"' (Asian Migration, 14 September), and 'Representing Disasters from the Inside Out' (Inter-Asia Engagements, 28 September). In October, there were four roundtables: 'Oceanic Asia: Global History, Japanese Waters, and the Edge of Area Studies' (Inter-Asia Engagements, 5 October), followed by 'Asian Urbanisms:

Critical Reflections and New Directions' (Asian Urbanisms, 12 October), and 'Mapping Changes in Religion and Globalisation across Asia' (Religion and Globalisation, 19 October), and 'Science, Technology and Society in East and Southeast Asia: Current and Future Directions' (Science, Technology, and Society, 26 October). In November, the Asian Peace Programme hosted 'The Idea of Peace in Asia' (9 November), just before the finale event on 11 November with the full line-up of all the current research leaders of the seven clusters (Profs Tim Bunnell of Asian Urbanisms, Brenda Yeoh of Asian Migration, Kenneth Dean of Religion and Globalisation, Jean Yeung of Changing Family in Asia, Greg Clancey of Science, Technology, and Society, Jamie Davidson of Identities, and Naoko Shimazu of Inter-Asia Engagements) moderated by Prof Tan Tai Yong as the new Chair of the International Advisory Board of ARI on 'ARI and Asian Futures in Humanities and Social Sciences Research'. Jean Yeung's Changing Family in Asia Cluster held a finale conference on 14 October 2021. All these events were well attended, having reached a wider audience, particularly in the region. As an institute that is squarely situated in Southeast Asia, greater access to its anniversary events was a very positive outcome of the virtual format.

As ARI starts its third decade, we look forward to its strengthening research relevance in Singapore, whilst at the same time, forging ahead with its research agenda which is highly conscious of its unique positionality in the regional and global research community.



**Ms Carol Chan** (15 years), **Ms Ceron Tan** (5 years), and **Ms Kristel Fernandez Acedera** (5 years) received NUS Long Service Awards in February 2022.

**Prof Tim Bunnell** gave a keynote speech titled 'Golden Indonesia 2045 in Comparative Perspective: Lessons from Geographical Analysis of Malaysia's Vision 2020', *International Conference on Geographic Actualization* (e-conference), Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat, 6 December 2021.

**Dr Céline Coderey** received the Residential Colleges Teaching Excellence Award 2021 in recognition of her excellence in teaching and learning at the Residential Colleges, awarded by the Residential Colleges Teaching Excellence Committee (RCTEC), on 6 January 2022.

**Dr Carola Lorea** gave 2 invited lectures: 'Ways of Listening, Ways of Knowing', *Communities of Sound: Caste, Religion, and Displacement Across the Bay of Bengal*, St Louis University, 22 October 2021; 'Communities of Sound: Rethinking Global Religion', University of Tübingen, 13 December 2021.

The **Kishore Mahbubani** Professorship was announced on 7 October 2021 by NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, a new professorship named after veteran diplomat Prof Kishore Mahbubani. <https://medicine.nus.edu.sg/nus-medical-school-names-new-professorship-after-distinguished-diplomat-2/>

Prof Mahbubani also gave an ambassadorial lecture titled 'Can Humanity Preserve Peace?', Macau University of Science and Technology, online via zoom, 25 March 2022, and was awarded the title of Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa* by the same university on 27 March 2022.

**Dr Kesava Chandra Varigonda** was appointed Fellow, International Research Seminar *Shifting Geographies of Expertise and Policymaking*, the India-China Institute, The New School, 2021-2022.

**Prof Brenda Yeoh** gave three keynote speeches at webinars: 'Asia's Temporary Migration Regime in a Time of Covid-19', *Sir John Monash Lecture Series 2021*, Monash University Malaysia, 11 November 2021; 'Migrant-Led Diversification in the Global City', *1st Winter School on Migration Linguistics, Migration Linguistics: Principles and Processes*, Migration Linguistics Unit, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and IOM, 9-11 February 2022; 'The Temporary Migration Regime in Pandemic Times: The Opportunity to Do Things Differently', *32nd Festival International de Géographie*, 1-3 October 2021, Saint-Dié-des-Vosges, France.

Prof Yeoh also became Honorary Adviser, International Association of Migration Linguistics, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies; Member of the Sixth Asian Population Association (APA) Council; Member, The World Cities Summit Urban Resilience Knowledge Council; Chair, Advisory Board, Center for Aging, Research and Education (CARE); Member, Advisory Board, National Museum of Singapore, 2022-2024; and Member of the Panel of Assessors, National Council on Problem Gambling, 17 March 2022 - 17 November 2022.

# SHELLS OF A COMMUNITY: LOOKING FOR NARRATIVES IN UPPER NEW STREET

DR YUANHAO ZHAO

In February 2022, the Shang Xin Jie (Upper New Street) area in Jinan City, Shandong Province was waiting for its 'gentrification'. As a district hosting multiple historic sites and historical buildings of roughly the Republican Era in Mainland China (1912-1949), how 'new' will Upper New Street become after the renovation could be a bothering question.

Part of my fieldwork on folklore and life history takes place in the community facing this site of gentrification. As changes were happening across the street, I decided to visit it, searching for people's lived experiences in the vacant shells of a former community. Thus this fieldnote.

Taking the final chance to walk in the deserted streets, one may collect not only the waning beauty of the aged mansions, but the fragments of the dwindling vernacular lifestyles. With the retrospective view as a local kid who grew up in the city but has been away for too long, I was ambushed by familiar but long-gone experiences, memories and selves left behind the walls, or maybe on them (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1. A house in Shang Xin Jie



Figure 2. Children's drawing on a wall

On the beam of a house, I find a pair of beautifully written charms. Although partly covered, I can still recognise the words because the charm and its variations are still used in many places in China. 'The Grand Duke [is Here]; Great [Fortunes] for Beam Installation (太公[在此] 上梁大[吉])' (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Charm on beam

The Grand Duke, or Jiang Taigong, a deity known widely in Chinese-speaking communities, is believed to have the ability to discharge all other spiritual beings present to protect the human being. Now the eminent domain has taken place, does he still assume his duties here to protect the household? Or has he already descended from the beam, driven by a power that is larger than the spiritual world?

In a vacated house, the second half of a couplet still tells the former owners' New Year wishes: 'Learning the Charisma of Chinese Sages'; while the first half is replaced by a cold character: 'Delivered' — a sign that this house has been successfully claimed by the eminent domain (Figure 4).

Clashes between official and vernacular narratives about the district, the street or a certain house are visible on many a street corner.



Figure 4. Couplet



Figure 5. Ma Qingzong's former residence

Ma Qingzong, an ethnic 'Hui' (this ethnic group is always oversimplified as the Chinese-speaking Muslims), was a famous National Champion of Wrestling in the 1950s. He used to live in Upper New Street. Outside his former residence, above the gate, a red band floating powerlessly in the cold wind reminds us of the former owner's pride and prowess. Now an even redder character 'to be dismantled' (*chai* in Chinese) is on the wall (Figure 5).

A lived space is created then abandoned, to be de-contextualised in the margins between the spatial rearrangements sponsored by the municipal government, the discourses about urban tourism and gentrification, and former residents' imagination of a better life beyond the grass crawling on roofs.

Then comes the re-contextualisation: what will be resurrected from the bones of this district? Per the official narrative, this street is to be re-constructed as part of the 'tourism corridor' of Jinan City, to demonstrate the local culture and history, while simultaneously featuring fashion and trendy goods, especially Chinese brands, to attract young people.

We may catch a glimpse of a future Upper New Street from other districts gentrified for similar purposes.

Furong Jie (Hibiscus Street), the No. 1 famous local landmark of titular cultural tourism, features hundreds of snack stalls and art shops. However, it is hard for one to ignore its kitsch and deliberately archaic-styled buildings, and overcommercialised taste of food choices such as fried fermented tofu, fried squid, and bubble tea.

Another similar local site of tourism is Kuanhou Li (Tolerance Alley). This place is also flooded with popular snacks. Moreover, vulgar appropriation of local culture is bluntly demonstrated here. The Great Shun, a legendary ancient emperor, is believed to



Figure 6. Introduction to the T-Rex

have lived in this area. In his temple on this alley, he is depicted as having defeated a 'T-Rex'. One also finds an archery game area in the temple, with the slogan: 'No shooting no pleasure, so shoot to your climax!' (Figures 6 and 7).



Figure 7. Archery game slogan

Walking in these streets, one may frequently sense a familiarity. I have seen very similar sites in other places in Shandong, Shanghai and Beijing, and sniffed very similar scents there. Upper New Street, Hibiscus Street and Tolerance Alley: all the small narratives behind these names are gradually replaced by nationwide grand narratives of urban development, cultural tourism and the official plans of 'safeguarding' old streets.

By the end of February 2022, Upper New Street had been fenced for construction. Segregated from people's everyday life, the spatial practices and representational spaces are walled in, creating a heterotopia that transcends past and present, official and vernacular, and visions and reality. It is disturbing, as when shells of the community are filled with new facilities, new visitors and new narratives, what kinds of lived spaces then will be created?

All photographs are author's own.



# SABBATICAL AMID A PANDEMIC

DR OFITA PURWANI



Pesangrahan Ambarrukmo, Yogyakarta  
Photo credit: Lutfia Nuri

I joined the Asia Research Institute in December 2021 as an Urban Studies Foundation International Fellow. The Urban Studies Foundation (USF) is based in Glasgow, UK and it is linked to the *Urban Studies* journal. My fellowship aims to help urban scholars from the Global South to write and publish, under the mentorship of a senior urban scholar. My mentor for this fellowship is Prof Jane M. Jacobs from Yale-NUS College, who is also a cluster associate of ARI. This fellowship is very important for me as I can take a break from my work for nine months to focus on my research, writing and publishing.

I am originally based in Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia. Being granted a fellowship for a sabbatical in another country during the pandemic is quite a challenge. As the situation during the pandemic keeps changing, so does the border

policy. My fellowship which was granted from May 2021 to February 2022 had to be postponed several times. When the Singapore border was finally reopened in September 2021, we quickly proceeded as soon as we could. I had to catch up with all new policies, find accommodation, and a place for quarantine in a relatively short period of time. Everything had to be processed quickly, just in case the border closed again at short notice. One thing that I learned about the pandemic is that we have to embrace uncertainty during this time. I am really grateful that I finally made it to Singapore after so many emails back and forth between me, ARI, USF, and other related parties. I am particularly grateful for the help from ARI, particularly from Dalreena and Sharlene, and the USF, which is willing to fund costs arising from uncertainty.

My project during my stay in ARI relates to Southeast Asian monarchies and their impact on urban development. This topic is a continuation of my PhD research which focused only on the contexts of Yogyakarta and Surakarta. I first made the proposal long before the pandemic, so I was planning to do the fieldwork in Southeast Asia myself. This idea turned out to be impossible with the pandemic, so I decided to bring together scholars whose research was focused on topics similar to my own, but in different countries in Southeast Asia. This goal is actually more feasible than my original idea, bearing in mind that there is also a language barrier for me to do it all by myself. I can speak Indonesian but not Thai, Brunei Malay or other Southeast Asian languages. The pandemic has turned out to be beneficial in that it is now relatively easy to bring people together through online platforms. Thus I will organise an online conference to bring scholars together so that we can communicate and open opportunities for collaboration.

The topic of the research, which deals with people in power, also brings some potential difficulties. The first is a fear of our safety, and then there is the issue of availability and reliability of data. Being in Singapore when doing the project is beneficial for me as I am away from the object that I am researching. This qualifying point also applies to the

conference. It will be potentially risky to organise a conference on such a topic in the country where the research was conducted. Organising the conference from Singapore, where there is no monarchy under research, is ideal for this topic.

The other issue is about the data. I cannot rely fully on interviews as a way of information gathering as most people will not talk. In the case of Yogyakarta, people are usually silent about anything negative related to the royal court. Relying on the news is also not enough as media sometimes serves those in power. In addition to the data from formal sources, I select other sources from NGOs and social activists, who are usually critical of the government and the royal courts, for interviews and documents as they may well know something not covered in the news or emerging from formal government sources. The interview data, however, has to be confirmed by other means, as the interviewees are basically biased. They are usually in opposition to the government and the royal court. I will then check the interview data using observation, news, and formal documents. The data from previous research such as those in theses and dissertations, journal papers, and reports are also useful as data sources and to confirm the interview data. Clearly it will be necessary for me to create a balanced, rather than one-sided, presentation.

Apart from those difficulties that come from the pandemic and the nature of my topic, I find this research fascinating. Doing this project in ARI where I can get so much support from peers, is therefore to me very worthwhile.



**Ms Stephanie Christine Heng**

joined as Research Associate with the Asian Migration Cluster on 3 February 2022. She has an MSc in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies from Oxford University. She is interested in the politics of space and (im)mobilities in urban spaces and global cities. At ARI, she will assist in the Belt and Road Initiative and Student-Mobilities in China-Southeast Asia (BRISM) project.



**Mr Wang Jun Hao**

joined as Research Apprentice with the Asian Migration Cluster on 31 March 2022. He holds a Bachelor of Social Sciences (Hons) in Sociology from NUS. His honours thesis examined how social and cultural underpinnings influence Singapore youths' end-of-life decisions. He is also interested in transnational ageing and return migration in later life.



**Dr May Ee Wong Hui**

joined as Postdoctoral Fellow with the Asian Urbanisms Cluster on 10 March 2022. She received her PhD in Cultural Studies with a Designated Emphasis in Critical Theory from the University of California, Davis. Her research at ARI explores aesthetic and science fiction speculative futures as counterpoint to discourses of technical urban futures.



**Mr Jason Ng Chih Sien**

joined as Research Assistant with the Science, Technology, and Society Cluster on 1 April 2022. He holds a Master of Arts in the History of Art from The Courtauld Institute of Art, UK. He researches the sociocultural histories and technopolitics of air-conditioning in Singapore and the Gulf states, against the backdrop of climate change and the energy economy.



**Dr Elizabeth Mae Elliott**

joined as Postdoctoral Fellow with the Science, Technology, and Society Cluster on 21 March 2022. She is a medical anthropologist with a PhD in Anthropology from University College London. At ARI she will examine how power, vulnerabilities and well-being in the contemporary Lao landscape can be conceptualised through analysis of local medical practices.



**Dr Caroline Chia**

joined as Research Fellow with the Religion and Globalisation Cluster on 1 April 2022. She holds a PhD in Asian Studies from the University of Melbourne. Her research focuses on traditional Chinese theatre. At ARI, she will investigate how traditional Chinese theatre and its related practices react and change as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.



**Dr Jorge Bayona**

joined as Postdoctoral Fellow with the Inter-Asia Engagements Cluster on 28 March 2022. He holds a PhD in History from the University of Washington, Seattle. His research focuses on empire, territory, and transnational histories in Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Pacific. At ARI he will work on his book manuscript on territorial anxieties and empire in the Philippines and Peru.



**Dr Ven Paolo B. Valenzuela**

joined as Research Fellow with the Asian Urbanisms Cluster on 25 April 2022. He holds a PhD in Sustainability Science from the University of Tokyo. He is a Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA) researcher of synergies between disaster risk and climate change in Asia and the Pacific, particularly in coastal urban areas.

# ASIAN MIGRATION CLUSTER

## CONTESTED ASIAN PARENTING IN INTRA-ASIA MIGRATION

DR CHAND SOMAIAH

Immigrant and migrant parenting from and within Asia is a surprisingly understudied topic. This is despite intraregional migration (the median age of migrants in Asia is 35) being the dominant form of migration here. This two-day virtual workshop brought together scholars of Asian migration to consider what migrant parenting in Asia means for parents, families, and communities across old, new and/or multiple homes. We called for empirically grounded work which considers migrant parental care ranging from (but not limited to) classed, gendered and ethnicised parenting practices such as intensive parenting, remittance-sending and care-giving at a distance, food work, native language maintenance, culture work, and substitute care by relatives or fictive kin. By focusing on the emplaced, embodied, and gendered aspects of parenting, the workshop provided a finely grained lens to investigate intersectional agencies and subjectivities among migrant parents as well as the conjuncture between family and citizenship practices in superdiverse, multi-ethnic, Asian settings.

To address the overarching question of how migrant parenting is done in intra-Asia migration, workshop participants were invited to consider the following aspects of migrant parenting: (1) the different migration policies which hinder and/or facilitate migrant parenting to be accomplished in multidimensional, unexpected, and creative ways. For example, how migrant parenting may be achieved *despite* uncaring migration regimes particularly for labour migrants implicated in global care chains; (2) the kinds of migration (circular/circuit migration, stepwise migration) within Asia which engender variant forms of parental care enmeshed with ideological



### CONTESTED ASIAN PARENTING IN INTRA-ASIA MIGRATION

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'Asian Values' (e.g., stigmatised versus idealised parenting styles, the racialisation of migrant parenting and hierarchies of destination sites for parents); (3) advancing conceptualisations of affective citizenship practices conducted via the work of migrant parenting in Asia (e.g., emotions, generational transnationalisms, aspirations for 'worlding' children through migration, ICT use among migrant parents); (4) eliciting connections and comparisons on continental migrant parenting across Asia to wider theoretical applicability beyond Asian cases.

Workshop participants presented conceptually generative papers which examined the emergence of mobile parenting cultures from perspectives from and around Asia. We accommodated a total of 14 papers on various reproductive mobility issues, child-raising dilemmas, and conflicting immigrant parenting identities and practices in the region (Singapore, the Philippines, China, Japan, India, Vietnam, Malaysia and Thailand), presented by critical feminist, parenting, education, communication and social science scholars from multiple disciplines (geography, history, sociology, anthropology, psychology, linguistics, and communication and media studies) who are based in various institutions in Singapore and abroad. Panels focused on 'Mediated Power and Care Labour', 'Temporalities and Emotions', 'Language and Education', and 'Care Arrangements and Constraints' prompted rich discussions by participants, and raised important questions for future research agendas around the complexities of parental care and intra-Asia migration. The workshop was organised by Dr Chand Somaiah, Dr Exequiel Cabanda, Assoc Prof Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho and Prof Brenda S.A. Yeoh FBA.

# INTER-ASIA ENGAGEMENTS CLUSTER

PROF NAOKO SHIMAZU

In the last six months, IAE has been a host to long-term visitors, Professor Xuefeng Sun (Tsinghua, International Relations) and Assistant Prof Choon Hwee Koh (UCLA, History), and in October 2021, we welcomed a new postdoctoral fellow, Dr Jorge Bayona, who obtained his PhD from the University of Washington in 2021.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, Dr Bayona participated remotely from his home city of Lima, Peru, thus making our cluster truly inter-Asia, connecting our colleagues in Pacific South America, to Essen in Germany (Nyi Nyi Kyaw, IAE Associate), and to Kuala Lumpur (Universiti Malaya, Associate Prof Helena Varkkey).

In February 2022, we welcomed Dr Rob Cole who is based in Vientiane, Laos, on the Mekong Region Land Governance project. IAE continues to be very active in international collaborations: In October 2021, Prof Sujit Sivasundaram (Virtual Academic Visitor) participated in the *ARI20 Anniversary Roundtable Series* session on *Oceanic Asia: Global History, Japanese Waters, and the Edges of Area Studies* organised by Senior Research Fellow Dr Stefan Huebner. Also in October, Cluster Associate Dr Anthony Medrano together with Dr Chitra Venkataramani (NUS Sociology) organised *Asia's Wet Natures: Past, Present, and Future*,

followed by two events in December, the first by the TECSEA Programme which held the third and final stakeholder workshop on environmental issues, closely followed by another workshop, organised by Research Fellow Dr Yang Yang, with Dr Ameem Lutfi (MEI), Dr Serkan Yolacan (Stanford) and Dr Nisha Mathew on *A Season of Revolutions: Transnational Lives of Nationalist Revolts*. The cluster kickstarted 2022 with hosting Prof Simon Avenell (Virtual Academic Visitor) who gave an ARI Seminar on 'Asia, Transnationalism and Japanese Environmental Activism'. In late January, Research Fellow Dr Gerard McCarthy hosted a panel on 'Coping Amid Contagion: What Can We Learn from Oral Histories of Pandemic Upheaval in Southeast Asia and the United States?' which featured a comparative discussion featuring Dr Denise Milstein from the Columbia University's INCITE project and Prof Shimazu with Tinesh Indrarajah (Yale-NUS), as part of the cluster's ongoing *Living with Covid-19* project.

# CHANGING FAMILY IN ASIA CLUSTER

PROF JEAN YEUNG

The Changing Family in Asia Cluster, one of the oldest clusters in ARI established in 2003, came to a close at the end of 2021. In this final year, cluster members continued to actively organise and participate in international conferences via online platforms and yielded an impressive volume of research output in multiple venues and multiple formats of international prestige and global reach.

In October, for the *ARI20 Anniversary Roundtable Series* in celebration of ARI's 20th anniversary, the cluster brought together its alumni and current researchers in an online conference to contribute to dialogues on issues regarding Asian families with cutting edge research on the unprecedented changes in the area of marriage and fertility, family types, gender and intergenerational relations, and rapid population ageing. The cluster had two cluster leaders—Prof Gavin Jones (2003-2010) and Prof Jean Yeung (2010-2021). The two-day conference also commemorated the cluster's achievements and legacy and reflected on ARI's contributions to the achievements of the cluster's alumni. Founding Cluster Leader Prof Gavin Jones delivered a keynote speech. Alumni who presented included Cheryll Alipio, Ji Yingchun, Teo You Yenn, Premchand Dommaraju and Maznah Mohamad, to name a few.

This year also marked the publication of several special issues in reputable journals. Jean Yeung and Yeonjin Lee published the special issue 'Aging in East Asia: New Findings on Retirement, Health, and Well-Being' in *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B* (DOI: 10.1093/geronb/gbab055).

Gu Xiaorong published two special issues: 'The Value of Children and Social Transformations in Asia' in *Child Indicators Research* (vol. 14, issue 2), and 'The Value Turn in Childhood Sociology' in *Current Sociology* (DOI: 10.1177/00113921211006102). Each comprises a collection of papers presented at the ARI conference *The Value of Children in Asia: Family and Public Policies* held in November 2018.

In October, Jean Yeung, Sonia Drobnič, and Chung Wei-Yun published the special issue 'Family Policies and Care Regimes in Asia' in *International Journal of Social Welfare* (vol. 30, issue 4). The collection of papers in the issue was from ARI workshop *Family Policies in Asia*, held in November 2019.

A special issue based on the ARI conference held in November 2020, *Emerging Dimensions of Marriage in Asia* convened by Jean Yeung and Gavin Jones, is forthcoming in the *Journal of Family Issues*.

9 – 11 MAY 2022

**GOVERNING DIVERSE CITIES IN EUROPE AND ASIA**

18 – 22 JULY 2022

**17TH SINGAPORE GRADUATE FORUM ON SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES**

4 – 5 AUGUST 2022

**GREEN CITIES BEYOND FAILURE: TOWARDS HOPEFUL EPISTEMOLOGIES OF ECOLOGICAL URBAN FUTURES IN ASIA**

25 – 26 AUGUST 2022

**MONARCHY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THEIR IMPACT ON URBAN DEVELOPMENT NOW**

22 – 23 SEPTEMBER 2022

**MALAY WORLD MANUSCRIPTS: MEDIUM AND METHOD IN DECENTRING DOMINANT NARRATIVES**

27 – 28 OCTOBER 2022

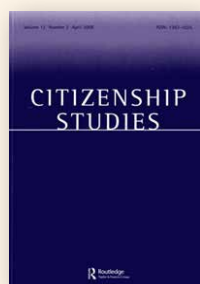
**FAITH IN IMMUNITY: RELIGION, COVID-19 VACCINES, AND STRUCTURES OF TRUST**

Details of events are available at [ari.nus.edu.sg/upcoming-events/](http://ari.nus.edu.sg/upcoming-events/)



**Francesca Bray, Gregory Clancey & Annapurna Mamidipudi (guest eds)**

Special Issue: Building Sites, Crafting Knowledge  
*HoST – Journal of History of Science and Technology* 15(2), 2021



**Tuen Yi Chiu & Brenda S.A. Yeoh (guest eds)**

Special Issue: Marriage Migration, Family and Citizenship in Asia  
*Citizenship Studies* 25(7), 2021

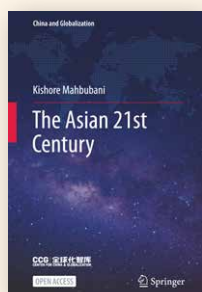


**Shaun Lin; Naoko Shimazu & James D. Sidaway (guest eds)**

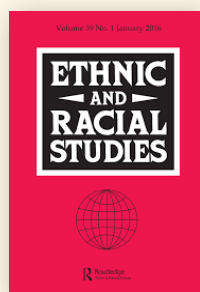
Special Issue: BRI as Method Forum  
*Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 62(3), 2021



**Kishore Mahbubani**  
*Can Singapore Survive?*  
2nd edition  
Singapore, Straits Times Press, 2021

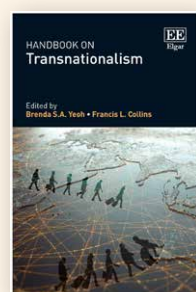


**Kishore Mahbubani**  
*The Asian 21st Century*  
Singapore, Springer Nature, 2022



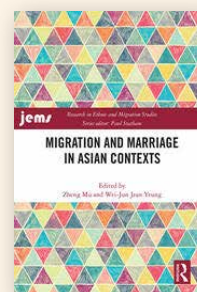
**Sylvia Ang, Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho & Brenda S.A. Yeoh (guest eds)**

Special Issue: Migration and New Racism: Beyond Colour and the 'West'  
*Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45(4), 2022



**Brenda S.A. Yeoh & Francis L. Collins (eds)**

*Handbook on Transnationalism*  
Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, 2022



**Zheng Mu & Wei-Jun Jean Yeung (eds)**

*Migration and Marriage in Asian Contexts*  
New York, Routledge, 2022

# LINKING THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES TO BIODIVERSITY HISTORY IN SINGAPORE AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

ASST PROF ANTHONY MEDRANO  
DR STEFAN HUEBNER



## PROJECT TEAM

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### COLLABORATORS

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Rapid biodiversity change is contributing to the spread of old and new diseases, increased vulnerability of food systems and supply chains, and growing threats and costs to economic productivity. Climate change and environmental degradation are amplifying this problem in Southeast Asia, a region home to the Coral Triangle and among the world's richest centres of biodiversity (Koh 2020).<sup>1</sup> Yet one of the leading drivers of rapid biodiversity change has been the historical introduction of alien species and their naturalisation and establishment over time and space.

Our two-year project running from August 2021 to August 2023 is leveraging digital humanities methods and historical source materials to better understand and visualise rapid biodiversity change through the lens of alien species and their vectors. As such, we are building what we call 'The Singapore and Southeast Asia Historical Biodiversity Database and Platform'. Our Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum team is collecting and contributing historical data about animals while our Singapore Botanic Gardens team is doing the same for plants. Our library team is digitising a wealth of biological, environmental, and natural history material—from old scientific journals to rare holdings such as the Raffles Museum Collection. Our fauna and flora teams are mining these newly digitised materials (along with previously digitised sources) for data about the arrival and spread of alien species in Singapore and the wider region. In addition, we have a Geographical Information Systems expert who is developing our data visualisation platform (by collecting and incorporating vector-related map layers such as rainfall, temperature, and land-use change) as well as collaborating with—and learning from—other successful digital and environmental humanities projects that are focused on Singapore and Southeast Asia. In this regard, the Asia Research Institute has been an exceptional laboratory for incubating new ways of exploring and examining environmental change across disciplines, clusters, grants, and regions. In the end, we see our project—and its database and platform—making possible a more robust and interdisciplinary analysis of alien species and their histories, vectors, and impacts in the context of rapid biodiversity change in Singapore and Southeast Asia.

<sup>1</sup> Koh, Tommy (2020), 'Looking to 2020: The Global Outlook for the Year', 8 January, [https://news.nus.edu.sg/research/looking-2020-global-outlook-year?utm\\_source=newsmailer&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Looking+to+2020:+The+global+outlook+for+the+year](https://news.nus.edu.sg/research/looking-2020-global-outlook-year?utm_source=newsmailer&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Looking+to+2020:+The+global+outlook+for+the+year) (accessed 9 January 2020).