



AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL ASIA PACIFIC FUTURES RESEARCH NETWORK

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ARC Asia Pacific Futures Research Network

PROJECT SUMMARIES

Third Round 2006

PA30601

Applicant: Professor Tessa Morris-Suzuki
Affiliation: Australian National University
Project Title: "New Media for Civil Society"
Awarded: \$ 4700

This conference brought together academic researchers, NGO activists and media experts to examine how new media may be used to enhance effective communication by Asian groups committed to the promotion of human rights. It had two central aims: to develop resources that provide practical guidance on effective media use for human rights NGOs in the region, and to generate deeper theoretical insights into the possibilities and limitations of the development of "online civil society". Though recent developments in communications media have created promising opportunities for social movements and NGOs to share and disseminate ideas, they have also presented serious challenges to grass-roots organisations now forced to deal with rapid technological change. This conference addressed the specific issues of organisational adaptability, inventiveness in design and content presentation and technological isolation experienced by many small and under-resourced grass-roots organisations by providing linking the practical experience of grass-roots action to the work of those with technical and design skills, and of researchers with a thorough understanding of media and social movement dynamics. It was held in Nepal, which both enhanced interaction with social movements and offered two Australian postgraduate scholars a unique opportunity to make contact and exchange ideas with NGO professionals, journalists and academics from throughout the Asia-Pacific. Postgraduate students were also mentored by senior academics in the preparation for contribution to the publication of conference proceedings - in hard copy and online as part of the network's web journal, *AsiaRights*.

PA30605

Applicant: Associate Professor Kathryn Robinson
Affiliation: Australian National University
Project Title: "Enhancing communication in ethnographic writing on Asia and the Pacific"
Awarded: \$ 4975

This residential writing workshop assisted postgraduate research students writing up their theses following the completion of fieldwork. It collectively forged and imparted practical tools

for ethnographic writing and the answers to two central questions: How can vivid narratives effectively convey cultural context and social analysis? And how can suspense be embedded in scholarly accounts? By exploring specific techniques for writing about places, persons, dialogues and stories encountered in fieldwork, the project examined the ways in which theory might be emplotted within ethnography, the range of ethnographic genres and border-crossings to other literary genres. Its innovative approach to academic writing involved drawing insights from fiction writing and challenging participants to reflect upon assumptions about scholarly writing that are often taken for granted. Led by the distinguished anthropologist and published novelist, Professor Kirin Narayan, the workshop provided postgraduates with the opportunity to practice innovative writing techniques and develop better communication skills. It also facilitated the networking of postgraduates from other centres nationwide, including students from small and/or isolated centres.

PA30607

Applicant: Dr Yang Jingqing
Affiliation: University of Technology Sydney
Project Title: "The regional impact on health and trade policy of food safety issues in China"
Awarded: \$ 8650

This workshop addressed critical Chinese food safety issues within a global context. It invited and solicited papers that explored the following issues: food safety policy and regulation in China and in Australia and New Zealand, globalisation of food and food safety issues and their impact on health status in China and other countries, Chinese food safety strategies in its foreign trade, and food safety as technical barriers to trades and new protectionism. China's food industry is one of the fastest growing domestic industrial sectors with food safety in China not only a major health concern due to increasing number of food safety incidents but a salient issue in China's foreign trade. The project brought scholars across a wide range of academic disciplines, including food safety, sociology of health and WTO from China, Australia and New Zealand, together with a major Chinese regulator and implementer of standards, Australian government departments/agencies, food industries and food safety institutions. The innovative approach taken by the project meant that, while related forums on food safety in China and Australia have tended to focus on the technical aspects of quality assurance, safety standards and food safety management, this event facilitated discussion on the issues of food safety, health and trade between China and Australia and more broadly in the Asia Pacific Region. Postgraduates and postdoctoral students from UTS and other universities were invited to present papers in the workshop and were also given the opportunity to network with academics in this field and members from various food and health industries and regulatory institutions.

PA30608

Applicant: Dr John Tebutt
Affiliation: LaTrobe University
Project Title: "Public Service Broadcasting in Asia and the Pacific"
Awarded: \$ 5000

This project comprised a forum for the discussion of recent research in Public Service Broadcasting (PBS) in Asia and the Pacific (morning) and a workshop for postgraduates on research methodologies and achieving outcomes in regard to policy and broadcast practices. It aimed to provide researchers and postgraduates with access to recent research and policy developments in PBS, to provide Asian and Pacific researchers and policy makers with access to Australian communication scholars and researchers, to encourage

applied research for policy outcomes in PBS, identify cross disciplinary research synergies and initiate partnership discussions. The events followed the 2007 national conference and meeting of the Australian New Zealand Communication Association (ANZCA), and developed its emphasis upon the commercialisation of media and the need for citizens to have confidence in informational channels in a climate of increased security threats as the critical reasons for reassessing PBS scholarship and policy. It examined these issues, for the first time, at an international level, linking Asia-Pacific researchers with Australian communication scholars. Interaction between participants at the conference, forum and workshop provided a significant opportunity to bring Asia-Pacific concerns to the attention of young Australian media and communication scholars, offering material for future research possibilities.

PA30609

Applicant: Associate Professor Lyn Parker
Affiliation: University of Western Australia
Project Title: "Symposium on Islamic Education in Indonesia"
Awarded: \$ 5920

This symposium and associated postgraduate workshop aimed to improve Australian and international understanding of Islamic schools (*pesantran* and *madrasah*) and secondary education in Indonesia and to counteract negative stereotypes about Islam and Islamic schools. It was organised under the aegis of an ARC-funded project "Ambivalent Adolescents in Indonesia" which aims to develop comparative knowledge about adolescence in Indonesia society. The specific objectives of the symposium were as follows: to improve Australian and international perception of *pesantran*, enhance academic knowledge about the diversity and inside workings of Islamic schools in Indonesia, disseminate this knowledge in the form of publication/s and media releases, advance links between the Indonesian Islamic education sector and Australian educationists and academics, and provide comparative knowledge relevant for understanding the nature of Islamic education in Australia. Realising the strategic importance of the Islamic factor in Indonesian education, the Australian government provides over \$30 million in development funding to improve the quality of Islamic education - as strategic move towards poverty alleviation but also, in part, a response to terrorism threat. In deepening the knowledge of the importance of Islamic schooling and promoting an understanding of *pesantran* as agents in community development, the symposium initiated and fostered links between practitioners in Australia and Indonesia whilst providing comparative knowledge for understanding Islamic education in Australia. Australian postgraduates were involved in the presentation of papers and received detailed feedback from experts upon their research. Postgraduates also participated in a round table discussion that provided further feedback and networking opportunities.