



Inside ISTR

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THIRD-SECTOR RESEARCH

Regional Neighbours Conference a Great Success

Report on the ISTR Asia Pacific Conference: “Global Challenges and Sustainability in the Asia Pacific: The Role of the Third Sector,” Hosted by CECT Universitas Tri-sakti, Pullman Hotel, Central Park – Jakarta

By Ruth Phillips, ISTR President-Elect, University of Sydney, Australia

The ISTR Asia Pacific Regional Conference was recently (December 4 & 5, 2017) held in Jakarta, Indonesia. Although often very small the ISTR Asia Pacific Conferences are very rewarding for regional third sector researchers and I have been privileged to attend the last seven, in various wonderful locations throughout East and South-East Asia. I see these conferences as not only a wonderful opportunity to network with fellow researchers in the region but also to attend a conference that is not dominated by global North ideas, theories or scholars, despite the high attendance of Australians at these conferences. The diversity of perspectives and insights is both illuminating and inspiring and the Jakarta conference was one of the best that I have attended as a wide range of global South perspectives were presented through an excellent program of papers. There were presenters from places as diverse as Fiji, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Korea, Japan, Singapore, China, Taiwan, the Philippines, the USA, the UK, Australia, Thailand and even Hungary.

The tone for this exciting conference was perfectly set by the keynote address from Professor Akihiro Ogawa, Professor of Japanese Studies at the Asia Institute, the University of Melbourne. Professor Ogawa recently edited the *Routledge Handbook of Civil Society in Asia* (2017) and gave an excellent overview about the current state of civil society in Asia, exploring its future and raising what he saw as key challenges ahead and new research directions for the third sector and civil society more generally. Attendees were also enriched by presentations and panels by impressive local entrepreneurs and corporate sector representatives who presented on innovations in CSR and social enterprise, providing great insight into the unique Indonesian context for the third sector and its dynamic relationship with the state.



Maria Nindita Radyati addressing the conference

For the first time, the ISTR Asia Pacific Conference held a two-day PhD seminar prior to the conference where a group of 13 PhD students from Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, the Philippines and the UK, were supported by four faculty. The seminar included workshop presentations from other academics to engage, learn and network with fellow student and expert researcher/academics from a diverse range of countries. The workshop topics included Getting Published, Career Strategies, The Tension between Fundamental and Applied Research, and Researching in the Third Sector. As one of the workshop presenters, I was pleased to see how connected the students had become through the workshop and how all of them were full of praise and gratitude for the opportunity and the experience. The PhD seminar has been part of the larger International ISTR conferences for many years and it is an excellent way of supporting emerging researchers in the field of third sector research.

A heart felt congratulations must go to Dr Maria Nindita Radyati who offered to and expertly led and hosted the conference and her wonderful team of people who work at the CECT (the Centre for Entrepreneurship, Change and the Third Sector). They were fabulous hosts and the entire conference was very well organised, buoyed of course by a great location that provided great food and well-known Indonesian hospitality. Dr Maria Nindita Radyati also secured a high level of support from the corporate community in Indonesia that was also greatly appreciated.

Reflections on the ISTR PhD Seminar in Jakarta, Indonesia

By Elaine Xu, PhD candidate at Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia



The ISTR Asia-Pacific Conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, marked the first time I attended an ISTR conference. I came to know about ISTR when I was completing my candidacy requirements because scholars whose work I was reading had listed ISTR as one of their professional associations. One of the highlights of my trip to Jakarta in December 2017 was the opportunity to participate in the pre-conference PhD seminar. During the two-day seminar, I attended workshops about journal publishing, research methodology, and career strategies. The academics who presented these workshops were candid about their experiences in academia and shared practical tips about how to navigate different aspects of academic work.

For instance, in the publishing workshop, journal editors shared their perspectives about the features of a strong article. I learnt that 'writing to the journal' is not simply about conforming to the style and foci of the journals. Our research should be positioned either as an extension of a conversation (from previous articles or with the scholars we cite) or as a way to extend the coverage of the journal into a new topic and area. In another workshop about career strategies, we were asked to list the terms we want our name or research to be associated with if people search for us online. Thinking about our research in this way was a useful exercise in clarifying the trajectory of my research vision and the scholarly profile I want to build.

The PhD seminar was also an invaluable opportunity to receive feedback about my methodology and application of theories. Academics whose expertise and research interests were aligned with the themes of our projects were assigned as our mentors in the daily group feedback sessions. A conscious effort was made to group us based on our research topics, which allowed for focused and productive discussions. Even though everyone in my group was working on different research topics, their diverse perspectives added fresh insights to my analysis of how charitable fundraising appeals are operationalized to fund development projects. I also benefitted from the exper-



tise and interdisciplinary knowledge of our mentors. Their feedback helped me to refine the theoretical underpinnings of my analytical framework and see future extensions to my research topic.

For me, the impact of the PhD seminar extends beyond the two days of workshops and feedback sessions. Other than forming friendships with research students across the Asia-Pacific, the academics I met also became a source of inspiration for my research. Having interacted with them during the seminar, I found it easier to approach them during the conference and ask them questions about their research. They also took the time to send me articles that are relevant to my research, for which I am grateful!

Reflections on the Asia-Pacific ISTR PhD Seminar

By Sujeet Kumar, Research Fellow, Center for the Study of Law & Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, India



When I started working on my PhD and landed in the field for preliminary data the real problem started from there. I was encountered with questions. Some of them were - How to avoid biasness in the field and in the process of writing research? How should I proceed in the field? How should I keep myself motivated until finishing my PhD? What to do after finishing my PhD? I struggled with these questions every day. However, I equipped myself in the field, but some of them are still unanswered.

It was my great luck to get selected for the ISTR PhD Seminar. It was my first PhD seminar and also it was my first time outside my country. I was thrilled as well as nervous. However, after attending the ISTR Asia Pacific PhD Seminar, I can say that it provided me with not only an op-

portunity to discuss my PhD, but also to meet like-minded researchers, as well as exploring careers after the PhD, and knowing contemporary research topics focused around the South Asian region.

I really loved the way the Seminar was organized. The ambiance was amiable and each researcher was made to feel comfortable while sharing their research and experience. I was given adequate time and ample space to discuss my PhD topic as well as the questions which I have faced for long. I found comments of the experts Prof. Carolyn Cordery and Prof. Bambang Shergi and peers extremely helpful. We discussed the key techniques and the processes of refining research methodology. The discussion shedding light on the objectivity and epistemological challenges has really refined my ideas.

Various sessions organized during the seminar proved to be of great utility. The session on research methodology by Prof Ruth Philips, and especially session on networking and key tips for pub-

lishing the paper by Dr. Aya Okada and Dr. Takako Nakajima respectively were very informative and helpful. Overall, we discussed several important dimensions which may be valuable for PhD students vis-a-vis a successful career.

I can say that it was one of the best conferences I have attended so far. It was not just limited to academic discussion but also presented an opportunity of knowing culture, food and people of the South Asian Region. The seminar facilitated me to understand contemporary challenges of the third sector in different aspects which impact its growth and efficiency.

Overall, the ISTR Asia Pacific PhD Seminar bolstered and refined my ideas. It was full of learning and knowing other cultures, collaborating with like-minded researchers and especially recalibrating for future research. Discussing my PhD topic and session on how to build networking in third sector was of countless value. My great thanks to the host CECT and ISTR for making my academic journey memorable.



Amsterdam Conference News

If you haven't checked in on the ISTR website recently, be sure to do so because a great deal of new information is available about the upcoming conference in Amsterdam. Registration is now open and early bird rates end March 16. Limited registration subsidies will be available to students and members from low-income countries. Be sure to apply by **February 15 here**.

On our website, you will find the **preliminary conference schedule** so that you can begin planning your arrival and departure times and all the side meetings with colleagues you would like to arrange. Descriptions of some of the conference events will be posted on the **Special Events page**, including the Meet the Author Session and our new Professional Development Seminars, so check there for more details.

Speaking of travel, we are doing our best to support you in planning your trip. ISTR has partnered up with Air France and KLM to offer you discounted airfare and blocks of hotel rooms have been secured for conference participants at several hotels in the area. Check out our **Travel and Lodging page** for more information, and for details about



getting around in Amsterdam. And if you need a visa, ISTR is ready to help prepare letters in support of your application - just fill out the online form **here**.

Finally, spots are still available to advertise in our conference program and on our mobile app (discounts available if you do both) and to book an exhibit table. **Reserve space for your ad or exhibit table now** to promote your products and services and expand your networks among all 800 of our conference participants.

See you in Amsterdam!

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