

9 November 2016

**Associate Professor Simon Avenell**  
**Director, ANU Japan Institute**  
 College of Asia and the Pacific  
[japaninstitute@anu.edu.au](mailto:japaninstitute@anu.edu.au)

**Report on Gender Institute Funding, 2016:**  
**Intimate Connections: Everyday Experiences of Inter-Asia Ties**  
**Australian National University, Canberra, August 11-13, 2016**

Dear Director, ANU Gender Institute,

On behalf of the ANU Japan Institute, I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the support provided by the ANU Gender Institute for our symposium held in August of this year. Together with funding from the College of Asia and the Pacific (\$15,000 of Innovative Project Funding and \$6,000 of basic regional institute funding), the support from the Gender Institute made it possible for us to invite an exciting line-up of keynote speakers and panel presenters for this wonderful event. Details of the event are as follows.

<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Intimate Connections: Everyday Experiences of Inter-Asia Ties</b>
<b>Academic Lead(s)</b>	A/P Simon Avenell, Dr Shiori Shakuto, Mr Benjamin Hegarty
<b>Date(s)</b>	August 11-13, 2016
<b>Outcomes – Research</b> (eg publications etc)	Dr Shakuto and Mr Hegarty are working with workshop participants to publish either a journal special edition or edited volume based on the best papers from the conference
<b>Outcomes – Outreach</b>	Attendees: (30) Keynotes: (4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professor Koichi Iwabuchi, Monash University</li> <li>• Associate Professor Thang Leng Leng, National University of Singapore</li> <li>• Dr Chika Watanabe, University of Manchester</li> <li>• Dr Dredge Byung'chu Kang, University of California San Diego</li> </ul> Panel Presenters: (12)
<b>Related events</b>	Masterclasses (see below for details of the master classes run in conjunction with the workshop)

**OUTLINE:**

In recent years Asia has experienced an unprecedented flow of people, media representations, and capital as many countries have undergone vast economic and political transformations. In considering these tectonic shifts, analysts have often focused on macroeconomic and political questions, studying shifting market forces or politics at a national level. Such questions have tended to promote top-down research focusing on one nation or one sub-region at a time. In contrast, there is an emerging field of research on inter-Asian connections which views contemporary Asian nations as interlinked and interrelated at the most intimate of levels. Building on this approach, this workshop offered a space for rigorous discussion on how shifting political and economic realities are fostering new intimate connections among people throughout the region.

At the symposium scholars and early career researchers explored this topic from a variety of disciplinary, theoretical, regional, and national perspectives. In his keynote speech, Professor Koichi Iwabuchi proposed the idea of “trans-Asia as method” as a way to explore issues of intimacy and connectedness across Asia.

Associate Professor Thang Leng Leng pointed to the connectedness of Northeast and Southeast Asia through the example of Japanese women leaving their country for work and intimate relationships. Dr Chika Watanabe provided a different perspective on interconnections through the lens of Japanese NGOs working on grassroots development issues with partners in Southeast Asia, while Dr Dredge Byung'chu Kang addressed the fascinating and provocative "Interracial Optics" of intimacies in Thailand.

Panel presenters spoke on a vast array of topics including popular cultural exchanges, Asian Muslim Women in New Zealand, Japan's gay subculture and Chinese men, Taiwanese Expatriates in Vietnam, Gender Relations in Indonesian Migration, and Chinese rural migrant labor. These presentations stimulated lively and fascinating questions and observations from the audience

The final session of the symposium was devoted to a general discussion about the major themes discussed over the two days and plans for publication going forward.

The two-day symposium was followed by a series of masterclasses offered by keynote speakers Dr Chika Watanabe (Economics, Development, Activism) and Dr Dredge Kang (The New Anthropology of Love). These masterclasses were attended by symposium participants and others who had registered after a general call for participation.

Keynote speakers stayed at the ANU University House for the duration of the symposium while panel participants were accommodated in shared rooms at Liversidge Court Apartments on the ANU campus. In order to foster networking among participants, an informal get together was held at Fellows Bar and Grill on the evening before the symposium (August 10). The official symposium dinner, attended by all presenters and organizers was at the Spicy Ginger restaurant on the first evening (August 11).

All in all, the symposium stimulated rich discussion and debate in the burgeoning field of intimacy and inter-Asia connections, as well as helping to establish substantive ties among established and early career scholars from Australia and Asia working on these issues.

### **PARTICIPANTS:**

#### *Keynote speakers:*

Professor Koichi Iwabuchi, Monash University, "Intimacy's Enemies Revisiting Radical Potentials of Trans-Asian Mediated Connections"

Associate Professor Thang Leng Leng, National University of Singapore, "Inter-Asia Intimacies on the Ground: Journeying with the Women from Japan"

Dr Chika Watanabe, University of Manchester, "Intimacy Beyond Love: a Case for Ethnography and History in Inter-Asian Encounters"

Dr Dredge Byung'chu Kang, University of California San Diego, "The Interracial Optics of Asian Intimacies in Cosmopolitan Thailand"

#### *Panel Presenters:*

Gietty Tambunan (Universitas Indonesia)  
Kania Arini Sukotjo (National University of Singapore)  
Anoosh Soltani (The University of Waikato)  
Benjamin Hegarty (ANU)  
Thomas Baudinette (Monash University)  
Carl Gabrielson (University of California, Santa Barbara)  
Ching-Ying Tien (ANU)  
Sherman Tan (ANU)  
Wen-Ching Ting (University of Sussex)  
Shiori Shakuto (ANU)  
Andy Scott Chang (University of California at Berkeley)  
Tingting Liu (University of Queensland)

### **MASTERCLASSES:**

ANU JAPAN INSTITUTE, ANU COLLEGE OF ASIA & THE PACIFIC

<b>Masterclass</b>	Topic: Questions of intimacy in development and humanitarian spaces
<b>Convener(s)</b>	Dr Chika Watanabe (University of Manchester) assisted by Dr Shiori Shakuto and Mr Benjamin Hegarty
<b>Date(s)</b>	13 August 2016, 10:30-12:00
<b>Outcomes – Outreach</b> (eg number of attendees, media coverage etc)	Attendees: (15)

<b>Masterclass</b>	Topic: The New Anthropology of Love
<b>Convener(s)</b>	Dr Dredge Byung'chu Kang, University of California San Diego assisted by Dr Shakuto and Mr Hegarty
<b>Date(s)</b>	13 August 2016
<b>Outcomes – Outreach</b> (eg number of attendees, media coverage etc)	Attendees: (15)

**ATTACHMENTS:**

We have attached relevant promotional materials for the workshop and masterclasses to this report.

Once again, I warmly thank the Gender Institute for its generous support of our event and look forward to continuing collaboration between our institutes into the future.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Avenell  
 Director, ANU Japan Institute  
 On behalf of workshop co-organizers, Shiori Shakuto and Benjamin Hegarty