



CONFERENCE ON
INTER-ASIAN CONNECTIONS II: SINGAPORE

DECEMBER 8-10, 2010

CALL FOR WORKSHOP PROPOSALS
DEADLINE: Monday, February 22, 2010

The Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (HKIHSS), the University of Hong Kong, the National University of Singapore (NUS), and the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) (the Organizers) are pleased to announce an open call for proposals from faculty members at accredited universities and colleges in any world region, to organize and direct one of 6 thematic workshops at a 3-day international conference entitled "Inter-Asian Connections." Following on the successful inaugural conference held in Dubai in February 2008, this second conference will be held in Singapore on December 8-10, 2010. The conference aims to showcase innovative research from across the social sciences and related disciplines on themes of particular relevance to Asia, re-conceptualized as a dynamic and interconnected historical, geographical, and cultural formation stretching from the Middle East through Eurasia, South Asia and Southeast Asia, to East Asia.

WORKSHOP THEMES

Proposals are invited from faculty interested in organizing and directing a workshop on one of the following 6 themes:

1) Transnational Knowledge Economies

Knowledge economies are associated with recent globalization and Asian circulations. Generated by high levels of investment in education, they are often articulated in transnational networks that are dependent on multi-nationals, out-sourcing and off-shoring. Knowledge economies thus reflect the changing face of capitalism in Asia which seems to intensify existing patterns of labor and migration while opening up new dimensions relating to the economy and infrastructure. Possible research foci include:

- The changing institutional landscape of higher education, research and scientific knowledge production
- Inter-Asian collaboration and competition in knowledge production
- Labor hierarchies within knowledge intensive sectors, nationally and internationally
- Labor hierarchies between the knowledge intensive sector and other sectors: how are high-tech sectors sustained by low-end service industries symbiotically as central parts of the new urban ecology?

2) Translocal Trust Networks, Religion and Law

This workshop explores how religion, trust networks and law are intertwined in a transnational Asian context. This includes examining how religious groups and trust networks extended across borders (variously defined) both historically and in contemporary times and how systems of trans-local legal



norms and religious ideas and practices have served to integrate modes of social, contractual, and diplomatic interaction across Asia. Specific issues could include:

- How long distance trust networks facilitate the development of business and social enterprises
- The changing geographies of transnational religions and religious networks
- The impact of colonial and post-colonial legal regimes on the formation of trust networks
- How trust networks evade or supplement legal regimes (for civil or uncivil ends)

3) Urban Ecologies in Asia's Cities

This workshop should bring together scholars of environmental questions and urban experiences. The rapid transformation of Asia in recent decades stretches the resilience of cities and the ecological integrity of the urban form in the region. Building on strong traditions of political ecology research, this workshop focuses on how, as cities take new shape today, they leave an unprecedented ecological imprint on the countryside around them and on increasingly displaced populations. If the ecology of the city is frayed and fragmented by urban sprawl and incessant redevelopment, the urban environment is strained by pollution, resource scarcity, and public health hazards. Yet, the city is home to rising aspirations and conflicts among disparate groups that imagine their futures in this unstable urban ecology. Topics to be explored could include:

- How natural resource claims are forged, appealed, and mediated in urban contexts
- How such claims – be they to 'open space,' water, or land – resonate with questions of citizenship, civility, informality, equity, and social strife
- The changing realms of urban expertise, such as urban planning, architecture, hazardous waste management, and public health engineering
- Historically shaped moments of encounter and contest between various urban actors and their impact on the nature, environmental sustainability, and political economy in Asia's urban spaces

4) Security and Insecurity

This workshop investigates the historical and contemporary dynamics of "security" and "insecurity" in Asia. Taking an interdisciplinary approach that goes beyond the paradigms of security studies and international relations, the papers in this workshop should examine how political, economic, cultural, and social changes in the region affect definitions, paradigms and experiences of insecurity and security at the level of institutions, ideologies, communities and everyday practices. The workshop will also explore the intersection of the international, the regional, the national and the local in understandings and impacts of various (expanding and contracting) global notions of security/insecurity such as "human security," "food security," "environmental security," "virtual security" and so on. Papers should look at how Asia figures in such global discussions and policies as well as how it appropriates/reshapes/reflects such discussions and policies. Research topics could include:

- "Crises" and "Panics" in Asia
- Inter-Asian threats and cooperation
- Financial securities/insecurities
- The governance and infrastructures of security: apparatuses, secrecy, communication



5) Migration: Mobilities and Displacements

In congruence with re-imaginings of the world as one of flows and connections and characterized by a time-space compression, this workshop focuses on re-examining migration patterns across Asia and building upon the promise of the concept of “transnational migration” in helping to understand the simultaneity of living in two (or more) locations. The study of diasporas (political, trade, ethnic) is also central to this workshop. The following issues could be examined:

- Linkages between different types of mobility and displacement and going beyond the categories of “forced” and “voluntary”
- How migrants live ‘here’ and ‘there’ at the same time and engage in the economic, political, social and cultural context of both the sending and receiving countries, as well as some others in between
- Cultures of mobility and their role in shaping diverse processes including political participation, notions of citizenship, and cultural production
- The role of new communications technologies in enabling and maintaining these new relations as well as in creating virtual mobility in cases of constraints, incarcerations and the absence of physical freedoms to move

6) Old Histories, New Geographies

This workshop examines “re-regionalization” in Asia, that is the ways in which emergent powerful and meaningful units structure new modes of governance, economic transactions, social relations and individual and collective subjectivities. Re-regionalization is produced through, and in turn produces, new kinds of long-distance connections of exchange, reciprocity and communication. Within this broad conception, the focus is more specifically on the following:

- Revisiting standardized histories in order to reveal previously hidden connections, alternative geographies and new periodizations
- Identifying emergent connections that links diverse parts of Asia in ways that contest and reconfigure borders and boundaries
- Examining waterways and landmasses and the ways in which they bring Asia to the world and the world to Asia
- Inter-Asian connections that produce local, national and regional histories and geographies

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications are invited from scholars who would like to convene an international workshop that brings together a group of researchers working on one of the aforementioned themes located in an “Inter-Asian” research landscape, whether this involves the comparative investigation of societies/polities within Asia (as defined above), or the exploration of historical and/or contemporary transnational/cross-national/trans-regional processes, structures, practices, and flows within and across the territorial and imaginative space of Asia. In addition to the investigation of particular themes and processes as described in the workshop themes, the conference aims to critically investigate the ways in which fields of knowledge map Asia and imagine alternatives. We aim at gathering as broad an international and multi-disciplinary representation of scholars as possible. We also encourage proposals for workshops that will see participation by activists, policymakers, media practitioners, and cultural producers addressing different aspects of the “Inter-Asian” conference theme.



Each workshop may have one or, preferably, two directors and will include 8 participants (senior and junior scholars, graduate students, other researchers) chosen competitively from across relevant disciplines in the social sciences and related fields. Workshop Directors selected by the Organizers will be expected to help recruit and select workshop participants, thus they should have sufficient research experience on the region and themes of their proposals and will be selected according to four criteria:

- i. The theoretical and/or empirical contributions of the workshop—i.e. the extent to which the proposed workshop represents an innovative and original contribution to existing scholarship on the subject;
- ii. The “Inter-Asian” relevance of the workshop—i.e. the extent to which the proposed workshop takes forward the intellectual mandate of the conference, of redefining “Asia” as a dynamic and interconnected formation, whether through innovative comparative approaches or through a focus on connections within and across the traditionally defined regions of Asia (Middle East, Eurasia, Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia);
- iii. The anticipated composition of the workshop—i.e. the extent to which the workshop will elicit participation from a diverse community of scholars, with preference given to workshops that have multi-disciplinary and international appeal, and that involve scholars and researchers at different stages of their careers;
- iv. The anticipated research outcomes of the workshop—i.e. the extent to which the workshop has the potential to generate new and innovative research agendas and to forge/sustain intra and inter-regional networks of scholarly research and exchange among institutions and individuals working in and on Asia.

The deadline for application submissions is **Monday, February 22, 2010**. Workshop proposals will be reviewed by a committee convened by the Organizers, and decisions will be announced by Friday, March 19, 2010.

Following the selection of workshop directors, the Organizers will announce and widely circulate an open call for individual paper submissions for each of the workshops. The responsibilities of the workshop directors will include:

- Collaborating with the Organizers to select 8 participants for their workshop;
- Communicating with workshop participants;
- Ensuring the timely delivery of papers;
- Preparing a workshop agenda;
- Convening daily meetings of the workshop at the conference as well as participating in plenaries; and
- Presenting a research statement at the conclusion of the conference.

In addition to covering the travel, accommodation, and other related costs associated with attending the conference, the Organizers will offer an honorarium of 500 USD to compensate workshop directors for their time and efforts. Limited funds may also be available to cover expenses of some workshop participants, based on an assessment of needs.

For further information, including details on the application process, please see <http://www.ssrc.org/programs/interasia-program/> and contact the Organizers at interasia@ssrc.org.