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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.