

“The Social Cohesion and Contemporary Urban Communities” The Third Collaborative Symposium between Rikkyo and Monash Research Centers

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An international symposium, “The Social Cohesion and Contemporary Urban Communities” was held on March 14th and 15th 2017 in the Robert Menzies Building, Monash University, Melbourne. This was the third collaborative symposium between the Social and Population Research Centre, Monash University and the Rikkyo Institute for Global Urban Studies. Previously we published *Creating Social Cohesion in an Interdependent World: Experiences of Australia and Japan* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), and our collaborative discussion continues.

The question of how social cohesion relates to migration has been a significant one for both Australia and Japan. As for Japan side, Professors Noro and Mizukami have been involved in the studying and assessing the activities of non-profit organizations which assist the settlement of foreign residents safeguarding their rights in the Tokyo area. And Asian People’s Friendship Society (A.P.F.S.) has led the way in establishing a citizens’ council that is concerned with facilitating special permission for foreign residents. A.P.F.S has been active in drawing attention to the relationship between immigration policies and migrant social cohesion in the host communities. The membership includes the NPO staff, a lawyer, a medical doctor, a civil movement activist and some sociologists. In fact, the term ‘social cohesion’ has not yet become part of public discourse and, unlike Australia, is not even presented in Japan’s sociological consideration and public discussion of migration. But the lack of terminology can be misleading for it does not indicate that the governments, academics and public are not keen to consider social cohesion, as there have been various researches which are related to the concept and key elements of social cohesion, and these include research into social trusts, social networks, or social capital (see Mizukami 2016). We expect that sociological studies on social cohesion will become widespread in Japan under the influence of what can be termed “western trends” as various European governmental and academic organizations continue to focus upon the topic, as do those in Australia and Canada. In this Symposium, some case studies, both directly and indirectly related to social cohesion, were presented.

The program of the symposium consisted of two parts: On the first day, March 14, we had

seminars and discussions about prospective research and projects, while the following day a study excursion was organized. As with the previous two occasions, the Symposium venue was the Robert Menzies Building, Monash University, Melbourne, and commenced with the opening address by Professor Dharma Arunachalam (Director, Social and Population Research Centre). The opening session included three papers, and was chaired by Professor Tetsuo Mizukami (postgraduate course head of College of Sociology, Rikkyo University). Dr. Ernest Healy (Research Affiliate, Social and Population Research Centre) presented a paper on “Social Cohesion in an Australian Context,” which was developed from his experience, including his publication in 2016, in which research data from the Australian context was discussed systematically in relation to various social cohesion theories.

The second paper from Professor Yoshiaki Edwin Noro (Doctoral course head of College of Sociology, Rikkyo University) considered “Lifestyle Changes of Bangladeshi Returned Migrants from Japan.” He has been a member of a project, ‘Global Migration and Transnational Relations’ that has been developed from one of the postgraduate research courses in the College of Sociology, which introduced a research-based course from 2014. Those involved conducted fieldwork in Bangladesh in 2014 and 2015, and also planned to similar research in August 2016. However, they had to give up initial plan to visit Dhaka in August 2016 due to a terror attack to a Dhaka restaurant in July 2016. “Twenty people hacked to death when a group of Islamic State terrorists burst into a restaurant popular with foreigners in Dhaka” (Marszal and Graham 2016). Seven Japanese were murdered in this incident. Thus in 2016, Rikkyo University project members instead undertook research into Bangladeshi communities in Tokyo, and set up Skype meeting at Rikkyo University of Tokyo and Asahi Consultant Agency in Dhaka in order to undertake interviews with Bangladeshi returnees from Japan. Professor Noro’s presentation was derived from his analysis of those research data.

The third and final paper of the opening session was from Professor Dharma Arunachalam, with a title, “Emerging Issues for Research in Culturally Diverse Societies.” He has been involved in systematizing census data and showing patterns of integration into the host Australian community by countries of birth and their descendants. He disclosed that there is a “substantial difference between ancestry groups among second generation” which has been narrowed in the third generation (Arunachalam and Karidakis 2016: 171). For this symposium, he focused upon more recent tendency of immigrant integration, and suggested forthcoming research possibilities.

After a tea break, we entered a closing session for the day which was chaired by Dr. Ernest Healy. The fourth paper for our consideration was “Immigrant Policy Change in Scandinavia:

A Divide between Denmark and Sweden?” presented by Professor Ariyoshi Ogawa (College of Law, Rikkyo University). As he is a specialist in comparative political science and the history of political science in European politics. He analyzed “the democratic deficit” in the European Union, and in coping with Europe’s migrant crisis in the late 2015. In this paper, the focus was placed upon the Scandinavian welfare state. The fifth paper was presented by Professor Michiyo Yoshida (Faculty of Tourism, Wakayama University), who has actively participated in Japan’s Australian studies conferences. Her paper was “The Directional Changes of Japan’s Refugee Policies.” Japan’s refugee policies have been under criticism due to the fact that there have been many applications for refugee status to Japanese government, in fact several thousand, but only a very small number are accepted each year. The following paper presenters were Professors Yoshiya Ichinose (College of Law, Rikkyo University) and Mitsuko Tamura (Uegusa Gakuen Collage). Their paper was titled “Questionnaire Concerning Children’s Place in Chiba City.” ‘Children’s Place’ was a local community’s social program near Inagekaigan station in Chiba-city. The community residents have offered a place for children to support their healthy growth. Professors Ichinose and Tamura illustrated the program activities of the organization.

The seventh and final paper, was presented by Professor Tetsuo Mizukami, with the title “Transnational Channels in Central Tokyo: The Increase in the Foreign Population and the Social Cohesion of Migrants.” World trends seem to be following a direction that challenges efforts to address transnational social incohesion: for instance, President Donald Trump’s US administration oversees a seriously divided nation; the European Union appears incapable of maintaining a stable union; One Nation, the party of Pauline Hanson, has revived to reappear on Australia’s political landscape as a popular alternative across the entire country rather than being a local Queensland politician; and in Japan, Prime Minister Abe, has the rudder hard-right to turn the ship of state around. Despite these seemingly ubiquitous trends, social scientists have maintained their own stand, and research into social cohesion has become more and more important in the contemporary world. Professor Mizukami introduced his fieldwork from the Ikebukuro district, which is a well-known town for Chinese businesses. Before closing the session, all the participants joined open discussion on prospective research collaboration. Then, Professor Ariyoshi Ogawa (Director, Rikkyo Institute for Global Urban Studies) offered the closing address. The symposium’s entire crew celebrated the successful third gatherings in farewell dinner at Italian restaurant, Tiamos, on Lygon Street.

On the second day, March 15, the crew visited the International School of Melbourne and Holocaust Museum. The Japanese School of Melbourne was officially established in

Caulfield in 1986 in response to the gradual increase in the number of Japanese families around this municipality. “The number of Japanese school children has gradually declined after the peak year of 1991, embracing 161 students. In 2004, the lowest number of 38 students was recorded” (Mizukami 2007). When the new school year started April of 2017, the number of primary school pupils was 42, while junior high school students numbered 14 (The Japanese School of Melbourne 2017).



Photo 1 The Japanese School of Melbourne (Photograph was taken by Dr. Mizukami on 15 March 2017.)

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The Japanese crew from Rikkyo University, Professors Ogawa, Noro, Ichinose, and Mizukami was given lecture and guide about the school from Principal, Ms Yumiko Ueno. After visiting the School, the crew joined Drs. Bruce Wearne and Robert Wolfgramm (both former sociology lecturers from Monash University), and Mitsuko Ono (Doctor from Rikkyo University, and Research Affiliate, Social and Population Research Centre) at the Jewish Holocaust Centre. Its original name was the Jewish Holocaust Museum and Research Centre, founded in 1984 in Elsternwick. “A great foundation has been laid to keep alive the message, and enable those who perished in the Holocaust to ‘speak’ through the memorable volunteers” at the Centre (Marks, *et al.*1994: 13). The crew was guided around the site by a perceptive and friendly volunteer. The Museum has designed the education programs for students and researchers since it has collections for official documents, photographs, and even camp uniforms.



Photo 2 The Jewish Holocaust Centre (Photograph was taken by Dr. Mizukami on 15 March 2017.)

All the participants promised to meet again at the next round of our collaborative work, that involves the Social and Population Research Centre, Monash University and the Rikkyo Institute for Global Urban Studies. Since the start of the first workshop of 2015, these symposia have facilitated successful and pertinent research outcomes, including assistance for a student exchange program between Faculty of Arts, Monash University and College of Sociology, Rikkyo University, a book publication, and the growth of mateship.

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