

IGU Commission on Gender and Geography Symposium, Taipei 2007

Report by:

Nora Chiang, Professor, Department of Geography, National Taiwan University

Tovi Fenster, Chair of IGU Commission on Gender and Geography



With a long history of almost twenty years, the IGU Commission on Gender and Geography held two meetings in 2007: one in Europe (Zurich), and one in Asia (Taipei). The symposium “Transnational Lives: Feminist Perspectives on Citizenship, Home and Belonging” was held in Taipei on November 23-26, 2007. The title of the conference came about due to abundance of on-going scholarly work on gender and transnational migration, an aspect of globalization which is (about to be) eagerly explored at personal, institutional and national levels.

The local organizing committee also initiated a “Gender and Geography Week” which includes the Symposium, special lectures on Gender and Geography Research, posters and a display of publications from different countries.

Twenty-four papers coming from the U.K., Ireland, Norway, Netherlands, U.S.A., Canada, Israel, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Mainland China, Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand, U.S.A. and Canada were presented in two days. The papers were organized under four themes: 1) Citizenship, rights and identity formations; 2) Homemaking, everyday life and transnational families; 3) Mobility aspirations, decisions and adjustments; and 4) Cosmopolitanism, belonging, and transnational subjectivity. Besides the speakers, about 50 people from Taiwan attended the two-day conference.

During the two days, visits were made to two of the six landmarks of Women's Culture in Taipei. They are: Fembooks (www.fembooks.com.tw) and Homemakers' Union and Foundation (<http://www.huf.org.tw/>). On the third day, thirty two people, including the conference speakers, two of their family members and six students headed for a day trip in Yangmingshan and Beitou hot spring region. It started with a visit to Zhon Shan Building which was meticulously designed by noted female architect Hsiu Tze-lan. The trip also included lunch at the Shann Garden, which was once a Japanese officers' club in 1920 and a Japanese Kamikaze reception site during World War II. The fieldtrip ended in a two-hour visit of a tea factory: the visitors were shown how Taiwanese tea was manufactured and were invited to sample the tea by their hosts, whose ancestors started the business back in 1890 in Xiamen, China.

The organizing committee wishes to express thanks to the Department of Geography at NTU which provided the venue, and also to the graduate and undergraduate students who participated in the final planning stages and helped to put on the Gender and Geography Week and the fieldtrip. The greatest thanks must go to the sponsors, who include the National Science Council, ROC, the NTU Office of International Affairs and the NTU College of Science, and the Geographical Society of China (Taipei). The symposium, though small, ran smoothly. According to our participants, it set a high standard for other symposiums, attended to details and has maintained a high level of participation throughout. As the papers are of high quality, original and cover a wide spectrum on the subject of transnational lives, we hope to publish them in several journals in the near future.



Top: From left to right, N. Chiang and T. Fenster, D. Conlon, R. Longhurst

Bottom: From left to right, R. Fincher, R. Jongwilaiwan, N. Chiang and J. Monk