



## ASIASCAPE.NET - THE CONTEMPORARY EAST ASIAN MEDIA CENTRE



Established in September 2007 at Leiden University, Asiascape.net is the home of the Contemporary East Asian Media Centre (CEAMC). It is an attempt to build a new international research

coalition in the rapidly emerging fields of cyberculture (New Media, Convergence Culture, Video Games and other related media, such as fan-culture) and anime-manga (Anime and Manga), especially as they relate to (or originate from) East Asia.

It is well known that a large proportion of this type of media emerges from the East Asian region (Japan, China and Korea), and Asiascape seeks to sponsor and organize research into the importance of these media as a series of transformative, cutting edge, transnational global commodities, and/or as a

series of cultural products that reveal much about East Asia itself.

Asiascape aims to provide a hub for the organization and direction of this rapidly emerging field. With an international advisory board of leading scholars, Asiascape sponsors 'state of the field' conferences and disseminates research using new and old media, including via its website: [www.asiascape.net](http://www.asiascape.net)



Universiteit Leiden

## LATEST NEWS:

### NWO AWARDS VICI GRANT FOR INNOVATIONAL RESEARCH

The Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), has awarded Prof Chris Goto-Jones, the director of Asiascape.net, a major research award of 1.25 million euro to run a five year project entitled: ***Beyond Utopia - New Politics, the Politics of Knowledge and the Science Fictional Field of Japan.***

#### GOALS OF THE PROJECT:

Recognizing that, since the end of the Cold War, political theorists around the world have embarked upon a deliberate quest for difference and innovation in their discipline, triggered by the apparently 'world historic' victory of liberal capitalism, this project



aims to uncover a series of sites of difference and innovation. In particular, it locates itself in two kinds of distancing: *geo-cultural* (ie. in the non-European space of Japan) and *me-dial* (ie. in innovative expressive media). Utilizing the 'techno-media' of anime, manga and video games, and focusing on the radical potentials of the genre of speculative science fiction, this project aims to analyze and model a series of political visions as potential alternatives to liberal capitalism, hence contributing to the field of political thought.

Furthermore, acknowledging that these widely popular techno-medial products utilize different grammars of expression from conventional, text-based media, this project seeks to formulate a research methodology for scholars to employ for critical interventions into these fields. Accepting that the dimensions of the public sphere change with time and technological developments, and hypothesizing that the public sphere in many contemporary societies is now informed by this techno-politics, at stake is the ability of scholars to remain in touch with (and persuasive in) political realities: new forms of literacy are required if scholars seek to remain involved in the new public sphere. This project attempts to outline those forms of literacy, as implied by the rapidly globalizing force of Japanese anime, manga and video games.

#### CRITIQUE AND INTERVENTION:

An implication of this research agenda is that anime, manga and video games have identifiable grammars that enable them as expressive media, and that these grammars and devices actually facilitate the development and deployment of political thought in ways inexpressible (or even unthinkable) in other media. Taking this seriously demands twin responses from the scholarly community: the first is critique – we must employ literacy in these grammars and skill-sets to affect sophisticated political criticism of these media; and the second is participatory – as responsible intellectuals, we must be able to employ these grammars and skill-sets to intervene in political arguments and the public sphere ourselves. Hence, in addition to conventional research products (three PhD theses and two monographs), this project also aims to produce a series of political manga, short anime, and a simple video game expressive of concepts from Japanese science fiction.



*Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children, Square Enix, 2005*

**FRAMING THE PROJECT:**  
 This project locates itself at the intersection of a number of pressing issues for contemporary society, and simultaneously in an interdisciplinary and multi-medial space between several academic fields of inquiry. In its most general form, the central thread of the interlinked sub-projects is concerned with the matrix of relationships between evolving conceptions of politics, literacy and technology (particularly digital technology). In each case, first and foremost, the concern is with the way in which these shifting categories interact with, challenge, and actually constitute the 'humanity' of individuals in contemporary society and the way in which they interact politically

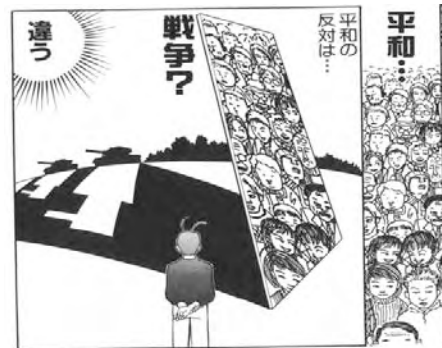
**ASIASCAPES.NET'S ACTIVITIES**



*Neon Genesis Evangelion, Anno Hideaki (Gainax, 1995)*



*Appalseed, Aramaki Shinji (Geneon, 2004)*



*Senso-ron, Kobayashi Yoshinori (Gentosha, 1998)*

**THE FUTURES OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY**

In September 2007, Asiascape.net hosted a conference in The Hague to discuss the possible dimensions of a future shaped by digital technology, both in Asia and in Europe. Participants included representatives from the business world (insurance firms, internet companies), public services (museums), and academics from around the world. We were particularly honored to welcome Prof Susan Napier (Tufts University, Boston), Dr Sharon Kinsella (Oxford University), and Dr Richard Barbrook (Westminster University). The conference sparked a new research agenda in **Comparative Futurities**, which resulted in a major grant application.

**FUTURISM AND NOSTALGIA IN EAST ASIA**

In January 2008, Asiascape.net hosted a conference at Oxford University in the UK to discuss the relationship between nostalgia for the past and aspirations for the future, with a focus on the experiences of East Asia. Participants came from universities around the world.

**SCIENCE FICTION AND THE POLITICS OF THE FUTURE**

In spring of 2008, Asiascape.net hosted a workshop in Tokyo, Japan, to discuss the ways in which science fictional representations of the future in different cultures reveal the political agendas and issues of the present.

**FINAL FANTASY AND THE FUTURE**

In 2009 Asiascape is launching its first substantial research project into the *Final Fantasy* franchise from Square Enix.

**PUBLICATIONS**

In recognition of the under-representation of cyberculture in many of the mainstream academic journals (and hence the difficulty encountered by scholars, journalists and others in finding reliable, scholarly sources in these fields), in 2008, Asiascape.net launched a peer-reviewed online publication series, Asiascape Ops. Asiascape Ops deliberately utilises free, web-based distribution in order to assist in the dissemination of serious scholarship in the areas of cyberculture, animanga etc., with the goal of helping to establish a lively, rich, diverse and thriving field.

**COMPETITION**

In 2009 Asiascape.net will launch a manga competition to tie-in with its new VICI project.

## SPONSORSHIP

Asiascape is proud to acknowledge the support it receives from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), the Modern East Asia Research Centre ([www.MEARC.eu](http://www.MEARC.eu)), Leiden University (LU), the International Association for Asian Studies ([www.IIAS.nl](http://www.IIAS.nl)). For the images used in the exhibition at the Peace Palace, The Hague, to commemorate 400 years of Japanese-Dutch relations on 13 February 2009, we are grateful for the support of Toei Animation. We are duly acknowledge the copyright of Square Enix & Sony, Gainax & Production IG, Toho & Geneon, and Gentosha for the images in this academic leaflet.



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