

The 5th Asia Future Conference Roundtable B
Southeast Asia Inter-Cultural/Religious Dialogue

Social Ethics and Global Economy
“Can Religion Stop the Tyranny of the Market Economy?”

Date : January 10 (Friday), January 11 (Saturday) 2020

Venue : Alabang Bellevue Hotel and University of the Philippines, Los Banos

Organizer : Atsumi International Foundation Sekiguchi Global Research Association (SGRA)

Abstract of Southeast Asia Inter-Cultural/Religious Dialogue

To date, the Southeast Asia Inter-Cultural/Religious Dialogue has been held twice at the Asia Future Conference. The first session was at the 2016 conference (AFC 3) in Kita Kyushu, in which the impact of globalization on Southeast Asian countries and contemporary religious responses to the issue were discussed. The second session took place in 2018 in Seoul (AFC 4), and the focus was on peace and the role of religion in conflict and crisis resolution in Southeast Asia. In the third Southeast Asia Inter-Cultural/Religious Dialogue, the focus will be on ethical theory borne from religion (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism) and the economy.

Despite the economic progress and reduction in poverty in Southeast Asian countries achieved under the current global economy (the globalization of the economy), there continues to be a spread in inequality and with it a growing social division. The distribution of fortune and power has become polarized, and while megacities are built in these countries there is a sense of fatigue amongst local communities who seek to reject the knowledge of their elders which sustained their past lifestyles. Southeast Asia consists of diversity of ethnicities, religions and cultures, and through the trials and errors of the past have built up a wealth of wisdom.

In this roundtable we gather theologians, philosophers and economists, and through focusing on the wisdom and knowledge of Christianity's third world theology, Islam economics and Buddhist philosophy explore the perspectives given on the economy in an increasingly complex world.

The Problem from an Economist's Perspective

The globalization of the economy has eradicated absolutely poverty in Asia, but even in this global society inequality in wealth and property continues to be on the rise domestically. Democratic systems have spread in form around the world, but a closer look reveals that authoritarian systems are shooting up even in developed countries. At the root of these social problems is the rapidly growing inequality in wealth distribution.

How can an economist make sense of the current situation? After the collapse of the Eastern bloc, the form of economics which privileged above all else liberal competition (neoliberalism) gained overwhelming influence and pushed for the globalization of the economy. Unfortunately, mainstream economists were not interested in how property and wealth were distributed and stood by the privileged in society who increased the gap in wealth distribution. It can be said that they played a role in assisting the spread of the insatiable capitalism that pervades society today.

There are rules in society, and limitations. In the history of humanity, freedom and equality have been developed through the concept of human rights. However, to what extent do economists today incorporate this history into their research and outlooks? We are seeing a phenomenon in which the antithesis of democracy is being produced by democratic processes, and this is a crucial issue that needs to be examined.

The countries of Southeast Asia have seen tremendous growth over the past ten years. As one of the core regions of global growth, it has also seen a reduction in the number of people experiencing absolute poverty. With this economic development many people also find themselves ever more entwined and caught up in the processes of global capitalism, and embedded in the hierarchical structure of consumer capitalism. The inequality in wealth distribution increases and the social gap grows wider, as does destruction of the environment.

Many new tasks and challenges await the future of Southeast Asia. At the same time, there is a “wisdom” that has driven and supported these established cultures, such as the sufficiency economics of Thai Buddhism, local community mutual economy aid in Indonesia, Islam in Malaysia, and the anti-globalist economic theory of Christianity that is the basis of poverty aid relief to the slums of the Philippines.

There is now a calling to integrate the knowledge gained from religions and intellectual thought and to allow them to fulfill a new role in the current market economy. This is not restricted to Asian societies, but rather can provide us with insights for the potential of development in this increasingly global world.

This roundtable was put together with the above problems in mind. Through the presentations given by the presenters, I hope that we can learn from each other and have a fruitful exchange.

By Hitoshi Hirakawa

Program

January 9, 2020(Thursday)Day of Arrival Bellevue Hotel, Alabang	
18:00	Meeting with panelists (Brenda Tenegra, Sonja Dale)
Day 1: January 10, 2020(Friday) Alabang, Bellevue Hotel Conference room	
9:30~12:30	AFC5 Opening Ceremony AFC5 keynote speech, Commemorative symposium, etc.
AFC5 Roundtable “Southeast Asia Inter-Cultural/religious Dialogue”	
14:00 <i>Start</i>	Acknowledgment Brenda Tenegra
14:15~14:30	Setting the topic for discussion: Hitoshi Hirakawa (from the perspective of an economist) Focus on the following questions: ➤ What is the problem with global economy? ➤ Why is a dialogue with economists and religious scholars necessary?
14:30~15:00	Keynote : Dr. Bernardo Malvar Villegas Vice President, Board of Trustees, University of Asia and the Pacific Title : Social Ethics and Global Economics ➤ Global Economy - inequality and social division ➤ Ethics and natural law
15:00~15:15	Presentation1 – The Philippines/Christianity Sr. Mary John Mananzan Vice President for External Affairs, St. Scholastica's College Title : Feminization of Poverty in the Philippines ➤ The woman question which is ideological (patriarchy), structural and global. ➤ View of global economy from the grassroots (Case of the Philippines)
15:15~15:30	Presentation2 – Thailand/Buddhism Mr.Somboon Chungprampree Executive Secretary International Network of Engaged Buddhism Title : Buddhist Perspective on Social Ethics and Global Economy ➤ Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and Engaged Buddhism in Thailand ➤ The self-reliance development practices at the grassroots
15:30~15:45	Presentation3 – Indonesia/Islam Dr. Jamhari Siswanto Dean of Graduate School, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) Jakarta and advisor of PPIM (Center for the Study of Islam and Society) Title : The Rise of Religious Conservatism and its Impact on Socio-economic and Political Development in Indonesia ➤ How the conservative groups received considerable support from Indonesian Muslim? ➤ The rise of religious conservatism among students of high school and university
15:45~16:00	[Coffee break]
16:00~17:30	Roundtable Discussion MC/Facilitator: Tadashi Ogawa (Atomi University)
Day 2: January 11, 2020(Saturday) University of the Philippines, Los Baños Laguna (UPLB)	
AM : Travel to Los Banos	
11:00-12:30	Session A Discussion (Panelists & participants)
11:00-12:30	Session B Discussion (Panelists & participants)
Participants can join the group discussion with the panelists. Non-academic-style discussion, more of a free discussion	

Presenters/Panelists

Supervisors

Prof. Hitoshi Hirakawa (Nagoya University Professor Emeritus, Asian economics/)

Prof. Tadashi Ogawa (Atomi University, international relations)

Dr. Ferdinand Maquito (UPLB, economics) Vice Chair of AFC5 Executive Committee

Keynote Speaker

Philippines: Prof. Bernardo Malvar Villegas (University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P))

Case Presenters

Philippines: Sister Mary John Mananzan (Missionary of Benedictine Sisters, Poverty and Gender)

Thailand: Mr. Somboon Chungprampree (International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), Buddhist Ethics)

Indonesia: Prof. Jamhari Siswanto (Dean of Graduate School of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN), Islam in Indonesia)

Invited Panelists

Thailand: Venerable Napan Thawornbanjob (Spirituality and Engagement/ Phra Nak Phatthane)

Indonesia: Dr. Amelia Fauzia (Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University/ Faith and State)

Philippines: Mr. Geny Francia Lapina (University of the Philippines Los Banos/Economics)

Philippines: Dr. Jovi Dacanay (University of Asia and the Pacific/ Economics)

SGRA Members

Dr. Brenda Tenegra (Philippines, Sociology) Project Coordinator

Dr. Sonja Dale (Norway/Singapore, Sociology/Gender studies) MC, Coordinator

Dr. Ranjana Mukopadhiyaya (India, Religious Studies) Session Facilitator

Abstract

[Keynote Speech]

Prof. Bernardo Malvar Villegas (Philippines)

Vice President, Board of Trustees, University of Asia and the Pacific

Social Ethics and Global Economics

The global economy is faced with increased inequality within national economies and between the highly developed countries and the emerging markets that are still trying to attain sustainable and inclusive development. A major reason for these inequalities is the absence of ethical practices among both the government officials and the leading industrial leaders in both developed and developing economies.

In addition to rampant corruption in the public sector, there is little concern for the common good among those who are on top of business organizations. There are not enough people in business who consider it their obligation to contribute to the common good of society, which is defined in ethical terms as a social or juridical order that enables every single member of society to attain his or her integral human development. At best, lip service is paid to the "greatest good for the greatest number" which can be a dangerous criterion for determining the good of society. Ethics requires the recognition of a natural law that objectively establishes the difference between good and evil, which cannot be determined by majority rule. The principle of solidarity requires that every decision maker consider how he, in his business decisions, is contributing to the welfare of every person in society and not only to the maximization of profit of his enterprise. The same can be said of every consumer who, for example, should consider how his or her behavior as a consumer is affecting the physical environment.

All cultures, religions and ideologies and Asia must agree on such basic ethical principles imprinted in the mind of every human being by the Creator such as the principles of subsidiarity, the principle of solidarity, the common good, the universal destination of goods and the preferential option for the poor or marginalized.

[Case Presentation 1]

Sr. Mary John Mananzan (Philippines)

Vice President for External Affairs of St. Scholastica's College, Manila.

Feminization of Poverty in the Philippines

Poverty in the Philippines is caused by 1) unequal distribution of resources; 2) percent of the people in the Philippines owning and control 75 percent of land and capital; 3) foreign control of the economy exacerbated by globalization.

Feminization of poverty is understandable in the context of the woman question which can be defined as the situation of women characterized by discrimination, subordination, oppression and exploitation as women, regardless of class, race, nationality, creed and is ideological (Patriarchy), structural and global.

"Feminization of poverty" means that there are a greater number of women who are poor. Although men are also poor, there is a greater severity of poverty in women as in men. It also means that there is an increasing trend of more women falling below the poverty line because of increased number of female heads of households, etc.

According to UNDP Philippines: "Millions of Filipino women still live today in poverty, with rural and indigenous women being the most vulnerable...."

Filipino women have less access to resources, have only access to low paying domestic jobs, earn less wages than their male counterparts. The fact that they are also mainly responsible for the household makes outside jobs a double burden for them.

Certain laws and support systems have been established but these are not properly implemented and are insufficient for the needs of women.

[Case Presentation 2]

Mr. Somboon Chungprampree (Thailand)

Executive Secretary of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)

Buddhist Perspective on Social Ethics and Global Economy

Viewing the global economy from the perspective of Buddhist ethics is relevant in the modern age in terms of social and economic development. Some examples of how Buddhist philosophy and teachings are in Thailand seen through the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy development approach using public policy from the top and the self-reliance development practices at the grassroots.

Today, Thailand's Theravada Buddhists are making the transition from a pre-modern low-income rural society to a middle-income modern technological society. The dilemma is how to balance the spiritual and material worlds, or the religious traditions and secular world. We will examine how to do this, and whether monks and nuns are becoming more actively involved in their communities. Now, are Buddhist monks and nuns at the center of or are they marginalized from the development processes? Although, their engagement takes place across several levels – social, economic, community; political; and moral and spiritual.

[Case Presentation 3]

Prof. Jamhari Siswanto (Indonesia)

Dean of Graduate School, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN)

Jakarta and advisor of PPIM (Center for the Study of Islam and Society)

The Rise of Religious conservatism and its Impact on socio-economic and political development in Indonesia

On the 4th November (known as 411) and on 2nd December 2016 (known as 212) massive demonstrations were held in front of the Indonesian State Palace (Istana Negara) demanding to prosecute Governor Ahok for religious blasphemy. Ahok, the Christian and Chinese Governor of Jakarta, made a controversial statement that some Muslim leaders have fooled Muslims by using a Qur'anic verse (al-Ma'ida 51) not to vote for a non-Muslim political leader. These two demonstrations were successful in two ways; defeating Ahok in the Election of Jakarta Governor and sending him to prison for 18 months. Conservative groups such as FPI (Front Pembela Islam--Islamic Defence Front), HTI (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia), and conservative elements within MUI (Majlis Ulama Indonesia--Indonesia Ulama Council), HMI (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam--Islamic Students Association) and the network of Pesantren Gontor (Islamic Boarding School, founded in 1926) have orchestrated the demonstration. The question is how these conservative groups received considerable support from Indonesian Muslim? Some studies showed that Indonesian Muslims is becoming more conservative that matches the reason why the 411 and 212 demonstrations received immense support. The reason national survey conducted by PPIM in 2017 demonstrated the rise of religious conservatism among student of high school and university. The presidential election in 2019 also showed an apparent political influence of religious conservatism. The religious issues, such as Islamic Caliphate and Piety of the Presidential candidates, have colored the campaign. I will explore the impact of Indonesian religious conservatism in socio-economic and political developments.