



## Book Review

# Civic Engagement in Asia: Lessons from Transformative Learning in the Quest for A Sustainable Future

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### Climate

Change is a hot topic to be discussed in various countries. This is not surprisingly, since the climate change has had a tremendous impact on human life, ranging from economic, political, legal to socio-cultural aspects. Due to the tremendous and multi-complex impacts, it is not surprising if many countries begin to think about their development strategies that are at crossroads or even starting to question whether or not the planned development program is a sustainable manner? Such debates are taking place around the world and there is no single answer that can provide a solution to the impact of recent climate change.

Indeed, in the international level, debates are already ongoing but it should be noted that very little certain real discussions can be heard at the local or grassroots level. For example, climate change is on the agenda of discussion at the elite level of state leaders, but the question is how can the people at the grassroots do something so that the climate change does not make their lives in certain localities threatened? This needs to be highlighted and also shall be given more serious attention so that a diverse society with their cultural traditions, socio-cultural

systems, economic systems and legal and political systems would not be trapped into a stalemate of policies led by rulers or community leaders at the local level.

The presence of this book, entitled *Civic Engagement in Asia: Lessons from Transformative Learning in the Quest for A Sustainable Future*, which is a collection of writings from ecologists, political scientist and other social and humanities scholars seems to give serious attention to human attitudes and behaviors in various development programs in Asia in general. This book provides spaces for thought to establish dialogue in relation to the experience of Asian society. Indeed, sharing of experiences could be used as one of the important aspects in making a decision to have right target.

The book is the result of thoughts from several authors who have scientific backgrounds as academicians or researchers from the Asian region about various problems and conditions that occur in Thailand, Laos, Indonesia (East Sumba, Lombok, Papua), Quezon City (Philippines), Malaysia, and Cambodia. The book is summarized into 24 chapters. In this book review, of course, not all writings will be highlighted but certain issues related to spiritual elements, religions or beliefs and those are rooted in a strong tradition in Asian society in general will be given attention. For example, in his writing Dicky Sofjan entitled, "The Heartware of Ecological

Sustainability in the Asian Context" explains the term sustainability which refers to existence or survival despite modernization, global economic disruption, socio-cultural dilution that takes place quickly in various parts of the world. To that end, Dicky Sofjan argues that the relationship between nature and culture takes place in the life of local people which is related to beliefs, religions, and spirituality manifested in various forms of religious ceremonies or rituals. This also takes place along with ecological changes both in Southeast Asia and in Japan. He further argues that there is a strong relationship between aspects of ongoing modernization with global capitalism and climate change which significantly impacts the lives of local communities and the surrounding ecology. He believes that heartware remains as a predominant driving force for ecological sustainability. Another author is Ahmad Rifai who writes "Urban Reform in Indonesia" explaining how civic engagement is a very broad concept that has various understandings in relation to differences in regions, localities, bodies of knowledge and ideologies. There is a hope that the presence of this book can provide wider exposure to knowledge sharing and exchange.

He added that as civic engagement and participation in development in counter-context, documenting smart practices to help informing community members and to encourage greater participation, especially the public participation. Similarly, the cases or disclosures of case studies that occur in Indonesia, for example East Sumba, Lombok, and Papua, are very interesting to see because of the limitations of studies related to ecology and climate change. These kinds of studies have been neglected not only in the present but also in the past. This is understandable because during the Dutch colonial rule the spotlight on this issue was almost ignored. The Dutch colonial rulers concentrated only on western Indonesia (Inner Indonesia) rather than Outer

Indonesia (Outer Indonesia).

Until now, there is an inequality between the two regions and this is the contribution of this book in complementing the reference treasures of studies or researches that should be further improved for the younger generation as well as ecological researchers in the present and the near future.

Writings from experiences gained from the cases in Indonesia, for example, can be seen in the work written by Chandra Kirana Prijosusilo, entitled "How Diversity and Culture can fuel economic prosperity: The Case of traditional Textile Artisans of East Sumba-Indonesia", which is more related to the discussion of biodiversity and culture question whether or not economic prosperity can be gained from the traditional textile artists from the community in East Sumba, Indonesia.

In addition to some cases and experiences of topics taken from the Indonesian region known as the Southeast Asian mainland world region, it is also displayed from other Southeast Asian Ocean world regions, including the Philippines. There is something interesting about the case that occurred in the Philippines as revealed by Nestor Castro entitled, "Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals:

The main question in the Case of a Community in Quezon City, Philippines is on how to ground concepts related to sustainable development goals. The contribution of this paper is to attempt to bring the fore from the anthropological concepts of the bottom layers of society. In this case, how they define and try to elevate local value to strengthen the sustainable development goals not partially from people's lives. Thus, the concept of inclusive development by involving the role of local communities in the Philippines becomes a reality and is expected to contribute the thoughts in the broader context of civil society engagement in Asia in general. Meanwhile, from the mainland world of

Southeast Asia, it can be seen that there are contributions from experiences from Thailand, Laos, Malaysia and Cambodia. From Thailand Tran Thi Lanh, entitled, "Building Livelihood Sovereignty for the Mekong Region" discusses livelihood issues, especially livelihoods for residents along the Mekong River. This study is about the need for networking more broadly by involving regional networks and the involvement of indigenous people figures, especially in relation to the recognition of rights related to natural resources both for indigenous people and local communities throughout Southeast Asia and beyond. Contributions about this thought were written by Antoinette G Royo, Andhika Vega Praputra and Joan

Jamisolamin and Neni Rochaeni in their writings on "Building Recognition for the Resource Rights of Indigenous People and Local Communities". The connections actually already exist with Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia, Bhutan, Philippines, Indonesia, Europe and even Brazil. Indeed, the presence of the book, entitled, *Civic Engagement in Asia: Lessons from Transformative Learning in the Quest for A Sustainable Future* give us significant understanding on how the involvement of the civic society in Asia by introducing local cultures based on local wisdom in the context of preserving a sustainable development.[]