Towards Global Transformation
Proceedings of the Third International Conference on
Gross National Happiness

The Centre for Bhutan Studies
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Activating Difference: Appreciating Equity in an Era of Global Interdependence

Peter D. Herschock

It is a great – and, indeed, humbling – honour to be able to open the academic sessions of the “Third International Conference on Gross National Happiness: Worldviews Make a Difference: Towards Global Transformation”. Although the comparison is not at all warranted, it is hard for me not to recall the opening remark of the 9th century Chan Buddhist master, Linji, when he was invited by the provincial governor to speak before an audience of several hundred people about the meaning of Buddhist enlightenment: “As soon as I open my mouth, I will have made a mistake.”

Like Linji, however, I am obliged to speak.

As I understand it, ours is a gathering that seeks to shed practical light on the means-to and meaning-of happiness, where happiness is understood not only as a matter of subjective well-being, but also as a distinctive quality and direction of relationships – a quality and direction of our interdependence and interpenetration.

The hope expressed in the title of this conference and in the efforts we have been expending in coming together is, I think, not at all misplaced. For the most part, humanity is getting things right. Globally, we now produce enough food to feed every person on the planet. We have realised living conditions and developed medical practices that allow us collectively to enjoy the longest life expectancies in history. Literacy is at an historical high. Communication takes place at the speed of light. World-class libraries are available to anyone with internet access, and the range of choices exercised in pursuit of lives worth leading by the world’s nearly seven billion people is wider and deeper than it has ever been – a pursuit now globally recognised as a basic and universal human right.

* East-West Center, Hawaii.
The devil, as the saying goes, “is in the details”. More than 800 million people today are chronically hungry. One out of every five people currently live in what the World Bank terms ‘absolute poverty’ – conditions so degraded and degrading that they do not afford even the hope of a dignified life. One billion people do not have access to clean drinking water, and 2.6 billion live without adequate sanitation. One out of every seven people in the world are illiterate (two out of every three of these being women or girls), and functional illiteracy affects nearly one out of every four people living in many of even the most highly developed countries. For tragically large numbers of people, the fact that they ‘possess’ universal human rights does little to offset the effects of systematically perpetrated human wrongs.

The fact that humanity is mostly getting things right is scant consolation to those living in absolute poverty or to those surviving on less than what $2 a day might buy in the United States today, a population that is now equal to that of every man, woman and child alive in 1965. What must be done to open spaces of hope for these mothers, fathers, sons and daughters? How do we work out from present conditions, as they have come to be, to realise – at a bare minimum – dignified lives for all?

One place to begin, I think, is to reflect personally and collectively on a key implication of the Buddhist teachings of karma and interdependence: all experienced realities imply responsibility. We are all in some degree complicit with the inequity and suffering that are no less a part of the contemporary world than are its many wonders. Fortunately, as the Buddha insisted, it is precisely because of karma that we are able to realise lives dedicated to the liberating resolution of all trouble and suffering. By changing the complexion of our values-intentions-actions, we can change the patterns of outcome/opportunity that shape our personal and public experiences. Indeed, to the degree that we heed the Buddhist injunction to see all things as impermanent, it is clear that there really is no question about whether change is possible. Change is already continuously underway. The only real question is: change by what means and with what meaning? Or to turn the question around: since change is ongoing, why does it seem to be heading us in the direction of greater inequity and greater suffering for
greater numbers? How do we go about effectively changing the way things are changing?

A unifying aim of the various sessions of this conference is to reflect on how best to answer the questions just posed about opening spaces of hope and dignity for all, and about orienting change toward greater equity and happiness. As a prelude to them, let me offer a few thoughts of my own.

First, it is my own conviction, that truly dignified lives cannot be lived by any unless dignity is a reality for all. It is my further conviction that all will not enjoy dignified lives until the differences of each are enabled to make a difference for all.

For most of us, having been educated to a global modern standard, it is natural to assume that it is only through moving in the direction of greater universality and equality that inequity can be overcome, poverty reduced, and dignity made possible for all. That is, we believe that it is through our commonality – not our differences – that we will find a happy route to global transformation. As I understand it, the main title of this conference, “Worldviews Make a Difference”, insists otherwise. And I would like to take a few moments to press the point that global transformation for greater equity, dignity and happiness will not come about through deepening our sense of commonality alone, but only to the degree that we also activate our differences as the basic condition for mutual contribution.

It is a central tenet of Buddhist traditions – but one that I believe is shared by all systems of effective religious, social and political practice – that meaningful change can only be initiated and sustained on the basis of present circumstances, as they have come to be. In the present era, the way things have come to be is very much a function of the interlocking array of processes that we refer to as ‘globalisation’. Let me mention three key affects of these processes, each of them in large measure both driven by and driving scientific and technological advances.

First, and most notably perhaps, is accelerating and intensifying change. Globalisation is bringing not only more change more rapidly, but also the advent of qualitatively distinct kinds of change. Of particular importance is the phenomenon known as ‘emergence’: structurally significant changes occurring
in complex systems that in principle could not have been anticipated, but that after the fact do make perfect sense.

Second are homogenising effects that led many early critics of globalisation to fear the Westernisation or McDonaldisation of the world, but that in fact have fostered truly global forms of popular culture and, more importantly, patterns of institutional convergence that, for example, allow credit cards to be used the world over and are beginning to enable students to take advantage of virtually borderless higher education.

Third are pluralising effects that have taken the form of resurgent national and ethnic identities, but also niche marketing, global production networks, and such acutely uneven geographies of development that the top 2% of the world’s people now own 50% of global wealth while the bottom 50% own less than 1%.

As a combined result, we are not only in an era of change, but a change of eras. More specifically, I would submit that we are in the midst of a transition from an era dominated by problem-solution to one dominated by predicament-resolution. Problems arise when changing circumstances make evident the failure of existing practices for meeting abiding needs and interests. Solving problems involves developing new or improved means for arriving at ends we fully intend to continue pursuing. For example, gas/electric hybrid automobile engines solve the ‘problem’ of rising fuel costs. Predicaments occur when changing circumstances lead to or make us aware of conflicts or competition among our own values, interests, development aims, and constructions of meaning. Predicaments cannot be solved. They can only be resolved through sustaining detailed attention to situational dynamics and realising both enhanced clarity and more thoroughly and deeply coordinated commitments.

World hunger is not a problem. Enough food is grown to supply adequate nutrition for all. What is lacking is the resolve to bring our economic, social and political values, intentions and practices into alignment with doing so. World hunger is a predicament. And an increasingly significant part of the reason that we make so little headway in addressing it and other apparently intractable issues like global climate change, illiteracy and mounting economic inequity is because we persist in thinking
about them as *problems* awaiting technical solution, rather than as *predicaments* commanding sustained and ever deepening resolve.

In sum: 21st century patterns of globalisation are raising crucial questions about the *means* and *meaning* of difference, presenting us with a paradoxical impasse or aporia. On one hand, we need to more fully recognise and respect difference, going beyond tolerating differences from and among others to *enable differences to matter more, not less*. On the other hand, we need to engage in more robust collective action and global common cause, *incorporating differences within shared and deepening commitments*. To ignore our differences now is to fail resolving current predicaments and to foster conditions for more, and more intense, predicaments in the future. To pass through the aporia posed by the complex realities of the 21st century, we must *activate* our *differences* as the very basis of all mutual contribution.

As a way of fleshing out what this activation might mean, let me distinguish between variety and diversity as two means-to and meanings-of difference – two qualities and directions of differentiation processes. Variety is function of simple co-existence, a *quantitative* index of factual multiplicity. It connotes things *being-different*: a surface characteristic that is visible at a glance. Diversity is a function of complex interdependence, a *qualitative* index of self-sustaining and difference-appreciating patterns of mutual contribution to shared welfare. Diversity connotes things *becoming-different*: a process of meaningful differentiation; a relational achievement that becomes evident, if at all, only over time.

To make this distinction more concrete, consider the ranges of plant and animal species and the interrelationships among them in a zoo and in a naturally occurring ecosystem. An ideal zoo, for instance, might include representatives of every relevant plant and animal species in a given ecosystem. But these species would, because of the nature of zoos, have very little relevance for one another. They would be in little or no position to contribute to one another’s welfare as they do in the environments within, and along with which, they have evolved. Zoos are high in variety; ecosystems are high in diversity. In this room today, there is
remarkable variety in terms of cultural backgrounds, historical experiences, academic training, and religious or spiritual sensibilities. Whether or not this gathering begins to exhibit diversity will depend on how well we are able to go beyond how much we differ-from each another to how best we might differ-for one another.

To resolve the predicaments arising with complex global interdependence and to break through the aporia of difference they bring into focus, we must go beyond recognising the co-existence of different worldviews – the variety of ways in which humans conceive the meaning of ‘the good’: a good life, a good environment, or a good political economy. To bring about truly equitable global transformation, we must begin realising and continuously enhancing social, economic, political, cultural, technological, and – I would argue – spiritual diversity.

This means going beyond modern universalisms that would deny our differences in celebration of dreamed for equality. But it also means going beyond postmodern relativisms that would hold differences to be critically incommensurable and that would warrant the validity of fundamentalist tribalisms. The former are likely to result in a world in which everyone is exactly like me; the latter, one in which we live adjacent to one another in enclaves of mutually enforced moral apartheid.

There is no doubt that tolerance is better than intolerance. But tolerating the differences of others is no longer good enough. An era of predicament-resolution compels: first, developing capacities for harmonising distinctively differing worldviews and conceptions of the good; and, secondly, generating commitments of sufficient intercultural gravity to reconfigure the dynamics of our globally complex interdependence across both sectors and scales. Diversity itself, I would argue, should be seen as an indispensable global commons and public good.

A crucial entailment of enhancing diversity is moving beyond dichotomous thinking. The self-other dichotomy is perhaps the most basic and virulent expression of this, but no less entrenched are our tendencies to split the world into what is attractive or aversive, pure or impure, right or wrong, good or evil. In a phrase drawn from Mahayana Buddhism (but with resonances in other
Appreciating Equity in an Era of Global Interdependence

spiritual and religious traditions as well), we must begin engaging our circumstances non-dualistically. This does not mean ignoring differences. Rather, as proposed by the Huayan Buddhist thinker, Fazang, it means seeing that all things are the same, precisely insofar as they differ meaningfully from one another. Non-dualism means realising that things ultimately are only what they mean for one another.

Given this, changing the way things are changing can be seen as a process of opening, within present realities, new courses of meaning making. Here, the early Buddhist contrast between aims and endeavours that have *kusala* results and those that have *akusala* results is quite useful. *Kusala* and *akusala* are normally translated as ‘wholesome’ and ‘unwholesome’, but in fact *kusala* is a superlative. It does not mean good as opposed to bad, skilled as opposed to unskilled, wholesome as opposed to unwholesome, or something that is just ‘good enough’. Rather, *kusala* connotes heading in the direction of excellence or virtuosity.

Conducting ourselves in a *kusala* manner is the Buddhist meaning of going ‘beyond good and evil’. It is the expression of resolutely appreciative karma – intentions and conduct that continuously result in adding-value-to or enriching our situation, but also to our becoming ever more valuably situated. According to the Sakkapanha Sutta, it is only by both decreasing the *akusala* and increasing the *kusala* that we stop proliferating impediments to liberation (*papanca*), dissolving the root conditions of conflict and suffering.

To break through the aporia of difference with which we now find ourselves confronted, we must go beyond being non-judgmental or averring the ultimate equality of one and all. These may perhaps help decrease the *akusala* effects of dichotomous thinking; but they will not generate *kusala* patterns of outcome and opportunity. For that, we must conserve our differences rather than disarming them.

Perhaps surprisingly, then, if we are to orient global interdependence toward greater equity, we must refrain from the temptation to conceive of equity in terms of equality of opportunity. Equality is a very useful fiction – the pursuit of which has done much, for example, to positively reframe gender
discourse and political practice – but it is a fiction nonetheless, and one that can hardly ring true in a world of fabulously widening income gaps. Equity can only be enhanced to the extent that the dynamics of our interdependence enable and encourage all present to contribute to furthering their own interests, in ways that are deemed valuable by others. In short, equity is rooted in the activation of our differences to be able to make a difference, for ourselves and for others. Ultimately, there is no equity without diversity.

One of the insights about diversity afforded by the natural world is that diversity is highest, not within any given ecosystem, but rather in the ecotone or zone of overlap between them. That is, diversity tends to be highest where the potential for conflicts among values, aims and interests is greatest. It is not coincidental that our era of increasingly broad and deep predicaments is also an era of historically unprecedented potential for both diversity and equity. Realising this potential would surely bring about a happier world. Doing so, however, will require that we work together to create social, economic, political, cultural and technological conditions under which we can realise and deepen our diversity as a crucial global relational commons and public good. This can be accomplished only by deepening our capacities-for and commitments-to contributing to shared flourishing, realising kusala arcs of change, moment-by-moment, from wherever each of us happens to be sitting, standing, walking or lying down.

Some might object that as good as this sounds, surely it is a path that could be travelled only by the extraordinary few. ‘Global transformation’ has a heroic ring, and it is tempting to insist that it can only be spurred and guided by those ‘chosen by heaven’. To this, I would respond by invoking the Confucian response of Mencius when asked about the difference between the human and the animal. The difference, he admitted, is infinitesimal. What distinguishes the human is a disposition for enchanting the ordinary: taking eating and turning it into culinary and social art; taking cries of fear and pain and turning them into poetry and song; taking the act of procreation and transforming it into romantic love and family. It is our human nature to take things,
as they have come to be, and to distinctively enchant or appreciate them.

And given this, although some freedom-of-choice is certainly better than none at all, human freedom cannot be exhausted by the exercise of choice. That would be to root freedom in dichotomous thinking – a matter of getting what I want and avoiding what I do not want. Freedom finally becomes, then, only a means to further want or lack. Expressing our deepest human nature is expressing our disposition for entering into appreciative and liberating relationships.

There is a passage in the *Diamond Sutra* where the Buddha is asked what he attained with complete, unsurpassed enlightenment and liberation. His answer was: “Not one single thing.” Liberating happiness is not something achieved or gained; it is a quality of relationship through which our entire situation is suffused with compassion, equanimity, loving-kindness and joy in the good fortune of others. Ultimately, there is no freedom or happiness to be attained. There is only the happiness of relating-freely in deep and mutual enrichment.

Although the dynamics of 21st century globalisation are generating ever greater and deeper predicaments, they are also generating ever more potent opportunities for realising global common cause and shared resolve on the most apt means-to and meaning-of happiness and human flourishing. Let me end by voicing hope that the academic sessions to follow will contribute, in distinctively differing and concrete ways, to the wise and kusala activation of these opportunities.
Pretty Woman

Dasho Kinley Dorji

The village

The young woman is bent almost double, vigorously soaping her hair, face, shoulders, and neck. Her faded blue flannel Petticoat is pulled up so the elastic holds it just below her breasts. It is wrapped around her buttocks and thighs with the end bunched together and held between her knees. She is singing as she rubs the somewhat hard cake of red Lifebuoy soap with some effort to work up lather.

The water, a natural spring, flows down the mountain into the village which is a scenic sprawl of terraced fields that are cut into the steep slopes. The foot-wide community canal meanders down through the terraces, taking the spring water past the houses. As the water flows past each house it is tapped with a zaa, a three or four-foot hollow half log that channels a small jet of water towards the house. It is shared by the people and domestic animals and the drain-off waters the vegetable gardens.

The twelve houses in the village are spread out. Each house has its own space, surrounded by clumps of trees, bamboo, and vegetable gardens. Beside every house is a cowshed and a pig sty; some also have chicken coops. Multi-coloured hens, mostly with red, brown, and white feathers, and the occasional rooster clucks around the houses during the day, pecking titbits from the ground. Most families keep a fierce guard dog to warn them of leopards that come to steal hens. They are usually locked in a strong wooden house to stop them from biting visitors and to protect them from the leopards.

Bent forward to catch the stream of water before it hits the drain, the woman does not see ten-year old Kuenley who runs down the slope along the canal. Ignoring the twisting path, he nimbly dodges Artemisia and cannabis bushes and clumps of

* The Editor-in-Chief and Managing Director, Kuensel, the national newspaper of Bhutan.
bamboo, and jumps over a variety of dwarf shrubs, some of them with serrated leaves that have sharp thorns sticking out of them. Puffs of dust rise as his bare feet hit the dry earth. He clears the last patch of yellowish green shrubs with a leap, landing near the woman.

“Ow Thrimi,” says Kuenley. “My mother sent me to borrow your dre (measuring bowl).”

Rubbing a new layer of soap into her closely cropped hair, she does not hear him.

“Ow Thrimi!” Kuenley shouts.

Still bent over, Thrimi stops and turns her head sideways to look at Kuenley. She squints through the soap bubbles that make her eyes smart.


She places the soap on a flat piece of stone on the edge of the canal and moves forward, placing her head under the stream of water to rinse the soap off. When she is satisfied that the soap is all gone she runs her fingers through her hair and straightens up to face Kuenley. Her neck, rounded shoulders, and muscled arms are burned dark brown. Her large and firm breasts are much fairer. The water trickles from her hair and face, down her arms, between her breasts.

“What did you say?”

“My mother wants to borrow your dre. The trader from Thinleygang has come to collect the rice that we owe him and uncle Tashi has taken our dre to Thimphu. He’s gone to sell some rice at the weekend market.”

“Let me finish washing,” says Thrimi. She lifts her petticoat higher up her thighs and sticks out her legs, one at a time, under the jet of water. She soaps her sturdy thighs and calves and rinses them. Then she soaps her feet and uses a small flat stone to scrape the hardened skin around the edges of her feet. The skin on her heels is cracked and the soles of her feet coarse from years of outdoor life without shoes.

Kuenley likes Thrimi, with her red cheeks and bright eyes and ready smile. She is known to be the prettiest woman in the village.
She is the best singer and the centre of attention at village festivals. Twenty years old, she is also admired for her strength as she goes about the seasonal chores of a village woman. In winter she carries home loads of firewood for the house, dry oak leaves for her cowshed, and takes baskets of manure out to the fields. In spring she plants the chillies and spinach in the garden front of the house and radish and turnips behind the house. In summer she is out in the rice fields transplanting the seedlings as her uncle ploughs the ground. In autumn she has to harvest, thresh, and mill the rice.

Thrimi picks up a small grey cotton towel sitting on the ground and quickly wipes her face, neck, breasts and stomach. “Come,” she says. Throwing the towel around her neck so the two ends cover her breasts, she picks up the soap with her left forefinger and thumb and walks to the wooden ladder that goes up to the outdoor deck that leads into the house. She climbs the near-vertical ladder with ease, ignoring the handrail that runs on her right, her back muscles rippling gently on both sides of the spine.

Kuenley follows her up to the deck and through the large open door into the house. The spacious all-purpose room has a neat mud hearth against one wall and a double-deck window on the other. An array of pots sit on two rows of shelves above the hearth. The only furniture in the room is a wooden box against the wall beside the hearth, the rice container. Some ropes and tools hang on wooden pegs near the door. Thrimi unhooks the dre which is hanging by a thin leather strap above the rice box and hands it to him. “We need it back tomorrow.”

Kuenley glances at the man in a black gho sitting cross-legged on a black bear-skin rug near the open window, his back to the room. He is using the late-morning sunlight to better see as he turns and twists strands of dry nettle bark into a rope. His head is cocked a little to the right so he can use his good eye. Kuenley knows Thrimi’s uncle, Dom Saymi (bear killer).

All the boys in the village are in awe of Dom Saymi who got his name because he killed a bear with his dozom, a double-edged 18-inch knife that tapers evenly into a sharp point. The dozom is a multi-purpose tool that every man, and some women, carry,
tucked diagonally into their belts in front. The story is that Dom Saymi and the Himalayan Black Bear suddenly came upon each other on a narrow path above the village. The bear sprang on him as wild animals do when they are surprised. As they wrestled over the bushes Dom Saymi pulled out his dozom and stabbed the bear repeatedly in the stomach until it collapsed on him. The bear had ripped off the left side of Dom Saymi’s face, including his left eye and nose.

He does not talk because his mouth is disfigured. He works on the farm and makes nettle ropes that the farmers use to tie their oxen and cows in their sheds at night, to carry firewood, and for other necessities. Thrimi lives with him, her father having left the village with another woman when she was ten years old and her mother having died of a stomach disease when she was fifteen years old.

Kuenley bounds down the steps and runs up the path towards his house. He suddenly bumps into Nado, an eighteen-year old cowherd who lives with his mother on the outskirts of the village, who jumps out from behind a thick Rhododendron bush. “Isn’t she pretty?” asked Nado. “Did you look at her breasts? I couldn’t see them too clearly from here because she was bent down most of the time.”

“Yes,” said Kuenley, who had not looked at her breasts. It seemed the right thing to say to an older boy who had been hiding in the bushes peeping at Thrimi washing.

The dancing picks up pace. Four men and two women started at an easy gait, singing a pleasant folk song, and maintaining the rhythm with their steps, as they move in a circle around the bonfire. Other men and women join as they get inspired by the songs and as they drink enough to find the courage. By the third song, eight men and five women are stomping in unison, singing a little breathlessly as they move. The leader, Thrimi, sings the verses and everyone joins the chorus. Her voice is clear and strong and her expression conveys the mood of the song. Her eyes are downcast and her expression reflective when she sings a sad song. She smiles and moves into a bouncy rhythm for a happy song.
The party is at Ap Tandi’s house. He is holding his annual lochhoe ceremony that day and invited all his neighbours for the evening’s festivity. The entire village is there. At dusk the men, women, and children sit in two rows in front of the house to be served the traditional evening meal of rice, pork and beef strips and Ap Tandi’s legendary pumpkin stew, spiced with green chilli and hot pepper corn. Now the ara flows. Ap Tandi’s wife, Aum Zam, is known to make a powerful brew from fermented wheat. She had loudly made her annual vow that nobody would leave her house until all her palangs were empty.

A few of the men and women, including Nado, are visibly tipsy as they sing and dance. Every song is greeted with shouts of appreciation, from the young and old alike. They shout requests for their favourite songs. As the men flock around Thrimi, gray-haired Dophu, the wittiest man the village shouts, “Thrimi, with her face like the full moon, has more admirers than the flies on Ap Tandi’s dried meat.” Everyone laughs. “Nado will get nowhere because he won’t be able to stay on his feet for long.” Everyone laughs again.

The older people sit close to the fire and children run around, playing their own games. A bamboo container of ara tucked under his arm, Ap Tandi pours drinks for the dancers. “We will sing the tashi lebey (auspicious closing song) only at dawn so you can see your way home,” he says, laughing. “We will not let Thrimi stop singing tonight.”

Kuenley is fast asleep as his father carries him home a little before midnight. His school holidays are over and he leaves for Thimphu tomorrow. He lives in Thimphu with his aunt who is married to a clerk in the finance ministry. Most of the villagers send their children to schools in Thimphu if they have relatives to live with because the village school is in Thinleygang, a two-hour walk. Children find it difficult to reach school for the morning prayers. And there are too many leeches when it rains.

**New times**

Kuenley is 14 years old and home for the school holidays when the electricity lines to the village are completed. The village astrologer chooses an auspicious day for the inauguration
ceremony. The astrologer and three lay monks start the prayers at dawn. The dzongda, the district's highest official, arrives at the auspicious hour of 9.00 am and turns on the transmission station below the village. “Our nights have turned into days because of the selfless service of our beloved King,” he says. Thrimi leads a group of women in a few songs. Everyone has contributed ingredients for suja-dresi (butter tea and sweet rice) and nominated the village's best cook, Ap Dago, to make the dresi. The astrologer and the dzongda are served first and everyone else sits on the grass in two rows, their cups and bowls placed in front of them for the suja and dresi.

Now the houses are brightly lit with naked bulbs at night. Children do their homework and women weave. The village is changing. The people are changing. Thrimi has married a fifty-five-year old former government official who bought land from an old couple who have left the village to retire into a life of Buddhist practice. The couple sold their land because their two sons have both left home, one to join the civil service and one to become a monk.

Everyone calls Thrimi's husband “dasho” because he had been an official. He had resigned from the government and made money by becoming a trader. He has built a new house with the village's first zinc roof. It glistens in the sun, in stark contrast to the traditional wooden shingles that the others used. He also brought from Thimphu a large-size rice cooker, an electric pan to cook meat dishes, and a refrigerator. He has a special sitting room in his house, with a sofa set and two choedroms to entertain visiting officials.

Nado is a telephone line-man at the district telephone exchange. He left the village to look for a job. He is trained to look after the telephone line between the Thinleygang exchange and Lobeysa. His parents still look after seventeen cows, grazing them during the day and milking them in the morning and evenings to produce butter and cheese. They sell the produce at the Thimphu market.

“No archery this year, huh?” Kuenley is sitting on the raised edge of a terrace. His childhood friend, Tenzing, is ploughing the field, his right hand on the plough handle, pushing the
ploughshare into the ground to get a deep groove, his left hand maneuvering two oxen with a long wooden cane. Tenzing looks around at the rows of unploughed terraces. “It’ll probably take me until Losar to finish these,” he says. Kuenley finds his friends changed every year. At fourteen years he is in Class IX, a boy grappling with homework, obsessed with basketball. The fourteen-year-olds in the village are men with adult responsibilities.

It is February. As they do every year, Kuenley and his mother go to Lobeysa village to make offerings at Chhimi Lhakhang, the 15th-century lhakhang built by the popular saint, Drukpa Kuenley. Drukpa Kuenley strikes a chord in the Bhutanese people because of the outrageous antics he used to overcome evil and to expose the hypocrisy in society, including the religious hierarchy. His teachings are often expressed as graphic sexual exploits, symbolic of his “crazy wisdom”.

The lhakhang, according to legend, is built on the spot where he subjugated the Dzhu-la demoness who was terrorizing the people in the valley. It sits on top of the dramatic hillock that resembles a giant breast. On most days a stream of pilgrims are seen on the bare grassy slope leading to the lhakhang. Many are pregnant and many carry babies to be named because Drukpa Kuenley is most revered for his blessings of fertility for which pilgrims come from all parts of the country. Kuenley’s own parents had lost three babies before him and have no doubt that he survived because they made the pilgrimage to Chhimi Lhakhang when his mother was pregnant with him. So every year, his mother packs rice, meat, fruit, and a bottle of alcohol to be offered to his “spiritual father”.

They stop at the village shop in Lobeysa valley to buy a packet of dalda (oil) and a roll of incense sticks. It is a warm afternoon, typical for Lobeysa valley. Last year the government had introduced a second crop of paddy, in autumn, so the people had two harvests and doubled their income. But this year many families refused because it was too much work. They had no time for their winter festivals, archery matches, and the favourite winter pastime, basking in the sun.

A group of children are leaning on the open windowsill of the shop, gazing longingly at the variety of imported fizzy drinks in the
store that they cannot afford. Some older village boys are gathered outside the shop to stare at the latest attraction in the village, a large glossy advertisement for a new soda drink.

The advertisement shows a fair-skinned dark-haired model lying on her side, her raised head resting on her left hand, propped up by the elbow. She is wearing a red bikini. Her slim body is sensuously poised so that the curve of her waist and hips resembles the ‘waist’ of the pepsi bottle that she holds in her right hand. Her red bikini and the dark red liquid in the bottle contrast sharply against the blue backdrop of the billboard. But it is her bare arms, hips and thighs that are best accentuated in the picture.

“Is she made of plastic?” says one. They break into laughter. They are all in their late teens. Three of them are wearing grimy singlets and shorts that were once white. Two of them are wearing ghos with the tops taken off and sleeves wrapped around their waists.

“I don’t know what she’s made of but Drukpa Kuenley would know what to do with her,” says another. They all laugh.

Twelve-year old Kuenley is not amazed by the billboard because he has seen many of them in Thimphu. He has even watched television. His uncle’s boss in Thimphu bought a television set when he went on a study tour to Bangkok. One day his uncle had sent him with some papers to the boss’s house. The boss was not home so his wife had allowed Kuenley to wait in the sittingroom where her son and daughter were watching a Hindi film.

Back in the village his friends ask him over and over again to repeat what he had seen on television. He can see the amazement in their eyes as he describes the handsome hero, in fine clothes, who fights dozens of bad guys and the heroine who literally glitters with make up and fancy dresses that change even as she dances through fields and forests, over mountains and rivers, on trains, cars, and motorcycles.
Coming of age

“This is a precious load,” says Kuenley’s brother-in-law, Tshering. The cardboard box containing a sixteen-inch Akira television set is strapped to his back. Kuenley follows him up the hill. He is seventeen years old and has just finished school. Over the past year his family had sent his uncle bags of rice, rare orchids collected by Tshering, vegetables and fruits grown on the farm to be sold in Thimphu. His uncle had saved the earnings and bought the television set. Kuenley’s parents had originally planned to buy a diesel-powered rice mill, but his sister, twenty-two-year old Yangzom, and her husband, Tshering, insisted on a television set. Two other families in the village already had television sets.

“I hope you are not going to carry the TV set around the village before you take it home,” says Kuenley. Tshering has a tendency to show off. He did that with a power thresher two years back. “Why not?” was Tshering’s response. “Last year Ap Dophu carried a leg of beef around on his shoulder just to show us that he was going to eat meat.”

For Yangzom, this is the big moment. She has cleared the chhoesham room and had the village carpenter make a special stand for the television set. It is placed in the corner opposite the altar, its glistening presence immediately commanding the room. She covers it with a piece of bright-red polyester cloth to protect it from dust and soot. She places a vase of flowers on top to prevent the cloth from slipping off. She is smiling.

The audience, about twenty men and women and a dozen children of different ages, are mesmerised. Their eyes move from the screen to the two girls and back to the screen. Sitting in front, Aum Zam has her hand over her open mouth. Ap Dophu, standing a little unsteadily in the back of the room, is talking but
is inaudible because of the loud music. Kuenley, sitting on the floor near the open door to avoid the sweaty atmosphere in the room, gets an occasional whiff of scent from the girls. He just had his first taste of whiskey and feels grown up.

It is Dasho’s lochhoe. He has killed a fat pig and served slices of pork with fat that was four fingers thick. There is Special Courier whiskey and Dragon rum flowing. Dechen, Dasho’s fourteen-year old daughter from his former wife, has planned the modern entertainment for the villagers. Her best friend, Deki, who likes to be called “Diks”, came for the lochhoe and to dance with her.

This is something the villagers have never seen before. The girls dance for an hour or so and then show some films they had brought from Thimphu. The guests are riveted to the screen. They do not understand the dialogue but are fascinated by the action. The older people go home because their sight is not so good. They prefer the outdoor dancing of their times.

Thrimi, now called Aum Thrimi because she is Dasho’s wife, serves drinks and food all evening. Her uncle, Dom Saymi, is not well these days. He lives alone.

Around midnight Kuenley goes home. Walking past the two girls, he fakes a little stagger to walk like the other men who have been drinking all evening.

It is around noon as Kuenley walks down the path to Dom Saymi’s house. He leaves the next day and is a little sad because it might be a long time before he comes back to the village. His Class XII marks are good so it is likely that he will get a scholarship to India. He will opt for electrical or electronic engineering because he is one of the few students with very good mathematics results.

Dom Saymi is sitting on the bearskin near the window, hunched over a half-finished rope. He looks much smaller than he was last year and his movements are feeble. He works with his face very close to the rope strands to see better.

Aum Thrimi is stirring broth on a small pot on the hearth. She is very busy these days. She runs Dasho’s household and comes regularly to cook for her uncle.
“My mother says these herbs will be good for Dom Saymi. She got them from the lam when we went to Chhimi Lhakhang.” He gives Aum Thrimi a clear plastic bag with a mixture of crushed brown leaves, twigs, and seeds.

“Oh good, I’ll put it in his broth right now.” She empties the herbs into the pot and stirs it for some time.

“So what kind of dances do the boys do these days?” she asks over her shoulder. “Modern girls dance just like the movie heroines.” She takes the pot over to Dom Saymi and pours some broth into a cup on the floor in front of him. She sits next to him and rests her elbow on the windowsill, looking out.

“Men do the same dances, more or less.” Kuenley visited a disco in Thimphu when his uncle gave him some money for passing his final exams. Everyone was writhing to loud music in the dim light. Many were smoking and nearly everyone was drunk. He did not quite understand the excitement.

Aum Thrimi looks into the distance. “They are so pretty, the girls. They are so thin. They are so fair. They smell so nice.” She looks at Kuenley, a gangly five-foot nine-inch boy, standing with his hands in his pockets. She turns and looks out of the window again.

“Better study hard Kuenley. Otherwise you’ll have to live in the village. You have to work all day in the sun. You have to walk everywhere with no shoes. You have to carry manure on your back and smell of cow dung. In the village you will quickly become ugly. We have no choice because we are already old and ugly.”

Kuenley says nothing. He does not know what to say. Thrimi is twenty-seven years old. She has not changed. But the world has changed.

A Commentary

This is not a happy story. As Bhutan goes through a dramatic period of history the writer looks at the excitement and, more importantly, at the pains of change. The rural setting in the story, the people, and their lives are real. Their experiences are very real.
As an effort in creative non-fiction, the story is a journalistic perspective presented with the colour that creative narration permits. It is a memoir that looks at a community’s experience without carrying the burden of a conclusion. It is an attempt to make sense, find order, in a response to crisis.

The story is Bhutan’s story. The metamorphosis of a rural society is documented through the eyes, and the confusion, of a Bhutanese youth who personifies a generation in transition. There are no subtleties because the experience is not subtle.

The message that comes through as a small rural community feels the impact of globalisation, in the guise of modernisation, is that the consciousness of Gross National Happiness is needed, more desperately than ever before.

**Place**

The setting is a typical Bhutanese village. The terraced backdrop, scenic environment, and the cozy farmhouses are a familiar picture in most parts of Bhutan. The daily and seasonal routines, the livestock, and the forested surroundings are common across the rural country. Today, some villages have progressed beyond the stage described in the story, some are yet to reach it, but most Bhutanese will identify with this village.

The physical changes are also typical of the development activities that have been the most significant of Bhutan’s successes in the past four decades. Schools, health units, electricity, telephones, and roads are the most visible developments, not necessarily in that order.

Since Bhutan opened up to planned development in 1961, its main concern was the “development process”, focusing on infrastructure: roads, schools and hospitals, then electricity and telephone connections. Starting in the early 1990s, the focus moved to information age and development of the media. By the late 1990s globalisation and a small explosion of the media, with the introduction of television, had a visible impact on the country. The previously controlled pace of development saw a new momentum.

Against this backdrop the story portrays the lives and interaction among individuals, families, and the community. The
traditional lifestyle comes across as a relatively trouble-free existence where the responsibility on the individual and values are clear. The beauty, talent, and strength one of the main characters, Thrimi, portrays the earthy values that are important for society.

Ap Tandi’s *lochhoe* represents the closeness of the community that enjoys a ceremony and party together, the songs, dances, happy bantering, and bonfire symbolising the warmth in human relations. A family ceremony is incomplete without the entire village taking part. The spirituality of the *lochhoe*, the feasting, singing and dancing, even the flirting, is all shared as a community.

Thrimi’s uncle, Dom Saymi, represents the quiet courage and strength of the people who live with the forces of nature without fuss. Bear attacks are a major problem throughout the country and represent both the abundance of wild animals (because Buddhism discourages hunting and killing) and the calm acceptance of the ferocity of nature.

**Context**

The thrust of the story is the dramatic changes that take place in a very short period. The whole story is developed within a span of seven years. The two main characters, Kuenley and Thrimi, are swept up in a transformation that they do not comprehend.

This context raises many profound issues, each of them affecting the value systems and nature of Bhutanese society. While the changes affect every facet of Bhutan life and existence, some are blatant and obvious and others are subtle and long-term.

There is the broad impact of development, symbolised by the electrification of the village. The excitement and appreciation of modernisation is quite evident. “Our nights have been turned into days” is a widely quoted phrase around the country as villages turn on electric lights for the first time.

With the power line come rice cookers, electric pans, and refrigerators, more as status symbols than necessities in the initial stage. The implements that launched the economies of commercially successful Asian nations are all coming into
Bhutan, most of it from Bangkok and some from Hong Kong and Singapore.

The excitement of progress is, however, overpowered by the fascination with television, which comes as an aerial invasion since it was introduced in 1999. The story portrays the helplessness of a rural population against the forces of globalisation symbolised here by television.

Bhutan’s single government-owned station is unable to compete with the forty international channels that came in overnight in 1999. Distributors in Kolkata and other Indian cities decide what the Bhutanese audience should watch. Bollywood dominates the entertainment culture.

Advertising has a strong impact on Bhutanese society. A subsistence farming population that believed it was self-reliant suddenly feels poor as television shows them what they do not have. The Buddhist concept of needing less is overwhelmed by the new trend of wanting more.

The dasho’s *lochhoe* ceremony is a sharp contrast to Ap Tandi’s *lochhoe*. Tradition has no chance against Bollywood. The community celebration is replaced by the hip-swirling dances of Indian television, performed by two young Bhutanese schoolgirls in this story. Thrimi’s role changes from being the heroine to someone pouring drinks for guests who are mesmerised by a Bollywood film and teenage entertainers.

The new values come to Bhutanese villages via the capital, Thimphu. The dasho in the village, obviously better off because of his exposure, represents a wealthier lifestyle. His material wealth awes the village community. Thrimi, the prettiest girl in the village, becomes his wife. But she is not necessarily happier.

The thrust of the story, in terms of media impact on a village community, symbolising the impact of change on Bhutanese society, is the immediate impact on traditional values like the concept of beauty, age, health, home, strength, community relationship. Thrimi, the prettiest girl and the best singer in the village, is reduced to seeing herself as being the wrong shape, wrong size, wears the wrong smell, and feels old at the age of twenty-seven.
Do we conclude then that development comes as a rude shock?

Messages
The story invites important questions. Are the side effects of development taking a toll that is more powerful than the effects of mainstream development? This is symbolised by the immediate excitement over television that far exceeds the advantages of electricity as a source of power for utilities.

In a country where there are now an estimated 50,000 television sets compared with 14,000 computers, television becomes a major status symbol and dominates the altar in the altar room.

The role of women is an interesting issue. The responsibilities that women had, side by side with men in farm work, gave them the equal status in society that has been commended by the international community. With television and the concept of beauty changing, and with the new cosmetic demands of the entertainment industry, their work on the farm becomes something to regret and to be ashamed of.

Development is also a direct reason for rural-urban migration. Youth, like Nado in the story, see far more glamour in being a telephone repairman than in village life. This is an element of the rural-urban migration that is becoming a major problem in Bhutan.

Symbolism
The clear mountain spring that provides the source of water for the community represents the purity of unadulterated village life.

The benefits of development, “as night turns into day”, are best symbolised by equipment, utensils, and tools in farm life. The zinc roof has been a common symbol of success and, with electricity, the rice cooker and curry pan are in great demand in rural Bhutan.

The lachhoe parties are changing and wealthier families serve factory-produced alcohol instead of the popular home brew of the past.
The most important symbolism is the contrast between the smell of manure that symbolised fertility in the past and perfume that is a part of modern attire.

**Conclusion**

It is significant that the story takes place close to the abode of one of Bhutan’s most popular saints, Drukpa Kuenley, the Divine Madman who symbolised the realities of life that the Bhutanese have always appreciated. In fact it is the village closest to Chimmi Lhakhang where people refused to continue double cropping rice, and double their income, because they valued their free time. This is an intuitive expression of GNH.

But, in a country where the main livelihood has always been subsistence farming, the occupation of producing food has quickly become a mundane routine.

If Bhutan is vulnerable because of the lack of exposure can we learn from the lessons learnt in other countries?

What is strong in the story is the sense of helplessness in the schoolboy, Kuenley, in the main character, Thrimi, and even if they do not know it, the other members of the community.

This is the dilemma of GNH. Recently the King of Bhutan asked the population to not just love the country but to love the country intelligently. He said that GNH must be the nation’s conscience.

All this raises the deeper issue of the need for more introspection and discourse. GNH emphasises the mandate of the state to create an environment where individual citizens can find happiness. This requires that the government introduce appropriate media and other regulations, not necessarily to control, but to prevent a complete destruction of the value systems of Bhutanese society. GNH also requires a close check on the pace of change itself. GNH must provide a response to globalisation.

That is not happening. Not in the village in this story anyway.
Buddhism defines happiness as the state of mind that enjoys inner peace and is contented. A state of wellbeing that the great Indian Pandit Nagarjuna explains in one of his compositions is as follows:

There is no treasure like contentment. Of all the types of wealth, it is contentment, which was told by the teacher of god and men, which is the most supreme. Strive for contentment and should you achieve it, even without material wealth, you will truly have found your fortune.

The concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) has been widely promoted and discussed in recent years in Bhutan and has even caught the interest of intellectuals, social scientists, and politicians throughout the world. Seminars and conferences on GNH over the years have served to highlight the importance of catering to the social development of the nation, including the spiritual health of its citizens as well as the promotion and preservation of its unique culture. While conventional development models stress economic growth, the concept of GNH is based upon the premise that the true and sustainable development of human society takes place when material and spiritual development occur side by side, serving to complement and reinforce one another.

Bhutan, as the foremost proponent of this concept, places economic self-reliance, environmental preservation, cultural promotion, and good governance as the foundation for bringing happiness into the lives of its people. In its attempt to cater to the immediate socio-economic needs of the Bhutanese people, the roles of spiritualism, religious practice and faith in achieving happiness and wellbeing have been largely ignored in the vast discourse on GNH.
According to Buddhism, the cause of happiness is virtuous *karma*, the law of causality and delusion. Our entire experience of the physical world is simply a projection of our mind. Since it is a production of our karmic mind, the experience will exist as long as we remain in *samsara*. Positive, virtuous and beneficial actions result in happiness in the present life and a higher rebirth in the next life. Unwholesome deeds or bad *karma* beget sufferings in this life and rebirth in the lower realms. Therefore, happiness can be achieved through acts of virtue and selflessness in this life. Buddha said in the *White Lotus Sutra*:

> The external world is formed and created by Karma  
> The inherent sentient beings are born from the seed of Karma.

The four pillars of GNH can thus be considered conditions for attaining the happiness and wellbeing of a nation by the creation of good *karma*.

The definition of happiness for most people is based upon having physical comfort and fulfilling their needs and desires, such as, driving a car, having a big fat bank account, owning a plush home, taking vacations to exotic locales and eating gourmet food. These superficial and impermanent attainments can be brought about by the judicious application of the indicators of GNH. The other happiness, which is founded on the attainment of a deeper mental contentment, can only be brought about by applying oneself to the practice of the Dharma. The Buddha said in the Sutra, *Instructions to the King*:

> As the moment comes for you to leave, Oh King!  
> Neither material wealth nor dear friends and relatives will follow.  
> And wherever one travels henceforth,  
> The Karmic deed is all that follows, like one’s own shadow.

The great Tibetan yogi Milarepa sang this song to Lan Gom Repa:

> He who has a thorough Realization, at ease in the self-sustaining Reality, is ever joyful. He who is enslaved by his desires, insatiable and always longing, is ever sad.
Bhutanese clergies have always taken upon themselves the burden of bringing about happiness and social harmony to the community. Looking back in history, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal unified Bhutan during the 17th Century and created its first formal government, the Dual System of Governance. This system of governance combined both the secular and religious which complemented one another and worked together for the benefit of Bhutan’s citizens. Zhabdrung created the laws of the land based upon the sixteen principles of moral conduct and the ten virtuous deeds, which had been previously developed from the teachings of the Buddha, which gave these laws a distinct religious flavour. The codified laws took into consideration the material and spiritual rights, benefits and responsibilities of both individual citizens and the greater community.

In fact, by adhering to the laws of the land, one could put into practice the Bodhisattva ideals and enrich one's own spiritual training. The rules and regulations are steeped in Buddhist teachings and at their core is the practice of benefiting other beings. *Karma*, the law of cause and effect, was explained by Shantideva, the great seventh century Indian master, in the *Bodhicaryavatara*:

> All those who are unhappy in the world are so as a result of their desire for their own happiness. All those who are happy in the world are so as a result of their desire for the happiness of others.

Contentment, the source of genuine happiness and inner peace is characteristic of true dharma practitioners. The dissatisfaction, unhappiness and frustrations that we so often encounter and create in our daily lives, which are materially developed, tend to be absent in most monastic communities. In going forth from home to homelessness, the clergies seek to abandon attachment to worldly life, but in so doing also take on the responsibility of bringing psychological wellbeing to the community.

The Bhutanese clergy has a clear distribution of roles and functions in regard to their pastoral responsibilities. For the most part, members of the clergy are engaged in providing spiritual
services to lay communities in times of death, sickness, as well as on joyous occasions, such as marriage and job promotion. It is the presence of the clergy that helps to assuage their fears, weaknesses, anxieties and desperations during difficult periods as well as enhancing their joy and confidence in good times.

On the other hand, there are those who dedicate their lives to prayers and practice in inaccessible and remote mountain hermitages. By forsaking material comforts, these practitioners work towards fulfilling their goal of gaining enlightenment in order to come back to better serve all sentient beings.

Happiness, or the joyous state of mind, has always been a recurring metaphor in religious literature for yogic attainment. Milarepa, the Divine Madman and many other yogins, both in Tibet and in Bhutan, have sung often about the joy of liberation and of sublime bliss. It may surprise most people that these materially poor practitioners could be so happy even without the basic necessities and comforts. The answer may be that they have found complete contentment through practice.

For the most part, a majority of the members of the Bhutanese clergy contribute three quarters of their time towards the performance of religious ceremonies and rituals for the welfare of the State and its people. The objective of these religious engagements is to promote the peace, prosperity and wellbeing of the country and its citizens. Many Bhutanese take for granted these religious engagements and view them as the responsibility of the clergy. They often do not take into consideration that the large number of monks who participate in these daily rituals and ceremonies are in truth deprived of the opportunity to engage in more meaningful and profound Dharma practice and training. The monastic body is willing to make this sacrifice in order to satisfy the needs of the country and its people.

In addition to imparting academic and life-skills training, monastic education is an avenue to train youths to be compassionate, loving, kind, and non-violent. The curricula in the monastic institutions serve to build a solid foundation in humane value-based education, thereby contributing toward a more altruistic frame of mind and practice. The benefits of a monastic education, including providing knowledge and contributing to the
social development of the country, has prompted the monastic hierarchy to open its doors to aspiring monks and nuns throughout Bhutan. The monasteries accommodate all those who come specifically seeking a religious education as well as those who come because they do not have access to a secular education.

The contribution of the Bhutanese clergy toward the promotion and preservation of culture is very significant. The monasteries have for centuries educated and trained the Bhutanese population long before the establishment of secular schools in the mid-twentieth century. The preservation of most forms of arts and crafts, dance, drama, literary and traditional practices have been the handiwork of the monasteries and the religious leaders. In fact, monk scholars have been at the forefront of documenting and preserving the history and tradition of the country.

As Buddhists, we believe that the root of happiness can be found within oneself and in order to find this contentment one must practice the dharma. Therefore, the monastic body should play a larger role in achieving GNH by having a more active role as spiritual guides to the Bhutanese people in order to shift the focus away from temporary material happiness to everlasting inner contentment.

Throughout the history of Bhutan, the monastic body has played an integral part in the development of the country as well as the preservation and promotion of Bhutanese culture. Even during the time of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, his vision could not take place until the establishment of the sangha which became the base for the unification of Bhutan. It is only appropriate that at this time of great change that the monastery continue to be involved in the development of the country in order to ensure a balance between the spiritual and the secular needs of the people. Through the blessing of attaining the three kayas of the Buddha, through the blessing of the unchanging truth of the Dharma and through the blessing of the unwavering aspiration of the Sangha, may all our prayers be fulfilled?
Reciprocal Exchange and Community Vitality: The Case of Gortshom Village in Eastern Bhutan

Sonam Kinga

Introduction

The goals of Gross National Happiness implicitly uphold the preservation and promotion of village life which is the primary source and repository of the Bhutanese way of life. Bhutan is a country of villages and small communities. Hundreds of small communities scattered throughout the hills and valleys form the building blocks of our society. Each community is a consequence of a long process of historical, social, economic and cultural evolution.

A community’s vitality depends on various interactions that take place in different realms of the social, economic and cultural life. An interactive environment fomented by the necessities of inter-dependence at all levels fostered the sense of community vitality and strong sense of belonging. The foundations of a stable and cohesive society in traditional Bhutan were small and sustainable rural communities. As subsistence agricultural communities, they are more inter-dependent, more interactive and their lives more integrated.

Community vitality depends on various factors such as voluntary activities in the community, level of trust among members, safety levels and emotional support and care during times of childbirth, illness and death. However, I limit myself to discussion of three attributes: village festivals, marriage and labour exchange in a subsistence agricultural village. I do this in context of an ethnographic case study of a village in eastern Bhutan called Gortshom. Although it is isolated in terms of modern communications like roads, telephones and electricity, it

* This paper is based on the ethnography of Gortshom village in Lhuntse, which was submitted in partial fulfilment of the pre-doctoral course to the Graduate School of Asian and African Studies at Kyoto University, Japan in February 2007.

° PhD Candidate, Graduate School of Asian and African Studies, Kyoto University, Japan.
has continued to exist alongside the Bhutanese state. After the beginning of modernisation in early 1950’s, the state’s effort to build a modern nation through socio-economic development was felt almost simultaneously in Gortshom. The scope of the paper doesn’t allow for discussing how the currents of modernisation and nation-building were simultaneously experienced in the state’s margin such as Gortshom but suffice it to mention here that the gradual expansion of the modern state into Gortshom in the name of development has affected the bases of their social and economic life such as land and kinship as well as domains of exchange of subsistence resources.

Villagers have responded to this expansion mostly, but not exclusively, by adapting the means of subsistence livelihood. One primary means of securing subsistence livelihood is the exchange of resources like labour. Such exchanges are underscored by the principle of reciprocity. The pressures and opportunities created by development have required farmers to adapt their exchange relationship in order to secure or enhance their subsistence needs. Adaptation of exchange relationship does not imply disappearance of exchanges. Exchanges persist because without them, community life and subsistence production would be impossible for several reasons.

In the face of modernisation, villagers emphasise more on their exchange relationship. Emphasis is marked by payment of economic compensations which serve as social reminder of the obligations and debt to reciprocate in the near or immediate future. Compensations are usually made in the form of money and sometimes goods. But payment does not complete the exchange relationship as in a market place. In fact, it commits to memory of both the payer and the recipient the obligation to continue reciprocal exchanges.

While reciprocal exchange of labour is indeed a vital component of economic life for securing subsistence livelihood, the ability to engage in such exchanges is dependent on the demographic status and kinship network in the community. A depopulating village with diffusing ties of kinship impinges on labour exchange and hence, community vitality. The Gortshom kinship and marriage system is based on exchange of primarily men but also women among Gortshom and other neighbouring
villages. The scarcity of marriageable women created by a prescription of cross-cousins and non-kindred villagers means that men circulate among these villages, while as women usually, but not always, remain in the village inheriting land and property. While Gortshom men moved out to marry, other men moved in to marry women from Gortshom. There was thus an endogamy not in the village but among villages. However, outflow of men without a corresponding inflow tips the balance of labour supply. In the process, a situation of men-deficit gradually arose, whereby women from Gortshom and those other villages had to look for husbands from other parts of the country. Since there was no traditional practice of men from other parts of the country coming to Gortshom looking for wives, it amounted to girls leaving the villages. As girls also go to school and then move to towns for employment, the possibility for younger men of finding spouses in neighbouring villages are also comparatively limited. Without remaining or coming back, the village's ability to reproduce itself as a community is challenged. While the kinship system made men and women symbolically scarce, education and employment made them physically scarce as well. Marriage has now become more exogamous. A few men from other parts of the country have come and married women in Gortshom and other villages over the last few years. They have come either as civil servants, or on business. Exchange of men thus continues, but with communities far beyond the social, cultural and geographic boundaries of Yungtoed.

Indeed the vitality of the community depends on its ability to reproduce and sustain. Besides economic and social attributes that can help assess its vitality, the preservation and promotion of cultural life is also crucial. An important aspect of cultural life in villages such as Gortshom is the upholding and celebration of calendar rituals and local festivals. These rituals and festivals serve as the cultural framework within which community membership are actualised. They require the participation of households and families taking turns. Non-participation is a severe act of disregarding social and cultural obligations and thus deserving of punitive community action. A community that upholds such celebrations through active members' participation is indeed an indication of vibrant cultural life. They constitute the
heart of village civilisation. In Gortshom, there are many annual ritual celebrations. However, I discuss three inter-connected celebrations that give the community its cultural identity and affirm membership.

**Gortshom - The Ethnographic Locale**

Gortshom is a small village in eastern Bhutan. It falls under Lhuntse Dzongkhag, one of the 20 districts in the country, and under Metsho Gewog, one of the eight blocks or administrative units in Lhuntse Dzongkhag. Located at an elevation of approximately 1800 metres above sea level, the only access to it is on foot. It takes a day's walk from an eight-shop settlement called Gorgan located on the highway between Lhuntse and Mongar, another district in eastern Bhutan. With a 20-minute steep descent from Gorgan into the valley of Kurichu, one of the two largest rivers in eastern Bhutan, the rest of the mule track alternates between steep and gentle climbs through an expansive forest of pine, goose berry trees, lemon grasses and onto more sub-alpine growths like oak, rhododendron, walnut and others. Only after crossing three villages called Obi, Pangshingmey and Tongthrong does one reach Gortshom. However, Gortshom isn’t the last village. It is actually the heart of Metsho Gewog of which much will be said later.

While it is removed from the nearest motor road built only in the mid 1970's, it is actually located a few minutes below the erstwhile footpath-highway called *jalam* that connected Lhuntse Dzongkhag to the royal court at Bumthang, a district in Bhutan's central alpine region.\(^1\) It has witnessed caravans of mules and humans travelling between Bumthang and Lhuntse crossing the high mountain peak of Rodungla that rises over 4000 metres, especially as villagers transported loads of agro and diary products collected as tax by the state’s tax collector to the royal

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\(^1\) Bumthang can said to be the capital of Bhutan during the reigns of the first two kings between 1907 and 1952. Although Punakha was the state capital, the two kings and their courts operated from Bumthang in summer and Trongsa in winter. It was the third King, who moved to Thimphu. When the majestic state headquarter of Tashichho Dzong was being built in 1962, the king temporarily moved the court to Paro.
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court. Most of these loads were reached by villagers living closer to Lhuntse to the transit point of Khini Lhakhang, a small but ancient monastery located only 10-minutes away from Gortshom. From there, it was the responsibility of people of Gortshom and nearby villages to deliver it to Bumthang. Transportation of goods for the state, as a corvee labour always had one member of the household travelling up and down away from the house, away from the fields. Such labour service to the state is however, part of history now, but other labour services have to be rendered to build development infrastructure. It is noteworthy that both the geographic and mental proximity to the state for the people of Gortshom was much closer when the royal court was at Bumthang. It was nearer their village as compared to Thimphu, the present capital which is two-days away on bus.

The total population is 118 people. 40 are students mostly at the community school in Gortshom, in Tangmachu Higher Secondary School, which is almost a day away on foot and in some other schools in the country. Three are serving as army personnel elsewhere, one is a monk, five others are laymonk, and five are civil servants. Ten women live in different parts of the country because they are married to people outside the village, while one lives with her son who is in the army. Nine are babies. Thus only 46 people, or 38.9% of the village's population, constitute the active workforce working in the fields. Including students in the community school and others, only about 50% of the population live in the village.

Gortshom is a subsistence agricultural village. Its main produce is maize. Grounded maize mixed with rice is the staple food consumed with vegetables that are grown aplenty. Most of the maize fields are located immediately below the village whereas paddy fields belonging to five households are located above it. Some paddy fields are located in Dung, which is far below the village by the banks of Yungchu. Rice is considered more valuable. It is eaten mixed in little quantities with grounded maize. A pure rice dish is eaten only on festive occasions and served to guests. However, the value of rice is going down as access to it is increasing through purchase enabled by Fair Price Shops and some cash income.
Cattle and livestock are valuable possessions and measures of wealth especially horses and cows. The size of the cattle heads owned by households have declined heavily over the years. There are many reasons for this decline. First, the establishment of an eight-shop town in Gorgan beginning in the early 1980’s provided an alternative source to cooking oil and other edibles. As farmers either buy or barter their produce with shopkeepers with whom they have a strong connection, the dependence on cows is declining. There are also fewer cowherds available as young children who normally looked after them increasingly attend school.

Gortshom consists of 17 households. But a household is not equivalent to a family. In some households, there are more than one family. The families are registered as member of the same household. There are two registered households without a house. Their houses were damaged and demolished over the last ten years, and families moved to other parts of the country. But they still appear in the local census record as separate households. There is also a new house, which is not yet registered as a household.

Thus, what defines a household is bit problematic. The state refers to a household as gung (basically meaning a roof). A gung is a taxable unit. A unit of taxation in both kinds and labour was also called mephu (fire-place or hearth). A household is assigned a house number (gung ang) as well as a land registration number (thram ang). But there are households, who have a house but no thram because they don’t own land. Some have thram because they own land but no house number as they don’t own houses. I must mention here the fact that the procedures and formalities of the state to make communities legible are contested in such seemingly small isolated cases.

Most of the households are clustered, separated either by kitchen gardens, toilets or pigsties. However, two households are located further from the main village. Villagers are all related to each other as they descend from one family. Over a hundred years ago, Gortshom comprised of only one household called Khini which was a three-storied house. It was located at the site of the present-day health clinic, which is built on a spur overlooking
Gortshom village. An elder sister inherited the upper storey known as thog and the younger sister, the lower storey called wog.

Descendants of the two sisters have subsequently built the houses in Gortshom and came to be known as thogpa and wogpa households respectively after them. Over the years, these two households branched into more households. The first household that separated from the main wogpa family is called khimsar (new house). Today, there are four households that have branched out from khimsar one of which is an absentee household. The next household that branched out from the wogpa is called lagtang (arm extension). Later, lagtang also branched into five more households. Similarly, the thogpa household split into smaller households such as Thogpa (original thogpa family), Ta Dzong, Frangchen, Dulibi and another household which doesn’t have a name. Similar to the wogpa, one thogpa is also an absentee household. Three thogpa households have two families each.

**Diagram 1: Households of Gortshom**

Gortshom falls under Metsho Gewog, one of the 201 administrative blocks or gewogs in Bhutan. The villages comprising of more than 400 households lying at different elevations on either side of Yungchu River constitute this block. Yungchu is a tributary of Kurichhu. All these villages are collectively referred to as Yungtoed (source of Yungchu). Till the mid 1970’s, Gortshom and all villages in Yungtoed were under
Jarey Gewog. The Yungtoed villages were later constituted into one separate gewog. As of today, the administrative boundary of the gewog and geographic boundary of Yungtoed villages marked by Yungchu and mountains, which are abodes of local gods, coincide.

This gewog consists of five sub-administrative units called chiwogs. A chiwog consists of one or more villages. Gortshom is a village or yue as well as a chiwog by itself. Every gewog has a gup as the chief administrator. He is supported by a gedung (clerk), a mangmi (community man) or the gup’s deputy, a few tshogpas depending on the number of chiwogs or sub-blocks in a gewog, and a chipon for a village. Gortshom used to have a chipon gongma and chipon wogma, a senior chipon and a deputy. One member of thogpa households always served as the senior while the wogpa served as the deputy for one-year. The positions were rotated among households. Some years ago, the association of senior chipon to the thogpa household and the position of the deputy were abolished.

Now every household takes turn to serve as chipon for one year. There are no fixed criteria for assuming the post. Depending upon conveniences of households, the position is rotated. A chipon, known as pirpon in Kurtepkha also called Chocha Ngacha is basically a messenger. He or she reports to the gup once every week, and conveys official messages from the gup to every household about village meetings, tax payment, labour contribution and their deadlines. Although Gortshom is a chiwog and should actually have a tshogpa as its representative to the GYT (Gewog Yargye Tshogchung) which is headed by the gup, it shares the tshogpa of another nearby village.

Thus as a chiwog, Gortshom is an administrative unit by itself. An interesting aspect is that it is also the home of the gewog or block administration office and other service centres. Gortshom is referred to as the gewog centre. The gup’s office, a health clinic, a community school, a veterinary centre, an agriculture extension agent’s office and some shops are all located right above it. Very soon, a forest extension office will also be set up. Gortshom’s identity as the administrative centre is very recent. Although the school, health clinic, veterinary centre, gup’s office and even a shop are all located in one area and distinctly separated from
Gortshom village, Gortshom as gewog administrative centre is becoming synonymous to its identity.

**Village festivals**

Gortshom is part of a monastery-supporting community. The most historical monastery in Yungtoed is Khini Lhakhang. Referred to as Mon Tamnyen Lhakhang in scriptures, this lhakhang, or monastery, is believed to have been built soon after the construction of the first two Buddhist monasteries in Bhutan, Paro Kyichu Lhakhang and Bumthang Jampa Lhakhang in the 8th century. Both these monasteries are in western Bhutan. Khini, as noted above is the name of the first household from which sprung the households of Gortshom. It is also said to be the patron of the monastery, and therefore, patron of prayers, rituals and ceremonies conducted there. There is no monastic school or a monastic community associated with this monastery.

While the government has extended support in the form of corrugated zinc sheets for roofing and casting of new images, both the maintenance of the monastery and observance of an annual festival called Ramda celebrated on the 15th day of every 10th month of the lunar calendar are responsibilities of many but not all villages in Yungtoed or Mets ho Gewog. Households have to either perform mask dances or make contributions mainly cereals, alcohol, vegetables and butter for meeting the expenses of celebration. Members of thogpa and wogpa households have to perform the mask dances unlike other villagers, who only make material contributions. The tradition has however declined over the years so much so that people from another village in Yungtoed called Zhongmey came and performed in 2004.  

2 When I attended this festival, Gortshompas were there only as spectators while the whole show was performed by those from Zhongmey, led by a very elderly person. There were talks among Gortshompas about how shameful it was that another village’s members have to come and perform for them.
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a village meeting from amongst the monastic community of the area.

The caretaker, called *konyer*, is responsible for conducting daily prayers and making offerings, and for ensuring the security of its sacred images and scriptures. For his livelihood, every community member must provide three *drey* of maize or paddy annually called *phog*. He collects over 400 *drey* of cereals. Yeshela from Tongthrong village is the present caretaker.

Mem Bragtsan is the *tsan* or guardian deity of Khini Lhakhang. He is propitiated in the second month in a rite called Tsanchoed (*tsan* propitiation). This is part of a larger celebration called Ha which is discussed below. Everyone in Yungtoed valley dedicated to him performs propitiatory rites or makes offerings at their convenience. But it is only the people of Gortshom, led by a *thogpa* and *wogpa* household each who organise the annual propitiation rite. These same households also had to perform a dance called *tsan cham* during the Khini Lhakhang Ramda. The people of Tongthrong, a village located just below Gortshom are also required to participate in performing the *tsan cham* although their own *tsan* is different, known as Gonpo Dorshey. Yet they participate in the Ramda owing to the fact that their forefathers were originally from Gortshom. *Tsan cham* is the dance mimicking and honouring Mem Bragtsan and his non-human attendants. The following year, another *thogpa* and *wogpa* household take over the responsibility. If someone from their households does not know the dance, they must learn it from those who know by providing a fee and meals.

Gortshom propitiates a host of village gods or *yue lha* in a distinctive festival called *lha* (hereafter called Ha as pronounced and known in Gortshom) in the sixth month. In the process of propitiation, offerings called Hai Wannyer are made to all the spirits and deities of cliffs, valleys, streams and mountains in the vicinity of Gortshom and neighbouring villages. They are Lhatsen Karpo of Phrang Phrangla, Yonten Dorshe and Gonpo Dorshe of Pelphug, and Thratsen Marpo of Tirphub, Sherab Zangpo of

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3 I attended the Ha celebration twice; once in 1986 and again in July 2002. My knowledge and information about Ha are based on those two attendances since I couldn’t attend it as part of fieldwork for this study.
Kempaphu (the cliff adjacent to Gortshom), Ludi Lubtsen of Samburung (the small valley below Kempaphu in which a rivulet flows), Thekar Gyelpo of Trashigang (a steep cliff located at the end of Gortshom), Latsa Karpo of Lawa, Terda Dra of Charcharmey, Thongdang Kara of Rodpagang, Lawa Dragpa of Tsangpho, Kingkhar Zangmo of Rulibi, Rangthang Gormo of Milabambo, Drongkher Gupa of Dung, Drangpo Janzan of Nor, Dzamling Wangmo of Tashobra, and Jamo Gormo of Shokang.

All these gods are associated with a stream, cliff or a mountain in Yungtoed. As much as people inhabit villages in Yungtoed, these gods and deities have their citadels or abodes in these natural places. There are spaces where those of the humans and deities overlap as well as those that are separate and inviolable. Unlike other festivals in Yungtoed, Ha is not an isolated celebration. Various activities are observed at different times of the year either in anticipation of, or as follow up to the festival. The Ha celebration is a part of Bon tradition. This particular tradition belongs to the Bon Kar. Bon practitioners are of two types: The Bon kar and Bon nag. Kar means white, and are those who do not engage in animal sacrifices. Nag means black, and refers to those engaged in activities such as black magic sorceries and animal sacrifices. In Bhutan, Bon nag was replaced by the introduction of Buddhism.

**Table 1: Ha calendar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>5th</th>
<th>6th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>18th</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>10th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Tsanchoed</td>
<td>Hagtshoed</td>
<td>Ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activities in the sixth month**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Prepare Machhang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Prepare Gazang Chhang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>Preparatory works for Ha. Bring sangshing and dachoed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>Ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>Hai Län or Lanchhen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>Dued choed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th</td>
<td>Dudkihan or Lanchhung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14th</td>
<td>Phag chham</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The days for activities listed in Table 2 are not always followed strictly. Since paddy is transplanted during the sixth month, the Ha celebration may be postponed to the 18th day if plantation has not been completed. The calendar of the actual celebration of Ha is no longer followed through the five days listed in the table above. While Duechod is conducted on the third day, the tradition of performing Phagcham (dance of hog) has disappeared altogether.

Just as they did with the position of *pirpon*, one household of *thogpa* and *wogpa* are responsible for organising celebrations of Ha and events related to it every year. They are known as *Hai tsawa*, or hosts of Ha. The very households who are responsible for organising Ha are also responsible for the *tsan cham* at Khini Lhakhang Ramda that year. They are accountable for any crop damages due to hailstorms and strong winds or misfortunes to cattle and livestock which could occur if the local deity is not propitiated or due to untimely propitiation.

The observation and propitiation of gods in the 2nd and 6th months are accompanied by prohibition of entry to higher reaches of the mountains in Yungtoed. An astrologer or a laymonk accompanied by some friends would go up to certain location in the mountains and offer *serkem* (ritual offering of distilled spirit). Then they would erect symbolic fences declaring that the entry is prohibited. This tradition is called *ladam* or *ridam* (meaning mountain closure). Any entry of human or cattle provokes the wrath of the gods. The following event will illustrate what this means.

On 14 July 2006, the former *gup* of Metsho Gup, Gyempo Tshering sent a notice to the *tshogpa* (representative) of Tshangthromey village, which is 10 minutes away on foot from Khini Lhakhang. Through the notice, he conveyed the message that villagers have to bear responsibility if strong winds flatten and damage maize in the next few months. This was because someone reported that some villagers from that village had entered the mountains, one of which is located directly above Gortshom, along with their cattle despite the entry restriction being in force that month.
The notice read, “This is the month of lha (Ha) in our gewog. Without permission, and taking decision on their own, some people and cattle from your village have entered closed mountain areas like Pimay, Yamalung, Phungpogang, Nyungmabi, Ranila, Phrang Phranga, Gonpo Dorshey and Khen. You must be mindful that these people will be implicated if strong winds destroy maize plants.”

It was learnt that one of the persons who violated the entry restriction was implicated for crops damage a few years earlier. He was going to hoist prayer flags up on the mountain top in memory of his late mother. The prayer flags inscribed with mantras have to be blessed by a lama. One lama happened to be at a house where a child had been just born, and he visited him there. According to Buddhist and local belief, visit to families where there is death, birth or marriage can cause defilements (keydrib, shidrib and bagdrib) or impurities that need to be purified. Because he did not perform any purification rite and went straight to the mountain to hoist the flags, the defilements he contacted at this house provoked the mountain deity. It sent hailstorms and winds, which destroyed a lot of crops in the village. He was pressured by the community to pay thousands of ngultrums (Bhutanese currency) as compensation but later pardoned with a stern warning.

This indicates that while Gortshom community alone propitiates the yue lha or village deities, the consequence of non-propitiation or provoking them can be harmful to all villages in Yungtoed valley. Similarly, the benefits of propitiation and appeasement can be enjoyed by all in the form of timely rainfall, absence of illness and misfortunes to both humans and livestock, and bumper harvests. The whole Yungtoed valley or villages under Metsho Gewog are under the protection of these yue lha, whom Gortshom community propitiates.

The association of Gortshom community to the village god or yue lha is very important. While only this community is responsible for co-ordinating Ha celebrations, the other villages in the vicinity are associated with it. For example, symbolic gesture of contributions like butter and alcohol, in meagre quantities are collected from households in nearby villages a day before the Ha celebration. These contributions constitute part of offerings to the
yue lha on the following day. These symbolic collections are tokens of confirming their membership to Gortshom community with whom they have kinship affinities, and also of confirming their loyalties to the gods propitiated on those days.

Therefore, seen in these three different contexts, Gortshom is the centre or heart of many other villages in Yungtoed. It is the centre of the gewog administration. By virtue of its historical association with Khini Lhakhang, it also becomes the centre of the monastery-supporting community. By propitiation of the yue lha who inhabit natural niches of Yungtoed, it is at the centre of ritual performances. Gortshom can thus said to be the core village in Yungtoed valley. As a village community, it combines functions and characteristics of administration, monastery-support and propitiation of village-deities or yue lha.

**Marriage: Reciprocal Exchange of Men and Women**

Since the nearest primary school was established at Zangkhar in 1975, boys gradually began to leave their villages for education and then employment. Girls followed later. The establishment of the community school in Gortshom in the mid 90's accelerated the process of boys and girls leaving the village. Their departure isn't just temporary but extended as most of those, but not all, who went to school didn't return. I reiterate the fact that about 50% of Gortshom's population is in other parts of the country for various reasons. This is a situation of not only symbolic but physical scarcity of men and women.

This scarcity is expressed in the form of labour shortages on farms (see below), but in relation to kinship there are two important consequences. First, owing to scarcity of both young men and women, the endogamy of marriages among communities of Yungtoed valley is not always possible. Most young men and women who left Gortshom have married spouses from other parts of the country. Marriage is becoming more exogamous. Received notions of morality are also making cross-cousin marriage less preferable. This leads to the second consequence. Since community and kinship are more or less coterminous in the case of Gortshom, exogamous marriage leads to a diffusion of kinship, affinal kinship far beyond the village community. Because kinship
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is diffused, the emphasis and operationalisation of kinship in terms of daily face-to-face interactions are not possible. Since affinal kinsmen live in other parts of the country, it is not possible to engage in interactions like labour exchange or celebrations of community festival. As exchange of men and women dwindles among the communities, the ability of communities like Gortshom to reproduce itself is also questioned. For now, there are men who have come to Gortshom and neighbouring villages in marriage from other parts of the country. This indicates that while exchange of men among villages in Yungtoed is dwindling, some exchange with people from other parts of the country have been taking place.

In table 4, I list three generations of Gortshompas. The ones referred to as the first generation constitute those who are mostly remembered by their grandchildren. If the table were extended further, it can show two or more generations, the last being the young pre-teenage children and babies. All the grandmothers listed in this table are children of the same parents. Therefore all their daughters, granddaughters and grandsons are parallel cousins. We see a similar pattern in the case of Thogpa households as well. All the grandmothers as well as mothers of the children listed (except for one) were from Gortshom. Their grandfathers and fathers were from neighbouring villages. Similarly, all the husbands of the daughters are from neighbouring villages. Only half of the sons listed have their wives from neighbouring villages. It is men from this generation of Gortshompas who first leave the village for employment in non-farming sectors. Two are in the army, two in private companies, one in business and one in civil service. Most of their children are not in Gortshom since they married spouses from other parts of the country. Therefore, the kinship network begins to diffuse from this generation on.

As I stated previously, marriage among Yungtoed communities characterised by exchange of men and women can be described as villages' endogamy. In Table 2, I list 18 households that include only resident Gortshompas and exclude those who are away from the Gortshom. The non-resident Gortshompas are listed below. In this table, there are 11 households with wives from Gortshom. In three households, wives
have come from other villages; three more households have both husbands and wives from Gortshom. Eight women from Gortshom in this table belong to the younger generation, by which I refer to those having children now who are as young as a month-old baby to 14 year-old daughter. Except for four men, most husbands of these 11 women are from neighbouring villages in the same administrative and monastery-support group of which Gortshom is the centre.

On the other hand, many men in neighbouring villages are from Gortshom. They have left Gortshom or were sent out to live with women in villages like Obee, Pangshingmey, Tongthrong, Dowa Leptang, Lhakhang Tsa, Changshing Pogpa, Tshobrang and Sengyebee. These men belong to both the older and younger generation. Two sons of these men have come back to marry girls from Gortshom. Every village in the vicinity has some affinal relatives in Gortshom. Again, among the older generation, very few women or men have married outside the cultural and geographic region of Yungtoed. Whereas almost all women of the older generation of Gortshom married people from neighbouring villages, more than half of younger women are married to people who are not farmers and belong to other districts. All these women have moved out to live with their husbands. Therefore, marriages are becoming more exogamous. For comparative purpose, I have listed in Table 4 both younger and older men from Gortshom who are not farmers but work either in government or private sector. They have married women either from Gortshom, neighbouring villages or outside the Yungtoed valley. But not one of them has brought his wife to Gortshom. Whether employed or not, all these men and their wives, except for one couple, live beyond Yungtoed valley.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl #</th>
<th>Wives</th>
<th>Household</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Husband</th>
<th>Household</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dekimo</td>
<td>Khimsar</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td>Tashila</td>
<td>Jarey</td>
<td>Husband from different gewog</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ai Muku</td>
<td>Khimsar</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td>Late. Gembola</td>
<td>Zhungkhar</td>
<td>Non-resident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dorjimo</td>
<td>Khimsar</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td>Karchung</td>
<td>Trashigang</td>
<td>T/gang is a different district</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Pema Dolkar</td>
<td>Lagtang</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gembo</td>
<td>Obee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pema Tshomo</td>
<td>Lagtang</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td>Sonam</td>
<td>Dowa Leptang</td>
<td>Husband’s father is from Gortshom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ai Cheni</td>
<td>Lagtang</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td>Pema Tshewang</td>
<td>Dowa Leptang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ugyenmo</td>
<td>Lagtang</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td>Gangchula</td>
<td>Tongthron</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Al Tshomo</td>
<td>Lagtang</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td>Not married</td>
<td>Has two sons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Jangchumo</td>
<td>Ta Dzong</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td>Tshering</td>
<td>Tongthron</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Late Bichamo</td>
<td>Ta Dzong</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td>Norbula</td>
<td>Changshing Poppa</td>
<td>Husband’s father was from Gortshom</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Yeshey</td>
<td>Yangchen</td>
<td>Frangchen</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td>Samdrup</td>
<td>Jarey Divorced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Northelmo</td>
<td>Khimsar</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td>J.B. Gurung</td>
<td>Dagana</td>
<td>Southern Bhutan</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Yesheyemo</td>
<td>Dulibi</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td>Yeshey Dorji</td>
<td>Frangchen</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Yangdon</td>
<td>Frangchen</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td>Kesangla</td>
<td>Dulibi</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Tashi Tshomo</td>
<td>Ta Dzong</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td>Kesang Thogpa</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Dorjimo</td>
<td>Ta Dzong</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td>Namgyela Khimsar</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Pema</td>
<td>Pangshingmey</td>
<td>Jambayla</td>
<td>Ta Dzong</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Dorjimo</td>
<td>Yurung</td>
<td>Late Lhamola</td>
<td>Thogpa</td>
<td>Gortshom</td>
<td>Her 2nd husband is from Tongthron</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Household</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Husband’s Occupation</td>
<td>Husband’s District</td>
<td>Present Residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinley Wangmo</td>
<td>Khimsar</td>
<td>Jamyang</td>
<td>Electric Linesman of Chukha Hydro Power Project</td>
<td>Trashigang</td>
<td>Chukha</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kunzangmo</td>
<td>Khimsar</td>
<td>Security guard of Chukha Hydro Power Project</td>
<td>Pema Gatshel</td>
<td>Chukha</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunzangmo</td>
<td>Thogpa</td>
<td>Not-married</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tshering Choeki</td>
<td>Thogpa</td>
<td>Kezangla</td>
<td>Health Assistant</td>
<td>Lhuntse</td>
<td>Zangkhar/ Lhuntse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinzin</td>
<td>Thogpa</td>
<td>Civil servant</td>
<td></td>
<td>T/Yangtse</td>
<td>T/Yangtse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northelmo</td>
<td>Thogpa</td>
<td>J.B. Gurung</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Dagana</td>
<td>Gortshom/Lhuntse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kesangmo</td>
<td>Lagtang</td>
<td>Civil servant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pema Gatshel</td>
<td>Thimphu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenzin Wangmo</td>
<td>Ta Dzong</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pema Gatshel</td>
<td>Thimphu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choden</td>
<td>Ta Dzong</td>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td></td>
<td>Paro</td>
<td>Paro</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dechen</td>
<td>Thogpa</td>
<td>Laymonk</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lhuntse</td>
<td>Yurung/Lhuntse</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From endogamy to exogamy

Most young men and women of marriageable age are now in junior high and high schools. I take note of the fact that the age of 16 years for women and 18 years for men have been considered as marriageable although marriages have taken place at younger age as well. Since Gortshom Community School provides education from Class PP (Pre-primary) till Class VI to children within the age group of 6-12 years, most children go to boarding schools to pursue their junior high and higher secondary schools which are located further from the village. As they continue either in pursuit of vocational training or employment, they remain away from the villages. Only those students, who are 12 years old and below, stay with their parents studying in the day school of the community.

Table 4: Men of Gortshom working in non-farming sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Wife</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Wife’s Native Place</th>
<th>Present Residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sonam Ngedup</td>
<td>Dental Surgeon</td>
<td>Tshokimo</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Singyebee, Lhuntse</td>
<td>Gelephu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tshering Phuntscho</td>
<td>Civil Servant</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Sephu, W/Phodrang</td>
<td>Thimphu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tashi Penjor</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Tshimphu, Lhuntse</td>
<td>Thimphu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonam Kingsa</td>
<td>Private employee</td>
<td>Tashimo</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Khomo, Lhuntse</td>
<td>Lhuntse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tshewang Sithar</td>
<td>Private employee</td>
<td>Kinzangmo</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Yidang, Lhuntse</td>
<td>W/Phodrang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tshering Phuntscho</td>
<td>Private employee</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>T/Yangtse</td>
<td>Thimphu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tshering Dorji</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>T/Yangtse</td>
<td>Thimphu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lekila</td>
<td>Civil Servant</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Bumthang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ugyen Dorji</td>
<td>Retd. employee</td>
<td>Dema</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Singyebee, Lhuntse</td>
<td>Thimphu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenzin</td>
<td>Private employee</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Thimphu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only two young men in Gortshom who are in their early 20’s and not married yet are Kinzangla and Sonam Wangchu. Although the former is from thogpa household and the latter from
...household, they are half brothers. There aren't many young women in the neighbouring villages. While difficulty of farm life has been cited as reasons for quite a few women from Gortshom and neighbouring villages to run away to towns, this ethnography reveals that the absence of young marriageable men in both Gortshom and neighbouring communities mean woman into towns. While some succeeded in finding a husband, a few have returned for various reasons.

Exchange of men and, sometimes of women depending upon circumstances, has characterised the marriage tradition of Gortshom and villages neighbouring it. Since the kinship system has made marriageable men and women symbolically scarce in the community, men had to leave to other villages in marriage as much as other men came to marry women in Gortshom. As long as both men and women were largely farmers and tied to their landholdings for subsistence livelihood, the exchange of men and women didn't take place beyond communities of Yungtoed valley. However, the introduction of modern education took younger men followed by women to schools and then to towns for employment. So the symbolic scarcity of marriageable men and women became a physical and genuine scarcity in both Gortshom and neighbouring villages. This meant that the level of exchange of men and women among these communities was constrained. It doesn't mean inter-community marriage has disappeared as I have indicated above. But the scarcity of marriageable men and women has made it necessary for women of Gortshom to look for husbands from communities beyond Yungtoed valley. A few men from far off communities have come to Gortshom either as farmers, on business or as civil servants. A majority of them, nevertheless, have to leave Gortshom which has resulted in a situation of women 'running away'. Thus most Gortshom women who are in other parts of the country are those who have never been to school and married salaried husbands. It can be seen then that marriages of Gortshompas are still characterised largely by exchange of men. The difference is that instead of neighbouring villages, wives are from other parts of the country. Similarly, husbands of Gortshom women are also from other parts of the country. The traditional boundary within which marriageable women and men were found has been extended. Like men who
have always left the village to marry, women also leave now either in marriage or for school and employment. They are not in the village.

As people marry outside Yungtoed village communities, and kinship ties diffuse, the ability of the villages to reproduce is challenged because of gradual depopulation. Although those who leave their villages for education and employment still retain their census registration there, many are considering options of settling in towns. For example, three Gortshompas who have left the village have land and houses in Thimphu. Two of them live in Thimphu although they are retired. One has land and a house in Paro and lives there. Except for the parents who are living in Gortshom and working their fields, most of their children are away or would perhaps go away unless new opportunities of employment and livelihood attract them back to the village.

**Labour exchange**

Besides land, the most important factor or resource for production of subsistence livelihood is labour. It is the most exploited of resources by both the farmers and state, at present and in the past. Such demands have always made labour a scarce resource, and hence an extremely valuable one. On its own, a household will not be in a position to farm and cultivate its landholdings within the limits of seasons through labour at its disposal. Hence, an intricate system of labour mobilisation has developed.

In Gortshom, the most common form of mobilising labour is to exchange it among households. Labour exchange takes place among households of Gortshom as well as those of neighbouring villages. Not only labour of humans but of animals like bulls and sometimes horses are also exchanged. Exchange involves other obligations such as providing dr inks and meals. There is no discrimination between the labour of young children, in their teens and of adults. Where exchange isn’t possible owing to shortage of labour or other reasons such as illness or deaths in the household, other means of mobilisation such as asking for free labour or paying wages in kinds or cash are used. Similarly, when the labour of other households cannot be reciprocated for various reasons, there is no compulsion to fulfil all labour
exchange commitments in one season. Exchange obligations can be spilled over to the following season, or the following year.

Exchange of labour takes place among households to overcome limitations of time and labour in completing works on time. It enables a synergy of labour in ensuring timely completion of works. It is not possible for any household to complete ploughing the fields, sowing, weeding, and harvesting his/her entire landholdings without entering into this exchange system. Rather than pay wages, in cash or kind, exchanging labour on reciprocal basis ensures that the available household labour is used to its optimum level. This is also a primary motivation for households to engage in labour exchange.

While the need for labour compels households to enter into reciprocal exchange relationship, it isn't a mechanical reciprocity compliant to rules and behaviour of market exchange. Even during the times of peak demand for labour, in which exchange labour is a scarce resource, the rate of exchange does not vary according to the balance between 'demand' and 'supply' of exchange labour. Consequently, the individual choice about whether or not and how much to exchange labour on the reciprocal basis does not depend on the market mechanisms.

There are different forms of labour mobilization (see below) but reciprocal labour exchange is the dominant one. Reciprocal exchanges can be between dyads or among triads, meaning between two or more households. In a dyadic exchange, labour of household A is reciprocated by household B. It is like but not exactly a 'balanced reciprocity', "which stipulate returns of commensurate worth or utility within a finite and narrow period" (Sahlins 1972: 148). It is not absolutely necessary for household A to reciprocate labour to a household to whom it owes labour. Instead, A can work for household C to whom B owes labour. This flexibility among households ensures that labour dues to one household can be offset with labour dues from another household. It is somewhat like Levi-Strauss's 'generalised exchange', where resources transfer from A to B, B to C, and C to A. Sometimes, it may involve more than three or four households. It is also possible to think of labour exchanges along what Ekeh (1974: 209) calls individual focused generalised exchange. A group of households help another household (ABCD→E; ABCE→D; ABDE→C;
ACDE→B; and BCDE→A). This however, should not imply that labours are exchanged for a particular work taking turns among households. At any given time, there may be two or three households doing the same work, say paddy transplantation or maize weeding, where parallel exchanges of such type could be taking place.

I must mention here that hiring of bulls is important for ploughing fields and is also reciprocated by human labour. Except for those who own bulls, everyone has to hire them. By 'hiring' I do not mean in its market sense. A day of a bull hired is reciprocated by a day of human labour. Obviously, the value or amount of work done by a bull is more than a human being. A man cannot dig as much field as a bull can plough in a day. Similarly, the amount of work done by a young teenager is comparably less than that of an adult. Yet a day of labour done by a teenager is reciprocated by a day of an adult.

**Typology of labour mobilisation**

While exchange is the popular form of labour mobilization among members of the community particularly during farming season, there are other types of work besides farm work such as felling trees and cutting them for fuel wood, bringing them home after drying for few weeks, and collecting dry leaves. There is also work where labour is contributed 'freely' or wages paid. I will discuss below the typology of labour mobilisation prevalent in Gortshom.

First, labour exchange is called *lakpho*. The basic idea is that a household who has employed the labour services of another person must reciprocate with equal number of days. While farmers would try to fulfill all exchange obligations in one farming season, there is no compulsion to have them fulfilled. Similarly, labour can be exchanged not for the same type of work. If someone has worked for you while ploughing the field, you can exchange it by fetching fuel wood or collecting leaves. The severity or difficulties involved are not considered. There are indeed many factors that determine this. For example, farmer A goes to plough fields for farmer B. But farmer A has already finished ploughing his fields with the help of C and D. So there is no need for B to go and plough fields for A. He can go during the weeding or
harvesting season. If A hasn’t finished ploughing, he would insist B to reciprocate if B has no other labour commitments on the day of ploughing.

Second, a household may choose to pay wages in-kind (pheu or chiêu) although the consent of the labourer must be sought before work. This is because farmers normally prefer labour services rather than wage during peak seasons. In instances where a household is unable to reciprocate labour obligations, he/she may request the person to accept wages in-kind or accept labour services at a later time or during the next farming season. Wages in-kind include corn, paddy, cheese, eggs, butter and dry chilli. The choice of wages in-kind reflects the necessity of these materials for daily subsistence. In some cases, rather than the household initiating the work, the workers may ask for wages in-kind if he/she feels the need for it.

Third, some households who may have limited household workforce or face difficulties during working seasons may find themselves unable to fulfil reciprocal labour obligations. In such cases, they will organise a work feast called danpa. Here, the whole idea of work is converted to day-long feasting and working at the same time. Although the hosts always provide foods and drink for all kinds of labour exchange practices, they have to be very special and served at regular intervals during danpa. Delicacies served during danpa are mostly rice, meat or fish, egg, cheese or butter. Even at worksites, additional drinks of tea and alcohol have to be served. Farmers are not always keen on danpa especially during peak farming seasons. So, the organiser has to decide on a date and request farmers to attend danpa much earlier. It used to be more popular during autumn and winter. For a regular lakpho, foods served are the usual staple meal of mixed corn and rice, some vegetables and whey. Kharang may also be substituted by kneaded and cooked maize flour. It isn’t considered special or a delicacy. At each meal, workers are also served alcohol. Those who don’t drink alcohol are compensated by egg, butter or cheese to be eaten with their meals. Sometimes, tea may be served. During a danpa, kharang can never be served. Besides the alcohol served with meals, it must also be served in the fields just before lunch and before dinner called nagchang and nubchang respectively.
Works done at a *danpa* are supposedly not reciprocated in exchange. It is seen as a form of support or help for the household in difficulty, for which the host has expressed appreciation and gratitude through good meals and regular drinks. But there is an implicit understanding that in the future, the household who organised the *danpa* may also come for *danpa* organised by those who have come now. Thus, a *danpa* may be reciprocated in future, but on the other hand, it may not be reciprocated either. This can be thought of as a ‘delayed reciprocity’ or ‘generalised reciprocity’. Sahlin says:

> [T]he expectation of a direct material return is unseemly. At best it is implicit...the counter is not stipulated by time, quantity, or quality, the expectation of reciprocity is indefinite...The requital thus may be very soon, but then again it may be never (1972: 147).

Fourth, households organise *drola* (morning work) based on similar principles of *danpa*. The only difference is that *drola* begins very early in the morning and ends by sunrise. It is for shorter duration, and the purpose is to mobilise labour for works that do not require a whole day. *Drola* is more popular than *danpa* since it enables farmers to work and enjoy, and also continue working during the day without loss of labour.

Fifth, *ruba* (to help) is not as common in farming as it is in house construction and other social activities. However, if the household suffers serious difficulties owing to labour shortage, poverty or illness and death in a family, they ask or rather request (*nangma*) others to come to help them. On the other hand, house construction is completed with ‘free’ labour of friends, labours and relatives. The host has to provide food and drinks, and they would be qualitatively better than those served for routine farm works. Here too, the basic premise is that if one helps someone in need now, that person will reciprocate in future. To the extent that an expectation of reciprocity in the future is present in this kind of labour mobilisation, it isn’t really free.

Labour mobilisation in the case of *danpa*, *drola* and *ruba* for farm works has to be initiated by the host household. He or she would go to different households and say she has come for *lapa nangma* (requesting for workers) or *danpa nangma* (requesting for...
Towards Global Transformation

danpa). But if it was for house construction or some illness and death related ceremony, neighbours, friends and relatives would just walk in to help.

Adaptations of forms of labour mobilisation

While the types of labour mobilisation described above are still practiced, there are adaptations farmers now make in response to different circumstances, particularly to that of labour scarcity. The only instance where the system remains in place is the drola. This is because it is done early in the morning and involves only few hours of work without implications on the day's labour.

The size of the workforce of each household is different. For example, there are four households with only one working person. All of these persons are women. Dekimo and Dorjimo's husbands are laymonks. Lay monks don't work in the field. Pema Dolkar's husband is caretaker of the local health clinic, and Ai Tshomo isn't married. In other words, there is no man in these households, which is an important consideration for labour exchange. Many works require men. All these women complained that their neighbours and relatives are now increasingly reluctant to work for them because there is no man in their households. Their children are either working elsewhere or in schools. They complain that exchange has become very selective and limited to those who have men. Ai Tshomo told me, "Because there is no men in my family, people do not readily agree to work for me. My brother and a son are laymonks. Another son is in the army. The youngest son is studying. So I am the only one working in the fields. People are afraid they won't get back their lakpho." Penjorla, who was from Gortshom but lives with his wife in the neighbouring village said, "If we have the time and convenience, of course we go to work for them. But first, we must have our own works done. And to do that, we must have labour exchange. They don't have men. But if they really suffer from want of food and drinks, they have their sons and sisters in towns who will send them money. We don't have anyone but ourselves. So we need to do lakpho with those who have men." Most households with limited workforce have someone or the other who earns a salary by working in non-agriculture sector in some parts of the country.
Another Dorjimo, who is Dekimo's elder sister doesn't exchange much labour with each other. They have not been on good terms for many years although they interact, eat and drink in each others house but they don't talk. Most of Dorjimo's children are in school. One daughter is married to a salaried man and lives in another part of the country. Her eldest son studying in Class X is married to a girl from Tongthrong, the next village. The wife's family has enough labour supply in their household. So Dorjimo cooperates more frequently for labour exchange with her daughter in-law's family. Because she and her husband own a bull, it is also easier to exchange labour with other households. In doing this selective cooperation, her ties with her daughter in-law's family becomes more emphasised than with her own sister, who lives next door. Karchung, Dorjimo's husband, also has other source of income. He owns two horses, which transports the goods and luggage of civil servants like teachers working in the community school, government officials on tours, medicines for the clinic, stationeries for the school etc.

Kesang and his wife own three bulls. His wife, Tashi Tshomo is more at home with her children or with the cows they own. So Kesang is the only worker. Because he is a man, and also owns three bulls, he has no difficulty in mobilising labour. He also lends his bull to these women because almost every work also requires women. This is advantageous for him as his wife is hardly free to work.

Dekimo and the other Dorjimo are trying a different alternative. Both of them own cows. Dekimo and Dorjimo have three milking cows; the milk is quite substantial. In order to get labour, they pay *pheu*, wages in-kinds particularly butter and cheese. *Pheu* or wages in-kind used to be a means of earning subsistence livelihood for those who had limited landholdings. When the values of these different goods are translated into monetary terms, there are different values for some of the goods. But the importance attached is less with monetary value than with the consumption necessity in rural areas.

There are many households with one or two non-milking cows. Cheese and butter are essential ingredients for meals taken every day. Thus rearing cows enables households without labour to pay wages. More often than not, the husbands of these two
women rear the cows. Their husbands are laymonks. While they can't work in the fields, they aren't prohibited from rearing cows. On the contrary, Ai Tshomo isn't married, and doesn't own any cow. This makes her situation much more difficult than other households in Gortshom.

Table 5: Daily wages in-kind and the corresponding monetary value in 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In-kind</th>
<th>Monetary Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grains</td>
<td>6 dreys</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>3 tegpa</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>1 sang</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>15 eggs</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potato (seeds)</td>
<td>6 dreys</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilli (dry)</td>
<td>3 dreys</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ara (alcohol)</td>
<td>2 and 1/2 bottles</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If wages were paid in cash, both men and women were paid Nu.60 for a day's work. The host, however, had to provide the meals. The wage was Nu.100 if meals were not provided. The quantities of goods listed in Table 5 were paid when meals are also provided.

In the eighties, the daily wage paid in terms of grains was 3 dreys which increased to 4 dreys in early nineties. Today, it has increased to 10 dreys. One drey of grain costs Nu.10. Thus Nu.100 for 10 dreys is equated to the national daily wage rate of Nu.100. But in addition to the wage, three meals a day have to be provided. This new wage rate became applicable five years ago. If it is cheese, now 20 balls have to be paid. Each ball is priced at Nu.5. Since one sang of butter is valued less than Nu.100, it was decided two years ago that five balls of cheese (called a tegpa) should be added to take the value to Nu.100. This means one sang of butter costs Nu.75. But last year, it was decided that if someone wants butter, the wage should be paid in butter and not clubbed with cheese. So, the cost of one sang of butter was brought down to Nu.50. Two sangs of butter are paid today.

Farmers are also adapting to the way and logic by which danpa was organised. In the short run, it is materially expensive to organise danpa. So when it is done, there are usually lots of labourers in order to ensure that the works are completed. Where danpa used to be organised to avoid immediate labour exchange through its festive appeal owing to the household's labour
shortage, it is now organised more as a means of attracting workers with immediate reciprocity. It is becoming more like a *lakpho*.

Ai Cheni organised a *danpa* to plant paddy. The late rainfall two years ago made people compete with each other to get their work done faster when some rain fell. Ai Cheni also has no men in the household. She couldn’t have her paddy planted unless she organised a *danpa*. About 13 men and women turned up. That evening when they were chatting after dinner, another farmer said that he is organising a *danpa* in three days. So, he asked all of them to come. It was difficult for many of them to say no. Later, I asked why he said thus because a *danpa* means you can choose to go or not. He said rather than go from one house to another to mobilise labour, it is good to get all of them agree to come when they are gathered at one place. And no one can say they won’t come. He has come for Ai Cheni’s *danpa*. So he should be able to come for the others *danpa* as well.

Such arguments are increasingly used to mobilise labour. What is happening is that farmers are using the festive appeal of *danpa* to attract labourers but with implied assurance for more immediate reciprocal labour than otherwise. *Danpa* was usually organised when there was a lull in the works or when most of the work of the community was finished. Then farmers are usually available and they can afford to go for *danpa*.

Labour mobilisation with *ruba* has to be thought of at two levels: for farm work and for non-farm work like house construction. *Ruba* (help) in case of farm work is a response to a request (*nangma*). This is given on occasions of illness and death in a household during peak season when farm work is in progress. For non-farm works such as those that concern funeral or prayer ceremonies, help is more voluntary. It is not requested or sought. Such help is still given with the understanding that others would also come to help when one is in need in a similar situation in future. The obligation for mutual help in times of need underwrites such interaction.

However, *ruba* for non-farm works, especially those that do not have to do with misfortunes are not as ‘free’ as it sounds. This has got to do with the tradition of *ruba* for house construction.
When someone in the community began to build a house, neighbours, friends and relatives both from near and afar used to come and contribute labour whenever they are free. House construction took place especially during lean seasons, i.e., in spring or winter. Both the young and old would come to help. The host would also go around asking people to come and help. Meals and drinks would be provided. I reiterate the fact that although this was said to be a 'free help', there was an understanding that the person helped would also reciprocate in futures during other's time of need.

The apparent shift from ‘free help’ to paid labour mustn’t however, be interpreted as abandoning of the ‘free help’ tradition. On the one hand, members of community still extend their ‘free help’ although it may be for a day or two only. On the other hand, this ‘free help’ wasn’t really free in the sense of altruistic voluntarism. Rather this shift to a paid wage labour can be seen as a kind of token of reciprocity for the help provided. Although help in the future is delayed reciprocity, cash does not make reciprocity more immediate and complete the exchange relation. The very fact that they have come to work also obliges one to go to work and help them in future even if the wage has been paid for now. Labour scarcity and the unavailability of immigrant labour will require one to reciprocate help in future even if that help is paid. Cash wage hasn’t displaced reciprocal interaction. It recognises that help has been provided, and thus obliges the recipient to reciprocate in future if and when needed. “Money is mainly...an act of remembering, a way of keeping track of the exchanges which we enter into with the rest of humanity” (Hart 1999: 234) The fact that cash is comparatively more accessible now and labour scarce also makes it more reasonable to pay wages than exchange labour. So money paid as wage is then a compensatory token for the debt incurred by having received the help needed. For those who have provided the help, the memory of having received the money also reminds them that not only can reciprocal help be expected in future; it also obliges them to again help if it is needed. So rather than circumvent exchanges, cash wage in a way reinforces it. And this reinforcement is understandable in a situation of labour scarcity.
The challenges posed by limited labour force in the community have required farmers to adapt the way they mobilise labour. There is a tendency for households with more labour, especially more men, to co-operate among themselves. Thus even when someone is more related or kindred, the possibility of co-operation is conditional to availability of household labour force.

This selective co-operation is however, not a dismissal of their kinship or inter-personal relationships. In other spheres of social life especially when misfortune befalls someone, no one is ignored. The preference for households with adequate labour supply ensures continuity of works and harvests that in turn ensure subsistence livelihood. The threat to subsistence of those with limited labour supply is offset by implied assurances from family members who have some income and live in other parts of the country. Farmers know this very well. Almost all households with limited labour supply have someone working in government or private sector as salaried employee or are married to such a person. In situations of any threat to subsistence of family members in the village, their help can always be called upon. The very reason that they have limited labour supply is because their family members have left the village in search of other opportunities of livelihood. Such choice for alternative livelihood beyond farming was not for their sake alone but for those of family members as well. Therefore, farmers with adequate household labour find it more secure in terms of ensuring subsistence livelihood to exchange labour among themselves.

Labour shortage has also compelled farmers to think of danpa as a means of attracting labour due to its festive nature. Although reciprocal obligation was not pronounced in danpa, it was not absent either. The expectation that it would be reciprocated in the long run was present. However, the expectation now is for more immediate exchange. The reciprocal obligation for danpa is emphasised and expressed whereas it was subdued and implied earlier.

Just as danpa was possible in a situation of more labour supply, so was ruba or ‘free help’ to those families constructing houses. Even here, the expectation that similar help may be reciprocated in future underpinned this ‘free help’ labour. Labour shortage now requires that this expectation is more pronounced.
So paying wages in cash as economic compensation emphasises the reciprocal obligation they owe. Just because cash has been paid does not free one from obligation to provide labour as help to those who have helped you now. He too would pay cash wage but again only as token of the fact that he is obliged to help in future. So, the obligation to reciprocate persists even when cash wage is paid.

Friends, neighbours and relatives still extend ‘free help’ for a day or two. Such labourers are also entitled to better food and drink as compared to others working for wage. Similarly ‘free help’ extended to families in need during difficult times is still in place. The underlying logic is the same. Everyone in need must help each other.

Those households where a woman is the only household labour have sought alternatives to offset pressures of selective cooperation exercised by those with adequate labour. They do this by way of raising cattle, and offering diary products as wages in-kind. Besides, they have also tried to gain comparative advantage by arguing to increase cost for butter and cheese, two primary commodities paid as wages. They are able to do this by valuing these goods against the monetary value of the national daily wage rate fixed by the government. Whereas, different wages in-kind were paid earlier considering people’s need and not the monetary value of each commodity, the need to address labour shortage has made them adopt a new point of reference.

Here again, it must be noted that either money or the concept of it entering the domain of village economy doesn’t function as a medium of exchange as in a market place. Since households with only women are disadvantaged in labour exchange, they pay wages in-kind more as a substitute for the labour exchange they should have provided, not as ‘wage’ for labour service they used. It becomes a symbolic token for the reciprocal obligation they owe but cannot fulfil through labour. Although the national daily wage rate of Nu.100 is taken as a referent, the value of wages paid and those of meals provided together are much higher. There lies a different perception of interaction beyond a market framework.
Conclusion

The vibrancy and vitality of community life is indispensable in realising the goals of Gross National Happiness. The fact that Bhutan is largely a Kingdom consisting of many subsistence farming villages require an objective understanding of the dynamics of community life. A ‘hot’ community that retains and regenerates its vitality overtime is one that takes cognizance of social, cultural, economic and political life based on active participation of its members characterised by upholding its core values and reciprocal exchanges of resources.

I have discussed a case of Gortshom by studying three attributes of its community life: local festival as the cultural, marriage as the social, and labour exchange as the economic dimension. In assessing whether this community is vibrant and interactive, I discussed how responsive it is to challenges posed by modernisation and development. The responsiveness of the community is expressed in adjustment it makes to address these challenges.

In making these adjustments, farmers have not abandoned the basic premise on which subsistence livelihood was secured and social and cultural life enacted. This premise is the social and economic exchanges underscored by principles of reciprocity as well as participation in village festival. However, while the premise is not abandoned, adjustments require that exchange obligations are kept alive in memory. Memory of exchange relationship has to be pronounced because of scarce labour as well as diffusing marriage ties.

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Is National Environment Conservation Success a Rural Failure? The Other Side of Bhutan’s Conservation Story

Dorji Penjore

At a great risk of provoking mainstream happiness theories and theorists, this paper argues that economic development is the key to increasing happiness, especially in rural Bhutan. It identifies national conservation policy as primarily responsible for decreasing the food security of rural households. Since the positive impacts of environmental conservation dominate our development discourse as well as government documents, this paper discusses the negative impacts of conservation policy on the wellbeing of farmers. It argues that Bhutan’s ‘middle path’ approach to development is an extreme path biased towards conservation of the environment at all costs. The impact of national conservation policy on subsistence livelihood is ‘asymmetric’ since one season’s or year’s harvests are often lost to wild animals in one single night. It contends that the indigenous resource management system is holistic and sustainable, and that what is not sustainable is the modern resource management regime that has been blindly applied across the country without considering unique local contexts. It also highlights the inadequacy of conservation science to address the human aspect of the ecosystem and the politics of Himalayan environmental crises. It concludes with some policy recommendations.

Introduction

We must recognize that some of the measures that we have taken to protect and preserve the environment and biodiversity may also have contributed to its erosion. The establishment of nature reserves and protected areas has introduced lines of demarcation between humans and nature that formerly never existed. The introduction of rules and regulations that must be respected have stripped some locations of their mysticism and prevented the communion with nature that was once common. Our beliefs that we should manage our biodiversity and environment in

° The views expressed are mine, not of the Centre for Bhutan Studies.
° Researcher, the Centre for Bhutan Studies, Thimphu.
accordance with international standards may have unwittingly contributed to a hardening of traditional attitudes, perception and values.


Gross National Happiness (GNH) continues to be viewed from lenses of different academic backgrounds and individual orientations. Its potential for diverse conceptualisations, interpretations, appropriations and abuses would have been lost through imposition of one intellectual hegemony, had it not been for equally competing theories that are being developed around the concept.

According to the results of the National Population and Housing Census 2005, only 3.3 percent of the Bhutanese population are ‘not very happy’ (OCC, 2005), while on the other hand 31.7 percent of the people are living below the national poverty line of Nu. 740.36 per person (NSB, 2004). The above statistics are suggestive of a low correlation between poverty and happiness in Bhutan.

The law of diminishing returns of money in increasing happiness may be true of the industrialised countries, but only increased financial opportunity and security can exponentially increase the happiness of the Bhutanese people at their current level of socio-economic development. No form of happiness could be conceivable, except for a few Himalayan Buddhist yogis, without first fulfilling the three basic necessities of life, namely food, clothing and shelter. Assuming that all rural farmers have warm clothes on their backs and roofs over their heads, meeting food shortages during critical summer months is a big problem in many villages. A key factor that prevents rural farmers from achieving food sufficiency is the country’s conservation policy and legislation.

\[\text{1} \quad 51.6 \text{ percent reported being ‘happy’ and 45.2 percent ‘very happy’}.\]

\[\text{2} \quad \text{The percentage of population living below the national poverty line (consumption of Nu. 1096.94 per person) has decreased to 23.2 percent, according to Poverty Analysis Report 2007 published by National Statistical Bureau. The statistics was not available at the time of writing this paper in November 2007.}\]
Farmers’ expectations from socio-economic development vary depending on regions, districts, gewogs, villages and even households in a village. While some villagers are yet to have a good footpath or mule track, others expect their farm roads to be blacktopped or broadened, and some even complain about conditions of existing motor roads. Of many problems facing rural Bhutan, the wildlife depredations of crops and livestock is the most serious one. Its impact is asymmetric since a year’s or season’s harvests are eaten by wild animals in a single night. For the majority of farmers, development (yargye gongphel) would mean the government’s intervention in saving their harvests from wild animals. However, this does not suggest a single explanatory factor for the rural poverty, nor deny benefits of the environment, especially for subsistence farmers. It rather suggests a direct link between the conservation policy and the subsistence livelihood.

The human-wildlife conflict is not a new problem. The National Assembly has discussed it many times. It forms the main plot of many Bhutanese folktales. If folklore is a mirror of the past, then our ancestors had a poetic justice when wild animals that either kill domestic animals or destroy crops were avenged in the end. Today, the government extends a legal protection to wild animals, while our farmers remain exposed to the mercy of wildlife and the long arms of national conservation laws.

3 The Nature Conservation Act of 1995 protects: Asian Elephant (Elephas maximus), Clouded Leopard (Neofelis nebulosa), Golden Langur (Presbytis geei), Musk Deer (Moschus chrysogaster), Pangolin (Manis crassicaudata), Pigmy Hog (Sus sylvanicus), Snow Leopard (Panthera uncia), Takin (Budorcas taxicolor), Tiger (Panthera tigris), Wild Buffalo (Bubalus bubalis), Black-Necked Crane (Grus nigricollis), Monal Pheasant (Lophophorus impej anus), Peacock Pheasant (Polyplectron bicalcaratum), Raven (Corvus corax), Rufous-Necked Hornbill (Aceros nepalensis), Golden Mahseer (Tor tor), Spotted deer (Axis axis), Gaur (Bos gaurus), Leopard (Panthera pardus), Leopard Cat (Felis bengalensis), Himalayan Black Bear (Selenarctos thibetanus), Red Panda (Ailurus fulgens), and Serow (Capricornis sumatraensis).

The loss of farmlands through a ban on *tseri* cultivation aggravates the problem, especially without any restriction on the population explosion of 22 animals species protected by the National Conservation and Forestry Act of 1996 (hereafter NCFA 1995). No well-intentioned government’s policies could be more damaging to farmer’s livelihood than the conservation policy that is biased towards preservation of environment to the detriment of the farmer’s efficiency and productivity.

A real index of farmers’ wellbeing could be the number of sleepless nights spent guarding their crops, the number of livestock and quantity of crops lost to wild animals, precious farm labour wasted ingurading crops from wild animals both during day and at night, and also in obtaining permits for firewood and timber for house construction, and acreage of farmland encroached by forests.

**Environmental conservation as a development discourse**

Let me begin with how the official interpretation(s) of GNH included environmental conservation to become an unavoidable concept in our development discourse. The word ‘happiness’ first appears in the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1988-1992) document where it is mentioned that a comfortable house is a source of security, “happiness” and contentment for rural people. It was not until the Eighth Five-Year Plan (1998-2002) that “Gross National Happiness” itself was first mentioned. Economic growth, it states, is useful only to the extent that they can contribute to Gross National Happiness.

The Planning Commission (1999, pp.51-90) was the first organisation to provide an official interpretation of GNH, in that it identified five central tenets of GNH, namely (1) “balanced and equitable socio-economic development”, (2) “environmentally
sustainable development”, (3) “human development”, (4) “culture and heritage”, and (5) “governance”.

“Environment conservation” has been proposed as one of the four platforms for pursuing GNH, together with “economic development”, “cultural promotion” and “good governance” (Thinley, 1999). It was followed by the government’s announcement in 2005 of “conservation of environment” as one of the four key areas for pursuing GNH (Thinley, 2005). The Tenth Five-Year Plan (2008-2012) guidelines has adopted, after the cabinet approval, the four pillars of GNH as the core values (PC, 2005). The environment conservation has indeed been the objective of the past five five-year plans (sixth to tenth).

Similarly, Karma Ura (2005) identifies “environment conservation” as one of the guiding principles of development, alongside self-reliance, balanced development, decentralisation, and cultural preservation. “Ecological diversity and resilience” is one of the nine domains the Centre for Bhutan Studies (CBS) is currently studying to develop GNH indicators to guide public policy and programmes. The eight other domains are (2) psychological wellbeing, (3) health of the population, (4) education, (5) time use and balance, (6) community vitality, (7) cultural diversity and resilience, (8) living standard, and (9) good governance.

Today, ‘GNH’ or ‘happiness’ litters pages of most government or private publications as well as public speeches at a great risk of reducing it to a mere political slogan.

Environmental conservation will continue to be the cornerstone of Bhutan’s development policy for all times. It has become a fundamental aspect of Bhutanese values, almost synonymous to the national identity. The official GNH was born with an umbilical cord connected to the natural environment, which brings us to the question whether we should breastfeed the child (GNH) or continue relying on the umbilical cord.

**Our conservation success is a rural failure**

Bhutan adopted a ‘middle path’ approach to development in 1990 for promoting sustainable development. It is supposed to strike a correct balance between environmental conservation and
development. The term is blessed with a 2500 years old event in the life of the Buddha. It is said that the Buddha, on hearing a boatman advising his son that a beautiful music will be produced only if strings of a harp are neither too tight nor too slack, took a middle path between the former palace luxury and a six long years of extreme asceticism and self-mortification, and finally attained the Enlightenment.

The conservation success, as a result of the middle path, is clear from our forest cover and size of the protected areas, the rich biodiversity of the country and the donor assistance provided for conservation. The conservation efforts and achievements are often described in superlative terms. Discourse on conservation often conjures up an image of Bhutan as the forests with a country, not the country with a forest. Most conservation documents and publications have many results and ‘facts’ to boast. However, the affluence of our ecosystem makes a glaring contrast to the poverty of our farmers. Our “pro-poor development policies and intervention” have not been effective in reducing the rural poverty (PC, 2006). In 2003, 31.7 percent of the country’s population was found to be living below the national poverty level, down from 36.3 percent in 2000, with the richest 20 percent of the population consuming almost eight times more than the poorest 20 percent (PC 2005; NSB, 2004). That poverty is a real problem in Bhutan irritates us from our calm-abiding life of denial: “extreme poverty and hunger are virtually unknown in Bhutan” (PC 2005). A regional comparison, particularly with Nepal, has been our consolation. We have often used fulfilment of a basic requirement of food, clothing, and shelter as yardsticks of success as if we are still hunter-gatherer societies. Yet nothing could be scarcer than food, especially during farming months. More than four decades after the launch of the First Five-Year Plan in 1961, poverty

5 “An environmental leader”, “one of the ten global biodiversity ‘hotspots’”, “requiring by law to maintain a minimum of 60 percent forests cover”, “35 percent of total areas under protected areas”, “home to 7000 species of vascular plants, 46 species of rhododendrons, 260 species of orchids, 201 mammals species, 700 birds species”, “black necked cranes and white bellied heron habitats”, “net sequester of green house gases”, “an acupuncture point in the leviathan body of our ailing planet” (Thinley, 2007; NEC, 2005; NSB, 2004; PC, 2002).
alleviation has been identified as the main objective of the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2008-2012) that will be pursued through strategies of rural development, balanced regional development, development of the private sector and infrastructure (PC, 2006, p.6) – the same old strategies of all past five-year plans.

**Protected areas and exposed farmers: revisiting the middle path approach to protect farmers**

Any government publication on environmental conservation, especially by the National Environment Commission (NEC) and Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) should logically begin with how the indigenous natural resource management systems unsustainably exploits natural resources, and then gone on to provide enough justifications for introducing borrowed conservation legislation. However, most publications acknowledge the role of the people and their strong conservation ethics in preserving the natural environment. It explains factors such as Buddhism, its interdependence, and pre-Buddhist nature worship as having been responsible for sustainable use and preservation of the environment. It applauds indigenous resource management institutions and practices that have evolved through centuries of interactions with natural world, informed by Buddhists’ respect for nature and interdependence that promotes diversity. There are adequate reasons to trust the local management and appropriation of the environment, but not enough reasons for forcing borrowed legislations on the people. The application of one forestry policy across the country irrespective of unique local contexts, and the replacement of indigenous resource management systems with modern institutions are affecting the farmers’ ability to make a descent living through subsistence farming.

For a nation of farmers, the importance of the natural environment for subsistence farming cannot be denied. It is for

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6 *Risungpa* (forest caretaker), *misungpa* (forest fire vigilantes), *chhusungpa* (domestic and irrigation water caretakers).
7 Restriction or ban (*dam*) on resource appropriation of hills, mountains, rivers etc., during certain months of the year for sustainability and religious reasons.
this reason that the indigenous knowledge systems have acknowledged its importance much earlier than modern science, in that the man-nature relation accommodates an invisible world of innumerable deities, gods and spirits, as a third dimension. The indigenous view of natural resources has always been holistic. Lham Dorji’s (2004) study of the traditional resource management systems in different regions shows that the Bhutanese people had managed natural resources on a sustainable basis for centuries. The traditional resource management systems have evolved through local initiatives and participation. It has strengthened social ties among the peoples and laid foundation for the community-based organisations. The systems had certain rules, regulations and procedures for resolving inter- or intra-village conflicts in the use of forests and non-forests products. For example, the people of Bji Gewog in Haa restrict cattle grazing in certain pastures to allow for the regeneration of fodder plants. Similarly, the people of Bardo in Zhemgang observe a five-month long sadam (restriction) on six traditional pasturelands to allow grass and fodder regeneration. Almost all villages have institutions like resungpa, mesungpa and chhusungpa to enforce sustainable management of local resources.

“Bhutan’s forest policy places strong emphasis on conservation above all other considerations” (Giri, 2005). Most communities blame modern forestry laws that do not give a permanent, inheritable and transferable right to the community, and with the loss of community rights and control over the forests, indigenous knowledge systems and community-based natural resource management regimes have disappeared. Earlier, it was community or private ownership that made the people accountable to their environment. The people enjoyed a balanced, harmonious and respectful relation with nature until the modern legislations favoured nature to the extent of denying farmers their traditional livelihood through restriction on resource appropriation, encroachment of farmland or protection of wild animals that destroy crops and kill livestock. We have favoured
the preservationists’ position of having forests free of (or minimising) human settlements.\(^8\)

It is time to revisit the ‘middle path’ and “our strict and uncompromising approach to environment conservation” (PC, 1999, p.88) by accounting the needs of the rural farmers. No natural resource whatsoever could qualify as a wealth which instead of increasing, decreases the people’s wellbeing. The government’s socio-economic statistics, common sense and lived experience provide enough evidence to support a direct relation between the rural poverty and forest cover. For example, Zhemgang district that has the highest percentage of forest cover (86 percent forests) and 44 percent of its area under three protected areas is the poorest district in the country.

The increasing number of protected areas, beginning with the first one established in 1966 and the addition of six in 1974 and five more in 1983, is impressive, except that the human aspects of these protected areas have been poorly studied. The present protected system of four national parks, four wildlife sanctuaries, one strict nature reserve, and 12 biological corridors, altogether constituting about 35 percent (14,800 sq. km) of the total geographical area of the country (NCD, 2004), was created by using the World Conservation Union (IUCN)’s classification guidelines. The IUCN’s definition of a protected area\(^9\) clearly points out that the management regime need not necessarily be a legal one, but includes “other effective means” such as traditional and customary laws or ownership. But the modern management systems imported from the West (adapted at best) had no place for our traditional resource management systems and practices.

\(^8\) In the conservation-preservation debate, the conservationists understand the word ‘conservation’ to mean that humans will continue to use a resource as long as its sustainability is ensured, while the preservationists’ position suggests that areas be set aside free of any human presence.

\(^9\) The IUCN defines it as: “An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means”.

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In reality, the government has been mostly responsible for forest exploitation, whereas the traditional uses of forest resources by farmers were largely sustainable. The institutionalised exploitation of forests, especially in the south, preceded the First Five-Year Plan by almost a decade. The forestry department was instituted in 1952 as the first government’s department to ‘exploit’ forests, then the most visible and available natural resource (NCD, 2004). Bhutan’s first modern legislation, Bhutan Forest Act of 1969 (hereafter BFA 1969), was enacted mainly to stop further exploitation of forests.

Although the government’s exploitation was restricted to forests accessible to motor road, BFA 1969 nationalised all land under forests (except those owned privately) and declared them as Government Reserved Forest, with restricted community rights to graze livestock, collect firewood, timber, and leaf-litter. The direct consequence of the overnight ownership transfer from the individual households/community to the state is the restriction on the appropriation and loss of community ownership and accountability. The revised forest policy (1991), while making the management more participatory through decentralisation policy, gave the highest priority to forest conservation, as did the 1974 policy.

FNCA 1995, which provides a legal basis to balance between sustainability and resource use by the local communities, and between the present and future generations, has deteriorated the poverty of the farmers. Its significance in relation to the wellbeing of the farmers is the prohibition of killing certain endangered wildlife species which coincidentally are responsible for livestock predation and crop damages. In the Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Parks (JSWNP), out of 76 domestic animals killed by predators in a year, 53 percent were by leopards, 26 percent by tigers, 13 percent by dhole and 8 percent by bears (Wang & Macdonald, 2006a). A 1996 survey of 10 gewogs revealed that wild boars were responsible for 33 percent of all crop damage (Kuensel, 2003). In Lemi village, Trashigang, 35 percent of crops are lost to wild animals from June to October despite constant vigilance day and night (Kuensel, 2005).
Conservation and food sufficiency

The conservation policy has seriously deteriorated the household’s food security directly or indirectly by denying traditional livelihood through restrictions on the use of natural resources for both forests and non-forest products. FNCA 1995 prohibits farmers from cultivating new land outside their land registered land holdings. “Clearing or breaking up of any land for cultivation or any other purpose”, among others, in Government Reserved Forests, is punishable with imprisonment. It was common for farmers to appropriate community forests and land through cultivation and other activities in many villages. These lands suddenly became forests after BFA 1969 and FNCA 1995 prohibited cultivation of these lands. In many ways the national goals of food-sufficiency and increasing forest cover is a zero sum game, in that one’s increase is other’s decrease; an increased forest cover indirectly means decreased land under cultivation.

The ban of tseri cultivation by the National Assembly in 1993 has directly increased the farmers’ food insecurity. The loss of farmlands through encroachment of forests and a tseri ban, especially in some districts, have left farmers with small land holdings to cultivate, and whatever crops they cultivate are lost to wild animals (especially wild boars) whose populations are multiplying due to increasing forest cover and the legal protection given by the government. The religious estates (chhozhing) owned by lhakhangs and goendeys are left fallow because of the menace of wild animals. While we have understood who practice tseri cultivation, no study has been conducted to understand historical, socio-cultural and economic reasons why people practice it, and providing them alternative livelihood. Given the choice, no farmers would practice tseri. They are forced by natural and other circumstances to make a simple living. Their living standard has been deteriorated by taking away that source of livelihood.

Farmers in Wamling village of the Upper Kheng make fences around their fields with post and poles abundantly available in nearby forests. Fences protected crops from the wild animals.

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10 Shifting cultivated land.
especially deer, barking deer, wild boars and porcupines in the 1980s and farmers could then harvest most of what they had grown. Today, the forest policy prohibits the felling of trees to make such fences. In 1997, Aaken reported that 23 percent of Zhemgang farmers have stopped cultivating chuzhing, 39 percent kamzhing and 71 percent tseri due to the wild boar problem (quoted in Wangchuk et al., 2001; Wang et al., 2006b). If Bhutan is “greener than it has been in living memory” (Thinley, 2006, p.8), it also means the lands under cultivation is at its lowest. A lack of or inadequate land holding has been found as a determinant of poverty (PC, 2002, p.33).

Due to crop damage by wild animals, all types of land (privately owned) which are located closer to forests have been abandoned. These abandoned lands had turned into forests, thus bringing wild animals closer to the fields and settlements. Earlier, the former tseri land and vacant government land served as buffers between wild animals and human settlements, but the loss of these buffers has made depredations easier, and crops and livestock vigilance more difficult and expensive. In JSWNP, 21.2 percent of the households surveyed reported losing about 2.3 percent of their domestic animals to wild animals in one year (Wang et al, 2006a).

What is unequal about the wildlife-human tension is that FNCA 1995 prohibits a so-called a ‘pre-emptive strike’ against wild animals. In other words the law prohibits farmers from killing these wild animals, even wild boars, with crude weapons and methods. They can be killed only during the act of destroying crops or killing domestic animals. Killing outside their fields is punishable with imprisonment depending on the rarity of the species determined outside Bhutan. The law has technically converted areas a few meters away from farmland as safe sanctuaries for wild animals. The compensation scheme started in 2004 does not cover for crop damage by wild boars though the law gives protection similar to the endangered carnivores like tiger and leopards. Compensation is less than even the economic value of the lost animals.  The NCD’s acknowledgement that full

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11 The government is only experimenting with a compensation system for the wild boar problem to stop farmers from killing them. The
compensation would run into millions gives the scale of damage the farmers all over the country have been bearing collectively \cite{Kuensel2003}.

The present system of obtaining permits (for fuel wood and rural timber for house construction, repair, renovation, and extension) is bureaucratic and lengthy, wasting many precious man days of farm labour. For example, the process for obtaining rural timber permit for constructing a new house is as follows: a farmer first travels (for hours or a day) to his gup’s office (lucky if the gup is in) to get a form. Whether he will get the form quickly will depend on his relations with the gup. After getting the form, he looks for a Dzongkha literate person to fill up the form with all necessary information. After the form has been filled, it is submitted for the gup’s verification (gup takes his time). The form is then sent to the district headquarters for the dzongda’s signature. The signed form then goes to the territorial division for the divisional forest officer’s approval. The approved form is next sent to the forest range office for issuing the permit. The permit is then sent to the forest beat office where dates for tree-marking are discussed. After the end of this long process, the farmers are allowed to fell trees. The process for obtaining the forest products for rural consumption like firewood, poles/posts for fencing and prayer flags, and other produces are equally long, except it goes directly from the gup to the range, territory or parks offices whichever is applicable, by skipping dzongkhag administration. The above formality has been designed as a check and balance system for reducing the misuse of subsidised rural timber in some districts, but its application in all districts, irrespective of the local contexts, is a big harassment to the people.\cite{13}

\cite{12} NCD has initiated a study of the relationship between wild boars and wild dogs and their depredation of crops and livestock respectively, but the study’s result may not be available for another two decades.\cite{13} Imagine a bereaved family member travelling to district headquarters for processing permit for prayer flag posts.
Sita Giri (2005) explains how the JSWNP is denying traditional livelihood to the Monpas of Jangbi, Wangling and Phumzur (40 households, 261 populations) in Trongsa. This indigenous people, often considered the original inhabitants of Bhutan, have a long association with the forests. Forests provided most of their needs through hunting-gathering activities, besides agriculture, which is not well-developed. Cane and bamboo handicrafts, and chirpine resin, are their main sources of cash income. The Monpas have managed their natural resources through indigenous institutions for centuries. The indigenous forest management institutions and systems controlled over-extraction of forest resources as well as equitable sharing of resources, and resolved conflicts arising from the use of forest resources among the villagers. The institution of menyer (village forest guard) has traditionally managed forests by ensuring adequate fuel wood and timber to everyone and enforcing ridam (restriction on forests appropriation) during summer months. Similarly, water was managed by a chunyer (water caretaker) who enforced the traditional water rights and distributed irrigation water, whereas zhingnyer (crop damage arbitrator) resolved dispute arising from the crop damage, declared farming season, enforced the season’s regulation, and assessed crops damaged during the season. They followed certain restriction such as prohibiting harvesting of bamboo, cane, fern, mushroom, orchids and wild tubers during the closed season; allowing bamboo plants to complete their full life cycles; practising selective harvesting so that the best quality and required quantity of canes are harvested; collecting only edible young fern shoots; collecting dead, injured and deformed trees for firewood; imposing a ceiling (ten numbers) on a number of pacha each household can harvest since pacha has a slow regeneration capacity; prohibiting fodder collection in summer (May to September) to ensure regeneration of fodder trees. Certain species of trees are cultivated and protected for religious, cultural and economic values. Abodes of local deities such as large trees, rocks, plants and trees, water bodies, and groves are not intruded. There are many sacred groves where it is a taboo to damage or cut trees. Coincidentally, most of the sacred

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14 Shoot of canes consumed as vegetables.
groves form watersheds of these villages. The Monpas enjoyed free access to the forest resources. They practiced *tseri* cultivation extensively in their own land as well as in the government’s land. They harvested honey and collected resins for cash income. The collection of timber and firewood for household use was easy. There was no restriction on appropriating these resources.

But Forestry Act of 1969, FNCA 1995 and now JSWNP have made resource appropriation difficult. Once the state became the owner of forests the Monpas have to obtain permits and pay royalties for fuel wood, timber and other products, which were once their traditional rights. *Tseri* cultivation was banned.

JSWNP has fulfilled its conservation objectives, but at the cost of the Monpas. The forest cover increased due to the ban on *tseri* and decreasing incidents of forest fires. The increase in populations of wild animals like wild boars, bears, monkey, sambar and deer increased crop damages, in addition to livestock depredation. Not more than 60 percent of the Monpas practice agriculture and they depended mostly on handicrafts (57 percent) and resin tapping (23 percent) for cash income. But the ban on resin tapping by the park management has significantly reduced their income. In 1995 the park management revived the *menyer* institution with major modifications only to become the park’s informants, instead of managing the community resources for the wellbeing of the people. *Menyer* became an outsider, responsible to the park, not to the community.

**Politics of the Himalayan environmental crisis**

Protected areas have historical antecedents in the forests reserves created for timber extraction, royal games, and recreational hunting for colonial officials in Asia and Africa (Orlove & Brush, 1996). It was in the 1970s that the biodiversity protection (through protected areas) became a global concern, with a focus on preventing species extinction (ibid., p.329).

The conservation biology and wildlife management academic courses in developing countries’ are patterned after the courses of the industrialised regions like North America (Saberwal & Kothari, 1996). Because the parks and wildlife sanctuaries in North America do not have human settlements, the courses have a little
or no social science and humanities components to address human dimensions. A blind application of the first world’s lessons in contexts of the developing countries did not work since millions of peoples derived their livelihood from forests under protected areas. The result is the continuous conflict between humans and wildlife and between local population and state institutions over the access to and use of these resources.

That Bhutan is a mountainous country makes the courses and science of conservation biology more irrelevant. Since only 9.1 percent of the world’s protected areas classified by biome are located in mountains (Smethurst, 2000), ecology science is biased against the mountains and must be studied separately, because,

Mountains are elaborate environments characterized by complex topography, multiple ecological zones, and built-in biological diversity. These three characteristics are linked, and they play a role in understanding mountains. High places are topographically diverse: Changes in elevation, slope, and sunlight are compressed into relatively small areas, leading to spatially concentrated variations in temperature, radiation, wind, moisture availability, and soils. Physical distinctions create different ecological zones or altitudinal zonation-belts of terrain where climate, soils, and vegetation are similar. Typically, every 100 meters in elevation gained is equivalent to a 100 kilometer change in latitude (ibid., pp.38-39).

Smethurst’s survey of 282 articles on the mountain study published in Mountain Research and Development journal revealed that one-third of the articles focused on physical process, followed by natural resource development and management (30.1 percent), and only 9.2 percent are about the human element of mountains, including local people. So the interaction between humans and mountains is poorly studied. Whether or not conservation students are trained to deal with the human dimension of ecological science is a big question. The mountains studies rarely discussed social and political problems, and any studies of human adaptation to mountain environments used a systems approach rather than a detailed study of human interactions with their environment. What is hampering the holistic understanding of unique mountains geography are differing interests of
 academia, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations, and research communities (ibid.)

Smethurst’s critiques of the Himalayan environmental degradation theory is of interest to Bhutan. The theory championed by Eckholm in 1975 – that Himalayan farmers are responsible for environmental catastrophes facing northern India and Bangladesh – is “simplistic, untenable, and unsupportable with any reliable data” which provides the basis for plain peoples to make claims on mountains peoples. The theory ignores the findings on how Japan and Switzerland have successfully managed common-property resources using traditional methods for hundreds of years. The reasons why this invalid theory persists, according to Smethurst, is because it serves powerful downstream interests by attracting substantial flow of international assistance for flood control projects, while on the other hand the mountain people bear strict environmental regulations through the creation of protected areas through international development assistance. He also notes that many problems facing mountain environments are result of states making claims on mountain nations, often disguised as development or environmental preservation.

Similarly, Aris (1990) wrote that though the popular conception of the Himalayan crisis and its causes has been challenged by a number of experienced researchers, a strong conviction of the crisis still exists, and the cures aimed at relieving only external symptoms are made by persons outside the regions who have little contact with the peoples within the region. The relations between the natural environment and the history, the spiritual values and attitude of the Himalayan people are totally neglected.

**Conclusion and policy recommendations**

It is impossible to eliminate this old human-wildlife conflict, but it is possible to reduce it. If the conservation policy is mainly responsible for increasing the problem, then the problem can be mitigated by changing the conservation policy. This paper in no way denies the importance of the natural environment for the wellbeing of the country. It is the tangible wealth of the people,
what Phillips calls “an invaluable inheritance from the twentieth century” and “a vital insurance policy for the twenty first” (2003, p.5). Its importance has been overemphasised in our legislation, policies and programmes. This paper only suggests a small shift in our conservation policy to account for needs of the farmers and make their subsistence living a little easier. Sustainable development is possible even after relaxing the tight nooses of the conservation laws, though it may not necessarily increase forest cover.

The relations between the people and the government will be different in post-2008 Bhutan. The greatest threat to the environment will arise when the frustrated farmers know how to (mis)use their electoral power to gain access to their natural resources. This potential problem can be stopped by revisiting our ‘extreme’ conservation approach.

If the national parks are to succeed, the concept of a park must be first planted in the minds of farmers who depend on forests for their living. It must begin through their initiatives while the government can provide financial and technical assistance. Their co-operation and participation is important for the long-term sustainability of the parks. The present protected systems (consisting of national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, nature reserves and biological corridors) have been established through a top-down approach without involving the local communities who rely on forests under the protected areas. There are many conservation failure stories in Africa where a similar approach had been used.

We need to engage the people in all aspects of the management and harvesting of park resources, and recognise their indigenous resource management knowledge and systems by incorporating it into our borrowed resource management system. No individuals, institutions, governments or donors like World Wildlife Fund (WWF) would care more about the environment than the local people themselves. They are the legitimate as well as effective guardians of forests, and they should be looked on as assets not as handicaps to conservation. Everywhere, indigenous peoples have been reliable allies of conservation. The local people would be more reliable than conservationists in protecting protected areas by transferring the ownership and accountability to them. At the moment, without rights to ownership and use,
communities are not encouraged to manage natural resources in a sustainable manner, while the government manages it to the point of denying the people their traditional rights.

We need to set up an institution similar to National Environment Commission (NEC) to look after the social and cultural impacts of development activities, and to train more social scientists. This will help our conservationists to deal with human population dynamics. The social aspect or social impact assessment is missing in our development programmes.

We need to establish an institutional framework to report, assess, and compensate damages to livestock, crop, death and injuries to human lives by wildlife. At the moment the whole country hears about these problems if the media reports them. The compensation must match the economic damage because the loss of domestic animals like horses or mules is more than the economic value of compensation schemes. They are almost as vital to community economic security as members of households. The current compensation scheme is less than the actual livestock damage, and distinction is made among predators. The current Integrated Community Development Projects that provide subsidised CGI roofing, barbed wires for fencing, solar panels etc., must be expanded to offset indirect sacrifice and loss on the part of farmers.

The present conservation legislation does not differentiate different groups of human users and applies a one-thumb rule which fulfils the principles of equality, not equity. The actual relation between local community and natural environment varies between societies, over time and across places. Moreover, there is a huge variation in levels of socio-economic development among regions, districts, gewogs, and villages and households, the direct results of unbalanced development (not necessarily by design but due to accidents of geography, resources, locations etc.) The conservation laws have to distinguish between the villages which have access to motor roads (where exploitation and misuse of subsidized rural timber is possible) and remote gewogs and villages (where the labour cost of felling of trees is more than the economic value of timber). Application of differential laws will achieve the principles of equity. The application of the same bureaucratic requirements for obtaining permits for fuel wood and
timber for rural house construction is harassing farmers of remote villages where there is no possibility of exploiting forests unlike in urban areas where rural timbers are sold illegally.

*Tseri* cultivation has been practiced by some of the poorest farmers in eastern and central districts. Helplessness, not choice, had forced them to rely on the *tseri* for their livelihood. If forests cover has increased at the cost of their traditional livelihood, alternative livelihood must be provided.

The rural villages have never been attractive to retain the farmers and as a result the rural-urban migration is continuing unabated. Relaxing the conservation policy is one way of making the rural life little attractive.

Eco-tourism is possible only if all three factors (the travel industry, tourists, and the conservation community) are present. The current tourism policy permits the exploitation of the conservation community. The earning from ‘servitude’ (sale of local produce, porter charge, and hire of mules for trekkers etc.) is the only financial benefit to the local communities. We may need to change the way tourism business, especially ecotourism like trekking and bird-watching, is done by empowering the local people to charge the tourists or investing a certain percent of the tourists revenue in respective community.

Until such times as guns replace bows and arrows, chainsaws replace axes, and motor roads replace foot paths all over Bhutan, Bhutanese farmers can be trusted to manage and use their own environment.

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Opening the Gates in Bhutan: Media Gatekeepers and the Agenda of Change

Siok Sian Pek-Dorji*

Abstract

Communication studies refer to the journalistic ‘gatekeepers’ as professional, trained editors and reporters with professional news values, setting the agenda for discussion in society, thus putting topics for discussion in the public sphere. The definition of ‘gatekeeper’ is extended to the family and community that have traditionally been important in the teaching and sharing of values in the home and community.

This paper explores the manner in which the new media in Bhutan are changing the traditional role of the gatekeeper in transmitting values, and setting the agenda for the discussion of news and information. It will look at the implications on this tradition in the context of the changing media environment in Bhutan. It examines the new group of gatekeepers who are determining the information we hear, read and see, and influencing emerging social value systems. The paper presents a brief review of current global trends and studies on the role of new media and examines the implications for Bhutan.

Strategies to build a healthy media environment are suggested for Bhutan as society builds a media culture that will give its citizens the kind of information, education, and entertainment it needs to achieve a GNH society.

Opening the gates in Bhutan

One of the most significant developments in the kingdom of Bhutan in recent years is a small explosion of media and ICT. Bhutan has adopted an array of technologies and, with them, a variety of new media forms, including international direct dialling, computer games, CD ROMS, cell phones, new interactive radio, TV and cable channels, online newspapers, and interactive web sites. More than 125,000 people now use the cell phone,

* Media Consultant, Thimphu.
overcoming Bhutan’s main communication challenge of high mountain barriers.

Media penetration continues to extend its reach into Bhutan:
- BBS SW and FM radio reaches all people
- BBS TV (the national TV channel) reaches almost all 20 districts
- Global TV programming reaches people in 46 towns and urban settlements.
- Two new FM radio stations were started in the past year. One of them became a 24 hour station in May 2007.
- Two new newspapers were introduced in 2006.
- B-Mobile, Bhutan’s telephone service will provide email and web browsing services on the phone by spring 2008.
- In 2006, the Bhutanese film industry produced a record number of 24 films

All this is serving a country of 630,000 people, a country that, until 1999, did not have television or the internet.

The traditional and new media are changing the way we work, live, do business, and even our view of life. The increasing accessibility of digital media is set to revolutionise the way we communicate and our means of expression and information. It is also developing a new, vibrant, and more democratic culture in Bhutan that can be tapped to build an environment for a GNH society.

In the initial years the media focused on development activities and government oriented news. Social issues like youth, crime, and urban development began to emerge in the early 1990s and now make up a major focus of the news media. Today the focus is shifting to political transformation. The media’s role is to expand the boundaries of discourse and debate. It is opening up society to issues previously thought to be ‘sensitive’ and beyond the public sphere, such as domestic violence, HIV patients sharing their personal views, crime, and political exchange.

Spurred by technological development and, most recently by political transformation, including the draft constitution, the media are giving impetus to political, economic, and social transformation. Television and radio programmes are aiming to be
highly interactive, newspapers are highly politicised, films are propagating a new culture, and the internet is providing a growing medium of expression.

Bhutan’s younger generation is now being weaned on a new set of values and beliefs perpetuated through the media, and the experience of a country opening up to travel, trading and globalisation. Today, with historic political changes and the emergence of new media, Bhutan is poised for another phase of the information revolution.

**Gatekeepers of values and information – shaping the agenda of change**

The traditional role of the media gatekeeper refers to the key persons involved in the decision-making process of news production such as media professionals and owners. Communications theorist, Harold Lasswell calls it the ‘surveillance function’ of editors and reporters. The agenda-setting role of the media has been the focus of much study. Editors and programme directors filter out what they think is bad (pornography, slander, etc.) and package what is good for their audience, or what they think is worthy of attention. As much as the media sets the news agenda, media also reflect a society’s values.

Media gatekeepers are governed by international laws, regulations and codes. In Bhutan, the draft constitution, media law and regulations guide media professionals. The government has adopted a Media Act\(^1\) and media regulations, and initiated a code of ethics. These laws and regulations are based on the concern that media professionals, with limited exposure and training, may not be able to fulfil the gatekeeper role in a changing and vulnerable society.

Therefore, the government is the main gatekeeper. With the first general elections coming up in 2008, the Election Commission (ECB) has introduced specific regulations for media

\(^1\) Communications and Media Act, 2006
in the bid to ensure fair and free elections. Election advertising regulations determine how much coverage each political party may get on the various media, particularly for election advertising. The Commission appointed a media arbitrator to monitor media coverage. The ECB says the media needs to be tough in its coverage of politics and to expose unlawful activities like “corrupt political practices”.

In this atmosphere of change the traditional gatekeepers of family and community value systems are slowly losing their impact. The oral tradition of storytelling, with families sitting around the hearth sharing their beliefs, values, and societal norms, is disappearing. It is evident that this oral tradition was much stronger in the relatively ‘pristine’ state that Bhutan was prior to modernisation and the advent of mass media and education. Until the early 1980s, Bhutan was largely a traditional society untouched by the world. The family and community had a more dominant role as gatekeepers of our value system.

Today, with traditional story telling on the wane and urbanisation on the rise, the traditional role of family and community elders in sharing values and societal norms through direct communications with the younger generation is weakening. People have less time for their children. In the evenings, many are entertained by television. An increasing practise is for family members to have a second television set, so they are separated according to the programmes of their choice. Some say a second television is necessary to keep peace in the family as father, mother and children all have their own favourite programmes. The

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2 Media Coverage of Elections Rules and Regulations of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Election Commission of Bhutan.
3 “Leaders urge media to be tougher”, Bhutan Observer, Friday 21 September 2007.
4 John Ardussi and Francoise Pommarie describe the mani-walls and tshechus as the mass media of Bhutan’s early history where values were transmitted through the written words or through drama and songs.
5 Dorji Penjore in his article “Folktales and education: The role of Bhutanese folktales in Value transmission” states that the “Walls of rural Bhutanese houses may have once echoed and re-echoed with folktales narrations, but frequency of narrations today has become even fainter and lesser.”
quality time that families had together is now being replaced with ‘entertainment’.

Communications professor, George Gerbner (1995) notes:

A child today is born into a home in which television is on an average of more than seven hours a day. For the first time in human history, most of the stories about people, life and values are told not by parents, schools, churches, or others in the community who have something to tell, but by a group of distant conglomerates who have something to sell (Strasburger and Wilson, 2002).

The increasing numbers of Bhutanese children who are in boarding schools also contribute to the gradually eroding role of families in transmitting and sharing values. These children are home only for part of the year during the holidays and their interaction with family and elders is minimised. The role of teachers in sharing and transmitting values has gained prominence since secular education was offered in Bhutan from the 1960s.

What research and current trends show

With Bhutan on a rapid path to modernisation and democracy, the news media are under increasing pressure to provide the public and cultural space for discussion that is required for the development of a healthy democratic society. The media must engage the citizens and empower them to ensure the functioning of democracy, good governance, and ultimately, Gross National Happiness.

International media trends today show that the internet has eaten into the profits of mainstream media, particularly newspapers, resulting in reduced advertising budgets and job cuts, shrinking international and local news. In South Asia this is yet to happen, but the trends indicate that it will come, and come suddenly. Mainstream newspapers in India continue to enjoy good profits. But, as aggregated news⁶ becomes more popular with the

⁶ Such as google news, yahoo news services, bhutantimes.com, which provide a variety of news from a selection of media sources.
internet generation, the new business model will be internet news. This is a trend that deserves watching.

The internet has spurred a powerful new space – the blogosphere\(^7\), where hundreds of thousands of bloggers gather to share insights and experiences, views and news. These gatekeepers of content perform almost similar roles as their peers in the media, they read and filter thousands of media reports and rewrite and post their own versions of the news and information. But bloggers do so without the editorial skills or accountability required by journalism.

The internet gives every citizen an opportunity to collect, report, analyse and disseminate news and information. This initially gave rise to terms like ‘civic journalism’ and ‘public journalism’, meaning that every person has a right to disseminate information. But analysis found that this was a misleading concept because the posting on the internet was mostly gossip and, therefore, the need for more professional journalism on the internet.

But newspapers, and the concept of the newspaper, is moving to the internet. For example, Oh My News (OMN), a South Korean online news service with the motto “Every Citizen is a Reporter”, has attracted global attention with its open source news reporting provided by about 60,000 citizen ‘reporters’ worldwide.\(^8\) While it acknowledges that many citizen reporters would not subscribe to a prescribed code of ethics, it has appointed 35 full time editors to edit the reports; they are the gatekeepers to maintain journalistic tenets like accuracy, lack of plagiarism, and to ensure that OMN reports are not “offensive or prejudiced”.\(^9\)

*The world of the net*

Digital communications takes a bottom-up approach. Compare this to the old modes of communication which are top-down and

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\(^7\) There are 53 million blogs on the internet and the number doubles every six months according to Andrew Keen in *The Cult of the Amateur.*

\(^8\) Citizen reporters submit about 200 articles every day, and about 1 million readers visit OhmyNews each day.

hierarchical, and opaque rather than transparent. The digital age has made it possible for the power of expression to go to the periphery or the edges. It is characterised by mobility, wide reach, instant communications and greater creativity. Ordinary people are now able to create content, capture pictures and write comments on any issue of their interest, thus creating a new public space for the exchange of communications.

Technology has forced open formerly closed systems of authority. Today’s digital world is a place with free and open spaces that have no gatekeepers. The co-founder of the Personal Democracy Forum in the U.S., Micah Sifry, says:

It’s one thing when the editors of a handful of op-ed pages and magazines can set the agenda. It’s another thing when 10,000 bloggers networking with each other boil up an agenda. And as you can see, the agenda in the latter case is much more open and responsive to a much wider range of viewpoints and it is much harder to get away with bullshit.10

Most research and writings about the internet tend to paint a utopic picture of digital media – its ability to democratise information and communications to create a more level playing field for everyone. Governments that regulate are, therefore, seen as being less democratic, and besides, the media itself does not lend to easy regulation. There is now an emerging critique to this viewpoint that recognises the negative impacts of digital media.

A former Silicon valley entrepreneur, Andrew Keen calls it the cult of amateurs, and warns:

In a flattened, editor-free world where independent videographers, podcasters, and bloggers can post their amateurish creations at will, and no one is being paid to check their credentials or evaluate their material, media is vulnerable to untrustworthy content of every stripe...from duplicitous PR companies, multinational corporations like Wal-Mart and McDonald’s, anonymous bloggers, or sexual predators with sophisticated invented identities (Keen, 2007).

He cites the example of Wikipedia – founded on the premise that it is constantly being corrected by web citizens, and now the third most visited site for information and current affairs. But there are no reporters or editors, and none of the content has been vetted for accuracy, thus “perpetuating a cycle of misinformation and ignorance” (Keen, 2007).

Keen warns:

Say goodbye to today’s experts and cultural gatekeepers – our reporters, news anchors, editors, music composers, and Hollywood movie studios. In today’s cult of the amateur, the monkeys are running the show. With their infinite typewriters, they are anchoring the future. And we may not like how it reads.

The digital world has lowered costs making it possible for everyone to engage in creating content, and self-expression. The high costs that prohibited people in the old analog world from becoming political actors or creators of cultural content, for example, is now less restrictive. What this means is that more people are engaged in the media and that the formats and presentation look more sophisticated, but it does not necessarily mean that the quality of discussion is raised. It simply means that we have a wider variety of discussion available in the digital world.

Lawrence Lessig, a lawyer and promoter of the Creative Commons, has been studying how people are using digital technology for creative activities like remixing content. He acknowledges that there will be illegal creativity and people will resist regulation. Proponents of media regulations believe that society has to resort to legal action and enforce technology agreements to block certain kinds of content to regain control over the discourse. But as Lessig and many people who work with the internet believe, it is very hard to sustain that kind of control. Experience the world over also shows that the younger generation is more actively engaged in cultural production and distribution in today’s age of instant access. This has wide implications for the role of the traditional media gatekeeper.

11 Creative Commons, a non-profit organisation devoted to expanding the range of creative work available to others legally to build upon and share.
A critic and writer on modern media, Howard Rheingold, describes the tools for cultural production and distribution – the mobile phone camera, digital camera and the internet – as being in the “pockets of the 14 year olds” (Rheingold, 2007). New media technologies have had an extensive influence over the way in which youth are exposed to information. The media saturated global community today poses many questions for the next generation of children.

No longer passive media consumers, new media provides the opportunity for people to have their say no matter how naive they may sound. People become participants and not just an audience. Bhutan’s experience is no different. Digital media have launched us into a process of a social and cultural transformation. Facebook, Youtube and Hi5 are internet sites with wide appeal, giving people the opportunity to adopt and invent ways to participate in cultural production.

In such a media saturated world, media researchers and academics are supporting the need for media literacy programmes to make people more aware of, and to be able to critically analyse, media content. Research shows that a media literate society is better able to make good use of all that the media has to offer, and to reinforce positive values rather than being passive and unthinking adopters of new ideas driven home by global television and media.

The internet is also described as a collective intelligence where people pool their knowledge and share what they’ve found. Do it yourself video and cell phone technology enable people to voice their views, report injustice, broadcast misconduct and voice political opinions. The young generation today are able to multi-task far better than their parents’ generation. The digital nomad of the 1990s has become a digital superhuman undertaking numerous tasks all at once. There are as many media gatekeepers today as there are millions of pages on the internet. Put another way, there are many more users without enough gatekeepers.
The new gatekeepers in a new culture: some observations

Internet in Bhutan

The internet in Bhutan is very quickly providing a much needed space for public discourse. Over the years, online forums have become highly popular among a certain group of e-literate Bhutanese. Bhutanese technophiles often find solutions to their daily questions on line and many have built strong community friendship (Dorji, 2003). Bhutanese online discussants are a dedicated group of users much like a collective intelligence on contemporary issues. Their bold voices have been criticised particularly due to their ‘anonymous’ nature. The Bhutan Information, Communication and Media Authority (BICMA) asked internet providers in June, 2007 to block a website, Bhutantimes.com, for being defamatory. Dedicated followers of the website continued to access it through proxy servers. One of the key attractions of the site is the aggregation of news on Bhutan, both from local and international media. Another is the boldness of the topics broached that question authorities, judicial decisions, etc.

People in the industry and those who use the internet as their source of news and information about Bhutan say that the issues raised in online forums are a great way to discuss critical issues. They acknowledge that some of the discussions often get too personal and slanderous. But they point out that such messages are often ignored and/or receive very little response. This is a natural censorship by the community, and is considered more effective than government regulation.

The internet is a democratic process that builds communities and enables a section of society to debate issues. With the political changes taking place in Bhutan, new websites are popping up like thunderboltnews.com, bhutandemocracy.com (established in September 2007), aggregating news on Bhutan and providing forums for online discussion.

There is a growing diaspora of Bhutanese, and friends of Bhutan, all over the world, who are connected via the internet. Thirty four million hits show up when we google the word Bhutan. Compare this to Thailand – 92,600,000 hits, Singapore – 104,000,000, Japan – 315,000,000 and USA – 536,000,000.
Towards Global Transformation

Bhutan’s presence is growing on the blogosphere. Google search shows more than 2,130,000 results for Bhutan blogs, although most of these are blogs written outside of Bhutan. Youtube, the video sharing website shows 392 posts (in October, 2007), with the earliest posted just barely a year ago. Most of these are travel videos, Bhutanese songs and film clips. Bhutanese students tend to use Hi5 as a forum for communication. At the same time, the presence of Bhutan’s critics are increasing, particularly the Nepal-based critics of government who dominate some online discussions.

Radio
The emergence of commercial talk radio spurred by FM technology is worthy of some attention. First of all, talk radio is not a journalistic medium, hence some people find it both refreshing and yet disturbing as the boundaries of accepted speech are stretched. Talk radio hosts and other speakers often employ persuasive communication techniques on the shows, and the overall contents of any radio talk show exhibit clear and strong biases. The participating audience and people calling into the show give talk radio messages the legitimacy it needs. Hence, the gatekeepers are the audience themselves who decide how far to take a discussion.

Talk radio listeners are found to be active participants in public life and studies show that listening to talk radio may reinforce people’s interest in participating. Talk radio is useful as a channel for citizens to actively engage in public discourse, at times challenging elite discourse in the process.

The two new radio stations are fast gaining popularity in Thimphu and some of the districts that receive their signals. These are young, dynamic radio stations that target the young, and young at heart.

Kuzoo FM, established in September 2006, claims an almost similar mission as the BBS to inform, educate and entertain. Kuzoo, describes itself as the voice of the youth and targets a young listenership. It has 16 full time staff and provides a Dzongkha and English radio service that now reaches six districts, and is quickly expanding. In May 2007, Kuzoo FM
became a 24-hour radio station. Its website, Kuzoo.net, has 6,000 members. The website itself provides blogs, news and videos.

Kuzoo aspires to be the voice of the youth of Bhutan.

Kuzoo aspires to inform the youth of Bhutan.

Kuzoo is the youth of Bhutan.

This statement from Kuzoo’s website describes aptly the profile of Kuzoo – youthful, bright and dynamic. Listeners point out a new accent, often described as being an American accent, on Kuzoo. It is the accent of a less ‘schooled’ or less ‘authoritative’/professional voice that many Bhutanese have grown up with on the BBS. The subjects and the level of discourse on Kuzoo are also fairly new by Bhutanese standards, from democracy and youth to a person with HIV coming on air. For example, on an evening broadcast in September 2007, a rather hesitant presenter talked about an emergency contraceptive that should be taken 72 hours after sexual intercourse. In describing the new contraceptive, the presenter said: “It’s really hard for me and my friend to say this on the air, but I think it’s important information for you to know.” This gatekeeper decided that the information was important enough to warrant sharing publicly on air despite her obvious discomfort in talking about contraception.

Talk of love and relationships also tend to dominate the banter on air with callers. This is contributing to a new and open culture that is defining urban Bhutan today. Kuzoo has three news bulletins a day, largely re-written from the newspapers and news from the Bhutan Broadcasting Service. Most of the full time staff have had little formal training and are learning on the job.

Radio Valley, established in April 2007 is Bhutan’s first commercial radio station that aspires to provide “musical joy and entertainment through the radio”. It also has a stated objective to encourage and acknowledge Bhutanese musicians and singers. The station models itself on successful commercial FM in India and in the West. It has two full time radio jockeys (RJs) and nine part time RJs, all with limited formal training, learning largely while on the job.

Radio Valley’s radio jockeys follow a global RJ template and adopt nicknames for themselves. There is “superman”, “the crazy
little girl called Phama”, etc. This has spurred a trend for callers to give themselves nicknames too, hence, a regular listener who is a 14 year old boy named “little romeo”, “aum wangzam”\textsuperscript{12}, “disco Pema” (a Kuzoo FM caller) and others like them.

Station manager Kinley Wangchuk says this is a policy to encourage more communication and callers as people in a small society like Thimphu may be deterred from calling when they have to use their real names. Radio Valley is a commercial radio station that’s enjoying a regular following six months after its establishment. Many people like the relaxed, informal style that the station exudes along with the almost non-stop music it offers.

Like the free spirit that characterises FM radio, Radio Valley gives the impression of a station that is daring, young and fun. It is outward looking and questionnaires on its website asks listeners for their zodiac sign and what they would do if they were made the president of America for a day. It also sometimes borders on the extremes of accepted radio norms, as many people notice that the radio jockeys sometimes flirt with their callers.

In a spontaneous moment in September 2007, a female radio jockey described an advertiser who had just visited the station. She says in rapid fire speech:

You should see the owner of ‘XYZ’\textsuperscript{13} shop who just walked in to the station with her skinny jeans and stilettos, she’s looking really hot. Even the other RJs here are all looking at her. It really makes me want to go to her shop and get something from there. Boys and men – go get something special from ‘XYZ’ shop for your special girl.

Here’s a female RJ describing another woman as looking “really hot” – not an expression women would use on their own gender, and perhaps an indication of an unfiltered acceptance of the language of global radio jockeys who tend to be more male. When asked for her reaction, the woman described said she was embarrassed by the remark: “She should have used the words

\textsuperscript{12} A term that is customarily considered impolite (meaning wench) but in this case used tongue in cheek and perhaps to denote a sense of being risqué and daring.

\textsuperscript{13} Name changed.
‘looking nice’ or something like that. After all I’m married with children,” she said. “I’m going to call the station and ask them not to use such descriptions.” And so starts a process of negotiating a new cultural space on Bhutan’s talk radio.

The new radio stations have spurned a youthful culture and will continue to push back the boundaries of accepted speech just like the internet. Talk radio setting a new agenda of love and relationships for the younger generation with the danger that it may swamp all other priorities. New to the experience, talk radio in Bhutan has not yet resulted in people becoming active participants in public life but has vast potential for doing so.

The new stations have had an impact on BBS radio. BBS is also seeking ways to become less formal and more interactive, and to acquire new music that is a main draw for its listeners.

**TV**

TV soap operas are popular. Indian soap operas have a fan following, while Korean soaps are becoming popular. Korean films and music have become a favourite of Bhutanese youths.

Cable operators continue to broadcast local community videos. One cable channel in Thimphu runs advertisements and music fillers to attract local advertisements. Low cost productions, re-runs and programmes that include advertisements taken from TV channels in India make up an eclectic, and unfortunately, low quality programme offering. The gatekeepers in most cases continue to be the technical staff on duty. Many amateur video efforts are surfacing on the local cable TV channels, while trailers of Bhutanese films attract some attention.

**Film**

The film industry continues to grow and a record number of films were shown in 2006. Despite being commercial ventures, the film and music industry are thriving. The latest films are expressions of the change taking place in Bhutan. A film released in 2006 is called “Aum Chum”, the story of a singer and stepmother to a child who loves hip hop. The film’s original cut features a six minute clip of Bhutanese boys taking part in a breakdancing
competition. This was later cut to four minutes and the rap song in English was removed on request of the film review board\textsuperscript{14} (which represents a government and industry gatekeeper) which stated that Bhutan is not yet ready for the culture of breakdancing, and objected to the expletives in the song.

The director of the film\textsuperscript{15} said breakdancing was already popular and all the film did was to reflect a reality of youth. The Bhutanese film industry is an example of a media that’s exploring and negotiating cultural space, but it has a big impact due to its popularity. There were 92 films produced by 2007, 24 of them last year. Overall, Bhutanese films and local soap operas have helped to improve an understanding of the Dzongkha language, are reinforcing Bhutanese culture and music although many are based on Bollywood templates. Most significantly, these local films are replacing the screening of Hindi movies in the local cinemas and there is a waitlist for films to be screened in Thimphu’s only cinema.

\textit{Music}

Music is a vibrant industry with 12 music studios producing 50 albums last year.\textsuperscript{16} Music videos and new music today include songs that combine languages, ‘Dzonglish’ has become a term to describe songs in Dzongkha that include some English words and lines. While the mainstream broadcaster, BBS, has emphasised proper Dzongkha, the national language is now less formal in tone and is even mixing languages in the new media scene. Bhutanese hip hop and rap music are making their debut in a growing market. Music videos show strong Bollywood-inspired dance sequences.

\textit{Newspapers}

Newspapers are also showing signs of reaching out to an urban and youthful readership. Kuensel publishes a weekly City Bytes section that targets the urban youth. The Observer, which professes to focus on rural news, and bills itself as citizen’s news,

\textsuperscript{14} Bhutan’s Film and TV Review Board.
\textsuperscript{15} Pelden Dorji in personal communications
\textsuperscript{16} From a UNDP workshop on creative industries, 2007.
citizen’s views, has stories on prêt -a porter, where to get hip hop clothes for children.\textsuperscript{17} Bhutan Times provides a regular fare of film idols (both Bollywood and Hollywood actors), and Western fashion trends including scantily clad models. It runs stories that would not have appeared in Bhutanese media a few years ago – e.g. “Bouncing breasts spark new bra challenge” with a picture that barely conceals a woman’s breasts (Sept. 20\textsuperscript{th} 2007 edition). Even as newspapers try to set a certain standard in reporting, there is a growing tendency to look for sensationalism ranging from the portrayal of Western women, to trivial news.

\textbf{Gatekeeping}

As the gates are opening wider and more news, information and entertainment are reaching the average citizen in Bhutan, it’s a good time to ponder the role of the media gatekeepers. How wide should we open the gates? Can we control the trend? How can we negotiate the new media environment to help build a more open society and strengthen civic engagement in issues of concern?

Similarly with the family growing up in a more media saturated environment than ever before, what role do families play in filtering the cultural change that is taking place in Bhutan? Messages can be healthy or unhealthy, positive or negative and what is perfectly acceptable in one society may be considered risqué in another. What we see today are new media gatekeepers each trying to find their own niche in the media market, and to set their own boundaries. Digital media are enabling Bhutanese to become not just consumers of news, information and entertainment, but producers of news, information and entertainment although the quality of such efforts may not always be of the highest standards.

\textbf{Strategies for the growth of a healthy media}

Media is evolving in Bhutan and the emergence of new media is providing new, vibrant and challenging spaces for public discourse and cultural expression. This section suggests

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\textsuperscript{17} Bhutan Observer, 21 September 2007
\end{flushright}
strategies for the healthy growth of media in Bhutan so as to create an environment conducive to GNH.

‘Many to many’ communications does not guarantee civic engagement by populations that have not been used to, or had a chance to express, public voices. The mainstream media now have the responsibility to give voice to the voiceless and the unreached. People must be encouraged to speak up and the media must continue to focus on people’s views. BBS is making efforts to that extent through new technology that will permit more regular relay of voices and pictures from the districts. Media must remember their public service obligations in a society where the majority of people are still subsistence farmers.

The new media emerging in Bhutan must promote wholesome civic engagement based on an accepted code of ethics and practices. Just as OMY, a citizen’s news site, has acknowledged the need for editors to maintain standards, the role of the professional gatekeeper will always be required. Similarly, the Bhutanese media must maintain ethical standards if it is to take on issues like corrupt practices in a democratic society.

The role of the government as gatekeeper

The gatekeeping trend needs to be watched and, if necessary, regulated. While regulations are meant to guide the healthy development of media, they must be introduced with a light touch to enable media to be professional. Tight regulations, no matter how well meaning, will strangle the media at a stage when they need to be strengthened and allowed to grow to be effective in a democracy. The best approach to the healthy development of the media will remain dependent on training and education.

Media gatekeepers encourage anonymity to encourage greater participation. While understandable for more sensitive issues, it is important that media in Bhutan encourage people to reveal their identity to make discourse honest and transparent. Today the newspapers continue to use comments from anonymous contributors on their online forums. It would be a grave setback to Bhutan’s emerging democracy if anonymity becomes a trend in the media. The argument that anonymity protects sources, or gets people to come out of their shell, loses out to the need for honest, democratic, and free speech. While some may see it as a matter of
time before we’re comfortable to say what we think, we have to begin now.

Regulators like the government and the media need to encourage people to speak out clearly and in a non-offensive manner for their views to be heard. Media are a reflection of the social world and we would like to imagine a civil society that’s civil rather than one that is petty and slanderous.

For democracy to work, media has the role to establish a diverse and vibrant public and cultural sphere, one that is truly Bhutanese and not copied. The media’s voice must be relevant to the average citizen. Plagiarism and intellectual piracy, so rampant in blogging and the internet, needs to be watched in Bhutan's new media to avoid a generation that’s freely acquiring others’ work as their own. Instead, we must encourage people to produce their own narratives.

Being relatively young in terms of media development we can create a media environment that truly suits Bhutan and our goal of Gross National Happiness. We must aim for media that are more culturally sensitive, more spiritual, more compassionate and more thought-provoking. We must develop media that do not succumb to commercial influences and that recognise public service as a priority even while we try to make media sustainable through advertising and corporate support. We have to shape the power that shapes the community – advertising. If GNH is a policy for contentment, it is essential that we have guidelines for advertising that targets children and the rural community so that rampant commercialism does not replace quality programming.

There is a need for Bhutan’s media gatekeepers to play the important role of community building (now more than ever in a new democratic environment) and to provide a healthy forum for discourse – be it political, social, economic or cultural.

There is a lack of training and professionalism and the new radio scenario runs the risk of putting out the wrong messages to the youth. The language used can be improved as it represents gatekeepers who set social standards. There is also an unchecked use of reading news from the mainstream media, often without crediting, a form of plagiarism that has become commonplace on the internet.
Gatekeepers in the family must continue to play their role as communicators of values and beliefs, and to engage the young generation in discussing the changing values and culture in Bhutan. Parent and media literacy programmes will help to spread an awareness of the role of media and skills necessary to make the most of what media offer today. Parents need to guide their children in media use. Media literacy will also help us bridge the transition from a speak-only culture to a watch-only culture with a recognition of the need to read and write that is so essential in a media-filled world. Today's media culture is a read/write culture as digital technology gives everyone the ability to create content. Bhutanese children must have a good foundation in reading and writing to be able to fully participate in this new media world. To be effective, we have to begin by introducing media studies in the school and college level curriculum.

Recognising that multi-tasking is also becoming a way of life in Bhutan, we should monitor and regulate our media use. More is not necessarily better. We have 35 television channels 24 hours a day, and the internet is soon to be available on our cell phones. We do not want to spend all our waking moments reliant on the media, or being filled with distractions from media, particularly television viewing that has been described as a “weapon of mass distraction”. As a GNH society, we need quiet time, down time and time for contemplation and spiritual pursuits.

The government has to play the balanced monitoring role; Bhutan can regulate without strangling creativity, through the open portrayal of our changing culture. In an open source and bottom-up world of postmodern media, we have little choice as traditional norms of control are no longer effective, nor desirable. The minds of our youth have been opened to the world and to new ideas, and there’s no turning back. The youthfulness of the media can be groomed and guided (through guidelines, training, regulations) to ensure quality discussions on the agenda, and to ensure that society’s values are upheld.

Media organisations need to adopt GNH as a policy for setting targets and planning. GNH in media means addressing public service obligations above all else. It also means media should question themselves about the intention of each story, programme and content and what they hope to contribute to society with their
work. With GNH as a guiding principle, media have to empower citizens to achieve wellbeing rather than creating a passive audience of consumerism.

We should be wary of the possible entanglement of social and commercial interests, and understand the need for public service that distinguishes the consumer (based on economics or who can pay for what) and the citizen. Media have the responsibility to develop a vibrant civil society by addressing citizens’ needs, and interests. The media can seek feedback and consult with citizens to prioritise information, news and entertainment that are relevant in a changing society, and not merely reiterate what the commercial world thinks we want or should have.

We should avoid the ‘dumbing down’ of media that is happening elsewhere in the world, where media feed misinformation and provide sensationalism producing a Disney-type happiness and entertainment; this will lead us far from the path to GNH. No matter how tempting it is to pander to gossip, titillation and commercial interests, media have a bigger role in ensuring quality media and discussion as Bhutan journeys towards democracy today.

All these strategies show the important role of the gatekeeper that filters the news, information and values we hold in Bhutanese society. Bhutan’s constitution guarantees the freedom of information and media. Government regulations the world over have been difficult to implement. The best approach is to enhance professionalism of the media through education and training.

Only through a healthy, open discourse can we truly try to build an environment in which every Bhutanese can decide how to achieve the state of GNH that is the inspiration for our development and future. Bhutan survived and thrived as a unique nation in the past because it kept a tight hold on its gates. It has inevitably decided to open up to the world, but cautiously. In doing so it cannot allow its gates to be pried open but must be in control of the pace. That is the essence of GNH.
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Abstract

This paper investigates empirically some of the critical aspects of wellbeing, primarily constituting the standard of living in Bhutan, using conglomerative radar perspective and econometric technique. The analysis is based on district level data for Bhutan, pertaining to the year 2005, taken from recently concluded standard of living survey and census enumeration in the country. The study concludes that at a disaggregate level, conglomerates of wellbeing enhancing indicators are important as they tend to contribute to the happiness of individual as well as society. Beyond this level, it is the lifetime satisfaction which is important for happiness. The study suggests focusing on domain satisfaction indicators for poor performing districts in Bhutan.

Introduction

The UNDP human development framework emphasised the recognition of broad based consensus on the three critical dimensions of wellbeing. These dimensions of wellbeing are:

- Longevity
- Education
- Command over Resources

Longevity is about the ability to live a long and healthy life. Education is the ability to read, write and acquire knowledge. Command over resources is the ability to enjoy a decent standard of living and have a socially meaningful life. These three critical elements of wellbeing facilitate effective empowerment and bring about a social, economic and political inclusion of the marginalised segments of the mainstream society. While much has been established to enhance our understanding about the significance of longevity and education on wellbeing research,
relatively less has been spoken on the significance of command over resources. However, domain satisfaction research seems to have focused on some of the aspects of command over resources. Individual command over resources determines sustenance, attainments of aspects of wellbeing and the opportunity that these attainments facilitate. It can also be pointed out that ensuring command over resources and amenities alone is not sufficient for lifetime satisfaction. Happiness is derived both from domain satisfaction as well as lifetime satisfaction. Both are necessary and initially they tend to reinforce each other. However, the researchable question raised here is: To what extent do improvements in dimensions of wellbeing ensure happiness?

The conglomerative perspective provides an effective and well-established way of understanding the dynamics and reinforcement of critical elements of wellbeing and thereby happiness of people and society. The conglomerative perspective looks at the advances made by society as a whole. Contrary to this, the deprivational perspective captures the status of the deprived in society. Both approaches are essential to understand societal wellbeing. While the first approach would suggest what enhances wellbeing in general, the second approach would capture the possible extent of reduction in wellbeing due to deprivation and lack of command over resources.

The present paper examines some of the critical elements of wellbeing in Bhutan and their relationship with happiness using the conglomerative perspective. The results have been obtained by drawing conglomerative radar for disaggregated data on some of the critical aspects of wellbeing in the country. Much of our understanding about Bhutan is intuitive in nature and lacks empirical support due to the unavailability of data. It is virtually impossible to attempt a disaggregated analysis, e.g. district level analysis. However, the situation seems to be improving and the recent standard of living survey and census enumeration of the country have provided a good database at the disaggregate level. The present paper makes use of this database for analysis.
Section II: Literature review

The growing literature on happiness has been immensely enriched with Bhutan’s contribution of Gross National Happiness (GNH). The holistic concept of GNH is constantly evolving and an attempt has also been made to model and quantify the concept. GNH is a macro concept and in all probability there exits a need for ascertaining the link between GNH and individual happiness. The pertinent question to ask is whether improvement as registered in a proposed GNH Index (seemingly in the making to quantify aggregate happiness of the nation), would essentially mean an improvement in individual happiness. Furthermore, when GNH is more important than GDP, then essentially the distribution of happiness, like the distribution of GDP, would be as important as the aggregate of GNH.

In the paper presented in the First International Conference on “Operationalising Gross National Happiness” held in Thimphu, I and my colleague argued that there seems to be a moderate link between GNH and individual happiness (Pankaj & Dorjee, 2005). Based on field data from eastern parts of Bhutan, the study showed that income and the social profile of individuals contribute differentially towards their happiness when seen across rural-urban set up and also across occupation, income class and age. Therefore, it makes sense to further analyse and understand happiness in the country for a better understanding of the linkage between GNH and individual happiness.

Current status of happiness research

There has been a phenomenal growth in happiness research since the 1960s with over 3000 published studies exploring this subject in a variety of ways (www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu). As more and more has been discovered, there is also a growing realisation among scholars that more needs to be explored. Like the subject of happiness itself, the convergence of opinion on its research is far from sight. Happiness research hasn’t been more about understanding it as perfectly as possible but it has been more about how the research can help individuals and societies to become as happy as possible. This makes research more relevant on a subject as elusive as happiness. There is a shift in the
domain of happiness research from psychology to that of applied psychology wherein the focus is on happiness increase research. The contribution of GNH in enhancing the status the happiness research is enormous. In fact, GNH has provided an alternative worldview which will go a long way in securing the greatest happiness for the greatest mass.

The literature on subjective wellbeing or happiness is fast growing and a comprehensive review of this literature can be found in Veenhoven (in press); many attempt to seek interventions to increase happiness (Fava, 1999; Fava & Ruini, 2003). Studies have pointed out clearly the distinction between the two components of ‘satisfaction’ (happiness); ‘life (global) satisfaction’ and ‘domain (work, family, self, etc.) satisfactions’. The leading researcher and authority on happiness, Rutt Veenhoven, visualised happiness as the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of life-as-a-whole favourably. Psychologist Jonathan Freeman pointed out that people may pursue happiness differently, but by and large it is the same happiness for everyone. Therefore, happiness can be viewed and discussed both as a global as well as individual concept. Happiness is an individual expression as much as it is an aggregate expression for an individual as also for the society as a whole. However, scarcely any study has attempted to find the link between aggregate happiness and individual happiness. It is imperative to ask and explore whether enhancement in societal happiness necessarily would increase individual happiness of everyone in the society. Is there a distributional aspect of happiness as an aggregate expression?

**Determinants of happiness**

Jeremy Bentham provided one of the earliest accounts of the calculus of pain and pleasure while bringing the discussion on utility to the forefront in England in 1789 (Stigler, 1965). Bentham’s thirty-two circumstances explained pleasure and pain. However, discussion in economics thereafter, cantered on discovering and rediscovering the principles of marginal utility and later on, their measurement. Utility is akin to welfare. As such, an enhancement in welfare can be measured in terms of changes in utility. More income brings enhanced consumption
which increases utility and hence welfare (happiness). The object of public policy should be to maximise the sum of happiness in society. Since marginal utility of money is more for the poor, it makes sense to focus on the redistribution of income. Contrary to this, many studies have confirmed that happiness, not income, constitutes the ultimate goal of most individuals (Easterlin, 1995; Easterlin, 2001; Ng, 1997; Oswald, 1997). Easterlin provided one of the earliest empirical works about self-reported happiness. The decade of the 1990s witnessed increased awareness on the subject, and economists have shown that happiness is not an entirely personalised phenomenon; rather, it also depends on conditions like unemployment, inflation and income (Clark & Oswald, 1994; Oswald, 1997; Easterlin, 200). Some scholars have also tried to quantify the effect of variables such as freedom (Frey, 2000) air pollution (Welsch, 2003), aircraft noise (Praag & Baarsma, 2001) and climate (Rehdanz & Maddison).

A good deal of discussion on this subject can be found in Layard (Layard, 2003) which emphasised that GDP is a hopeless measure of welfare demonstrated by the fact that despite a several-fold increase in per capita GDP the happiness of the population tended to stagnate. Layard points out that Pareto optimality leads us to a situation where no one could be happier without someone else being less happy. Even if we account for problems such as asymmetric information, short-sightedness, externalities and diseconomies of scale, it only can suggest that higher real wages will make the population happier. It fails to realise that our wants, once we are above subsistence level, are largely derived from society and they are major factors affecting happiness. Karl Marx said, “A house may be large or small; as long as the surrounding houses are equally small, it satisfies all social demands for a dwelling. But if a palace rises beside the little house, the little house shrinks into a hut,” (quoted in Layard, 2003). Layard concludes that rational policy-making is possible since happiness is a real scalar variable and can be compared between people.

Helliwell (Helliwell, 2001) perhaps, is the only author who attempted to analyse international (Helliwell, 2001) and interpersonal difference in subjective wellbeing while making use of data from three waves of the World Value Survey covering about
Conglomerate Radar of Happiness in Bhutan

fifty different countries. The study uses large international samples of data combining individual and societal level determinants of wellbeing. The study establishes the link among social capital, education, income and wellbeing. It also identifies the direct and indirect linkage between social capital and wellbeing. Happiness depends on a lot more than people’s purchasing power. It depends on tastes which people acquire from environment and on the whole social context in which we all live. Therefore, situation pertaining to income, work, family, and health do contribute to happiness and they also account for the overall happiness rating/index. Layard’s discussion also focuses on factors pertaining to freedom, religion, trust, and morality as important facets of life resulting in upward movement in happiness index.

Layard and Helliwell’s study lends a great deal of support to the presumption of the present paper that establishing the link between individual and aggregate happiness is important, as both individual and societal factors determine the extent of rise or fall in wellbeing (happiness) index. It also makes sense to compare aggregate happiness with that of individual happiness in relation to their determinants. It is in this light that the next section takes up the analysis of available data and the presentation of results.

Section III: Estimation and results

Data and methodology

The data used for analysis in the present study has been taken from the Planning Commission, Thimphu, which collected from the recently concluded standard of living survey and census enumeration. Most data are taken from unpublished sources and pertain to the survey year of 2005. A two-pronged methodology followed for the analysis of data: conglomerative radar and econometric estimation.

Conglomerative radar is a diagrammatic representation of progress and provides a snapshot view of the structure, pace and gaps in progress. The radar is also helpful in understanding the relationship among competing aspects. The present study draws the radar for each district and also for 12 critical aspects of wellbeing including happiness. To ensure comparability in
attainments, the respective magnitudes have been scaled and normalised to take a value on a scale ranging from 0 to 5. The least achievement corresponds to 0 scale, while the best achievement is closer to 5. In constructing the scales desirable, norms have been adopted. However, in some cases the norms are self-selecting, e.g., computer usage, ownership of land, etc. The selection of indicators strictly followed the international norms (MDGs etc.) coupled with the Royal Government of Bhutan’s development policy and emphasis. The radar captures the relative contribution of different dimensions of wellbeing vis-à-vis happiness. The greater the shaded area of any indicator the better is the attainment on that indicator. Similarly, the more symmetrical the shaded portion of the radar, the more balanced are the attainments of different dimensions of wellbeing. A well balanced achievement radar would look more like a good diamond, and therefore, the goal of public policy should be to achieve a good looking development diamond.

The study also makes use of the econometric technique for estimating the cause-and-effect relationship, keeping happiness as dependent variable. The explanatory variables are the selected wellbeing indicators. The estimation has been done using SPSS software.

Dimensions of wellbeing

- Happiness: Happiness has entered into the study as dependent variable and the ultimate goal of both individual and society. The data on happiness has been reported on three scales of ‘very happy’, ‘happy’ and ‘not very happy’. The scaling has been done on the frequency related to the first two responses.
- Employment: Scaling on employment has been done by taking employment among the economically active population of 15+ age across districts.
- Literacy: Scaling on literacy has been done by taking the literacy of 6+ age population across districts.
- Access to piped water: Access to piped water has been taken for both inside house availability and outside house availability. Though the outside house availability may require further information on its distance from house, but
presumably it would be far nearer in comparison to a natural stream.
- Access to safe toilet: Scaling has been done to capture the sanitation aspect, covering the availability of flush toilet inside or outside house, VIDP and long drop latrine.
- Ownership of land: Scaling of this aspect has been done on the ownership of land independent of the other assets, including house.
- Ownership of house: Scaling of this aspect has been done on the ownership of house independent of assets, including land.
- Safe source of lighting: The scaling included the use of electricity, solar and LPG as the source of lighting over the usage of kerosene, firewood, and generator, etc.
- Safe source of cooking fuel: The scaling included the use of electricity, solar and LPG as the source of cooking fuel over the usage of kerosene and firewood.
- Distance from motor road: The scaling included frequency for less than 30 minutes distance from the motored road.
- Telephone: The scaling included household in possession of telephone independent of other communication and media facility.
- Computer: The scaling included household in possession of computer independent of other communication and media facility.

**Conglomerative radar**

Table 1 below presents the statistical results of conglomerative radar, reporting on the average of scaling, standard deviation and coefficient of variation. These three statistical measures are useful in determining the level and variation in radar. The average scaling provides information on the level of achievement, with a higher average signifying a higher achievement. The standard deviation tells us about the extent of variation in average scale across various selected wellbeing indicators. The coefficient of variation provides the per cent variation in achievements, with a lesser percent meaning a better balanced achievement. These measures are significant from the point of view of ranking the districts according to their level and balance in achievements on wellbeing. There does not seem to be a definite correlation between level and variability of achievement, however, generally a
higher average achievement is found associated with better balance in growth and thereby more linkage with happiness.

Among districts Paro, Thimphu and Bumthang are the best three performing districts, with Paro at the top of balanced achievement. Districts with better performance in terms of level of achievement are also generally the districts demonstrating better balanced achievements. At the bottom of the ladder are the districts of Gasa, Tsirang and Lhuntse. These districts not only demonstrate a low level of achievements, but also a relatively higher level of variability.

When we look at the calculated scale for Bhutan as a whole, as many as 9 districts seem to be performing better than this average. These districts are the best performing districts with all round achievements. Urban performance in general seems to be better than rural, both in terms of level as well as balanced performance. This possibly can explain a great deal as to why people from rural Bhutan are migrating so rapidly to urban locations. Prima facie, if we address the question whether such migration is happening at the cost of happiness, the answer would be negative. With better balanced achievement radar and its positive relationship with happiness, migration to good urban locations has tended to increase peoples’ happiness. The only pull factor against this rural to urban migration could possibly be to achieve a similarly good looking development diamond for rural areas as well.

Happiness as such does not demonstrate much variation across districts, while the conglomerative elements represent a lot of variation. This indicates that, while various critical elements of wellbeing add to happiness in general they do not add to happiness neither greatly nor equally. Also, the extent of contribution has differed district-wise. This, however, needs to be ascertained further with econometric analysis which is undertaken subsequently in this section.
### Table 1: Rank order of districts according to average achievement scale and balanced achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank*</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Average Achievement Scale (0 to 5)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Co-efficient of Variation (%)</th>
<th>Rank Order according to average level of achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Paro</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>42.81</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Thimphu</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>43.57</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bumthang</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>45.21</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Haa</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>46.22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Punakha</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>46.71</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chhukha</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>47.59</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sarpang</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>48.42</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Wangdue</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Trashigang</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>58.16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Trongsa</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>55.40</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Pemagatshel</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>57.04</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Samdrup Jongkhar</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>57.80</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Trashi Yangtse</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>58.16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Monggar</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>58.91</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Samtse</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>59.49</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Zhemgang</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>60.88</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Dagana</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>61.45</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Lhuentsse</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>62.50</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Tsirang</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>55.40</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Gasa</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>67.31</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan (Combined)</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>50.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan (Urban)</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>46.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan (Rural)</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>61.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Order according to balanced achievement

The snapshot view of the above drawn results can be obtained by conglomerative radars. The radars below are presented for the best and the worst performing districts (Figure 4-6). Figure 13 presents the radar for Bhutan as a whole, urban and rural separately. Radars for all other districts are with the author and available on request. They are not presented here with a view to restrict the paper within limited size.
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Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Top performers: Triple Gems
Paro, Thimphu and Bumthang are presenting the achievement diamond more clearly, may be called the ‘triple gems’ of achievements. The respective radars are presented below:
Conglomerate Radar of Happiness in Bhutan

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6
The gems are not equally spread, demonstrating a deep cut on left upper side. This means that telephone and computer availability is yet to catch up with other competing elements of wellbeing. The gems are nicely poised on the right side with sufficient spread. This indicates that the achievements on the front of employment, literacy, piped water availability and safe toilet have gone a long way.

**Bottom performers**

The three bottom performers are Gasa, Tsirang and Lhuentse. The radars of these three districts are presented below:

*Figure 7*

![Figure 7](image)

*Figure 8*

![Figure 8](image)
It is clear from the observation of the above three radars (Figure 7-9) that they are half-cut gems, chiselled on left side. This means that bottom performing states have to go a long way in achieving on information and communication front, road network, and also in safe cooking and lighting environment for households.

**Conglomerative radar and happiness**

Happiness as such is not much different across districts, as is clear from the observation of radar which invariably has a similar sharp vertical edge in all cases. This suggests that critical elements of wellbeing do add to happiness but happiness, per se, is not explained only on the basis of these indicators. There are variations in explanations. This presumption goes very well with the on-going debate and research on happiness which clearly points towards factors beyond wellbeing measures on which happiness depends. Society needs much more beyond sufficient command over resources and amenities to be happy. In order to research a little more on this aspect, the study makes use of econometric techniques. The results of estimated regression are presented in Table 2.
Table 2: Regression results using happiness as dependent variable, Bhutan 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>4.405</td>
<td>1.499</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.287</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe water</td>
<td>0.179</td>
<td>2.086</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe toilet</td>
<td>0.285</td>
<td>1.166</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>0.569</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe lighting</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>1.073</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe cooking</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>1.080</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.329</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>-0.181</td>
<td>-1.102</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>-0.635</td>
<td>-1.290</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>0.756</td>
<td>Adj. R2</td>
<td>0.421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Se</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2.256</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DW</td>
<td>2.044</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A perusal of the regression results presented above reinforces the hypothesis set earlier. The result suggests that even if we assign zero value to all wellbeing indicators, the average scale of happiness will be 4.405. This means that almost 81 percent of aggregate happiness is secured without reference to any wellbeing indicators. This is also reflected from the adjusted R² value of 0.421 which indicates that the explanatory variables account for about 42 percent of the variation in happiness due to regression whereas rest is explained by variation due to residuals. This is a totally unexpected conclusion as it has been time and again reinforced that happiness is derived from wellbeing indicators up to certain improvements, and thereafter is mostly sought in lifetime satisfaction factors. Therefore, domain satisfaction and lifetime satisfaction complement each other and move side-by-side until 20-25 percent of happiness is secured, thereafter most of the reinforcement to happiness is obtained from lifetime satisfaction pursuits. Studies have pointed out some of the lifetime
satisfaction pursuits which come from freedom, religion, trust, and morality. In the Bhutanese context, aspects such as religiosity, cultural participation and identity were studied as factors affecting individual happiness and these were found to be significant factors. In these cases, the intercepts of estimated regression lines from field data for urban and rural separately, were found negative, suggesting that if we put religiosity, cultural participation and identity to zero level, it is actually likely to result in a substantial decline in happiness. The results were more pronounced for rural vis-à-vis urban Bhutan.

Regression results also reiterate the significance of some of the domain satisfaction variables as constituents of wellbeing. For example, employment, literacy, sanitation, clean water, good lighting and safe cooking energy source will enhance happiness to the extent of 10 to 50 percent. The estimated coefficients for computer and telephone are low, insignificant, and also negative. This indicates that an increase in computer and telephone are causing unhappiness to people. This is not an unexpected result as more exposure brought about by international media is likely to cause dissatisfaction due to the feeling of relative deprivation.

### Section IV: Concluding remarks

The preceding analysis, using conglomerative radar and regression results, suggests that causation between wellbeing indicators and overall happiness exists in Bhutan. This conclusion is significant from the point of view of understanding GNH. The study clearly points out that the wellbeing umbrella is likely to enhance happiness but to a limited extent. Beyond certain improvements, the pursuit of happiness requires discussion within the domain of lifetime satisfaction such as religiosity, culture, inner transformation etc. The inter-district analysis brings out a couple of dimensions which have policy implications. The majority of districts falling below the national average scale (11 out of 20 districts) need to improve holistically, keeping the conglomerative radar in mind; those at the bottom of rank order need special attention.

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2 Pankaj & Dorjee, 2005.
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The significance of individual wellbeing indicators cannot be ruled out as they do add to happiness. For a precise word on this notion, the study also attempts to calculate the happiness elasticity with respect to some of the wellbeing indicators. The happiness elasticity calculated from estimating double-log function from the same set of data gives the following results (Table 3).

Table 3: Happiness elasticity with respect to domain satisfaction (wellbeing) indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Happiness elasticity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe toilet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe lighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe cooking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.53 (Sig. 0.059)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above results suggest that employment, literacy, safe water, and safe toilet have a significant response to happiness. This fact can be significantly understood and taken seriously, especially when considering the low performance districts.

The study, therefore, concludes that GNH is a well conceived notion and has the potentiality to be converted into a well designed theory which can guide the course of development. At a disaggregate level, a conglomerate of wellbeing enhancing indicators are important as they tend to contribute to the happiness of the individual as well as society.
References


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A Case Story from Minamata: GNH Practice as Human Security and Sustainable Development

Takayoshi Kusago*

Introduction

I was born in Japan in 1962 and received education from the primary school to the university in Japan. History classes taught me of the rapid economic growth and transformation that took place after World War II as one of the best cases in the modern world. In 1955, the per capita GDP for Japan was about half a million yen and it reached above 4 million yen in 2005. School enrolment rates for high school and university have risen and life expectancy at birth has become one of the longest in this world. Japanese seem to enjoy and be satisfied in their lives. In textbooks of Japan, many have pointed out how miraculous Japanese economic development has been for more than forty years by referring to the successful companies such as Toyota, Sony, Panasonic, and so on. However, this industrialisation has paid huge costs for the society.

In 1956, a strange disease was found in Minamata-city located in the west coast of the southern part of the Kyushu-island where some people became seriously ill. The cause was organic mercury which had been accumulated in fish and shellfish caught in the Minamata Bay where one big chemical company, Chisso, which had produced acetaldehyde for economic development, discharged the industrialised waste for many years. Those who constantly ate fish caught in the bay became victims of the polluted fish.

After this problem was identified as the Minamata disease, local people were hard hit by the disease, which caused stigma from outside the city and internal conflicts among the local people. These troubles were partly due to the fact that the company that caused the disease had hired many local people as

* Associate Director, Global Collaboration Centre, Osaka University, Japan.
factory workers, close to 20% at its peak, and local retail sales depended on the company as well. Those who worked for the company did not want to lose their jobs, thus, the incidence of the disease was reported lower than the real number of cases.

There arose conflicts between victims and the Chisso over the recognition of their responsibility and compensation issues. In addition, this has created un-evidenced stigma among the Japanese people against Minamatans, with the mystified Minamata-disease believed to be a local infectious disease. Thus, passengers in a train in the line passing through Minamata city closed their windows once the train entered the city. On the other hand, those who were born in Minamata originally, tended not to identify themselves as people from Minamata, in fear of the people’s reaction to the city and them. Some people faced discrimination over marriage due to this stigma.

Minamata city is not a unique case in either Japan or the world. Industrialization started in the Meiji era more than hundred years ago in Japan. Industrialization with mass production created enormous social costs – polluted water, soil erosion with fertilisers and pesticides, polluted fishery products. And most importantly the central government led the ordinary people into World War II to secure the resources for industrial-based economic development. My intention today is not to speak about Minamata’s misery; rather, I would like to share a story about recent change – good change, which might buttress the pursuit of happiness among local people in Minamata-city.

In 1994, Yoshii Masazumi became the mayor of Minamata-city and he delivered a speech at the memorial ceremony for the victims of the Minamata disease, which was attended by the Environment Agency director-general and the Kumamoto Prefecture governor immediately after he became the mayor. His speech was different from those by predecessors. His message was contrition and apology, and he stated that the city’s past actions on Minamata disease had been mistaken and proposed a solution for dialogue as Japanese people did in the old days to solve a problem at the community level. This made a huge impact over the course of the Minamata disease issues. After this speech, various victims groups, which were split against each other over the certified status on the disease and compensation issues,
agreed on the dialogue for seeking a solution for the victims. Citizen groups supporting the existence of the Chisso Company in Minamata even supported for the urgent need of resolving the problem of the victims redress. In 1995 a political solution was reached on redress for Minamata disease victims.

What Minamata city and the people of Minamata have been doing since then is to restore good social relationships, which is identified as one of the core elements of happiness. For this purpose, the have initiated two methods, useful for our discussion on global and local linkage and a method for transformation applicable to middle or post-industrialization.

**Vision setting—determination to be a model environmental city**

The first one is Minamata city’s strategy to become a leading city on the environment, since the city had been labelled as an environment with high pollution-based risk. The city formulated the development plan with the citizen’s participation and came up with the environment model city idea. Concrete actions included the sorting of waste for more than twenty categories by local residents, the voluntary formulation of a women’s group working on waste reduction, and active participation of the local junior high school students in the waste reduction activities through education and waste sorting work in the streets. The Minamata city government created “Environment Meister” which certifies local people who are selected by the level of significance of their work for environment preservation, as well as healthy food and goods production. For example, one of the criteria is for those who have practiced and accomplished nature-friendly organic farming for more than five years. Before certified as ‘meister’, some people were ridiculed by others as a freak. However, after the certification, people looked at them differently and rather sought them out for advice on organic farming.

**Step to link people inside and outside the community – strengthen human bondage and ecological lifestyles**

The second method used in Minamata in its community reconstruction is *Jimotogaku*, a neighbourhood study concept and
method developed by Yoshimoto Tetsuro, one of the key figures in the paradigm shift in the Minamata city. He was a planning section chief under Yoshii, who delivered the important speech; in fact, Yoshimoto is the writer of the speech. This neighbourhood study method is a set of simple tools to learn about their land and people, which Yoshimoto believes that local people think more why their houses were built on the land (normally far from the edge of the river) why trees were planted in one dimension of the house (to prevent strong windows, etc.) if they are given opportunities to think them carefully.

In Minamata, one mountain side community that suffered constant decline in the young generation leaving for cities was consulted by the city office regarding their interest in receiving visitors who come to Minamata to learn about the Minamata disease. This was the start of the Living Museum of the Rural Community in Minamata. At first, they accepted with little enthusiasm, but, after visitors, including high school students from big cities, started to come, some even did home stay, their opinion changed. These outsiders asked the local people many questions on houses, trees, water use, vegetables, rice, cattle, and even cats and dogs. The visitors praised and envied the way of life of the rural community. Local people were shocked to learn that people from the advanced cities, which they always thought to be home to the most advanced and ideal living conditions, admired their village life. They started questioning themselves about how ignorant they were about many issues in their own village. Local people who became local tour guides started asking themselves questions about their village and their own lives. They started their own search for what their community is about, how valuable their village is in their wellbeing, what needs to be done to shape economic life in positive relationship with the natural environment, and for the nature of social relationships and relationships with the local environment. They started Jimotogaku with: social and environmental mapping; researching history, tradition, culture, and local customs; researching the production and consumption process in the village; and organizing community discussion forums over the local people’s concerns and needs. In 2005, this community received an award from the Ministry of Agriculture as a thriving rural model place. In
Minamata city, there are now four communities implementing *Jimotogaku*. In Japan, this movement is gradually spreading.

**Conclusion**

In my view, this story from Minamata is critical for us to find a realistic action to change our development direction from short-sighted and confrontational nature of the capitalist economic system to an economic system and practice this is based on sustainability and secured human livelihood.

New and creative indicators have been developed that capture and measure growth from a holistic, sustainable point of view. I believe that now is the time for us to search for existing wisdom from the local and community levels, search for a sprout of ideas and actions for transformation to regain social ties, and search for generating and sharing such knowledge through the globe. It may be critical to advocate these individuals, groups, communities, private companies, and governments as GNH ‘meisters’, GNH fellows, GNH best practice, GNH companies, and so on. Both the indicators and actions do need to go together to change the world upside down in the near future.
The ‘Suicide Priests’ of Japan and the Search for Gross National Happiness

Jonathan Watts*

Socially engaged Buddhism is not a new phenomenon. Its development can be traced back to the latter parts of the 19th century with the struggle of Buddhists in Asia to counter Western political and cultural colonialism. Further still, some say Buddhism has always been engaged based on the Buddha’s unique style of ‘middle path’ monasticism and his revolutionary ordination of women and social outcastes. However, socially engaged Buddhism has become a much more visible, and perhaps even popular movement, over the past 18 years through the Dalai Lama rising to global prominence in receiving the Nobel Peace Prize and the role that alternative and socially active spirituality is now playing in the struggle for a new, post-industrial global paradigm.

Japan’s place within the emerging global socially engaged Buddhist movement remains ambivalent. There are certain Buddhist groups within Japan who have become well known outside of Japan for their philanthropic activities. However, within Japan, the evaluation of such groups as legitimately working for the common good of the average Japanese citizen has not been unanimous. At the same time, traditional Buddhist denominations and their priests largely remain mired in an antiquated ritualism of which the public has grown critical. However, amidst the larger crises of economic recession and mental and spiritual health in Japan, we are witnessing various sorts of socially engaged Buddhist activities coming from the grassroots, that is from individual priests and temples as well as small, socially conscious affinity groups and networks. This paper will first attempt a very broad overview of the problems afflicting

* Research Fellow, International Buddhist Exchange Center (IBEC), Yokohama, Japan, Executive Committee of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). The following report is part of a larger book that IBEC is preparing on socially engaged Buddhism in Japan.
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Japanese society today. It will then look at the concurrent crisis in Japanese Buddhism. Finally, it will profile one of the most prominent and compelling examples of this new socially engaged Buddhist movement in Japan, which are the priests and temples addressing the problems of depression, alienation and suicide.

The Human costs of material development in Japan

For the latter half of the 20th century, Japan was hailed throughout the world for its revival from World War II and its miracle of economic development. It was held up as a shining example to the rest of Asia of the prosperity of following a modern capitalist system of development. It always served as the rebuttal against the tide of socialism and communism that swept through East and Southeast Asia. Furthermore, the Japanese had seemed to attain such prosperity while retaining important aspects of their traditional culture, thus representing a distinctively Asian type of capitalist prosperity. These aspects, such as the lifetime employment system of large corporations and a strong social welfare system run by a large state bureaucracy, reflected an intelligent mixing of socialist and capitalist sensibilities, while preserving the perennial emphasis on homogeneity and harmony in Japanese culture. However, since the early 1990s this great success story has all but unraveled. While Japan’s Gross National Product (GDP) per capita continued to rise steadily from 1955 to 2005, different social indicators, like the Genuine Progress Index (GPI), show that the quality of life in Japan has changed little since the 1970s. Furthermore, the percentage of those feeling very satisfied or satisfied with their lives shows a marked decline of 8-26 percentage points across age groups from 1978 to 2002.¹ The period of economic downturn in the 1990s revealed that much of the prosperity experienced in the 1980s was a built upon real estate speculation, irresponsible bank loans, and corrupt insider business between government and business elites.

With the abrupt economic downturn in the early-mid 1990s, the compassionate face of Japanese capitalism has turned into an

ugly frown. Slowly but surely, Japan is exhibiting the kinds of post-modern, post-industrial diseases of the United States, such as: increasing economic gaps between the rich and poor; high levels of corporate and individual debt; an overburdened social welfare system which leaves the poor, elderly, and other dependent groups at high risk; brutal crime especially committed on and by the young. Perhaps the most fearful part of this whole process is that we cannot see any end to it in sight. Japanese culture is notoriously slow to change, and the politicians and bureaucrats who run Japan have shown little to no vision in addressing these challenges. For the moment, Japan appears to be reluctantly increasing its adoption of American forms of economic liberalisation and privatisation.

**Alienation: the breakdown of social structures and bonds**

This vicious cycle of unskillful social and economic development has led to social breakdown in Japan which is having a deep effect on human relationships. As an island nation that spent the dynamic colonial period of global trade of the 17th-19th centuries in total isolation from the rest of the world, Japan has been long known for its homogeneity, its emphasis on inter-personal and communal harmony, and its following of successor based patriarchal and hierarchical social structures. Although such a social system may be an anathema to modern Western tastes, it has been one that ensured continuity and an ability to self-regulate on all levels through a powerful emphasis on fulfilling social roles and responsibilities.

Like so other many nations, including those in the West, Japan has experienced the numerous social dislocations in the shift from a rural agricultural society to an urban industrial one.

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2 The aging of Japan’s baby boomer generation, whose socialized medical care must be paid for by the next generations, will create impossible strains on the Japanese social welfare and health systems in the next 20 years. In 2025, demographers expect Japan to have the world’s oldest population at about 37 million people over the age of 65, which will be about one-third of the population. Kingston, Jeff. *Japan’s Quiet Transformation: Social Change and Civil Society in the Twenty-first Century*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004. p.291.
The first stage of communal breakdown in Japan began with the mass exodus of people from the countryside to the city in the first industrial boom of the early 1900s and the second one right after World War II. At present, about 80% of Japanese live in dense urban areas. In the rural areas, we see a continual battle by communities to create jobs for those who remain and to visitors and new inhabitants through a variety of development schemes. Many of these schemes, like tourist theme parks, have either experienced limited success or been downright failures, throwing local governments into debt and increasing their problems. The young continue to be attracted by the work and lifestyles of urban areas, while many villages, mostly occupied by the elderly, are disappearing or being consolidated. Through depopulation and the consolidation of villages, local culture, traditionally expressed through vibrant local festivals, is dying off. Compared within the image of glitz and excitement in urban areas, these areas seem literally like dead zones for the elderly of a previous generation to fade away. In this situation, we find suicide among the abandoned elderly to be high. However, as a further condemnation of the loss of the idealised community of the village, we are seeing suicide even among those not living alone and also incidents of brutal crime in such small communities.

While the dislocations of rural life are certainly a concern, the large majority of Japanese live in urban environments, and these environments are the front-line of the present Japanese social malaise. Community breakdown in modernised urban areas is a common issue around the world. The problems of community in the city have been the focus of many Japanese Buddhist groups since the beginning of industrialisation. In fact, some of Japan’s largest Buddhists groups, like Soka Gakkai and Rissho Koseikai, grew rapidly in the pre-war and immediate post-war years because of their ability to recreate and nurture urban community for Japanese who had left their villages in the countryside.

However, in the post-industrial era of the last fifteen years, even these groups have become overwhelmed with the challenges of maintaining community against the continually splintering forces of modern economic development. Whereas these groups were successful in working with labourers and nuclear families, most urban Japanese now work in the service sector doing more
white-collar work. The family has also further splintered into a post-modern kind of ‘dormitory family’, in which members of families live out busy and unconnected daily agendas retreating to the ‘home space’ for sleep and private forms of consumption on individualised communication devices (personal TVs, cell phones, computers).

In the work place as well, the breakdown of human connection has been on the rise. For example, the lifetime employment system of large companies has been increasingly replaced by the use of a high number of part-time workers who receive no company welfare benefits. This trend extends to all sectors of the Japanese economy, for example universities, which now rely mostly on part-time and contract base teachers. Consequently, the fulltime work force must carry heavier burdens of work and responsibility, regularly working overtime without additional pay. Whereas the company or any professional institution used to provide a form of modern urban community in which everyone was regarded as a community member, the increasingly fractured style of employment and labour policies now turns the work place into a generally alienating experience.

Alienation in modern, urban Japan begins at an early age. Over the last 20 years, bullying in the schools has become an increasingly problem in schools and the cause of numerous suicides among the young. More recently, many teachers have complained of class environments which have become anarchic because the students cannot pay attention and often wander from their seats, a phenomenon called gakkyu hokai. While there is mutual finger pointing between parents and school administrators, it appears that the dissolution of family life is a major cause. Even if parents are at home with their children, we can see that many parents have little interest or ability in engaging with their children. The poor socialisation of young people, whether it is due to parents in the home or to lack of meaningful community life, is a major cause for the long list of youth problems, such as bullying, violent crime, disregard for others (mukanshin), and inability to create strong and lasting interpersonal relationships.

The educational system, like so many others around the world, is based on the rote memorisation of information to be
regurgitated in a steady series of examinations which culminate in the critical university entrance exam. The pressure to succeed is intense. Japan’s extremely low birth rate\(^3\) allows most young Japanese today to attend university and find some form of white-collar employment after graduation. However, the elite jobs still are only available to the graduates of the highly competitive top universities. Meanwhile, graduates from the variety of second and third tier schools are faced with the blue collar like quality of office jobs with long hours of bureaucratic work. In this way, young Japanese are finding it increasingly intolerable to sacrifice their youth in such an educational system for lifestyle goals that are no longer readily available except to a small elite. The problem is not really that middle class Japanese cannot enjoy a materially sufficient lifestyle filled with a variety of electronic luxuries. It is more that such an existence does not satisfy the aspirations of the young anymore. The hyper-comparative and hyper-competitive nature of society has made a middle-class existence seem banal, whilst an elite lifestyle is out of reach to most.

Thus, over the last fifteen years many have increasingly begun to drop out of mainstream society. This begins early with students who refuse to go to school.\(^4\) These children may develop into social recluses (hikikomori) who rarely venture out of their rooms or homes, a phenomenon that has now reached nationwide to somewhere between a half to one million, mostly young men. Among young adults, there are the social phenomena of NEETS (neither in employment, education, or training) and slackers or furita, who choose part-time menial work, such as in convenience stores, in return for more free time. There are also what is called ‘parasite singles’ - women who see little possibility for

\(^3\) The birth rate in Japan has fallen from over 25/1,000 in 1950 to over 15/1,000 in 1975 to 8.1/1,000 in 2007, a rate which is now lower than the present death rate of 8.98/1,000.
\(^4\) In 2002, there were at least 26,000 elementary school children and 108,000 middle school students who refused to go to school -- about 10 times as many as in 1978. Actual numbers are probably higher because school officials sometimes classify absences as medical to protect the child (or the school) from the stigma of school refusal. Gordenker, Alice, “School Refusers: When one-size-fits-all schooling doesn't fit.” The Japan Times: May 3, 2002.
advancement in the patriarchal professional world or for fulfilment in early marriage and solo children rearing with absent, workaholic husbands. Thus they choose to live at home with their families and enjoy their youth until making a life choice in their mid 30s.

**Suicide without honour**

Across the board, from rural to urban, from young to middle-aged to elderly, the ultimate social indicator of Japan’s human development malaise is perhaps, not unsurprisingly, suicide. For nine straight years (1998-2006), since the full onset of the Japanese economic recession, Japan has exceeded 30,000 suicides per year. To give a sense of this number, that is 10 times the number of people who died in the terror incident on the World Trade Center in New York and about 9 times the total number of Palestinian deaths since the Second Intifada began in 2000. The total number for this 8 year period is over 240,000 deaths which is about equal to the number of people killed in the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined. This is by far the highest suicide rate among the G7 nations with France coming in a distant second. Globally, Japan ranks 8th following only the cluster of economically ravaged countries in Eastern Europe.

The largest number of suicides, by far, accounting for one third, are middle-aged business men. These men are the ones who have born the brunt of the recession, most directly through the accumulation of bad debts and the unsustainable level and load of work they must endure along with the pressure to always perform economically. Suicides by such men so that their families can collect on their life insurance and remain financially solvent is now a well known occurrence. Another factor in their high rate of suicide is the competitive, business culture which does not encourage men to reveal their insecurities and to find someone with which to share their feelings. Unlike women, and even the young and elderly, who may have the time and access to individual friends, middle-aged business men, not just in Japan, can be very socially isolated.

Some may feel that suicide has long been a cultural value in Japan. While this may be true on a certain level, the ritualised
and often public suicides of feudal warriors to either apologise for mistakes or to follow their lords into death differ strongly in tenor from the desperate and isolated acts of people in urban Japan today who may hang themselves in a private room or jump in front of a commuter train at rush hour. There is no dignity in these acts; no (voluntary) witness by the community. These are acts which reflect a deeper existential and spiritual crisis; and a loss of sense for the meaning or purpose of life. In Japan, modern economic values have replaced the human relationship ones of traditional feudal Japan. In this way, the achievement of a life of material prosperity has overtaken the development of human and community relationships, something which was the basis of Japanese identity and nationhood. In consort, the religious institutions of Japan from which many of these relational norms and ethics were derived have also decayed from the influence of this kind of development.

**Spiritual bankruptcy: compromised and anachronistic Buddhist institutions**

As mentioned above, some Japanese Buddhist organisations achieved a certain amount of success in supporting and creating community in the urban areas of Japan during the industrial booms before and after World War II. These organisations were largely newly established mass lay organisations, like Soka Gakkai and Rissho Koseikai. They developed a style that suited the period, and they grew at a phenomenal rate in the 1950s coming to form some of the largest Buddhist organisations in Japan. As also mentioned above, these groups are facing declining membership as they struggle to meet the interests and needs of the new post-modern generation of Japanese. Their emphasis on filial piety and diligent effort to build family, community and nation is a message that worked well in the post-war industrial era. However, the present generation of young people desire individual freedom over burdensome familial or organisational obligations and no longer believe that their diligent efforts will reap personal rewards in post-bubble Japan. Although these organisations still have large memberships and great wealth, one wonders what the future holds for them in 30 years when their core membership dies off. Unlike the traditional Buddhist
organisations and temples which house the graves of most Japanese, there is no lingering bond for the third and fourth generations of these new organisations to remain as members.

The traditional Buddhist organisations of Japan were for the most part formed 800 to 1,100 years ago, and are organised around an ordained clergy and lay followers. They represent the kind of feudal period Buddhism of agricultural and rural Japan. As such, they embody the core of certain key aspects of Japanese religiosity. Buddhism being the principal way of dealing with death in Japan, priests conduct funerals and offer memorial services for ancestor veneration. This basic form of religiosity has changed very little over the past 400 years. However, these traditional organisations have struggled greatly to adapt themselves to the modern era. During the feudal era, Japanese temples served as quasi-governmental offices in documenting and registering all citizens. The power that temples and priests had in the community was not always handled well, and priests often developed reputations for manipulating villagers for their own personal agendas which sometimes involved money and women.5

In modern urban Japan, temples and priests have been basically stripped of such power with the separation between church and state instituted in the modern Japanese constitution. However, their reputations have not noticeably improved. Since the 1870s, the Buddhist monastic code stopped being enforced by the state and became the private matter of individual sects. The result was that many of the underground activities of monks during the feudal era became openly public lifestyles, such as meat eating, marrying and having families, not wearing robes except at ceremonies, and generally following lay styles of personal consumption. This development has created a continual set of contradictions for priests between the monastic ideal of striving for nirvana through an austere lifestyle and the reality of their lives as professional ritualists who have lifestyles not that different from the laity.

Furthermore, temples and priests also flourished during the economic boom and have developed a reputation for caring for nothing more than easy money making at the cost of lay followers’ devotion to their ancestors. With the increasing advance of modernisation and secularisation in Japanese society, Buddhist priests have for the most part lost their traditional social roles in the community; lost their basis for moral and spiritual authority with their adoption of lay lifestyles; and lost the respect of the lay community for becoming overpaid, professional ritualists. The term now popularly used for them is ‘priests who make money hand over fist’ (bozumarumoke) and for the system is ‘funeral Buddhism’ (soshiki bukkyo). It is felt that traditional Japanese Buddhism has no concern for the living, just with those who have already died.

The ‘suicide priests’
In such a climate, what could we expect from Buddhist priests to confront the serious human relationship problems and the plague of suicides in Japan? Probably very little. However, there is a critical link in the passage from life to death amidst which the Buddhist priest lives that connects him to the sagging humanity of Japan. When someone commits suicide, there is a funeral and a priest who must deal with a grieving family. Although there is actually a social stigma in Japan concerning suicide and some families do their best to keep it secret, the priest is one of the few who may learn of the real nature of a person’s death. In a nation where there are on average 90 suicides per day, there is no lack of opportunity for priests to have contact with this problem. For a few it is something they cannot turn their eyes away from. In this way, from a wide variety of backgrounds, we are seeing individual priests becoming actively engaged in not just the issue of suicide but the wider problems of alienation and human relationships in Japan. Perhaps the best way to express what is happening is to look at a few of these priests who represent an astonishingly different array of temperaments and styles.

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Rev. Katsumi Fujisawa is the forty-six year old vice-abbot of Anraku-ji, a Jodoshin Pure Land temple in Tokyo. He is somewhat unusual for a Japanese priest in that he did not attend a Buddhist university and receive a degree in Buddhist studies, but rather graduated from one of Japan’s top secular schools, Waseda University. As in other Buddhist countries, Japanese temples and monasteries used to offer the highest forms of public education in society. However, now in the modern age, traditional Buddhist education has lagged behind secular education. In Japan, a bright young priest will tend to choose a stronger secular school over his own denomination’s university, where even the quality of students in the Buddhist Studies department are considered inferior to those in other departments. In this way, Rev. Fujisawa represents a small group of priests with top level educations. Because they attended secular universities, they tend to have a wider view of society, one not dominated by temple matters and sectarian sentiments. Some of these priests, like Rev. Fujisawa, enter the professional world and stay somewhat aloof from temple life.

Many young priests, who are sons of priests and are expected to succeed to their father’s position as abbot of the temple, grow up wanting to do something else with their lives. However, with the low level of Buddhist universities, inheriting the business of the temple is usually the best and most viable option for many upon graduation. It’s a secure job in an era of economic recession. Rev. Fujisawa had similar sentiments when he finished school, but with his educational background he had an option to do something different and so worked as a computer engineer in an IT company for twenty-three years. Although he very much appreciated his time in “regular society”, he experienced first hand the hardships and dissatisfactions of the typical Japanese salary man. He also knew that at some point he would return to the temple to succeed his father as abbot of the temple.

Amidst this situation, he became aware of and interested in the suicide problem. He says, “After coming to know about the suicide problem, I thought to myself ‘For sure, I can’t be mistaken...’”
that priests should be concerned with this issue.” 7 He further elaborates, “As a priest’s work deals with the life of people, the suicide problem is not something we can avoid, so we have to raise consciousness of it….It is not someone else’s problem. It is a fundamental social problem which when we become aware of it, there must be many such people living near us.” 8 Unfortunately, such a social consciousness is very limited in the Buddhist world. Although priests have frequent connection with dying and are often exposed to families in which people have committed suicide, it seems they feel there is not much they can do beyond offering their funerary services. There is a great wall that exists between the temple world and the rest of society in Japan.

This wall seems to be one that is mutually constructed. For example, Rev. Fujisawa often shows in public lectures a government plan for dealing with the suicide problem which displays a network chart of all the key social actors who could help. Religious organisations are conspicuously absent from this chart. Rev. Fujisawa remarks, “People who are filled with anxiety when walking past a temple might suddenly feel like going in and confiding in the priest. But from the gate to the entrance seems far.” 9 He elaborates further:

“If you are a salary man facing a problem, for example even myself when I couldn’t do my work well and then developed a kind of inferiority complex, I never thought about what kind of teaching Buddhism could provide at this time. Indeed, when my personnel evaluation was low, when inferiors humiliated me, I got depressed and asked myself, ‘Why can’t we develop human relationships well?’ At this time, I had a feeling that Buddhist teachings had no direct connection to my situation. However, at these kinds of times, if there could appear a priest who has concern, if there could be a person who radiates a feeling of personal intimacy, I

7 All quotes without citations, such as this come from private interviews done by the four-man IBEC research team. The translations are by the author himself.
9 Jimonkoryu August, 2006 p. 42.
think Buddhism could become part of this world and not be aloof to it. If we could talk about real ‘community temples’ (kakekomidera), for example setting up a café or salon in a temple that anyone could visit, I think it’s possible to create a place to talk which can open up the heart and mind and which could apply not only to the suicide problem but to other situations, like in companies when people get humiliated.”

However, Rev. Fujisawa sees that, “In order to restore the temple as a community center there needs to be preparation. At this stage, telephone consulting is something we [priests] can do outside of the temple…. You don’t need any special ability. Simply listening. However, it’s most important to create a feeling of mutuality and closeness. People contemplating suicide hold the conflicting emotions of ‘I want to die but really I want to live’. There needs to be someone who exists that can listen to this kind of talk.” 10 In this way, while he was still working in his IT company, he began to train as a volunteer at the Tokyo Suicide Prevention Center. The Center began in Osaka in 1978. The Tokyo Center has about 70 registered workers who are on-line from 8:00 pm to 6:00 am. In order to work as a counselor you have to train for half a year. The basic training is three months and then a period of practice sessions with other counselors. Most workers are volunteers who work in companies, and so there is a limit of working three times a month.

One of the continuing problems of prevention work is somehow connecting with this large group of middle-aged salary men who make up a third of all suicides in Japan. Rev. Fujisawa notes that in telephone counseling men have increased and now are almost equal, but in general it’s not common among salary men. Using the phone in this way may not be their style. The society is so hyper competitive and there’s no real concern for others, just about getting ahead for oneself. Rev. Fujisawa feels that it would be good if salary men used phone counseling, but it seems most of them are on board with this kind of competitive society. They see it as good and keep engaging in it. It would seem that Rev. Fujisawa, having lived in this world for so long, is just

10 Jimonkoryu August, 2006 p. 42.
the person who could find a way to reach these men and bridge the gap between the spiritual and business worlds.

In March 2006, Rev. Fujisawa quit his job in his company to return to attend full-time to the activities of his temple. Since then he has also taken time to become increasingly active in the suicide issue. He was part of a petition campaign to demand for basic government legislation for suicide prevention. This bill passed in June 2006 and has become a watershed event for publicly recognising that this problem is not just an individual one but a larger, social one. Rev. Fujisawa has also recently established a local group called “Buddhist Priests Taking on the Suicide Problem” and become a leader in trying to develop a nationwide network of priests concerned with this issue. It is felt that such a network is needed: 1) to help such individual priests and temples to sustain such social work; 2) to better provide those people in need with actual temples and priests whom they can visit in person during crisis; and 3) to expose and educate a largely ignorant society about these priests’ activities.

**Open 24-7: Rev. Eichi Shinohara**

A priest who is realising this vision of a community temple which responds to the mental and spiritual needs of the people is Rev. Eichi Shinohara. He is the sixty-three year old abbot of a Soto Zen temple called Choju-in located in a rather remote area of Chiba yet near the massive Narita International Airport which serves the Tokyo area. He has been involved with overseas aid and support for children since he was a young priest, but first started getting involved with the problem of suicide and the larger issue of alienation and depression seventeen years ago. When he was forty-two, he developed a brain hemorrhage which required serious surgery. Coming close to death, he says, gave him a new awareness which provides him the energy to sustain the very demanding work of working with the suicidal. Rev. Shinohara himself is a heart type. He likes to engage personally with people in crisis and to confront them in a very direct way. This character makes him perfectly suited for the kind of 24 hours 7 days a week help line he offers.
Operating out of his temple and from the basis of what he calls his Choju-in Sangha Association, Rev. Shinohara provides 24 hour telephone consultation as well as offering his temple as a refuge to anyone at anytime. If someone visits suddenly or calls in the middle of the night, it is Rev. Shinohara’s policy to never refuse them. As his work has received more attention in the media recently, he now gets calls from all over the country and an endless stream of visitors. On average, he estimates he receives 3-5 calls per day with that total spiking to over 10 per day on the weekends. Per month he receives about 12-15 personal visits by appointment and another 5 without notice. Many of these calls and visits are repeaters. Rev. Shinohara reports that these calls and visits come from people of all age groups.

He does indeed receive calls and even visits from salary men, a few who have spent the night at the temple. The elderly are another group who mostly call by telephone due to their immobility. They are usually victims of depression, being cut off from their families who do not bother to visit or call. Rev. Shinohara has also done extensive work with the young, perhaps based on his own difficulties as a youth. He remarks that Japan has become a difficult place to create human relationships. There is a serious problem of indifference or apathy (mukanshin) among all ages. Rev. Shinohara feels Japanese nowadays don’t seem to know or care about what others in the family are doing. They seem to be just stuck in themselves, their own worlds and their own interests. The young grow up in such an environment are cut off from the continuity and connection to life which the Japanese understand as coming from their ancestors.

This lack of sense of continuity and connection to life appears to be making it much easier for Japanese, especially the young, to consider suicide as a means for dealing with their alienation and apathy. Religion, and specifically Buddhism in this case, offers a view of the afterlife, and therefore helps to give meaning to life and death by showing the continuity between this life and the next. Secular, modern culture, however, emphasises the material aspects of this life so strongly that it fails to provide a sense of continuity to existence, especially after death. While Rev. Shinohara emphasises this continuity, he also emphasises the preciousness of this life. He remarks that transmigration is an
inexact science, and one cannot know where one will end up in the next life. Thus suicide is not a viable means of escape either into another better world or into a realm of nothingness. This sensibility is also something he communicates to the families of those who have committed suicide. There is a great danger amongst the bereaved of following the suicidal into death as a way to make amends for not helping them enough before they killed themselves or in order to find them on the other side of death. This latter notion is one that is strong in Japanese spirituality as the other side of death is often spoken of as a realm of ancestors or a Buddhist Pure Land where one can meet with departed loved ones again. Rev. Shinohara warns against this mentality. He says it is best to develop and preserve the present connections one has in this life now.

The Buddhist temple used to be a place to communicate these values and to socialise the young, especially through festivals. The temple used to provide a regular sense of continuity and connection to their ancestors and to life and death. However, today with the rise of secularism and consumerism, the young may go to a temple only once or twice a year for a funeral, brief memorial service, or grave visit. Like Rev. Fujisawa, Rev. Shinohara talks about the present wall between the temple and society, remarking that, “Temple people also have some uneasiness about dealing with suicide, so they would rather not end up having to think about being concerned with suicide. However, I think that if someone is feeling suicidal, a priest should confront the situation, meet them and listen to what they have to say.”¹¹ He emphasises that, “Buddhism is not a religion for the dead but for the living.”

On the other hand, Rev. Shinohara thinks there is the potential for greater trust with a traditional, local temple priest, because in contemporary Japan, the rise of cults have made people very suspicious of alternative means of spirituality. Another common alternative to the temple are medical doctors. However, Rev. Shinohara notes medical and mental health professionals are so overloaded with cases that they usually only have time to diagnose, prescribe medicine, and then move onto

¹¹ Jimonkoryu August, 2006 p. 46.
the next case. He remarks that in the United States there are three doctors for every patient while in Japan the ratio is only one to one. He says that 80% of the people who come to him are on medication, and he feels this is a devastating and inhuman form of treatment.

In this way, the Buddhist priest as counselor (not as ritualist for a funeral) has the potential to provide critical support to the medical system. Rev. Shinohara emphasises the personal connection that a priest can develop with someone. He sees himself as a friend, without office hours, fees or subsequent expectations for a cure based on payment. He also eschews the doctor-patient barrier of professionalism to which most psychiatrists and psychotherapists ascribe. For example, he may take the time to share a meal as he finds that the suicidal often don't eat well and a good meal helps them think better. However, unlike many religious professionals, he emphasises simply listening over sermonizing, while offering patience, time and energy. While most people, including priests, feel this kind of work can only be done by licensed professionals, Rev. Shinohara emphasises that more people with such listening skills and concern for others need to get involved. In this way, he often encourages other priests to confront this problem even if they don't have a license.

The temple out of which he works in rural Chiba was originally a training temple supported by the feudal government and had no lay people. Although Rev. Shinohara himself was born into a Buddhist temple in Hyogo, Choju-in is not a temple based on succession and one to which he was introduced by a friend. At present, he has about 100 lay members with some additional personal followers. Some of these people assist him in the 24 hour temple service for the suicidal. Rev. Shinohara does have a family. However, in order to allow them some space from the intensity of his 24 hour work, they live about one hour away in a separate residence.

In order to revive the value of the traditional community temple, Rev. Shinohara and his members have developed the Choju-in Sangha Association. This association has quite a number of activities and subgroups such as: a Buddhist school which runs some public programmes and practice events; an
events circle which creates concerts, tea ceremonies and such; a communal farming group; a relief aid circle for both international and domestic disasters; a mental support group; and an environmental group.

Rev. Shinohara stresses that the temple can be a refuge for 'hanging out' and finding quiet. “Almost all temples offer some green and open space, and not much other extraneous stuff. Even if there is some silence between the person and myself, they can still communicate with nature. People who have a daily lifestyle built upon running after time find this time precious. Above all for the person, it’s important to make clear at the beginning and remind them that the temple is ‘for you, a place you can come to freely anytime. It’s fine to just hang out and do nothing.’ Regular people still have many hopes for the temple, and we must provide an environment that responds accordingly.”

It is interesting that while Rev. Fujisawa has worked so hard to raise awareness that suicide is not just an individual problem but a larger social one, Rev. Shinohara feels that if we don’t focus on the individuals, one by one, they’ll get left behind because we are blaming society or calling it a social problem. People need to do something where they live. In the end, the two are not at odds with each other on this point but rather have complimentary approaches which are both essential. Indeed, Rev. Shinohara is also strongly supportive of a network which can work on the larger, social aspect of the problem and through which older priests with experience can have regular contact with younger ones to pass on their knowledge.

Mr. Coffee: Rev. Toshihide Hakamata

Rev. Toshihide Hakamata is the forty-seven year old abbot of Gesso-ji, a Soto Zen temple in one of Japan’s most northern and rural areas of Akita. Rev. Hakamata was born into this temple in the area known as Fujisato-cho. It’s a rather remote mountainous area of about 4,300 residents. This area is well known in Japan for the Shirakami Mountain Range, a world heritage site, and also the brutal winters in which at least a foot of snow falls most days
from January to March. Akita is also notorious in Japan for suicide, having had the highest suicide rate in the country for eleven years running. The area of Fujisato-cho itself had the highest rate of suicide within Akita, specifically amongst the elderly. From 1989 to 2003, a total of fifty locals took their own lives. On top of this chronic problem, Fujisato-cho came into national focus again in the Spring of 2006 when a disturbed young mother murdered both her own daughter and, a few weeks later, one of her daughter’s friends.

In this way, we can see that Rev. Hakamata might have developed some innate connection to the problem of suicide having grown up in this area. As a temple successor, Rev. Hakamata went through the typical temple upbringing, including four years of living in Tokyo attending Soto Zen’s Komazawa Buddhist University. However, he did spend an exceptionally long time in monastic training at Soto Zen’s monastic center of Eihei-ji in the mountains of central Japan. He spent six years there whereas most candidates spend only the required one year in training. After returning home at the age of twenty-nine, Rev. Hakamata developed a detached retina and temporarily lost sight in his left eye. Coping with the suffering of losing a bodily function, he began to grapple with the problem of life.

In 1992 with other Soto Zen monks from the same prefecture, he created a chapter of the Vihara Association which works on terminal care, especially for the elderly. He began doing volunteer work in the palliative care ward in the Akita City hospital where he came in contact with terminal cancer patients. Around this time, he first learned about the situation of suicide in Akita at a seminar held at the Akita University Department of Medicine where a local expert, Prof. Naofumi Yoshioka, spoke. He continued to study the issue with Prof. Yoshioka, participating in a meeting entitled “Thinking about Depression in Akita”.

The question arises, why is suicide so common in this area? We are not so surprised to learn of the high rates of suicide in urban Japan where community has broken down and individual alienation is high. However, the countryside is where the traditional values of Japan are supposedly preserved and where community is still something important. However, the three northernmost and perhaps most rural prefectures in Japan of
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Akita, Aomori and Iwate have the three worst rates of suicide. The fact is that since the end of World War II, Japan has experienced a huge depopulation of its rural areas. Hence, suicide related to solitude, especially among the elderly living in depopulated mountainous regions, is high. However, Rev. Hakamata notes that suicide is common among old people who don’t just live alone but also live with their families. Although they live with others, they still develop feelings of being neglected and isolated, for example during rice planting season, they can be left in the house all day while the family works outside. In Japan, technology has become relatively ubiquitous, and those in rural areas tend to spend as much time by themselves with their cell phones, TVs and computers as urban people. In the countryside, the space between houses and communities and the reliance on automobiles actually increase the lack of physical connection among people.

Rev. Hakamata comments that, “In the countryside as well, human relationships have become fractured. For example, farm work is no longer done cooperatively. Each family works in a different company. Children have become fewer, and in these households, children aren’t disciplined. The real meaning is that there is no connection across generations.” According to Motohashi Yutaka, a professor of public hygiene at Akita University, because of the drop in population, “the emptying out of villages” is spreading and traditional festivals can no longer be held in these areas. As we noted with Rev. Shinohara’s work, these festivals used to be an important way to nurture community and socialise the young. The despair of people from the regions which have been ‘abandoned’ could be a trigger. There can be a palpable feeling that compared with city life, these regions and communities are ones in decline which are filled with old people from another generation just waiting to die.

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14 Naga, Satoru. “Sharing Anxiety at a Café: Challenging the Taboo of Suicide in Fujisato, Akita” (saron-de nayami kyouyu; akita. fujisato jisatsu-no tabu-ni idomu) Asahi Shinbun, September 25, 2006.
To this situation, Rev. Hakamata comments, “People who want to commit suicide at the time of doing so find themselves all alone. The power to stop this is needed from the community. Just from a small thing can come the chance of becoming anxious. As so we should give a hand when these small anxieties arise. When you overcome some problem, you must experience some happiness you could have never imagined. In this way I thought that the key to create connection in the community did not need experts but rather getting people together to do something to stop suicide.” So in 2000 he organised a meeting called “Thinking about Our Hearts and Lives” at which twenty-eight people attended, including monks of his own denomination, housewives, health professionals and public health officials, and members of the social welfare organisation and district welfare officers. At this meeting, public health officials from all over the area gave lectures on health but also learned from listening to local residents. Rev. Hakamata has been part of this group that has held such meetings, lectures and activities in other cities and towns in the region.

In Fujisato-cho itself, he leads a group residents called the Thinking about Our Hearts and Lives Association (kokoro-to inochi-wo kangaeru kai), which consists of 28 members. In 2003, they established a café called Yottetamore in the back of the city hall in the lobby of the Three Generations Exchange Center. This center is a brand new building with tall ceiling and big windows for sunlight as well as using natural wood from the local area for an organic feeling. In this age where Starbucks and other such high end cafes can be found in practically every rail station and on every corner in the cities, it is a statement about life in this region that there is not even a single café in Fujisato-cho. The Yottetamore café with its modern yet warm and very inviting ambience thus provides not only a place to talk about problems but simply to get a good cup of coffee. It is situated in the main lobby of this community center and is open once a week on Wednesday afternoons. The purpose has been to provide a place where anyone can freely get together to talk. Rev. Hakamata comments that, “Whoever comes here will find someone who will

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15 Jimonkoryu September, 2006 p. 89-90.
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listen to them carefully. People know that once a week at this place there will be someone that will surely give them some mental support." During this time, people can talk about difficult experiences or their problems, like marital friction, conflicts with mothers-in-law, and the distress of caring for the elderly. When people begin to spit out what’s weighing on their minds, they can get pretty heated up. Rev. Hakamata notes, “This is a place of grieving for the unraised worries of the mind/heart.” In general, the café is popular among middle-aged women, though occasionally young people and men will stop by in the midst of their busy days.

It is interesting to note that while Rev. Hakamata shares some of the same concerns about the loss of community life as Rev. Shinohara, his work in some way resembles Rev. Fujisawa’s in that it is done outside of the environment of the temple. Like Rev. Shinohara, he feels he must be careful about over exposing his family to this kind of work, but rather in a mirror image to Rev. Shinohara, he keeps his family at the temple and works on this issue away from the temple. For Rev. Hakamata, working outside the temple is also in response to a specific problem he encountered in dealing with suicide. He remembers one unforgettable scene while performing a wake service at a private residence. He was not informed of the cause of death by the grieving family, and there was some unusual suffering and confusion coming from the family. It was suicide, and the grieving family was keeping it a secret.

The idea that suicide is ‘the shame of relatives’ (mi-uchi-no haji) is currently a deep rooted value in his region and most of Japan as well. Rev. Hakamata comments that while those who commit suicide are from within the town, no one talks about it. At the time that the Thinking about Our Hearts and Lives Association was started, suicide was a strong taboo in the region. There was a culture of not-speaking, and many grieving families didn’t grieve themselves. They sought to refrain from crying and to act courageously. This has been difficult to redress, but Rev. Hakamata has worked hard to try to change this culture. He says,

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16 Jimonkoryu September, 2006 p. 89.
“Suicide is not shameful. When suffering and suicide are spoken of and the difficulty of the mourning family is made known, an opening in the community is made and there must be a connection to the decrease in suicide.” Indeed, in 2004, for the first time in 17 years, there wasn’t a suicide in the town. In 2005, there was one person and in 2006 one person. Rev. Hakamata feels that this isn’t because they always talk about suicide at the café, but rather when people have problems, there is always an open window for them.

Working on such attitudinal change within his Zen community has also been a project of Rev. Hakamata. He notes, “It’s sure that there is no temple that hasn’t had to do some funerals for suicides. In this way, Buddhists have a connection with the suicide problem. But it seems no one understands how to listen to the voices of the bereaved families. It’s difficult to get involved in people’s problems which are seen as individual ones especially suicide, because you are not supposed to invade the privacy of others.”

In this way, Rev. Hakamata has confronted the wall between the temple and society by not only going out into the world himself but also getting his larger denomination involved. The Akita Soto Zen Youth Division has for the last three years done memorial services honoring those who have killed themselves and created prayer gatherings for the bereaved families of such people. This is the only such activity for dealing with suicide organised specifically on a denominational, not individual, level. In this way, at last year’s gathering, Rev. Hakamata appealed to other priests, “This is an important chance to listen to the real feelings of bereaved families. There are many people participating who were close to a person who committed suicide some years ago. So shouldn’t each denominational office create such a project soon?”

On a recent visit to the café, we not only found Rev. Hakamata with his group of devoted community followers serving coffee, but also helping out a young priest from the region who

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19 Jimonkoryu September, 2006 p. 89.
20 Jimonkoryu September, 2006 p.89.
through doing funeral services for numerous suicides had decided to get involved.

**Virtual Reality: Rev. Jotetsu Nemoto**

Rev. Jotetsu Nemoto is the abbot of Daizen-ji, a Rinzai Zen temple in a rural region of Gifu in central Japan. Rev. Nemoto represents yet another totally different background and approach to the suicide issue from Revs. Fujisawa, Shinohara, and Hakamata. Like Rev. Fujisawa, Rev. Nemoto was born and raised in Tokyo and attended one of the top schools in the country, Keio University. However, Rev. Nemoto did not grow up in a temple and is one of a minority of priests, only about 25%, who do not come to the priesthood through succession. He was born in 1972, growing up during the height of the bubble economy and its subsequent collapse. Thus his manner, speech and sentiments are more representative of the present young generation of Japanese, many of whom are alienated and have a hard time creating a meaningful life.

This generation’s parents grew up in the immediate post-war period and hold values of hard work for the sake of building the country, one’s company and one’s family. This post-war baby boom generation valued material benefit in this life, and their spirituality reflected this as this generation made up the core of the ‘new religious movements’ (*shin shukyou*), like Soka Gakkai and Rissho Koseikai, which emphasised the worldly benefits of a conscientious and industrious lifestyle. On the other hand, their children as the post-boom, post-modern generation never experienced the deprivations and difficulties of the post-war years. They experienced a nation and a culture transfixed on work and material gain, often at the cost of human relationship. In turn, this generation spawned a movement of ‘new, new religions’ (*shin shin shukyou*). These groups, such as the notorious Aum Shinrikyo that gassed the Tokyo subways in 1995, focused on mysticism, occult practices, and the meaning of life beyond the material. In the past decade or so, the latest generation of Japanese youth has become even more individualistic in their orientation. While their religious or spiritual sentiments may reflect the more recent ‘new, new religions’ and the larger New Age
movement, they remain suspicious or unwilling to find relief in a spiritual community.

Rev. Nemoto studied Western philosophy and existentialism at university, becoming interested in Nietzsche and the famous Japanese novelist Yukio Mishima. His existential interest flowed out of an already strong appreciation for the difficulty of living. His mother’s older brother committed suicide when he was young as well as two other school friends during his junior and senior high school years. By the third year of university, he had become dissatisfied with his life at university and quit school. Slowly he was drawn into an interest in Zen practice and entered a strict Rinzai Zen meditation temple at the age of 25. He lived in this strict and very secluded environment for four years.

In Japan today, such a person is rather extraordinary. First of all, young men who do not come from temple background rarely ordain to become Buddhist priests. Recently, those who do ordain from non-temple background are often men who marry the daughters of priests and ordain to join their wives’ family temples to take up the work and livelihood of a priest. While these men may have a generally stronger than feeling of religiosity than their successor counterparts, there are still very few young men who ordain into strict monastic environments out of their own spiritual interests. Rev. Nemoto chose the Rinzai Zen order which is relatively stricter than other orders in their training and has far fewer temples that succeed through father-son connections.

For most Japanese priests, including the Soto Zen order, they have a brief period of intense monastic training, anywhere from one week to one year at most, and then return to their family temples. One finds that most priests view this training as a right of passage, a period of hardship they endure with their ‘brothers’ from the same order. It is not something from which they gain a tremendous amount of spiritual illumination or value. This is mostly due to the style of these training temples, which tends to focus on ‘toughening up’ young priests as in a military boot camp. This situation is in contrast to what one might idealise as the role of such temples in edifying and giving young priests a taste of a spirituality that is difficult to experience in the almost lay lifestyle of the family temple. Rev. Nemoto is actually one of the few priests
one will meet who found great value and spiritual illumination in the strict training he underwent.

After four years of living in such a monastic setting, Rev. Nemoto came back out into the world to search for his place in society again. What he found surprised him. He remarks that, “Nothing had changed.” In fact, if anything, things had become worse. Since the time of his school friends’ suicides, the number of suicides all over Japan had increased. Part of his re-integration experience was working part time in a McDonald’s on the west side of Tokyo. He himself surmises that after four years of vegetarian food in the temple and numberless urges to eat junk food and meat during that time, he was drawn to this kind of job – one usually held by students trying to make a little pocket money or by the new generation of ‘slackers’ (furita) who only seek for free time and a basic lifestyle. This choice of work was more than ironic as it put Rev. Nemoto on the front line of alienated, urban Japanese youth.

At McDonald’s, he came into close personal contact with these young people, especially as his fellow workers. At first he became famous among the staff for his shaven head which went against company regulations for workers but for which he successfully gained exemption since he is a religious professional. After his identity as a Zen priest became known, other workers started asking him questions about Buddhism or the meaning of suffering. He reports that they didn’t want to just know about beliefs but also about what practice was like. Rev. Nemoto found that many expressed doubts or little hope about their futures and what to do after graduating school. He remarks, “They really have no hopes, and I discussed this with them. There is this gap between what they feel they are and can do and what they are expected to be like as a model person.”

At this point, Rev. Nemoto began to visit and write comments on internet sites created by young people who had some connection to suicide. The connection between youth and suicide was something that had been with him since his friends’ suicides in his school days. At this time, Rev. Nemoto was also living near a train station on the western Tokyo Chuo Line, which is notorious for the high number of people committing suicide by throwing themselves in front of its trains. From his apartment, he
could hear whenever there was an announcement that train service had been halted due to “an accident resulting in injury or death” (jinshin jiko).

After a year and a half of this reintegration back into society, Rev. Nemoto moved to Gifu in central Japan for more training and to become the abbot of a local temple. In 2004 with the various people he had met through his web surfing, he created a ‘community group’ on the internet called “Those Who Want to Die” (shi-ni tai hito). It was a support group where suicidal people who didn’t want to be by themselves could talk about any kind of thing from daily living to death. They actually met to talk face to face, as well as to visit famous places where people like to commit suicide, sometimes to chant and pray for the dead. After only two years, the group became quite popular and had assembled over 400 members. However, because of matters of privacy and impressions that the site might be condoning suicide (i.e. the name “Those Who Want to Die”), the server forced the group to shut down. However, shortly afterwards, Rev. Nemoto initiated a new group which didn’t advertise itself as a ‘suicide group’, drawing back many old members and now holding a steady membership of around 94.

When he began these chat groups, he just jumped into counselling individual mails. He used to answer up to 60 e-mails a day but he has now found that 30 per day is a more manageable level. Besides this basic e-mail work, Rev. Nemoto has developed some unique spiritual practices using the internet like e-mail sutra copying. Sutra copying is an ancient spiritual practice in Mahayana Buddhism and has always been popular among lay followers as a way to learn the teachings but also enjoy the meditative relaxation of copying a short sutra text. Instead of doing this by hand on the premises of the temple, people in Rev. Nemoto’s group type out the sutra on a computer keyboard and then e-mail it to him. Rev. Nemoto also uses the conference call capabilities of the software called Skype to create a virtual Zen meditation practice session.

As compared to the popularity of telephone counselling we saw in the cases of Revs. Fujisawa and Shinohara, this use of the internet appeals to a different kind of person. Rev. Nemoto has many members who are ‘social recluses’ (hikikomori). They rarely
leave their houses and find the internet a more comfortable medium than actually talking by phone. For a generation that has grown up using the internet, such forms of communication are perhaps more usual and appealing than for those who feel computers and the internet lack intimacy. In fact, although Rev. Nemoto does some counselling over the phone himself, he has some reservations about the larger ‘industry’ of telephone counselling and suicide prevention centres. He remarks, “There are some people who seek them out I suppose, but these people after using the service many times may feel ‘Is it that simple?’ and they eventually become cynical about such services.” He continues, “If you yourself have some anxiety, would you call a counselling centre? Of course not, you would rather talk to a friend. If we are not aware of this sensibility in most people, we won’t really be able to save them. The framework is important. Since I’ve never been to such centers I don’t really know. It’s also rude to say such negative things. But if there are people who are helped, there are also ones with no energy to use the service or who dislike it.”

Rev. Nemoto’s deeply Buddhist approach to his life and work stand in contrast to others who work in this field, even other priests. Firstly, his approach is in contrast to the way modern Japan deals with this issue as the domain of medical and mental health professionals. Rev. Nemoto remarks, “People go to the hospital and get a prescription for medicine but no resolution ever comes. They just continue on like this, just wanting to die. One time, at one of our off-line gatherings, a mental health professional came and talked, but we all felt that medicine has no basis for telling us the meaning of life. What are the reasons for saying you shouldn’t die? In this situation, if you take a more religious approach, it seems you can help people by finding some motivation for them to keep on living.”

Secondly, his approach is somewhat in contrast to Rev. Fujisawa and other priests who emphasise more that priests should develop professional counselling skills and/or work in non-religious counselling organisations. In fact, Rev. Nemoto’s lack of professional training and his somewhat solitary approach to his work received some criticism at a gathering two years ago of socially engaged Buddhist priests called “Bozu Be Ambitious”.

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Some participants expressed their concern, “There’s a limit to how far you can continue with counselling with just a kind attitude.”; and “You can’t just do this by yourself. You need some kind of organisation.” Rev. Nemoto appreciated the feedback and said, “I listened to the very concerned words of the participants. Afterwards, we prayed for the recovery of the suicidal, and briefly chanted the sutras of each sect. For everyone it was moving to feel together the connection to the suicide problem.”

The difference between Rev. Nemoto’s sentiments and those of some other priests may lie in the different way they approach their faith and practice. As we saw earlier, Rev. Nemoto came to Buddhism and the priesthood of his own will and desire for spiritual meaning. This led him into a period of serious monastic and spiritual practice from which he continues to draw in his counselling work. From a certain standpoint, we could ask why wouldn’t one expect a Buddhist monk to be especially skilled to counsel the suicidal – they come from a tradition with a deep meditation practice that has much contemplation on impermanence, death and the meaning of life? However, this type of sensibility is not one that you readily find among typical priests in Japan. The succession system amongst the priesthood, the routinisation and ritualisation of their practice, the adoption of largely lay lifestyles, and the increased secularization of Japanese society have all contributed to the average Japanese priest lacking much spiritual depth and in turn doubting the contributions he can make to society from the standpoint of Buddhist teachings and practice. Finding a priest like Rev. Fujisawa who has worked hard to understand and master the secular world is easier today than finding a priest like Rev. Nemoto who attempts to creatively bring his Buddhist study and practice into the secular world.

Rev. Hakamata further exhibits the possibilities of a priest who becomes re-grounded in his practice and finds this a source of creativity for social work. He comes from a typical temple family but seems to have had some proclivity for practice as he spent an additional five years beyond the norm at his Soto Zen’s training centre at Eihei-ji. After returning to his home temple in Akita, it appears that his meditation practice waned. However, after getting

21 Jimonkoryu September, 2006 p. 92-93. 163
deeply involved in the suicide issue, he found that a return to frequent meditation practice helped to refresh his spirit and to better handle his work. The discipline of enduring and transforming both physical and emotional pain in formal meditation practice helped him to gain insight into the nature of people to avoid such pain at all costs, through immersing themselves in material comforts as well as avoiding relationships with depth. This tendency to avoid pain he sees as a root problem in the alienation and suicide problems. Rev. Nemoto as well has derived important insights from the sheer physicality of meditation practice. Nowadays so many people are trapped in their minds, and meditation can seem overly mental as well. However, Rev. Nemoto talks about the direct awareness and experience of the body through the breath. This understanding he uses in the visits his group makes to famous places for committing suicide. His emphasis is on going in a group, not alone as the suicidal do, with friends who are in relationship with one another to physically experience the place where death occurs. In this way, he hopes for some possibility to transform the experience of the place as one of suicide to one of rediscovering the meaning of life with others.

Conclusion

While such creative use of traditional monastic practice is inspiring, the impressive aspect of this general movement of priests to deal with the issue of suicide is that no one is really championing a single proper method or approach to engaging this work. Each priest has their own unique background and abilities and each of them is engaging in the way that works best for him. In fact, at a recent public symposium on Buddhism and suicide, Revs. Fujisawa, Shinohara, Hakamata and Nemoto served as guest speakers. Rev. Nemoto commented that he personally

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22 On October 22, 2007 in Yokohama, the IBEC team in association with the National Youth Edification Consulting Group, the Japan Buddhist Federation, and the AYUS Buddhist International Cooperation Network organized a half day public symposium entitled “Thinking about the Suicide Problem: Searching for the Possibilities of Engaged Buddhism in
could not run the type of 24-7 community temple in the way Rev. Shinohara does. The internet is the medium at which he is best and can serve people the best. His comments weren’t made in criticism but rather in respect towards Rev. Shinohara’s ability and different style.

The one common feature that does arise in all the priests we’ve surveyed thus far is the emphasis in counselling on deep listening and creating close personal relationship. This is a practice inherent in the Buddhist practice tradition but it also a very basic human competency. Rev. Nemoto remarks here in a way that many other priests have as well, “Concerning intimacy of partnership, one can say sending a mail is roughly equivalent to speaking. E-mail is the chief means of speaking. But it doesn’t involve any specialised words. It’s just exchanging the usual discussion of everyday life. Within this, it’s possible to come to a resolution of the problem together. The thing I can do at this time is to create the basis for shared intimacy or being a partner. They may tell me the details of their illness or medication, which I listen to, and share their anxiety about it closely. In this, they may come to think ‘Man, why have I been wanting to die?’, and then they can say they can move forward. After such an exchange, if Buddhism can play a role that’s great.”

Rev. Nemoto emphasises that whether it’s on the telephone or on e-mail, the important thing is to share in their anxiety.

Through these ‘suicide priests’, we can gain a deeper insight into the potentials for a robust and authentic socially engaged Buddhist movement in Japan; that is a movement which deals with the real and pressing suffering of the people on the ground and which also confronts these problems on a structural level. From a structural level, we can see the concurrent crises of the deterioration of social structures which can foster human relationships and the deterioration of the Buddhist temple as a community center. These suicide priests’ show us how to take on these concurrent crises at the same time. Priests can use their temples as places to engage in efforts to confront alienation and Japan” which was attended by around 150 people including priests, NGO workers, concerned citizens and the mass media.

23 Jimonkoryu September, 2006 p. 92.
suicide and to rebuild human relationship. Rev. Shinohara spoke directly of how temples can offer people a place where time and money are not an issue, and where nature can be directly experienced in a healing way. Rev. Hakamata’s café is an extension of this sensibility, and Rev. Nemoto further extends such a place of ‘refuge’ into the virtual world. Finally Rev. Fujisawa, in this earlier quote, shows where this movement can go. “If we could talk about real ‘community temples’ (kakekomidera), for example setting up a café or salon in a temple that anyone could visit, I think it’s possible to create a place to talk which can open up the heart and mind and which could apply not only to the suicide problem but to other situations, like in companies when people get humiliated.” Beyond the problem of suicide, the Buddhist temple could rediscover its place in Japanese society as a place devoted to human relationship with a wide variety of activities and services for people in need.

It is this wider vision that is slowly emerging in the general temple revival movement, which we are seeing here in Japan recently through a variety of new kinds of social events being held at temples. However, one of the lingering problems for the Buddhist temple is how to survive financially in this market society. There are increasing cases of laity leaving their familial temples out of dissatisfaction with the abbot and his business practices. However, perhaps the practice of funerals as the core financial foundation of the temple is still necessary in order for the temple to develop its ability to offer other un-commodified human services to the living. It would appear to ruin the whole strength of the present movement if such counselling activities became services with fees (something Rev. Shinohara directly speaks to). A more radical solution would be to revive the tradition of laity providing for the temple materially out of donations (fuse), while the priests lessened this material burden through adopting a simple lifestyle. We are certainly not at this point in Japan. However, it is remarkable that the idea of socially engaged Buddhism is gaining interest at the centre of the major denominations which are struggling with managing the future of their temples. By providing various human services to the people, they see how they may be able to revive their social role and re-establish themselves in the 21st century.
Gross National Happiness: A New Paradigm

Chandima D. Daskon∗

Abstract

With the criticisms for top-town philosophy, development policies are now claimed to be culturally sensitive, people centered, flexible, dynamic and multi-sectoral. Today, people’s values, customs, beliefs and traditional knowledge systems collectively named as ‘culture’ is increasingly recognised as significant, and highly prioritised as vital sources, particularly for grassroots development. The Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) emerged in the 1990s as an alternative path to address grassroots problems, giving more opportunities to centralise people, their values and capabilities. The approach was declared as a holistic and comprehensive framework to address poverty and wellbeing, both in rural and urban contexts. But, it has also been criticised widely due to the lack of cultural and historical consideration, market and gender relations, and asset measurements.

This paper is built upon one of those critiques. The paper inquires into the role of traditional culture in building sustainable livelihoods in rural context. The inadequate attention of cultural aspect in livelihood context is a serious concern, as people’s values, customs, beliefs and traditional knowledge directly influence the choice of livelihood strategies. According to the present livelihood analyses, culture is an impediment for livelihood sustainability and refers to something that causes ‘livelihood vulnerability’. As far as people are centred both in the development process and livelihood analysis, their values, customs, knowledge, traditions and beliefs, should also be at the centre. At the same time, culture should be a soft and permeable concept rather than deterministic and rigorous.

∗ PhD Candidate, Department of Geography, University of Otago, New Zealand.
Introduction

Our living world is rapidly transforming and globalisation has become an inevitable process. We all have become members of the 'global village'. We all share the global economy, global society, global political structure, global environment and global culture. Therefore, life has become “absolutely exciting” for many people as this 'global' process is not equally benefiting for all at each and every corner of this world. Development is defined and redefined as a Western process and also integrated with the Western mythology that distorts the imagination and vision of the majority of the people, through imposing 'global values, norms and simply the 'global culture'. To put it rather differently, all ‘other’ world views are devalued and dismissed as ‘primitive’, ‘backward’ and ‘irrational’, or ‘native’ (Tucker, 1999); traditional values, knowledge and customs have become irrelevant for human progress and therefore the development process has become a value-free phenomenon. The conceptual and theoretical heritage of Western tradition has disallowed us to inquire into the relationship between culture and development, as modernisation theorists taught us that “development is about eliminating traditional culture”, defining development as the domain of the ‘economic’ guided by objective inquiry in which culture accrues no significant role (Hennayake, 2006).

Development as a practice and concept has been steeped in optimism. The defence of local cultural values and cultural diversity (see: Escobar, 2000; Esteva and Prakash, 1998; and UNESCO, 1972, 2001, and 2003) in development is centralised; a broad agenda is now being formulated to proclaim: “What is an appropriate or inappropriate culture in development context?” Going beyond the traditional criticisms, development is now shown to be a pervasive ‘cultural discourse’ with profound consequences of the production of social reality in the so-called Third World (Escobar, 2000). For example, as Tucker (1999) notices, development is not a “natural process”, although it has been accorded such a status in the mythology of Western beliefs. It is a “set” of practices and beliefs that has been woven into the fabric of Western culture and is specific to it (Esteva and Prakash, 1998, Tucker, 1999). Therefore, development was – and continues
to be for most part – a top-down, ethnocentric and technocratic process treating people and cultures as abstract concepts. As (Escobar, 1995) notices, current development is not “a cultural process”; it is a system of more or less universally applicable technical interventions intended to deliver some “badly needed” goods to a “target” population (Escobar 1995). The dependency theory, as the first major Third World challenge to Europe-centred discourse (Tucker, 1999, p. 12) has also failed to address the cultural dimension of domination. This is a crucial omission as cultural diversity is central to any understanding of the relations of power and to any strategy of resistance or dependency reversal. Esteva and Prakash (1998) posit that, “as people of the outskirts, the periphery, the margins, they were forced to adopt the centres established by others” (1998, p.288). As Chambers elaborates further, the current development is a “movement along gradients from peripheral or last towards core of first, and through the spread of core condition into peripheries” (1998, p.9). Such a process legitimises the socio-economic security through simplification and rejection of others’ values and knowledge through the assimilation of Western rationality. The modernisation theory sees traditional cultures as something that modernisation acts upon usually by breaking and even destroying cultural traditions of Third World societies, including their ways of speaking, celebrating, their beliefs, techniques, art forms and values (Schech and Haggis, 2000; Escobar, 1997; Tucker, 1999). Hence, the processes of modernisation are placed in opposition to traditional culture (Schech and Haggis 2000, p.37). In development studies, culture has tended to be regarded as something of an ‘epiphenomenon’, or secondary in importance to the all important economic and political dimensions (Tucker, 1997 and Schech & Haggis, 2000). But, the economic and social transformation of the society is inseparable from the production and reproduction of meanings, symbols and knowledge that are cultural reproductions.

This paper is an attempt to testify for the values of traditional culture in relation to rural development and sustainability. In trying to understand and elaborate the importance and the rationality of traditional culture in the development process, this paper suggests the potentiality of traditional culture as a resource
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for making livelihoods of rural people. Therefore, this paper recognises traditional culture in relation to livelihoods-building and livelihoods resilience based on the initial works of the authors’ doctoral study. The paper recognises the complex intricacy of traditional culture in relation to building livelihoods assets (social capital, human capital, physical capital, natural capital and financial capital), livelihoods resilience (response to livelihoods vulnerability) and livelihoods sustainability (social, economic, institutional and environmental). The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) emerged in the late 1990s and is a holistic paradigm that focuses on people’s needs, assets/resources, partnership, participation and sustainability. This approach has been seen as a remedy for many of the deficiencies encountered in the earlier ‘top-down’ development approaches and soon became popular among many of the development agencies and practitioners. However, the approach has also been criticised for the following reasons:

- people are invisible,
- explanations on how to analyse and measure capital assets are inadequate,
- recognition of socio-economic, historical and cultural factors is lacking,
- flexibility is insufficient,
- it is an ethnocentric notion and there are difficulties in translation,
- directions for alleviating poverty are poor, and,
- guidance on linking micro-macro levels and policy analysis is inadequate.

This paper addresses the importance of culture and historical factors in building rural livelihood systems, particularly emphasising the role of traditional culture in the livelihoods context. Cultural attributes have become an increasingly noteworthy new perspective of the development discourse, with a focus on local cultural values, norms, beliefs and knowledge systems. The conventional livelihoods analysis does not address the imperatives of cultural values adequately; instead it recognises culture as something which causes livelihoods vulnerability, or simply as a barrier for human progress.
Therefore, this paper specifically investigates traditional culture in a positive perspective in relation to the aforesaid functions in a rural livelihoods system.

**What is the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA)?**

The Sustainable livelihoods approach has evolved from the changing perspectives on poverty, participation and sustainable development (Swift, 1989; Chambers and Conway, 1992; Moser, 1998; Scoones, 1998; DFID, 1999; and DFID, 2000). The idea of sustainable livelihoods is a composite of the discussions on resource ownership, basic needs, and rural livelihood security (WCED, 1987) and by the late 1990s it had consolidated into an approach (Brocklesby and Fisher, 2003). As an approach SLA mainly focuses on the assets that poor people use and the strategies that they employ to making a living – rather than focusing on their needs (Farrington, 2002); the approach’s major concern is that which people have, rather than what they don’t have. As an analytical framework, it shows how sustainable livelihoods are achieved in different contexts, through access to a range of livelihood resources that are combined in the pursuit of different livelihood strategies (Scoones, 1998).

Livelihood is seen as a highly complex and all-encompassing concept which is not restricted to the ecological or to the economic or productive aspects of life (de Hann & Zoomer 2003). WCED (1987) for example, provides a detailed explanation based on the concept of Sustainable Livelihood Security. In this context, livelihood refers to “adequate stocks and flows of food and cash to meet basic needs...a household may be enabled to gain sustainable livelihood security in many ways—through ownership of land, livestock or trees; rights to grazing, fishing, hunting or gathering; through stable employment with adequate remuneration; or through varied repertoires of activities” (WCED, 1987 p. 2-5). Wallmann (1984, in deHann and Zoomers, 2005) articulates livelihoods in a descriptive way. According to Wallmann:

(L)ivelihood is never just a matter of searching shelter, money and food. It is equally a matter of ownership and circulation of information, the management of skills and relationships and affirmation of personal significance ...and group identity. The tasks of meeting obligations, of security,
identity and status are crucial to livelihood as bread and shelter” (p.32).

But, this is not to say that livelihood is not a matter of material wellbeing, but rather that it also includes a non-material aspect of wellbeing as well. Bebbington (1999) for example, provides a holistic meaning of livelihood; a livelihood encompasses income, both cash and in kind, as well as the social institutions (kin, family, and village), gender relations, and property rights required to support and to sustain a given standard of living. A livelihood also includes access to and the benefits derived from social and public services provided by the state such as education, health services, roads, water supplies and so on (1999, p.2022). Therefore, the understanding of sustainable livelihoods is holistic and meaningful, when it meets social, economic, cultural and spiritual needs of all members of a community, human, non-human, present and future—and safeguards cultural and biological diversity.

**Matter of culture?**

The wider role of cultural and historical contexts in livelihoods analysis has been questioned notably by Bebbington (1999) and other researchers including Cahn (2002), Glavovic et al, (2002), Adato and Dick (2002) and Muhia (2000). In the conventional livelihood approach culture is referred to mean various institutions, policies and transforming structures that shape and govern people’s accessibility to different types of livelihoods assets and livelihoods opportunities. Therefore, culture is recognised as a humanly devised constraint and often a vulnerable fact that determines human interactions (North, 1993). The SL approach developed by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for example, places culture in the vulnerability context and implies culture as something which cause of livelihoods vulnerability. Carswell (2000) for example, has referred to caste as a part of culture to determine the livelihoods diversification

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undertaking a study in Southern Ethiopia. As this study reveals people are unlikely to be potters, tanners and blacksmiths which are socially defined livelihood activities if they were not born into that particular caste group. In this case, Carswell refers to culture as a crucial determinant of livelihoods choices. (Hussein and Nelson, 1998) also discuss ‘culture’ in relation to livelihoods diversification in Mali, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia; in these cases diversification has been identified as a strategy for cultural expression and formation of a separate identity for the community. Ellis (2000) discusses the concept of culture in relation to social capital and subsumes the idea of “belief systems, class, caste and ethnicity and kin”. These are stressed as essential components to be considered in attaining the future security of livelihoods at individual and household levels.

However, as with Bebbington (1999, 2000), Cahn (2000), and Glavovic et al (2002), I also found that culture receives a scant attention in those livelihood discussions. The limitation of cultural aspect in current livelihoods analysis is a serious issue, as the sustainable livelihood approach has been declared as a ‘holistic' paradigm. It is straightforward that holistic is a combination of both material and non-material elements; it is a whole made up of interdependent parts. Indeed, the development process is now concerned about social values, customs and traditions (Landes, 2000; Rao and Walton, 2004) as preconditions for human progress. As livelihood approach provides itself the holism focuses on people regardless of sector, geographical space or level, it prioritises people’s own definitions and perceptions of constraints and problems and it aspires to provide a way of thinking about livelihoods that is manageable and that helps improve development effectiveness. However, as far as culture is seen as negative, rejecting customary practices, beliefs, mind, emotions and spiritual elements, social values could not be an integral part of the development process. Spiritual and cultural aspects are essential in determining livelihoods opportunities and choices and therefore building and shaping community’s livelihoods portfolios as well. Bebbington (1999) suggests culture as an imperative remedy in building livelihoods resilience as well. He stresses the importance of cultural perspective in analysing every phase of livelihoods concerns particularly in rural context. He questions
about culture emphasizing the stronger connectivity between place and reproduction of cultural practices. Bebbington cites, “through fostering certain forms of cultural identity maintenance and particular patterns of interactions, cultural practices enable, inspire and indeed empower; they are another important ‘input’ to livelihood production and poverty alleviation” (1999, p.2034). Therefore, ‘cultural practices’ are seen as valued for the meaningfulness of rural residence and importantly, its capability of forming action and resistance that the other types of capital would not alone make possible. For Glavovic et al (2002), thoughts of culture are highly influential. They question about the wider role of culture in developing ‘social capital’ and livelihoods building. As Glavovic et al (2002) assert, social capital is said to be one of the strongest livelihood assets that people have to combat threats of their survival and wellbeing. Many of the definitions of social capital (Robison et al, 2002; Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1995; Putnam et al, 1993; Berkes and Folke, 1992; Berkes and Folke, 1998) do not give sufficient recognition to the role of diversity, innovation and competition in development.

Proposal – Culture is a resource?

As we are aware, a rural livelihoods system constitutes a diverse economic, social and cultural ‘universe’ wherein rural families are bound to make their living. People acquire livelihoods in a variety of ways, with varying degrees of success according to their access to resources and employment and how they deal with pressures arising from social, economic and environmental changes. These livelihood strategies depend on the basic materials and social, tangible and intangible assets which possess rural complexity and heterogeneity. As the World Bank (2003) notices, rural people have the modest portfolio of livelihood assets that can help to bring them out of poverty and insecurity. It has been recognised that traditional social capital, culture and history, human capital, and indigenous knowledge and know-how are resources, which may provide different opportunities to pursue various livelihoods (World Bank, 2003). As Chambers (1998) emphasises, people construct and contrive a living using their knowledge, skills and creativity. They may be acquired within the household, passed on from generation to generation as indigenous and traditional
technical knowledge, or through apprenticeship, or through innovation and experiments. Therefore, traditional customs, rituals, knowledge, skills, beliefs and value systems – collectively termed as ‘culture’ – are an embedded element in rural lifestyles and indeed have greater influences on livelihoods choices and resource accessibility. On the other hand, culture and economic performance are also interlinked and economic activities are not exempted from the influences of local symbols and meanings. As Munjeri (2004) and Murray (2001) notice, intangible culture is the way of life and the vital sources of an identity for many communities that is deeply rooted in history.

As Bernstein (1992) notices, the image of farming for example represents the stability of rural society, and the immobility of its inhabitants; it conveys a notion like rural people being “tied to the land”. Paddy farming is defined as a cultural activity among the Asian people. For example, the Sinhalese paddy farming system is a metonymical representation of the wewa (lake) and the yaya (paddy field); the wewa (tank) the dagaba (pagoda) and the gama (village) and pansala (village temple) are the most culturally valued symbolic expressions of ‘prosperity’ of the Sri Lankan community. This is not the case only with farming culture. The pastoral societies of Africa and sea culture\(^2\) of the Pacific people for instance, are also cultural artefacts of livelihood systems. For example Adriansen (2006) notices, among the Senegalese Fulani people that cattle are the most culturally valued resource; they herd cattle to “survive” or “to feed Fulani families”. Adriansen (2006) put this in more poetic way, cattle for Fulani is “because I’m Fulani….a Fulani without cattle are like a woman without jewels.....Cattle are gold for the Fulani...Cattle are the honour of the Fulani.” In this aspect ‘cattle’ represents the cultural capital among the Fulani, and this does not appear to be changing even though the ways to acquire this capital have been diversified (Adriansen 2006, p.223). In this pastoral mentality, cattle are

\(^2\) Livelihood patterns, opportunities and livelihood choices are highly determined by their ocean traditions, skills, behavioural patterns, belief systems and customs. Survival skills and local knowledge attained within family units have been passed over generations as native technical knowledge or through apprenticeship, or more formally through education or extension services, or through experiments and innovations.
treated as a wealthy object and a source of a Fulani’s prestige (see: de Hann, 2000; Adriansen and Nielsen, 2002; and Bayer, 1999).

Prioritising the local cultural context would be more reliable in understanding claims and demands of the poorer communities and in designing appropriate strategies for them. Groenfeldt (2003) engages in a fair assessment of the importance of ‘cultural values’ in future development presenting four case studies; the Maori vision (see: Hingangaroa, 2000; and Loomis, 2000), Bhutan “Gross National Happiness” (Center for Bhutan Studies, 1999) and Menominee culture (see: Davis, 2000; and Groenfeldt 2003, p.926). These cases explain the success of culture in safeguarding distinctive core values against the rising tide of Westernisation. Helping to ease traditional societies into the modern era requires careful consideration and a deep respect for local cultures and customs. The promotion and development of effective and sustainable livelihood strategies require an attention to the local cultural diversity and resource complexity. Local people can ensure their own survivals by meeting their basic needs, but not in such a way as not to degrade natural resource base upon which they depend (Chambers, 1998; Chambers & Conway, 1992).

The sustainable livelihood approach requires creative ways of acquiring local sustainability and tools are need to be created and adapted as fit community needs, rather than forcing communities to fit with whatever tool is in vogue. Developing such strategies requires respect for values and knowledge, the “understanding of understanding” (Marschke & Berkes, 2005). Folke et al (2003), and Berkes & Seixas (2005), suggest ‘cultural resilience’ as a crucial phenomenon in rural sustainability. Folke et al (2003) notice three fundamental characteristics, which living strategies are obviously made up of:

1. Learning to live with change and uncertainty,
2. Nurturing learning, and
3. Adapting and creating opportunities for self organisation.3

3 For example, see Terer et al (2004); notice living ‘harmony’ with the ‘floodling regime’, seasonal changes and patterns of how Tana River,
However, the traditional cultures and their linkages for example may seem irrelevant to a development practitioner of this century, and they will often be more interested on modern ‘livelihoods strategies’. But, peoples’ value systems may be enough of an influence to make all the difference for the people who are seeking balanced economic livelihoods.

The cultural aspect need not be considered the ‘retarding’ factor for the livelihood analysis when considering the institutional contexts of local communities. As in livelihood discussions, policy and institutional environment always supports multiple livelihoods strategies and promotes equitable access to competitive markets for all (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Ellis, 1998b; Scoones, 1998). But, placing culture as an institution, DIFD asserts that “institutions can restrict people’s choice of livelihood strategies” (DFID, 1999, 2000). This controversy encourages further investigation whether culture can be always destructive as an institution or whether it can be constructive in terms of building livelihoods and strengthening community’s wellbeing? Indeed the whole idea of culture can be viewed constructively by understanding the “way things are done” in the context that we particularly examine. I believe that this works well if local culture is taken as a soft and permeable cluster, rather than its deterministic prospect as used by others (e.g.: DFID, 1999 and 2000; Carney, 1998 and 2000; and Carswel, 1999). To work this effectively the whole ‘package’ of transforming structures and processes, or as in the current livelihood discussion, the PIPs context, needs to be unpacked to liberate culture from its negative form. A positive view of local cultural institutions always gives a meaningful participation to local community. L. J. deHann (2000) for example, refers to social inclusion as an indication of sustainability. To ensure participation and empowerment of local communities, it is important to develop local leadership as a means of drawing on local resources and initiatives.

Pokomo and Wardei communities manage their livelihood resources. The local people had vast knowledge on wetland ecosystems especially on their ecological changes. This was particularly noted by their intentions to adopt new practice to earn their livelihoods (Terer et al, 2004. p.12).
Overton et al (1999) refer to the concept of ‘sustainable culture’ to build trust, interdependency and participation, which can also be important to the quality of people’s lives as material concerns. Norton (1992) also examines the linkages between natural and cultural diversity in relation to developing sustainable livelihoods strategies. The protection of natural systems and natural processes is cited as essential to flourishing local cultures which is integral to sustainable livelihoods. According to Costanza et al (2000), Daily (1997), and Folke et al (2003), human prospect is fundamentally dependent on retaining the integrity and adaptive capacity of natural systems. It provides a continuous flow of living resources. The inseparability of the natural and human dimension of the livelihoods system is perhaps obvious in traditional rural societies. For example, Berkes and Folke (1992 and 1998) and Allison and Ellis (2001) propose culture as a separate entity for attaining local sustainability stressing the importance of ‘traditional ecological knowledge’. They rely on the accumulation of knowledge from experiences shared through a common culture and integrated management practices with moral and spiritual belief systems which, in turn, have co-evolved in the context of the particular ecological setting (Berkes and Folke, 1998; Gadgil et al, 1993). According to Terer et al (2004) and Allison and Badjeck (2004), traditional knowledge is not static, but accumulates, erodes and changes like any other tradition. Chambers (1997) also asserts that,

the knowledge of rural people has a comparative strength with what is local and observable by eye, changes over time, and matters to people. It has been undervalued and neglected. But recognizing and empowering it should not lead to an opposite neglect of scientific knowledge; the key is to know whether, where and how the two knowledges can be combined, with modern science as servant not master, and serving not those who are central, rich and powerful, but those who are peripheral, poor and weak, so that all gain (1997, p.205).

Rural people’s traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge are complementary in their strengths and weaknesses. Combined they may achieve what neither could alone (Chambers, 1983. p.75).
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Beyond the Linear Logic of Project Aid Alternative: Understandings of Participation and Community Vitality

Amanda Kiessel*

Abstract
Since the mid-1980s, international development agencies have been responding to critiques of the ‘development industry’ by redirecting their assistance to (1) participatory community development initiatives and (2) targeted project-based aid. These two strategies are rooted in different worldviews and based on contradictory understandings of the nature of social transformation. This paper explores how recent research on complex adaptive systems, ancient Eastern philosophies, and the experiences of participatory development practitioners challenge the linear logic of conventional development interventions. It concludes with the implications of a non-linear world view for participation, community development, and alternative development frameworks like Gross National Happiness.

Introduction
The international development industry has changed significantly over the years. In response to critics’ claims that the post-World War II development ‘project’ has been a failure and a waste of resources, international aid agencies have sought new strategies to direct and target development assistance. Since the mid-1980s, there have been two notable changes. First, international donors have placed more emphasis on ‘participatory development’. Bilateral and multilateral agencies and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) alike have provided funding to form and strengthen community-based organizations (CBOs), conduct village-level participatory rural appraisals (PRAs), build village revolving loan funds, and support ‘community initiatives’ in countries throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Participatory approaches and a village-level focus are expected to reduce the risk of inappropriate interventions and, at the same

* Sewalanka Foundation, Sri Lanka
time, contribute to democratic governance and a viable market economy (Hulme & Edwards, 1997).

The second change is that most donors have shifted from flexible, general assistance to more targeted aid and project-based funding (Kuruppu, 1994). Projects give the donor agencies more control over an intervention, making it easier to demonstrate outputs, assess efficiency, and restrict financial support to activities that are consistent with the donor’s worldview. Today, most donors require project plans to be expressed in a Logical Framework matrix that includes the planned goal, purpose, outputs, and activities listed vertically, as well as the intervention logic, objectively verifiable indicators, sources of verification, and project assumptions given horizontally. The planned inputs and expected outputs must be measurable, for example, “The number of people below the poverty line will be reduced by 25 percent” or “incomes will be raised by 30 percent.” They should also be clearly linked with the activity timeline and budget of the project. An implementing agency is evaluated by its ability to “manage the project cycle”, complete the activities and deliver the outputs according to the pre-determined timeline.

Both participatory community development and targeted project funding are intended to increase the accountability and effectiveness of development interventions. The two strategies may have emerged from similar critiques of the international development industry, but that’s where the similarity ends. Field experience suggests that participatory development and donor-funded projects are based on contradictory understandings of the nature of social transformation. They are rooted in different worldviews (Kiessel, 2007). This paper explores the growing challenges to conventional development interventions and the implications of this emerging paradigm for community development.

**The linear logic of project aid**

According to philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn, scientific disciplines trudge through long periods of relative calm and

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1 Examples given at a ‘Partner Conference’ held by one of Sewalanka’s donors, Field notes, September 18, 2006.
stability, punctuated by intense revolutions or ‘paradigm shifts’. The dominant paradigm of a given period defines the boundaries for what are considered to be legitimate problems, theories, and methods in that field. New paradigms emerge when scholars encounter problems that cannot be handled within the prevailing paradigm.

Conventional development interventions are rooted in a linear paradigm that emerged during the Scientific Revolution when leading 17th century thinkers like Descartes and Newton made major advances in our understanding of linear systems and described fundamental laws of mathematics and classical physics. In linear systems, the same association between specific causes and effects applies at all times and in all places. This means that linear processes are predictable. They can be described by universal laws. Events proceed along an orderly path with a clear beginning and end. Once a system is defined, an external actor can provide specified inputs to produce the desired results.

The methodologies and logic used by these 17th century scientists were highly effective for the problems they were trying to solve, and it wasn’t long before they began to spill into other disciplines. Even human society was seen as a linear system, moving along a fixed path towards a pre-determined endpoint. This paradigm has been attractive because it provides a sense of security in an uncertain world (Dewey, 1930). It suggests that the future is predictable and controllable, and it enables us to imagine a society that is rationally ordered and manageable (Toulmin, 1992). If we uncover the universal laws of development and have the right experts at the controls, we will progress quickly and certainly towards the desired end state, a ‘developed society’.

Conventional development projects are based on two linear paradigm assumptions:

- Those who are ‘developed’ have the ability (and obligation) to intervene on behalf of those who are less developed and objectively measure their progress along a fixed path
- It is possible to direct social change and achieve predictable results through planned development interventions.
Development is reduced to a formula, a project recipe: if specialists provide X inputs and conduct Y activities in a community, they will get Z results. This is the logic behind the Logical Framework. The implementing agency is expected to predict in advance the types and amounts of inputs needed, when each activity will be done, and what the measurable output or impact will be. The implementer is then evaluated on their ability to make the world match their prediction. A successful project will use each budget line as predicted, conduct each activity according to the plan, and produce the expected outputs by the target deadline.

Since the projects are intended to address pressing concerns, like poverty, hunger and environmental degradation, and resources are scarce, a premium is placed on cost effectiveness: reaching the maximum number of people for the least amount of money in the shortest possible time frame. It is cheaper and simpler to assume that these project formulae are universally applicable, and that the same linear relationship between inputs and outputs can be applied to different individuals, different social groups, different villages, different regions, or different countries. All of the areas covered by the project are expected to travel on the same path to the same endpoint.

**Challenges to the linear paradigm**

The challenges to this linear understanding of social transformation come from many directions including recent scientific advances, ancient Eastern philosophies, and the experiences of participatory development practitioners.

*Complexity science*

Over the past century, scientists have begun studying a number of systems that cannot be explained within the linear paradigm. Einstein, Bohr, Schrödinger, and Heisenberg demonstrated the existence of non-linear phenomena, processes which are inherently probabilistic, uncertain, and unpredictable. They showed that there are systems in which a given cause can lead to more than one outcome, and if the process is repeated the results may be, and often are, different. These non-linear systems do not follow a pre-determined path and cannot be described by
universal laws. They also showed that measurements of space and time are relative. Frame of reference matters and an objective description of nature is not possible. In a process reminiscent of the Scientific Revolution in the 1600s, the recognition of nonlinear phenomena and relativity has slowly extended from mathematics and physics to other areas of human interest and opened new questions and areas of exploration.

Researchers are beginning to understand that certain systems, like brains, ant colonies, human organisations, national economies, and ecosystems share common properties that cannot be studied through reductionist methods or within a linear framework. They function as ‘complex adaptive systems’. A complex system refers to a dynamic network of many, constantly interacting parts. A system is described as ‘adaptive’ when these parts, called agents, have the ability to process information and respond to feedback. In the brain, the agents are neurons; in a human society, the agents could be individuals, households, organisations, companies, or nations, or a combination of all of these. System level patterns emerge from the micro-level actions and interactions of numerous individual agents (Waldrop, 1992; Holland, 1996; Watts, 1999 & Beinhocker, 2007). Change comes from within the system. There is no external planner. Attempts to precisely control the path of the system from the top can lead to unanticipated, or even undesirable, outcomes.

Eastern philosophies

The concepts that are emerging from complex adaptive systems research are not new. There are strong parallels with the ancient lessons of Eastern philosophies like Buddhism and Taoism. In these traditions, the world has always been viewed as an unpredictable, perpetually changing system. There is no linear, uniform path towards a fixed endpoint. The Buddha taught that the world is incessantly in motion (samsara) and everything around us is impermanent (anicca) and transitory (Dhammapada, 113). Lao Tzu taught that “it is natural for things to change” (Lao Tzu, 1970). The Tao is a flowing, ever-changing reality and “those who follow the natural order flow in the current of the Tao” (Huai Nan Tzu quoted in Capra, 1982, p.129).
All things are seen as interdependent and inseparable parts of the cosmic whole, of the same ultimate reality. This means that there is no separate, objective observer or planner and the source of motion and change comes from within the system. The highest aim is to see the world as it is, to become aware of this flow, of the unity and mutual interrelation of all things, and to transcend the notion of an isolated individual self. This ancient concept is captured by one of the most well-known researchers on non-linear systems, Albert Einstein:

A human being is part of the whole, called by us ‘Universe’; a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole nature in its beauty (Einstein, 1954).

Development practitioners

Participatory development practitioners often share a similar understanding of the nature of human society and social transformation that contradicts the linear assumptions of conventional development projects. They say that community dynamics are complex. There are no universal laws and it is not possible to exactly predict or control the change process. A community worker from Sewalanka Foundation, a Sri Lankan development organisation, offered this explanation:

In chemistry, when Carbon and Oxygen come together, you get Carbon Dioxide. It’s crystal clear. It’s always the same. But in social science, in social mobilisation, when people come together, it’s different every time. If we take one community, there are many different characters and things are changing every week (Focus group interview, June 3, 2006).

This worldview is not restricted to the so-called ‘developing countries’. Saul Alinsky’s work in the Chicago slums gave him the following understanding of social transformation: “[An] organiser is loose, resilient, fluid, and on the move in a society which is
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itself in a state of constant change...The basic requirement for the understanding of the politics of change is to recognise the world as it is" (Alinsky, 1972, p.11).

Community workers can provide support and stimulate discussion on 'the world as it is', but they are not the source of change. Motion must come from within the system, within the community. Social transformation comes about through the actions and interactions of the people in the community, the 'local agents'. According to a Sewalanka field coordinator:

Social mobilisation is about self-development. We help them with whatever they need, but they have to find their own path, not us. At the end of the day, the people have to say, “We have done that,” and not, “This social mobiliser has done it” or “Sewalanka has done it”. They should say, “We have done the work (Focus group interview, June 3, 2006).

This understanding of change is reminiscent of the Tao Te Ching: “When the best leaders achieve their purpose, the people claim the achievement as their own” (Lao Tzu, 1970).

Practitioners argue that uniform project formulae are inappropriate because there is no single path. The process and the direction of change may be different even in neighbouring communities.

We adjust according to the place and the people. That’s up to the social mobiliser. Doing social mobilisation is not easy. Nobody can exactly figure it out...We can’t apply the same system in every village (Focus group interview, June 14, 2006).

Rather than making a rigid plan and then sticking to it, experienced community workers promote a process of action and learning. This approach is called by different names: participatory action research (Pals-Borda, 1979) the learning process approach (Sweet & Weisel; 1979; Korten, 1980) and process-oriented participatory development (Ul-Haque et al., 1977; Bunch, 1982 & Uphoff, 1992). Myles Horton put it simply. He said his work in rural Appalachia finally taught him that “the way to do something was to start doing it and learn from it” (Horton, 1990). The idea is also captured in the title of a book that he did with Paulo Freire: We Make the Road by Walking (Horton & Freire, 1990).
**Implications for development interventions**

If society is seen as a dynamic, non-linear system, where change emerges from local-level interactions and planned interventions produce unpredictable outcomes, what does this mean for development and other attempts to direct social change? It does not mean that we are forced resign ourselves to drifting along through history and accepting the undesirable circumstances that emerge through the results of our actions like massive inequality, species loss, hunger, pollution, and war. It means that we need to re-evaluate how we think about change in a changing world.

According to one of the researchers investigating complex adaptive systems:

> It’s like a kaleidoscope: the world is a matter of patterns that change, that partly repeat, but never quite repeat, that are always new and different...We are a part of this thing that is never changing and always changing. If you think that you’re a steamboat and can go up the river, you’re kidding yourself. Actually, you’re just the captain of a paper boat drifting down the river. If you try to resist, you’re not going to get anywhere. On the other hand, if you quietly observe the flow, realizing that you’re part of it, realizing that the flow is ever-changing and leading to new complexities, then every so often you can stick an oar into the river and punt yourself from one eddy to another...It means that you try to see reality for what it is, and realise that the game you are in keeps changing, so it’s up to you to figure out the current rules of the game as it’s being played...you observe. And where you can make an effective move, you make a move. (Waldrop, 1992, p.330).
A complexity paradigm is a call for a more strategic approach to directed social change, a process of constantly observing and analysing the system, identifying strategic spaces for action and channelling our energy and resources more effectively. According to Harsha Navaratne, the Chairman of Sewalanka Foundation, attempting to follow a linear, pre-determined plan can restrict our ability to act effectively. Development is a balancing act, an art, and the exact path can’t be predicted. Once, to explain this point, he took out a blank sheet of paper and made a mark at the top (Figure 1). “This is where we want to go, but now we are here,” he said, pointing to the bottom of the page. He then drew lines across the middle of the page. “We cannot go directly. There are many obstacles in the way. There are many constraints, and the situation is constantly changing. If we try to go in a straight line according to our ideology and theories, we will get stuck” (Personal communication, December 12, 2004).

He drew a winding line from the bottom of the page to the top that bypassed all the ‘obstacles’. “You have to find a creative way to reach your goal. You have to keep your eyes focused on where
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you are trying to go, but you have to understand that to reach that place you may have to try many different paths. You have to compromise. You have to be flexible and creative” (Personal communication, December 12, 2004).

Pre-determined project plans confine genuine participation and limit the ability of the ‘participants’ to adapt to local conditions, learn from experience, and adjust to changing circumstances. Many donor-funded projects have supported the ‘institutional capacity building’ of community based organisations, but as long as this occurs within a rigid project framework, the CBOs rarely continue meeting and functioning beyond the end of the project. Social transformation requires time and flexibility. Community groups need space to test different strategies, learn from their mistakes, and try new ideas.

Community vitality through individual awakening

Complex adaptive systems research suggests three main areas of interventions to promote directed change in a constantly changing world:

- activity and reactivity of individual agents
- interactions between agents
- policies and institutions that contribute to an enabling macro environment

Participatory development practitioners focus on the first two of these three. The reason is that, although government policies and programmes are important, they do not affect all people equally. In most societies, inequality is high, and some people have less influence and access than others. Participatory development practitioners focus on the first two types of interventions in an attempt to change network structure and dynamics, to alter the ‘fitness landscape’. By increasing the influence and links of poorly connected agents, they hope to increase their capacity to shape policies and institutions, access information, services, resources, and markets, and direct the process of social change.

Community workers are sometimes called catalysers, mobilisers, change agents, or motivators. Their main role is to
change peoples’ attitudes and encourage them to be more ‘reactive’, more likely to act and interact with their network neighbours. In the Sri Lankan context, the primary obstacle is the ‘dependency mentality’ that has been developed through decades of paternalistic policies and aid hand outs. “Usually villagers complain about government organisations, and they blame the system for not solving their problems” (Interview, June 3, 2006). The social mobilisers explain the constraints and limitations of external assistance, and they encourage them to identify what they can do on their own. They stimulate discussion on the nature of the overall system, our interdependence with others, potential sources of change, and the potential for personal and collective action. According to one community worker: “Basically every individual has a selfish part; they have a concept like ‘mine’. We have to change that to ‘we’, and try to help them work as teams” (Focus group interview, June 22, 2006). This individual awakening or personal transformation is seen at the basis of social transformation.

Community vitality through interaction

In addition to looking at individual attitudes and behaviours, community workers focus on changing interactions between individuals. Most communities have what is called a ‘small world network structure’ (Watts, 1999). People have many ‘local’ connections with similar individuals and a few weaker connections with ‘distant’ individuals (Figure 2). Forming community organisations can be seen as a way of increasing the density of local network connections. The rationale is that if these densely connected network neighbours are able to make decisions collectively and work together as a single agent, they will have more influence in their interactions with others than they did as single individuals. For example, government officials and private companies tend to be more responsive to a demand from an active, well-organised group than a demand from a single person. Participatory development practitioners help increase community vitality by strengthening inter-community links, and (based on the interests and context of the community) forming new links with external agents.
A project has a clear beginning and end, but a development process is on-going. This does not mean that an indefinite intervention is needed. The small groups and community organisations formed through the mobilisation process increase villagers’ capacity to innovate and adapt to change because they provide a forum for dialogue: for observing and analysing the situation, identifying opportunities and potential constraints, and learning from mistakes. A community organisation is considered sustainable when the villagers are “constantly evaluating and evolving and able to address whatever issues come up” (Interview, March 27, 2006). “What you’re trying to do is maximise robustness, or survivability, in the face of an ill-defined future” (Waldrop, 1992). Participatory development practitioners have updated Chinese philosopher Kuan-tzu’s proverb, “If you give a man a fish...” to reflect this understanding of community organising and resilience.

If you give me a fish, you have fed me for a day. If you teach me to fish, then you have fed me until the river is contaminated and the shoreline is seized for development. But if you teach me to organise, then whatever the challenge, I can join together with my peers and we will fashion our own solution.

Figure 2: A small world network. Communities tend to have dense local connectivity with fewer inter-area connections.
Applying non-linear lessons to the development industry

To summarise, a non-linear understanding of social change draws into question the assumptions underlying conventional development projects and offers the following lessons:

- Social change cannot be precisely predicted or controlled. Development is a process of observing, identifying opportunities and constraints, learning from experience, and adapting to changing circumstances.
- Each society has its own unique historical path and dynamics. There is no single structure, technology, or universal development formula that can be directly imported from one system to another.
- Change emerges from within the system, from the actions and interactions of individuals. There is no external, objective expert.
- Change takes time and does not proceed at a uniform, predictable pace. Groups need space to test different strategies, learn from their mistakes, and try new ideas. Social transformation cannot be forced into a short, rigid timeframe.
- Personal transformation is at the basis of social transformation. Change agents influence attitudes and behaviours through example and by providing opportunities for dialogue and experience.
- Change is catalysed when ‘mobilised’ agents form strong enough ties with their ‘network neighbours’ to act together on common issues and collectively establish links with powerful individuals and groups outside their immediate circle.

Applying these lessons to the international development industry would require a dramatic shift in how aid agencies channel resources, evaluate accountability and effectiveness, and measure success. Funding for ‘participatory development’ would need to be flexible, process-oriented, and available in smaller amounts over a longer time frame. It seems unlikely that these changes will come without pressure from the academic community. Most ‘evaluations’ of development projects are self-assessments conducted at the end of the project period with a focus on the expected outputs and indicators from the initial
project plan. Both the implementing and the funding agency have a vested interest in showing positive results; the project's underlying assumptions are not questioned. In contrast, ethnographies of specific development projects, like Ferguson’s (’990) *The Anti-Politics Machine* and Uphoff’s (1992) *Learning from Gal Oya*, tend to highlight the unanticipated consequences of the intervention, the role of individual actors, and the influence of the local socio-political context and constantly changing conditions. More of these field-based, long-term studies of specific interventions are needed to provide insight into the social change process and inform development policy makers on which types of intervention strategies are most suitable.

**Gross National Happiness and a non-linear paradigm**

The view of human society and social transformation shared by modern complex adaptive systems researchers, ancient Eastern philosophers, and experienced participatory development practitioners is consistent with the alternative development framework of Gross National Happiness (GNH). First, GNH provides a flexible reminder of where we want to go: a society that maximises wellbeing and quality of life, equitable use of resources, cultural diversity, environmental protection, and good governance. It is a value-based ‘mark at the top of the page’ that we can focus on as we deal with the daily complexities of the change process. Second, it does not assume that all human societies will move along a uniform path towards a fixed endpoint, but provides the space and flexibility for people to adjust to the local context, adapt to change, and learn from experience.

Finally, a GNH framework highlights the role of individual agents in system-level change. Happiness cannot be experienced at a national level. This means that GNH has to be more than a compilation of existing national-level statistics and indices that hide individual and village-level disparities. Participatory action research will be needed to understand happiness in context and from the ‘bottom-up’ and analyse how people’s definition of happiness varies between places and over time. According to our ancient teachers and our modern scientists, happiness emerges from the type of personal transformation that leads to social transformation. It comes from recognising the incessant motion,
unity, and interdependence of all things and from “widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole nature in its beauty”. Einstein reminds us that even if we are unable to achieve this completely, “striving for such achievement is, in itself, a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security” (Einstein, 1954).

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Creating Vibrant Communities through Ecologically Sound Food Production

Alex Kaufman*

Abstract

The unbridled pursuit of economic growth through industrialisation forces rural dwellers to overexploit natural resources as a means of paying for the basic requisites, once freely available in the community. The cost of this overexploitation of the land is the degraded capacity to provide essential natural services, namely healthy food and clean water to both rural and urban communities. In effect, rural areas serve as a ‘supermarket’ which provides nourishment for the inhabitants of the city and fuels industry. Furthermore, boosting food production through commercially intensive agriculture, aquaculture and livestock rearing creates a loss of community identity, culture and traditional livelihoods. The mending of this rural-urban divide requires holistic methodologies based in eco-agriculture, protecting biodiversity and the development of integrated bioregions. This paper critically examines the impacts of modern food production on ecosystem services and quality of life in rural and urban areas.

Introduction

The current economic paradigm prescribes growth based development as the main instrument to bring billions out of poverty and hunger in developing countries. In rural communities the right to food production is essential to livelihoods and quality of life. Food production and preparation serves critical economic, spiritual, and cultural functions in Asian society.

There are a growing number of non-governmental organisations responding to the inequities of the global food trade through the support of community-based agriculture programs. However, these outside efforts to assist rural communities often clash with the objectives of government initiatives and agro-industry. At a governmental level, the countries of Bhutan and

* PhD Candidate, Faculty of Environment and Resource Study, Mahidol University, Thailand.
Thailand have implemented policies which boldly respond to the impacts of globalisation on local food production. These countries have recognised that maintaining rural livelihoods requires a localised form of sustainable economic development. His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan initiated the policy of Gross National Happiness as a means to improve quality of life through equitable socio-economic growth, preservation of culture, and environmental protection (Thinley, 2005). His Majesty King Bhumidol Adulyadej launched the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy to promote moderation, self-sufficiency and a reasonable form of economic development in Thailand (Sathirathai & Priyanut, 2004). These two policy initiatives constitute a noteworthy response to the failure of Western models to improve the wellbeing of rural inhabitants.

Modern economic development in its current form creates a loss of community identity, culture and traditional livelihoods through a transformation of rural livelihoods. As modern society absorbs rural communities, local residents are forced to extract natural resources and engage in monoculture, aquaculture and other means of paying for basic requisites, once freely available in their community. The constant demand for resources to sustain city life and provide input for industry erodes the self-sufficiency of local communities and degrades the environment. This situation creates an ever increasing flow of natural resources, from rural to urban areas, stimulated through policies and regulations realised by urban dwellers. In effect, rural areas serve as a ‘supermarket’ which provides nourishment for the inhabitants of the city and fuels industry. Moreover, the cultivation of monoculture and other commodity food products decreases the prevalence of community trade as large retailers tend to dominate the marketplace.

Private sector investment and government subsidies which intend to expand and increase food production further degrade the environment. Most of the commercial agro-industry depends on the promotion and sale of genetically modified seeds, manufactured pesticides, and fertilisers. This modern form of agriculture initiates a cycle of debt and dependence for small-scale farmers (Sathirathai & Priyanut, 2004). In addition, the rapid degradation of fishing grounds, rainforests and climactic
changes are decreasing the self-sufficiency of small scale rural food production. The subsequent breakdown in local food production disintegrates communities and traditional livelihoods. Moreover, global studies show the importance of food as a catalyst for healthy rural communities (Kuhnlein, et al, 2006).

More importantly, rampant growth diminishes the capacity of the rural areas to provide essential services, as crop land is degraded through massive inputs of fertilisers and pesticides. Water for irrigation purposes is combined with these chemical flows and contaminates rivers in both rural and urban areas. Contemporary agriculturalists take the multitude of ecosystem services, “natural services...that support life on the earth and are essential to the quality of human life and the functioning of the world’s economies” (Miller, 2004) for granted.

These invaluable services to agriculture and humanity can be separated into three major categories: supporting, provisioning and regulating functions. Supporting services can be defined as the processes necessary to sustain agricultural endeavours: nutrient cycling, soil formation and primary production. Provisioning services include food, water, wood, fiber and fuel for human communities. Regulating services are composed of climate control, disease regulation, flood abatement and water purification (Millennium Ecosystems Assessment, 2005). These supporting, provisioning, and regulating functions drive the world’s food production.

This paper surveys the impact of the Green Revolution and the transformation of indigenous farming communities through commodity-based food cultivation. Second, it reviews rural-urban relationships over the limited natural resources necessary to sustain high levels of food productivity. Third, it argues for a shift to organic farms, polyculture and other holistic methodologies which sustain ecological integrity. Finally, a case study of the Sufficiency Economy movement in Thailand sets the stage for a scenario of ecologically sustainable bioregions composed of vibrant, healthy, and self-reliant food producing communities.
The Green revolution

The same technology which international donors selected to avert the hunger and famine predicted by scientists and development experts in the 1960s (United Nations Development Programme, 1994) has adversely affected indigenous agricultural practices and food quality. This scientific movement termed the Green Revolution, “...was prescribed as a techno-politic strategy that would create abundance in agricultural societies and reduce the threat of communist insurgency and agrarian conflict” (Shiva, 1991). The Green Revolution was delivered to the developing world at a great cost to the quality of soil, water and structure of the community. These programmes concentrated on large scale mechanised agriculture and intended to provide food security. Unfortunately, the main beneficiaries were the wealthy elite farmers supported by government policies and international aid programmes (United Nations Development Programme, 1994).

Although the technological approaches employed since the advent of the green revolution increased our ability to support greater numbers of humans, it is well understood that industrial agriculture has negatively impacted the ecosystem’s ability to provide essential natural services (Millennium Ecosystems Assessment, 2005). The Green Revolution focused on ecological productivity meanwhile reducing societal wellbeing and ecological integrity through mono-cropping. Furthermore, the practice of monoculture disrupts biodiversity by diminishing ecosystem stability and resilience (Miller, 2004; Millennium Ecosystems Assessment, 2005). In contrast, the agricultural practices of vernacular societies were ecologically sound and largely self-sufficient.

Learning from indigenous societies

In In the Way (Goldsmith, 1996) Edward Goldsmith applies the term vernacular to denote a “society and to various features of such society that are self-organising and self-governing, rather than being organised externally by the state and its institutions, or commercial operations. The term is usually applied to a social group’s local dialect or architecture. More appropriately something that springs out of a local culture. Vernacular societies
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mythologised life in the animal kingdom and managed their livelihood according to a code of conduct rooted in nature" (Goldsmith, 1996).

The vernacular or indigenous societies were greatly influenced by their interdependence with nature, as linked to the four basic requisite for human survival: clothing, shelter, food, health or medicine (Puntasen et al, 2006). The Tukano Indians of Columbia, for example, understood that excessive demands on their natural environment could bring about the collapse of their society. The Tukano identified with the forces of the earth through their mythology, based upon their observations of the flora and fauna of the jungle (Hardin, 1968). For the hunter-gatherers, the environment was the provider of all things necessary for life and thus took on a powerful, mystical and centralised role. These communities obtained their basic requisites from their surroundings, and developed a symbiotic relationship with ‘Mother Earth’. Their intimate relationship with nature, led these communities to cherish and use their resources wisely.

In contrast to modern society, early agricultural societies were highly conscious of food chains and dependent upon local ecosystems for the natural inputs required to sustain agriculture. Inputs such as fertilisers and pesticides were largely organic and their components were sourced within the community. Villagers shared water, food products and other vital resources. Traditional lifestyles were dependent upon the notion of ‘the commons’ (Ramakrishnan, 2007) as access to agricultural inputs from afar were a limiting factor. Water for irrigation purposes was highly valued and water conservation an ingrained practice as resources were limited to the surrounding environment.

These early indigenous practices were ecologically sound, and farming communities were largely self-sufficient (Goldsmith, 1996; Ramakrishnan, 2007). Early societies practiced a ‘pure’ form of organic farming, as there were no fabricated chemicals available for agricultural inputs. Vandana Shiva (Shiva, 199) employs the term “internal input farming systems” to describe these self-sufficient farming units which utilise so-called waste products as valuable inputs (see Figure 1). In this diagram, Vandana Shiva utilises an ecological model to demonstrate a holistic and organic form of farming which continually circulates key nutrients.
The Internal Input Farming System demonstrates the cycling of products and services, through a continuous flow of energy and nutrients, as evident in all healthy ecosystems (Miller, 2004). Indigenous communities were dependent on ecosystem services to run their farms and the surrounding forests for food supplements, medicines and housing. The common spiritual, religious and cultural practices of indigenous communities aided in the protection of these resources and their livelihoods were dependent upon the free services provided by nature:

The sustainable use of tropical forests includes not just maintaining timber and conserving biological diversity, but also maintaining the ecological balance and functions of forests, such as soil quality, hydrological cycles, climate and weather, as well as maintaining supplies of other forest products essential to the livelihood of local people (Santasombat, 1995, p.18).

Self-sufficiency and survival demanded a symbiotic relationship between human communities and their natural environment. The introduction of modern agricultural methods shifted indigenous communities from a symbiotic relationship with the environment to one of dependence on corporations for manufactured agricultural inputs, medicines and housing.

**Bridging the urban-rural divide through ecological and sustainable natural resource management**

The problems concerning natural resource management strategies in rural areas necessitate a broad examination of the factors which led to this dramatic social, economic and ecological transformation. Firstly, agro-industry degrades farm lands and leads to the transformation of rural communities and landscapes through the diminished capacity of the land. Secondly, as industrial demands usurp community land or degrade the quality of ecosystem services, local people are uprooted from their traditional way of life. The distribution of natural resources in rural areas is no longer based on a long history of interrelationships to the watersheds, mountains and other neighbouring ecosystems. Ownership and usage of resources are mandated by the power base in the cities. This inequitable formula evades the notion of a commons (Ramakrishnan, 2007).
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shared by a diverse set of stakeholders. The rural community is no longer a caretaker of ancestral lands, and the commons which once provided vital services to small communities becomes the domain of the city. A lack of natural resources stimulates the migration of rural inhabitants to the city in search of new livelihoods.

The problems which accompany the disintegration of local communities are well documented throughout the developing world. As progress and development reach the rural areas, communities are transformed physically, socially and economically. Research on the degradation of mangrove ecosystems in Ecuador reveals an indigenous perspective of their situation, “I do not know what will happen to us if the mangroves disappear, we shall eat garbage in the outskirts of the city of Esmeraldas or in Guayacuil, we shall become prostitutes…” (Martinez-Alier, 2002). The mangroves serve diverse interests in the local communities: fishing grounds, aquaculture, charcoal, vegetation, medicines and disposable income.

The communities based around watersheds are economically, socially and culturally intertwined with the natural environment. Watersheds serve diverse interests and their territory is commonly slated for a multitude of development programs. Fishing, mining, timber and hydroelectric projects are a few of the principal impacts on watersheds. The increasing concern over the negative impacts of dam projects on surrounding communities is exemplified by the turmoil generated around the Pak Moon Dam in Thailand. This project which intended to generate electricity for development purposes uprooted more than 1400 families destroyed the livelihoods of over 6000 fisherman. The Pak Moon Dam both failed to serve the needs of the surrounding communities and produced far less electricity than was projected by initial assessments (World Commission on Dams, 2002).

In the U.S. the benefits of watershed preservation have been well studied. In the Catskills region of upstate New York, conservation has clear financial advantages “…for less than $2 billion the watershed can be restored fully, at a saving relative to a technological fix of at least $4 billion – perhaps as much as $10 billion if operating costs are included” (Heal, 2000). In developing
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countries rural areas rural areas are suffering ecologically and financially as watersheds are rapidly degraded.

**Self-sufficiency and urban growth**

Policy advocacy and government initiatives cannot continue to externalise the costs of city life, depositing toxic waste in impoverished communities or developing countries (Hardoy et al, 2001) cycles back to the city as polluted water and unhealthy food. Dangerous toxins are being emitted into our environment in the name of economic progress, under the authorisation and supervision of leading scientists, academics and political leaders. The production of toxic chemicals, consumer products and related waste disposal all affect human health and their use requires stiffer regulatory measures. In the past, there was a seemingly unlimited supply of natural resources and the biosphere appeared resistant to natural disasters and all forms of pollution. However, with massive population growth and polluting technologies (Millennium Ecosystems Assessment, 2005) it is becoming increasingly difficult to insulate ourselves from the negative feedback which results from our actions. We are slowly coming to understand that disturbing rural ecosystems means a decreasing quality of life in the city.

*Figure 2, Rural-urban cycling of resources: a holistic view*
The diagram (see Figure 2) demonstrates the cycling of nature’s products to urban areas, and the recycling of polluted waste, water and chemicals back to the rural areas. The political, social and economic tension generated by the continuous extraction of food and water from the rural areas leads to the disintegration of the community and rising conflicts over natural resources. These conflicts are arising mainly as a result of the socio-economic impacts of commercialised food production on rural communities. Moreover, rural dwellers lack financial resources and political power to challenge government decisions over the usage of natural resources in and around their communities.

**Ecological solutions for the 21st century: ecoagriculture, New Theory Agriculture and bioregions**

There is a growing awareness of the financial pitfalls and associated health impacts of wide scale industrialised food production. The degradation of ecosystem services through commodity-based farming has led to a new set of holistic solutions that focus on biodiversity protection, reduction of chemical inputs and the creation of diverse and interconnected farming landscapes. This holistic approach is not a new invention, but an approach that embodies a wide array of sustainable agricultural methods and management systems. ‘Ecoagriculture’ means to “increase agricultural production and simultaneously restore biodiversity and other ecosystem functions, in a landscape or ecosystem management context” (McNeely & Scherr, 2003, p.103). Ecoagriculture embraces the conservation of biodiversity, building habitat networks for wildlife, productivity increases, minimising pollution and mimicking natural systems. The growth of economically viable trees, shrubs, grasses and wildlife strengthen farm ecology and provide additional forms of livelihood for rural inhabitants.

In Thailand, a recent initiative under the Sufficiency Economy programme described as New Theory Agriculture (NTA) has supported many successful initiatives which fall within an ecoagriculture framework. NTA farms are divided into the following ratio: 30/30/30/10, the first part is for growing rice, the second for vegetables, the third for water retention and/or a fish
pond, the remainder for housing and other uses (Sathirathai & Priyanut, 2004). The United Nations Development Programme (Baker, et al, 2007) report on the ‘Sufficiency Economy’ documents several successful cases of NTA, in one particular example the Thai Impaeng Network supported one indebted farmer, Serm Udomna to switch from cash crops to growing rice and vegetables. Concurrently, Serm reforested the neighbouring hillsides with local trees which enhanced biodiversity and provided medicine, timber, and firewood for his family and neighbours. Eventually, Serm was able to develop several sustainable sources of food production and pay off his debts.

Ecoagriculture benefits farmers through promoting natural pest-predator relationships, cycling nutrients, and creating ecosystems that are more resilient to environmental perturbations. Farms achieve self-sufficiency through ecologically sound food production. In summary, this new methodology places importance on creating healthy farms through the protection of biodiversity, minimisation of chemical inputs, and improved land management (Gray, 2007).

The concept of bioregionalism first established during the 1960s in California advocated that communities be defined by a set of ecological criteria. Bioregions sustain ecosystem integrity as they are delineated by natural watersheds and co-existent biodiversity (McGinnis, 1999). The successful bioregion is composed of a rich mosaic of diverse organic farms producing a variety of foods and other basic necessities. Bioregions promote cooperatives and local trade as a means of decreasing external inputs of commercial fertilisers, pesticides, and genetically modified seeds. Products travel shorter distances in bioregions and subsequently diminish global warming potential. Bioregional farms and cottage industry form strong regional networks which are largely immune to fluctuations in global commodity prices. Moreover, vital and healthy rural communities contribute to the quality of life in urban zones through the provision of healthy food, clean water and unpolluted air.
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Conclusion

The current mode of development prioritises growth over the integrity of the ecosystem. Sustainable development necessitates supporting rural and urban livelihoods through healthy and resilient ecosystems. Edward Goldsmith discusses the clash between the current mode of development and natural capital (Goldsmith, 1996):

Ecology, with which we must replace it, is also a faith. It is a faith in the wisdom of those forces that created the natural world and the cosmos of which it is part; it is a faith in the latter’s ability to provide us with extraordinary benefits—those required to satisfy our most fundamental needs.

Mainstream economics elevates the pursuit of consumption to a spiritual quest that extends well beyond our fundamental needs. Consequently, the mega-cities have become consumer-communities, functionally and spiritually detached from the natural world. The only way for rural communities to survive is to maintain their interdependent relationship with Mother Earth. However, the only means to do so is to dismantle the policies which enhance the growth of the mega-city and follow decentralised paths of economic development that embrace an ecological worldview. Balancing the growth of consumption and the demand for natural resources requires a multifaceted and holistic approach to development. Therefore, we must proceed with forms of economic development which reject mechanistic models, value ecology and see rural and urban zones as integrated and interdependent. If society is to move towards sustainable development, rural and urban communities should be empowered through appropriate technology informed by ecological models.

Holistic forms of agriculture, food production and regional development depend upon the conservation of biodiversity, to provide healthy and biologically resilient ecosystems. It is evident that modern food production methods are not sustainable as they degrade the ecosystem services which are vital to preserving biodiversity and sustaining human communities. Proving the value of eco-agriculture necessitates ecological accounting which measures the real costs of subsidised water, pesticides, and fertilisers. Modern agriculture and related government policies fail
to quantify the increased costs of healthcare, waste management and pollutants which threaten rural and urban livelihoods. Agro-industry and commercial food production are reducing the ability of the ecosystem to provide services for future generations. In conclusion, when natural capital is accurately and equitably valuated, the costs of a transformation to eco-agriculture and bioregions will prove to be the least costly and healthiest option.

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Happiness Under Pressure: How Dual-Earner Parents Experience Time in Australia

Peter Brown, * Ester Cerin, ° Penny Warner-Smith♣

Abstract

Against a background of profound social, economic and organisational change in Australia, workers’ ability to satisfactorily integrate paid work with personal life is essential for social and economic wellbeing. If working parents are as stressed as national time use surveys suggest, then how is time experienced by mothers and fathers who combine paid work with caring responsibilities? Which activities are associated with the highest levels of positive and negative affect? The empirical basis for examining these questions is provided through a review of selected data from the Work/Life Tensions project.

Using the Experience Sampling Method, we report on data gathered via personal data assistants (PDAs) from 173 working parents (6778 time use surveys) with a view to providing in-situ interpretive information on women’s and men’s activity patterns and their subjective experience of time over a 7-day period. Data from a screening survey completed by the same sample of working parents are also used to compare sample characteristics and levels of ‘time crunch’. Despite high levels of time pressure the mood scores for parents suggest they are relatively positive about their time use patterns with the highest levels of positive affect being associated with socialising and recreation and leisure, and the highest levels of negative affect with child care and paid work activities.

By understanding better the experience and impacts of work-life tensions in time-crunched households, we aim to contribute to debates about the social and economic costs associated with time pressure and stress and their impact on individual and organisational wellbeing. Such an understanding is also crucial to understanding what makes us

* Centre for Work, Organisation and Wellbeing Research, Griffith University, Australia.
° Institute of Human Performance, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China.
♣ Research Centre for Gender, Health and Ageing, the University of Newcastle, Australia.
happy – and the need to build more positive experiences into our lives as a way of maximising our wellbeing.

Introduction

Anxiety about having too much to do and guilt about not using time according to the nagging ‘shoulds’ of family responsibilities are standard fare. Our everyday routines are hurried, regimented, and largely beyond our control. Where once families were likely to spend the day living and working together at home, the daily routine is now more akin to a ritual of dispersion: babies to day-care, children to school, and most parents to a workplace away from home. At the end of the day, families re-converge on the household, only to face more responsibilities: meal preparation, homework, lessons, shopping and scheduling for the next day (Daly, K. (2000).

Kerry Daly’s observations about family life in time-crunched households would strike a chord with many working parents where feelings of time pressure are exacerbated by tensions associated with perceived work and family roles. For many there is also a sense that the pace of life is accelerating, where there seems to be more and more things to do yet less time in which to do them (Gleick, 1999). Such private troubles are the source of a major public issue as evidenced by increasing levels of social commentary, policy debate, academic research and populist literature on the ‘problem’ of work/life balance and what to do about it (Bittman & Wajcman, 1999; Fiedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Gambles et al, 2006; Glezer & Wolcott, 2000; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1991; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services, 2006; Hinz & Hinz, 2004; (Moen, 2003; Ody, 1999; Pocock, 2003; Shaw, 1995).

Concerns about the relationship between working life and private life focus inevitably on questions of time allocation. Much of the research in this area is premised on the assumption that an individual’s ability to balance work and life will be associated with both work and non-work demands, the availability of time and other resources to manage such demands, and will vary across a range of socio-demographic characteristics including gender and age or life stage. Previous studies have also linked work/life
tensions with factors such as work overload (Bittman, 1999; Peters & Raaijmakers, 1998; Robinson, J Godbey, 1997; Schor, 1991) work-to-family interference (Coverman, 1989; Kay, 1996; Warner-Smith & Brown 2002) family-to-work interference (Neal, et al 1993) caregiver strain (Duxbury & Higgins, 2003) and lack of personal leisure time (Brown, et al, 2005; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1991; Kay, 1998). Duxbury and Higgins (2003) assert that an employee’s ability to balance work and life demands is associated with a range of outcomes associated with work organisations, family units, individual wellbeing, and healthy communities. Theirs and others’ research also suggests that work/life tensions may be moderated by factors associated with ‘family-friendly’ workplaces, as well as strategies used by individuals within households to juggle work and non-work demands (Blyton, et al, 2006; Bryson et al, 2007; Duxbury & Higgins, 2003). Despite such moderating forces, it has been reported in Australia (and other Western countries) that increasing numbers of people are experiencing time pressure and stress, and that time pressure is reported most by working couples with dependent children (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 998).

If working parents are as stressed as national time use surveys suggest, then how is time experienced by mothers and fathers who combine paid work with caring responsibilities? What associations are there between time use, gender, life-course stage and mood state? Which activities are associated with the highest levels of positive and negative affect? The empirical basis for examining these questions will be provided through a review of selected data from the Work/Life Tensions project, a three-year study funded by the Australian Research Council. The following sections describe the research aims and methods used to gather data for the Work/Life Tensions project, and provide an overview of selected findings from the study.

**The Work/Life Tensions Project**

**Study design**

The main aim of the Work/Life Tensions project is to examine the hypothesis that wellbeing is positively related to reduced time pressure, more leisure and greater control over time schedules.
The study commenced in 2003 and the fieldwork was completed in 2006. Four methods of data collection were used in the study: focus groups; the Experience Sampling Method (ESM); structured interviews; and data linkage with the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s Health [ALSWH]. The initial sample for the ESM and interview phases of the study was to comprise 100 dual-earner couples who live with their children, with 50 couples to be randomly selected via the ‘young’ (aged 26-31) and 50 couples from the ‘mid-aged’ (aged 54-58) cohorts of the ALSWH study. Participants in the focus groups were recruited via a snowball technique in selected work organisations in Queensland and New South Wales.

**Focus Groups**: Ten focus groups were organised in urban and rural areas of NSW and Queensland in 2003 & 2004, involving 54 participants.

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1 The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s Health was established with the broad aim to examine factors influencing the health of women in Australia and their use of health services. The study commenced in 1996 with 3 cohorts of women of young (18-23), mid (45-50) and older (70-75) age – and involved around 40,000 Australians. The sample was randomly selected and is broadly representative of the national population in these same age groups. Data on the main study were planned every 3 years for 20 years – following the baseline survey that was undertaken in 1996. The main study has 5 key themes, including a thematic area focused on examining issues relating to time use and social roles [30]. Within this theme, the baseline and subsequent surveys have included questions about occupation, hours in paid and unpaid work, satisfaction with time spent in various activities (including leisure), the extent to which women feel time pressured or have time on their hands, as well as questions providing measures of physical and mental health. For example, ALSWH survey data of relevance to time use, time tensions and health have been explored in terms of paid work (Bryson et al, 1998), family care-giving (Lee, 2001), social roles Lee & Powers, 2002), and leisure (Brown Brown, 1999; Warner-Smith & Brown 2002) and paint a picture of young and mid-aged women who, as a result of their busy, crowded lives report high levels of time pressure and stress (Brown, et al, 2002). While the ALSWH data set provides a rich source of quantitative data on women’s time use and wellbeing across the life-course, such data are limited in their capacity to examine how women and men experience time. These limitations were addressed in the Work/Life Tension study which seeks to achieve a broad but detailed perspective on women’s and men’s experience of work-life tension in dual-earner families.
working parents aged 26-55. The purpose of these focus groups was to gain a broad picture of women and men's experience of work-life tension and to identify specific strategies used to 'manage' work-life tension in dual-earner households (Brown et al, 2005; Bryson et al, 2007).

**Experience Sampling Method (ESM):** The ESM was developed by Csikszentmihalyi in the 1970s to sample people's reactions to the use of their time as they are experiencing particular events, rather than through recall afterwards (Larson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1983). It involves a signalling device which cues respondents to report and evaluate their activities (via a self-report questionnaire) at random intervals (usually 7-10 times a day), over about a week (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987). Our survey was provided to participants via personal data assistants (PDAs) which were programmed to beep at random times ten times a day for seven days (Ironmonger et al, 2005). When prompted, the participants were asked to enter information about what they were doing at the time, where they were, who was with them at the time, and how they felt about what they were doing. The Experience Sampling Method has particular strength for exploring how individuals experience time in daily activities, thereby addressing a limitation of time diary research which measures amounts of time spent on different types of activity (Davies, 1994; Morehead, 2001). The ESM and interview phases of the study were completed with the young couples in 2004 and the mid-aged couples in 2005 (Brown et al, forthcoming).

**Telephone interviews:** Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted within one month of participants returning their PDAs. The interview schedule was designed to allow us to explore in more depth the findings from the first two phases of the study related to commonalities and differences between men and women's subjective experience of time in both age cohorts, the contexts in which time is experienced, as well as the strategies used to 'manage' time among working parents.

**Linkage with ALSWA survey data:** In the final phase of the project, individual data from the ESM and interview surveys involving women only are being linked to existing data from the ALSWA project, to explore associations between time use and a
range of life circumstances, health history, and indicators of physical and mental health and wellbeing.

For the purposes of this paper, we will report on ESM data gathered from the young and mid-aged cohorts with a view to providing in situ interpretive information on women’s and men’s activity patterns (what they do) and their subjective experience of time (experience of positive and negative affect) over a 7-day period. Prior to commencing the ESM phase of the study, each participant was asked to complete a self-complete questionnaire where socio-demographic information was collected alongside assessments of personal time pressure based on a ten-item ‘time crunch index’ used by Statistics Canada in their 1992 General Social Survey on Time Use. We report on key characteristics of the sample first.

Sample characteristics

The initial sample for the ESM and interview phases of the study was to comprise 100 dual-earner couples who live with their children, with 50 couples to be randomly selected via the ‘young’ and 50 couples from the ‘mid’ aged cohorts of the ALSWH study. The final sample included 95 working parents aged 25 to 30, and 87 working parents aged 52 to 57. Selected characteristics from the sample are summarised in table 1.

Table 1: Work/life tensions project: Sample characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Young cohort (aged 25-30)</th>
<th>Mid-aged cohort (aged 52-57)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female 51; Male 44</td>
<td>Female 48; Male 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households</td>
<td>Couples: 40</td>
<td>Couples: 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children living at home</td>
<td>All households</td>
<td>56% of households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation categories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers/administrators; professionals; associate professionals</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradespersons; advanced clerical &amp; service workers</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate clerical, sales &amp; service workers; intermediate production &amp; transport workers.</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary sales &amp; service workers; labourers &amp; related</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The young cohort included 51 women and 44 men and the cohort sample included 40 couples. All of the parents had children living with them at home. In terms of occupational categories, 29.5% of the young cohort were in managerial, administrative or professional positions; 16.9% in trades, advanced clerical and service positions; 34.7% in intermediate clerical, sales & service worker or intermediate production & transport worker positions; 14.7% in elementary sales and service worker or labouring positions; and 4.2% in other positions. The mid-aged cohort included 48 women and 39 men and the sample included 39 couples. 56% of mid-aged parents had children still living with them at home, with others having varying degrees of contact with children who had left home. In terms of occupational categories, 54% of the young cohort were in managerial, administrative or professional positions; 17.3% in trades, advanced clerical and service positions; 16.1% in intermediate clerical, sales and service worker or intermediate production and transport worker positions; 6.9% in elementary sales and service worker or labouring positions; and 5.7% in other positions.

The table also includes data on perceived time pressure among the sample using the 10-item ‘time crunch’ index which was originally developed by John Robinson (University of Maryland) and then adapted for use by Statistics Canada in their 1992 General Social Survey on Time Use (Fredericks, 1995). As we have reported elsewhere (Brown et al, forthcoming), responses to the individual items in the ‘time crunch’ index pointed to similarities and some differences between women and men at different stages of life. However, the main use of the index is to categorise individuals according to levels of perceived stress. Adapting protocols used by Statistics Canada in the 1992 General Social Survey on Time Use, high levels of stress are defined as a positive response to 7 or more of the questions on time perception, moderate levels of stress are defined as a positive response to 4 to 6.
6 items, and minimum levels of stress are defined as positive response to 3 or less statements in the time crunch index (see table 1). Using these measures, 32.6% of young parents would be classified as severely time pressured, and a further 41.1% moderately time pressured. While a greater proportion of women (37.3%) in the young cohort were severely time pressured when compared with 27.3% of men, the difference between gender categories is not significant statistically. When comparing data between age cohorts, female and male parents from the mid aged cohort are significantly less time crunched than parents from the young cohort ($\chi^2$ 11.9, df 2, $P < .01$), although more than 56% could still be regarded as moderately to severely time pressured.

If working parents are as time-pressured as these data suggest, then it is important to understand the context for time use in terms of what people do and how they feel about it.

**How do working parents spend their time?**

Data from the ESM phase of the study provide a snapshot of the daily routines of respondents over 7 consecutive days where, on average, 34 time use reports were provided by each respondent over the course of the week. When cued, respondents opened up a survey form on a PDA which asked them to indicate how they were feeling when they were signalled, to indicate where they were and who they were with, as well as indicate what they were doing at the time. Respondents had the opportunity to list up to three activities that were being undertaken at the time of the signal. Activities were then coded manually by the research team using categories adopted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in National Time Use Surveys conducted in 1992 and 1997 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1994; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1998).

Individual activities were allocated to one of nine activity categories and one of four activity types using the framework used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (see Table 2).
### Table 2: Framework used to define categories of time use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad types of time use</th>
<th>Main activity categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Necessary time</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities which are</td>
<td>1. Personal care activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performed for personal</td>
<td>Sleeping, personal hygiene, health care, eating/drinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>survival (e.g. sleeping,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eating and personal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hygiene)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contracted time</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities such as paid</td>
<td>2. Employment activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work and regular</td>
<td>Main job, other jobs, unpaid work in family business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education, where there</td>
<td>or farm, work breaks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are explicit contracts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>which control the periods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of time in which</td>
<td>3. Education activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities are performed</td>
<td>Attendance at educational courses,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>homework/study/research, breaks at place of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Committed time</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities to which a</td>
<td>4. Domestic activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person has committed</td>
<td>Food &amp; drink preparation and cleaning up, laundry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>him/herself because of</td>
<td>and clothes care, other housework, grounds/animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>previous social or</td>
<td>care, home maintenance, household management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community interactions,</td>
<td>5. Child care activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>such as setting up a</td>
<td>Care of children, playing/reading/talking with child,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>household or performing</td>
<td>visiting child care establishment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voluntary work (E.g.</td>
<td>6. Purchasing activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>housework, child care,</td>
<td>Purchasing goods and services, window shopping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shopping or provision of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help to others).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Free time</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The amount of time left</td>
<td>8. Social &amp; community interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when the previous three</td>
<td>Visiting entertainment and cultural venues,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>types of time have been</td>
<td>attendance at sports events, religious activities and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taken out of a person’s</td>
<td>ceremonies, community participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>day.</td>
<td>9. Recreation and leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport and outdoor activities, exercise, holiday travel &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>driving for pleasure, games/hobbies and arts/crafts,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gambling, computer games, reading, AV media,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>attendance at recreational courses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What do working parents do?

In the majority of cases (81%) respondents reported doing one main activity, with 16% of respondents reporting two activities and 3% of respondents reporting three activities when signalled. Table 3 summarises the proportion of respondents who reported their involvement in different types of activity by age cohort and gender by main activity only.

Table 3: Proportion of sample who undertook different types of activity (%) by age cohort and gender (main activity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity type</th>
<th>YOUNG</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>MIDS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=1959</td>
<td>N=1135</td>
<td>N=3094</td>
<td>N=2005</td>
<td>N=1335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No activity</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal care</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work/care</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialising</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation &amp; leisure</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data show variations in time use patterns between age cohorts and genders. For example, in addition to personal care (17.1%) the greatest proportions of time spent by young parents were on ‘paid’ (22%) and ‘unpaid’ work including domestic (18.1%) and childcare (15.5%) activities, as well as 20% of time in ‘free’ time activities including socialising, recreation and leisure. In contrast, mid-aged parents spent more of their time in paid work (29.1%) and ‘free time’ activities (24.8%) and less time in child care (1.1%). The difference here is largely due to ‘mid-aged’ women spending considerably less time on ‘unpaid’ work activities including domestic, childcare, purchasing and voluntary work (26% from 46.2%) and more time in paid employment (28.4% from 14.7%) when compared to their counterparts in the young cohort.
This difference is consistent with broader trends where working mothers tend to return to the labour market as children get older and become more independent. The pattern for fathers is less distinct, with mid-aged men spending more time in domestic work and ‘free’ time activities (increases of 8.4% and 3.1% respectively) and proportionally less time in paid employment (a decrease of 4.6%) when compared with males in the young cohort.

**How do parents feel about time?**

Having explored temporal contexts for time use activities, a section of the time survey form asked respondents to indicate how they were feeling when they were beeped. 15 affective states were listed on the survey form and respondents were asked to indicate how they were feeling in relation to each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). Six items related to positive affective states including feeling ‘interested’, ‘in-control’, ‘enthusiastic’, ‘excited’, ‘happy’ and ‘calm’. Nine items related to negative affective states including feeling ‘worried’, ‘sad’, ‘irritated’, ‘frustrated’, ‘bored’, ‘angry’, ‘guilty’, ‘stressed’ and ‘tired’.

Table 6 provides a summary of mean scores on positive and negative affect items, by age cohort and gender.

**Table 6: Mean affective states during the study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>YOUNG</th>
<th></th>
<th>MIDS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>N=3267</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>N=3507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In control</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.31*</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excited</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>1.56*</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilty</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All responses on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much)

*** P < .001; ** P < .01; * P < .05

Mean scores for all positive affect items were higher for mid-aged parents (irrespective of gender) and lower for all negative affect items compared with parents in the young cohort. The between-cohort differences in average ratings on the items ‘interest’, ‘in control’, ‘enthusiastic’, ‘irritated’, ‘frustrated’, ‘bored’, ‘angry’, ‘stressed’ and ‘tired’ were statistically significant. Items relating to degrees of ‘happiness’, ‘control’ and ‘calmness’ were relatively high for women and men in both age cohorts. Conversely mean scores for items relating to feelings of ‘sadness’, ‘anger’ and ‘guilt’ were relatively low for all respondents. While parents in both age cohorts may be time pressured, their mood scores suggest that they are relatively positive about their time use patterns, and this is particularly the case for mid-aged parents. As we have reported elsewhere, this association could be due, in part, to differences in the occupational profile of young and mid-aged parents where a greater proportion of mid-aged parents (54%) work in managerial and professional positions compared to 29.5% of young parents, and the tendency for professionals to have more autonomy and control in their jobs as well as more disposable income than workers employed in other occupational categories [9]. Greater levels of control and income may also enable workers to better cope with time pressures (Brown, et al, 2005).

In terms of gender, although men scored higher on all positive affect items except one, these differences were not statistically significant. Surprisingly, mid-aged men also scored higher than mid-aged women on all negative affect items except the item relating to tiredness. However, only differences on the items ‘irritated’ and ‘frustrated’ were statistically significant. While men from the young cohort scored higher on five negative affect items (‘worried’, ‘sad’, ‘irritated’, ‘bored’ and ‘angry’) women scored
higher on the other four items. Differences in sadness and boredom were statistically significant.

While the analysis thus far has reported on mean affective states and their association with gender and life-course stage, to what extent is mood associated with different types of activity? The 6 items relating to positive affectivity were recoded to reflect a single score for positive affect (PA). The 9 items relating to negative affectivity were also recoded to reflect one score for negative affect (NA). Mean scores for PA and NA were then calculated for each of the nine types of activity and are shown in figures 1 and 2. The data indicate that the activities associated with the highest levels of positive affect were socialising and community interaction, voluntary work and care activities, education, and recreation and leisure. However, it should be noted that there was considerable variation in PA ratings for voluntary work and care activities and education as indicated by the confidence intervals (CI). This could be due to the different types of activity included in each activity category as well as the nature of demands within activity categories. For example, it is likely that a person who is doing voluntary work because they want to, will feel more positive about what they are doing than a person who feels compelled to help an elderly parent with dementia. It is also likely that a person who is under pressure to complete an assignment or to complete a training course because they feel they have to in order to progress in their career, may feel less positive than a person who is undertaking an educational programme for self development purposes and under no pressure. Such variations point to a potential limitation in time use research based on fixed categories of time use, and also highlights the complexities of mood states as being linked to motivation and perceived freedom of choice, among other things. That said, the high levels of PA (and relatively low levels of variation) associated with time spent in socialising and community interaction as well as recreation and leisure – sheds some light on the activities that are most closely linked to positive mood states.
Figure 1: Mean positive affect by type of activity

Figure 2, depicts mean scores for negative affect by type of activity. Consistent with figure 1, socialising and community interaction and recreation and leisure are associated with the lowest mean scores for negative affect when compared with other activity categories. In contrast, child care and employment are associated with the highest mean scores for negative affect although the average scores here are relatively low.
On balance then it would appear that activities associated with socialising and recreation and leisure are linked to higher levels of positive affect and lower levels of negative affect when compared to other types of time use. These findings support research conducted in the UK which links leisure activities with life satisfaction and argues for government intervention to boost life satisfaction by encouraging a more leisured work/life balance [16]. The data also support the need for policy interventions that seek to regulate hours and enhance conditions of work as well as promote access to affordable and quality childcare arrangements. Such assistance might help to reduce work/family tensions that are evident in how working parents feel about paid and family ‘work’.

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Work/life balance – Quo vadis?

In summary, while the average amount of free time may have increased in Australia, life for many Australians is characterised by high levels of time pressure and stress. This is particularly the case for young working couples with dependent children, where the bulk of time is either spent in ‘contracted’ activities (e.g. paid work) or in ‘committed’ activities such as childminding and domestic work. These pressures seem to recede for mid-aged parents who have fewer children to care for and increased amounts of leisure time at their disposal. It is also likely that older parents are employed in positions where they have more autonomy and control in their jobs, as well as higher levels of disposable income to better ‘manage’ different domains of life. The struggle for work/life balance can be conceptualised as the desire to balance work, family and leisure in ways that provide reasonable opportunities for individuals to participate in each of these life domains. In turn, wellbeing is increasingly conceptualised in terms of the satisfactory integration of work and family life (Lewis & Purcell, 2006).

A key issue of the new millennium is how to give individuals greater control of their time. This issue poses challenges to households, workplaces, and government, and is important given the reported associations between balanced lifestyles, leisure and wellbeing. Work/life balance is also important to unions and employers in terms of outcomes associated with employee welfare, job satisfaction and increased productivity. If a goal of public policy is to improve quality of life in Australia, then research is needed to understand variations in time use across different life domains, and how the time use mix changes over the life-course. Such research is necessary as a basis for determining what policy responses are needed to allow individuals greater freedom of choice in how time is used across different life domains, while at the same time ensuring that arrangements are in place to support particular lifestyle choices at different stages of family formation. By understanding better the experience and impacts of work-life tensions in time-crunched households, we aim to contribute to national and international debates about the social and economic costs associated with time pressure and stress and their impact on individual and organisational wellbeing, as well as help
formulate personal and public responses to social change. Such an understanding is also crucial to understanding what makes us happy – and the need to build more positive experiences into our lives as a way of maximising our wellbeing.

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Balancing work and caregiving for children, adults and elders.


P2P and Human Happiness

Michel Bauwens

Abstract:
The emergence of distributed networks, defined by capacity of agents to freely determine their actions and relations, and of the internet and the social web in particular, have created a new set of technological affordances creating a broad range of open knowledge and open design communities functioning according to a 'peer to peer' social logic. These communities have set in motion a new set of social processes for the creation of value, which we could summarise as peer production (the ability to produce in common), peer governance (the capacity to self-organise) and peer property (the capacity to make common production universally available). The social web has created the possibility to create complex social services, and 'productive systems', through the global coordination and scaling of small group processes of mass participation, moving them from the periphery of social life to its very centre.

The aim of this paper is to describe the characteristics of this new social process, and to see how they are specifically related to the issue of human happiness.

The Emergence of passionate production

The emergence of this new mode of production has already been quite substantially described and researched with recent summaries in a series of books and monographs. Using Ronald Coase's transaction cost theory, Yochai Benkler (in The Wealth of Networks) has examined the particular conditions under which commons-based peer production can emerge, and these conditions are strongly related to the emergence of a globally distributed network for the production and sharing of knowledge,

* Michel Bauwens is a Belgian integral philosopher and Peer-to-Peer theorist (p2pfoundation.net).
1 Yochai Benkler. Coase's Penguin, or Linux and the nature of the firm; www.benkler.org/CoasesPenguin.html
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i.e. the capability to reproduce non-rival information goods at marginal cost. The main thesis could be summarised as follows: When costs of participation are low enough, any motivation may be sufficient to lead to a contribution.

This new mode of producing social value is also a new mode of governing human collectives and in particular a mode of technological development, which has become very widespread as a method to develop software. Steve Weber proposes a detailed examination of the open source development and governance process in his book *The Success of Open Source*.³ There is a near consensus in the pragmatic research community that is represented by Venture Capital⁴ that open source is now expected to be a default strategy for their investments, and that there is only a limited future left for pure proprietary software strategies. Another detailed description, focusing more on general knowledge production, is an upcoming book by Queensland University researcher Axel Bruns, who describes it as a process of ‘produsage’, because production and usage are merging⁵ and are undertaken by communities of ‘produsers’. An earlier description, and a long argument and explanation of why open source functions better for complex projects such as software, is of course Eric Raymond’s widely known *The Cathedral and the

⁴ We anticipate it’s going to be very hard going forward to invest in closed source, because we don’t think it’s a good development mode.”. From: VC’s Expect Open Source to be Default Option, CBR, 4 July 2006, http://www.cbronline.com/article_news.asp?guid=288BD3F2-E55F-49CC-A284-43926C5F66A5.
⁵ Produsage can be roughly defined as modes of production which are led by users or at least crucially involve users as producers -in other words, the user acts as a hybrid user/producer, or producer, virtually throughout the production process. Produsage demonstrates the changed content production value chain model in collaborative online environments: in these environments, a strict producer/consumer dichotomy no longer applies -instead, users are almost always also able to be producers of content, and often necessarily so in the very act of using it.” www.snurb.info/produsage.
Alexander Galloway’s book *Protocol* is an in-depth examination of the issue of power distribution in distributed networks.

Commons-based peer production also creates a wide variety of hybrid modalities, whereby institutions and companies adapt practices that have a number of characteristics of peer production, but with the process being integrated in the value chain of the controlling companies. The landmark book here is Eric von Hippel’s *The Democratization of Innovation* which describes the emergence of social innovation outside of the corporation, by user-led communities or by ‘lead users’, and he shows how such social innovation is now at the heart of the industrial process. Don Tapscott’s *Wikinomics* is a description of how companies are adopting such practices of open participation in their competitive strategies, and has many examples of co-design, co-creation and crowd-sourcing as different ways to integrate wider participation in value chains. His conclusion is that such practices become competitive necessities and a new baseline for successful business operations. The expectation is that there is now in operation a law of asymmetric competition,

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7 Galloway’s key concept of protocally power is explained here at http://p2pfoundation.net/Protocollary_Power
8 First chapter available here at http://web.mit.edu/evhippel/www/books/DI/Chapter1.pdf
9 Explanation of user-centered innovation at http://p2pfoundation.net/User-centered_Innovation
10 Explanation of Lead Users at http://p2pfoundation.net/Lead_Users
11 Concept and examples at http://p2pfoundation.net/Co-Design
12 Concept and examples here at http://p2pfoundation.net/Co-Creation
13 Concept and examples at http://p2pfoundation.net/Crowdsourcing
14 Asymmetric Competition refers to any competition between entities that do not follow the same logic, for example between a for-profit company using paid staff and proprietary code, and a for-benefit institution drawing on a voluntary community. Frank Hecker uses the concept in an examination of the competition between Microsoft Explorer and the Mozilla Foundation’s Firefox browsers. See Frank Hecker, at http://www.hecker.org/mozilla/asymmetric-competition
which hypothesises that any for-profit company that does not integrate participation, is at a competitive disadvantage against those that do, and that any for-profit entity that is faced with competition from a for-benefit entity, will have a difficult time surviving. The paradigmatic example, of course, is the emergence of Linux as a strong contender for the operating system of computers, which is already an essential part of the internet’s infrastructure. Charles Leadbeater’s book *We Think*\textsuperscript{15} is probably the book which takes the largest societal point of view, through a description of participation in the full social field. His contention is that a new social process of mass amateurisation\textsuperscript{16} has created a sociological group of ‘Pro-Ams’\textsuperscript{17} or professional amateurs, a result of the increasing level of general education; this phenomena is changing expert-based practices as well as the relations between experts, Pro-Ams, and the general public.

Peer production is also categorised as a new common property\textsuperscript{18} format, because common production is generally made publicly available. This emerging format of common “peer property” is described in an edited book of research papers by Rishab Ayer Ghosh, entitled *Code*. Such common property format creates new legal and institutional formats, varieties of the old format of the commons, which is associated with a vibrant research community. Peter Barnes’ book entitled *Capitalism 3.0*\textsuperscript{19} has been instrumental in creating an awareness of new institutional formats for the governance of commons, such as trusts.

The emergence of peer production, governance and property is therefore associated with the rise of three new paradigms regarding social organisation. Indeed the social reproduction of

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\textsuperscript{15} Home page at http://www.wethinkthebook.net/home.aspx, draft version at http://www.wethinkthebook.net/cms/site/docs/charles%20full%20draft.pdf

\textsuperscript{16} Concept explained at http://p2pfoundation.net/Mass_Amateurization

\textsuperscript{17} Concept explained at http://p2pfoundation.net/Pro-Am_Revolution

\textsuperscript{18} Concept of common property, as distinct from private and public property, explained at http://p2pfoundation.net/Common_Property

\textsuperscript{19} Available via http://capitalism3.com/
passionate production requires open and free input, participatory processes and commons-oriented outputs, resulting in a process of social reproduction that Prof. Nick Dyer-Witheford calls the "circulation of the common". Social movements organised around these three paradigms are emerging in every field of human activity.

Peer production is becoming a social practice that is essentially active in the field of immaterial production of knowledge and immaterial services such as software, where the condition of non-rivalness of goods prevails. In our networked information economy inherently integrates this practice in the very core of value creation.

However, it would be erroneous to think that the emergence of peer production is restricted to the field of immaterial production. The reasons are not difficult to understand.

First of all, the development of the universal copying machine that is the computer, coupled with a universal distribution mechanism (of course conditioned by physical and cognitive access) means that it becomes increasingly counterproductive to maintain legal and technological restrictions on the free flow of knowledge. Not only is there increasing social pressure against more restrictive intellectual property legislations, and an increasing research consensus and political effort to show how they can restrict innovation, but new legal forms allow for the creation of legitimate forms of open content, such as the General Public License and the Creative Commons formats. Every physical production necessitates an immaterial design fase, and there is therefore a natural emergence of open design communities in various fields, for example around open sustainability and appropriate technology movements.

21 The GNU General Public License is explained by the Free Software Foundation at http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/gpl.html
22 The CC License formats are explained at http://creativecommons.org/
23 This whole area is monitored here at http://p2pfoundation.net/Category:Design; the article on Product
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The creation of smart objects means that a new configuration between physical, legal, and digital aspects of entities facilitates the creation of new types of commons (think of Couchsurfing.com for hospitality exchange, Bookcrossings.com for the sharing of books, the massive experiment in Paris, France for a publicly supported commons of bicycles, etc.). As the whereabouts of objects cannot be monitored, it becomes easier to use open licenses for physical objects, and to monitor potential abuse through technology.

Finally, there is a combined series of trends in financial and productive capital favouring the emergence of new modes of producing physical objects. To mention them briefly: 1) integrated desktop manufacturing environments for design; 24 2) the trend towards rapid manufacturing and rapid tooling; 25 3) personal fabricators and 3D printing; 4) the development of multi-purpose machinery; 26 5) social lending 27 and other distributed funding formats.

While the sphere of production and distribution of physical goods must obey the logic of rival goods, there is nevertheless an important correlation between the further miniaturisation and ‘distribution’ of the means of physical production (with a trend towards lowering capital requirements), and the already achieved means of information production and distribution. Hypothetically, when rising costs for energy and raw materials are combined with lowering costs for capital, an economic model combining open design with more localised production can be envisaged. Erik von Hippel’s Democratization of Innovation mentions several economic sectors, where such ‘built-only capitalism’ is already practiced, such as in the extreme sport communities.

From this relation emerge various hybrid forms of linkage between the non-monetary logic of peer production, and the

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24 Explanation at http://p2pfoundation.net/Desktop_Manufacturing;
25 Explanation at http://p2pfoundation.net/Rapid_Manufacturing
26 Explanation at http://p2pfoundation.net/Multiple-Purpose_Production_Technology
27 Overview at http://p2pfoundation.net/Social_Lending
monetary logic of the world of scarcity. Currently, three main models may be distinguished:

**Sharism** Individuals share their creative expression through proprietary platforms. While the sharing is non-monetary, the proprietary platform is funded by selling the attention of participants to the advertizing world. This is basically the model behind the emergence of Web 2.0 social web platforms.

**Commonism** A commons is created by self-organised communities. This is associated with for-benefit institutions that manage the necessary physical infrastructure (Apache Foundation, Mozilla Foundation, Wikimedia Foundation). Finally, around the companies, an ecology of businesses are created that produce scarce added value for the market. These companies in return practice various forms of benefit sharing to sustain the commons from which they benefit.

Unlike the previous models, based on the production of use value and only derivative exchange value, in this model, there is distributed production of commodities and thus for exchange value. The platforms can be proprietary intermediaries (istock photo model), or can be integrated into corporate value chains (Lego Factory).

**The characteristics of peer production and their relation to human happiness**

Peer production quite radically overturns many of the key characteristics of industrial production. Here is a review of these characteristics, linked to how these new practices may be related to a ‘surplus’ in happiness.

Passionate production is based on voluntary engagement and therefore structurally eliminates coercion. Individuals can choose the projects for which they feel most fit, and that corresponds to their desires, life projects and search for meaning. Fully coercive methods of work, such as slavery and serfdom, result in lower productivity. They also necessitate a costly apparatus of coercion and control. Methods of relative coercion, such as dependence-based wage work, generate a productivity based on mutual self-interest, but also have in-built limits. Unrewarded activities will generally not be performed, as innovation is only a function of
competition. Motivation studies show that the most productive form of motivation is the intrinsic positive format, surpassing intrinsic negative and intrinsic positive in its results. Peer production structurally weeds out such motivations retaining only intrinsic positive ‘passionate’ motivation.

Peer production is not organised as a predetermined division of labour, but on a modularization of granular tasks that can be self-selected. Individuals will naturally select those tasks for which they feel an interest, a fitness and for which they think they have the requisite skills. Less appealing tasks are not concentrated but are distributed as well, and can be taken up by volunteers. Some peer projects require that the less appealing elements of a task are supplied together with the rest of the contribution, thereby insuring a fair distribution of the unappealing requirements. The self-selection of tasks also permits natural workstyles that better integrate with personal biological cycles and the social cycles necessitated by family and community life.

The self-selection task is associated with a particular vision of the human and a particular form of evaluation judgment, based on the concept of equipotentiality. Anti-credentialism signifies that there is no longer a strong separation between the informal and formal curriculum that an individual represents. What count is demonstrated ability, not prior formal proof. It is therefore based on the goal of inclusion rather than a mechanism of exclusion. Furthermore, individuals are no longer judged on any kind of ‘unified essence’ but are recognised as complex beings, and the granular self-selected tasks will those that the individual judges to correspond to a particular skillset. In other words, in equipotential systems of cooperation, individuals are always naturally judged for what they do best, since they have self-selected the tasks for which they have the highest competence, motivation, and inclination.

Here is a quote28 on the topic by transpersonal psychologist Jorge Ferrer, note in particular the statement in bold.

28 Jorge Ferrer, essay on the Embodied Participation in the Mystery,
An integrative and embodied spirituality would effectively undermine the current model of human relations based on comparison, which easily leads to competition, rivalry, envy, jealousy, conflict, and hatred. When individuals develop in harmony with their most genuine vital potentials, human relationships characterised by mutual exchange and enrichment would naturally emerge because people would not need to project their own needs and lacks onto others. More specifically, the turning off of the comparing mind would dismantle the prevalent hierarchical mode of social interaction—paradoxically so extended in spiritual circles—in which people automatically look upon others as being either superior or inferior, as a whole or in some privileged respect. This model—which ultimately leads to inauthentic and unfulfilling relationships, not to mention hubris and spiritual narcissism—would naturally pave the way for an I-Thou mode of encounter in which people would experience others as equals in the sense of their being both superior and inferior to themselves in varying skills and areas of endeavor (intellectually, emotionally, artistically, mechanically, interpersonally, and so forth), but with none of those skills being absolutely higher or better than others. It is important to experience human equality from this perspective to avoid trivializing our encounter with others as being merely equal. It also would bring a renewed sense of significance and excitement to our interactions because we would be genuinely open to the fact that not only can everybody learn something important from us, but we can learn from them as well. In sum, an integral development of the person would lead to a “horizontalization of love.” We would see others not as rivals or competitors but as unique embodiments of the Mystery, in both its immanent and transcendent dimension, who could offer us something that no one else could offer and to whom we could give something that no one else could give.

The process of production itself is self-organised. Production is not geared towards predetermined products, under a command and control structure, but the process of production is ‘probabilistic’. Permission asking and a priori filtering or selection is replaced by a freedom to try various approaches, which are only
subsequently validated by the community. This means that both hierarchical dependence, but also time-consuming democratic negotiations, are eliminated. The individual can fully express himself and his capabilities. It is clear that such a process is very efficient to minimalise frustrations due to the unequal distribution of power. There is no dependency to obtain resources, no mechanism needed to allocate scarce resources.

Distributed production is matched with distributed control. Instead of a priori filtering by gatekeepers, various collective choice systems will evaluate and judge contributions. Generally speaking this eliminates the power and privilege located with certain individuals, and requires participation of all ‘produsers’. In highly technical environments such as in free software projects, it is generally the most competent and engaged individuals that become maintainers of subprojects and responsible for quality control. However, there is no financial dependence associated with these individuals, and the inherent possibility of exit and forking as alternatives to the volunteers, mean that the maintainers are themselves strongly bound to community norms and community approval. The main aim of peer governance modes is to eliminate the possibility of collective individuals separating themselves from the community. The model chosen is usually that of a combination of ad hoc meritocracies which are in constant evolution and dependent on the various microprojects. The analogy of a jazz band, with different soloists taken over the lead according to the different phases of musical expression, is often used to denote the logic of peer governance.

While traditional corporate production is based on panoptism and the ‘need to know’, i.e. on widespread information retention practices, which sustain the unequal access to allocation and decision-making, peer production projects are constituted around full transparency and the countervailing principle of holoptism. This dictates that all info is fully available, through automatic capture of participation and contribution, to all users and participants. This clearly eliminates many factors of frustration and unhappiness from the productive process.

‘Produser’ communities do not make finished products, but build knowledge artefacts that are never finished but also in continuous progress. This means an absence of deadlines and
abolishes micro-management by hierarchies. Rather, the vision leadership and participant community will set strategic goals, will discover new needs as the process unfolds, and continuously work on the improvement of the artefact. This way of work has an enormous stress-reduction potential.

Peer communities do not produce commodities for sale, but knowledge artefacts that are needed for their social life. There is the absence of any alienation that results from making unnecessary commodities that need to be sold. Peer production is not based on altruism nor on coercive forms of collectivism, but on value-conscious design of social systems that enhance the convergence of individual and collective interests. Because of the non-rivalness of information goods, sharing increases reputation, knowledge and chosen relationships, resulting in multiple benefits for individuals, those involved in the exchange, and the wider community. A rather extraordinary congruence of individuality and relationality is obtained.

The results of the above summary indicate that passionate production also produces individuals able to increase their autonomy, their possibilities of cooperation and support, the ability to find and exercise their competences and fitness with tasks, the possibilities to create meaning through joint projects, and the ability to work according to natural rhythms and flow. While these potentials may not always be fully realised, and are tempered by the necessities for financial survival, they are almost always structurally superior to the possibilities inherent in coercive work environments. While specific research on the relation between peer production is as yet scare, Erik von Hipple specifically links user-innovation activities to increased happiness (von Hippel, 2005, p. 242-244). An overview of the relation between knowledge-based economic activities and increased happiness, mentions several studies showing the relationship between open source participation and increased joy and flow.29

29Hans-Jürgen Engelbrecht writes that such studies “have included the role of having fun or joy derived from voluntary contributions to code of software products as at least one of the motivating factors for such activities (Hertel et al, 2003; Lakhani and Wolf, 2005; Lerner and Tirole, 2006). Whatever the specific activity, fun or joy can lead to ‘flow’"
Issues, problems and opportunities

The possibility of peer production first of all poses the problem of access. The participatory potential is limited by the joint factor of lack of physical access, not yet assured for the majority of the world population, and cognitive access. Universal broadband and social web literacy are key factors enabling participation.

It seems also clear that while peer production does a number of things better than previous alternatives, it will also create its own new set of problems. For example, the problem of quality control in Wikipedia has been well covered by the media. The hybrid co-existence of sharing communities and proprietary platforms is also rich in all kinds of tensions.

The potential of peer to peer technology to create positive social affordances can also be used in radically different ways. The centralised Domain Name System of the internet can be used both for insuring a global infrastructure of participation, or to enable censorship by authoritarian states. Lowering the capital requirements for social production, also allows for the production of negative social goods, such as distributed violent insurgencies and criminal conspiracies. For objective peer to peer infrastructures to serve as conditions for the production of positive social goods and surplus happiness, cultural-subjective adaptations are needed, in particular converting scarcity-forms of human consciousness (I lose by sharing) to abundance-predicated formats (we all win by sharing). The potential is there, but it needs to be activated, and public policies will be a crucial role in such endeavours (just as the availability of the book required universal education policies to create literacy).

Peer production is a challenge for the overall organisation of our societies. At present, a relatively minor part of this massive value creation is being transformed into monetisable exchange value, which is not only a problem for for-profit entities, but for peer producers themselves. Proprietary web platform owners can make money selling the attention of the communities to

advertisers. Commons-oriented companies (say IBM with Linux), create scarcities around the commons. And crowd sourcers lower their cost of production while increasing the pool for their own innovation processes. But one can immediately see that the ratio from use value to its capture through monetisable exchange value capture is minor. To simplify, one could say that while use value is growing exponentially, monetisation is only increasing linearly.

Referring to the earlier concept on asymmetric competition, this presents a difficulty for companies. They have to adopt open/free, participatory, and commons-oriented strategies to compete, but at the same time, without any ‘closed’, ‘scarce’ aspects, there can be no value capture. Both revenue-sharing and benefit sharing practices are subject to possible exploitation and lack of equity.

Furthermore, innovation is becoming more and more social, i.e. becoming an emerging property of the entire social field of networks, rather than an internal characteristic of for-profit institutions. Entrepreneurship is becoming divorced from capitalism, and edge competencies replace core competencies as key competitive qualities. Society and the market players are increasingly benefiting from the positive externalities of social cooperation, but we lack an efficient return mechanism. Peer production projects might be collectively sustainable (as long as they can replace individuals who leave with at least as many entrants), but the individuals involved in passionate and creative production still need to sustain themselves.

Hence a crisis of precarity, of which creative professionals are not just the victim, but it is often times a matter of choice, with paid employment becoming a means for the more meaningful passionate value creation.

What can be done?
Despite the issues above, the achievements and further potential of peer production are already such, that they would justify supportive policies. In addition, if the law of asymmetric completion were to be confirmed, and there are in fact already many instances of open strategies trumping closed ones, which are being monitored in the wiki of the P2P Foundation, then it
follows that institution, companies, and nations have reason to adapt and sustain such practices.

For-profit entities can start supporting, either the commons or communities from which they are benefiting, or social innovation more generally, since it is the pool from which value is created. Companies need to more actively support social innovation by expanding their practices of ‘benefit-sharing’.

Public authorities can also evolve towards a Partner State model, whereby they can enable and empower direct social production and social innovation. The Transitional Labour Market policies which are evolving in Europe to take into account the mobility of contemporary workers, need to be enriched with an understanding that the periods of non-work, are potentially as creative, necessary, and socially useful as episodes of paid employment. Ultimately, we need forms of income, which are divorced from the need for production for the market.

The peer producers themselves can also directly organise their interface with the market, and they can do this by following principles of equity and transparency, which are directly in tune with the underlying values of peer production. The OS Alliance of open source software developers in Austria, is a pioneering model for such efforts.

In conclusion, we have seen how peer production as a mode of production, and the peer to peer dynamic as a mode of being, have the potential, under certain conditions, to surpass other modes of production, especially concerning productivity, political participation, and distributive potential. Subjectively, it means more happiness as it allows intrinsic positive motivation to bloom. Inter-subjectively, it represents more relational wealth, through its higher modes of synergistic cooperation and collective intelligence.

Therefore, we have to learn first to recognise and accept that peer production is indeed emerging as a new logic for our economy and civilisation; and second, if we indeed accept the argument that it is a ‘better’ mode, then we have to find out, how we can extend and protect it. What is at stake is nothing less than human happiness.
P2P and Human Happiness

Bibliography


Microfinance in the Improvement of Living Standard and GNH

*Saugata Bandyopadhyay*

**Abstract**

This paper mainly aims to extend the philosophy of capability development at the micro level for achieving individual happiness as a part of a community through social transformation and to achieve happiness at individual and community level. One of the main indicators for Gross National Happiness is living standard, and this paper will examine briefly the role of microfinance in India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan in transforming the lives and social behaviour of the poor people of this part of the world. This paper will try to establish the strong linkage between microfinance and capability building through the process of social transformation by improvement of living standard for arriving at Gross National Happiness.

**Introduction**

The people have to be seen in this perspective (development as freedom), as being actively involved – given the opportunity -in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning developments.

-- Nobel laureate Professor Amartya Sen (Sen, 1999, p.53]

The Gross National Happiness (GNH) concept has evolved over time from highlighting the inadequacies of the traditional economic theories of measuring development and determining the direction of the development policy, introducing the ‘four pillar’ objective approach (Balanced Equitable Development, Environment Conservation, Preservation and Promotion of Culture and Heritage, and Good Governance) in line with Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to the effort of operationalising the same with the introduction of measurement indicators. The standard of living, health of the population, education, ecosystem vitality and diversity, cultural vitality and diversity, time use and balance, good governance, community vitality, and emotional...
wellbeing are the nine provisional Gross National Happiness (GNH) indicators identified by the Centre for Bhutan Studies, Bhutan.

GNH is always projected as a simple approach and at the same time so highly encompassing in its objective of happiness to all, that its operationalisation is quite complex. Happiness is a very simple term, often misunderstood by many by dissecting the same completely from the money part. It has to be understood that for a vast majority (poor as we call), the basic requirement of money is for their existence and not for their materialistic fulfilment. Thus, the friction between individual happiness and that of community happiness to national happiness will always be a complex tapestry.

**Hard facts of our world that cannot be ignored**

- Almost 30,000 children under the age of five die every day from malnutrition and preventable disease. (refer: State of the World’s Children, 2005, UNICEF)
- Approximately 790 million people in the developing world are chronically undernourished. (refer: World Resources Institute Pilot Analysis of Global Ecosystems, February 2001)

The discussion on happiness has to include the most neglected part of our world, the vast poor rural segment. In the event that national happiness does not address their basic happiness, then it will fail to live up to its promise as envisioned in the wisdom of the King of the Royal Kingdom of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck.

According to me, the most important driver for happiness is the upliftment of the living standard of the rural population, especially the poor. Why so much focus is placed on the happiness of rural population? South Asia is the place where almost one third of the world population lives. I will mainly focus on five of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan, since
the majority of the population lives in rural areas and agriculture, livestock rearing or traditional crafts are the main livelihood. This rural segment of the population needs to be made capable in the entitlements so as to help them to improve their living standard themselves. The theoretical background is the Capability Approach theory, the vision background is GNH and the operational driver is microfinance.

**Capability building for social transformation of poor class**

Professor Amartya Sen (1993) in his Capability Approach (CA) theory stated that the individual opportunities (capacities) are the deciding factors for conducting a better life as per one’s own choices and terms. These opportunities are reflected in the ‘Capability Set’ that is formed through a process in which resources and income are converted by personal, social and environmental factors (functions of utilisation) into potential human functioning (social, economic and political freedoms), known as ‘entitlements’. Thus, the core feature of CA is its focus on what people are effectively able to do and on their capabilities. Sen argues that a person’s freedom to live the way one would like has intrinsic value and therefore it is constitutive of a person’s wellbeing. According to him, public policy should address questions such as: a) what are the social and economic opportunities available to citizens in leading a life of their choice?, and b) what are the personal and social conditions that facilitate or hinder the individual’s ability to transform resources into different functioning? These questions underline the importance of individuals’ capability of selection and discrimination along with achieved functioning.

The criterion of ‘capabilities’ as a public policy mover addresses two interrelated aspects: a) enhancements of capacities or entitlements of people as human beings ranging from fundamental ones (nutrition, health, education, etc.) to complex ones (social, cultural, environmental and political), and b) the opportunities available to the people for exercising their capacities. According to Sen, income and wealth cannot be a straightforward indication of quality of life; they are just means for attainment of functioning. Further, peoples’ capacities could indeed be enhanced or curtailed based on the opportunities or
obstacles they face in their family or society. Sen pointed out that even though deprived people (mainly battered housewives, bonded labourers, street children, exploited migrant workers, oppressed minorities) may objectively lack opportunities – such as adequate nourishment, decent clothing, minimal education, basic health care services – their hope and desire has been blighted over generations in a manner that they no longer are able to recognise or articulate these as important components of life.

**Population: a magnitude of challenge to happiness**

Whenever I think of gross happiness in the SAARC countries, I think of the huge population, especially the rural population, with their varied ethnic and social lifestyles, diverse cultural heritage, fluctuating economy, fragile ecosystem and environment, numerous health and hygiene problems and endless other issues. It is these populations which are less understood and as such mostly misunderstood by our so-called policy makers and global development organisations. Population is the challenge for the concept of happiness – if we want to sugar coat this challenge with happiness then we will be trapped in the capital-minded measurement of the Human Development Index (HDI). The top countries in terms of HDI are Norway with a population of only 4.6 million and Australia with only 20.4 million people to manage. If we compare it with India the number is a staggering 1130 million; even Pakistan and Bangladesh are far more in population than Mexico given the population density per kilometre. Thus, the challenge remains in the enormity of the management of this huge mass of people and their happiness.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>HDI*</th>
<th>Ranking#</th>
<th>Population (Million)@</th>
<th>Growth (%) @</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top Countries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>0.965</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>0.957</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>0.948</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>301.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mid Countries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>0.820</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>108.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAARC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>0.611</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>1130.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>0.539</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>164.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is a tendency to make a simplistic support in favour of HDI that the so-called capitalist countries, viz. USA, United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, are not heading the list as the money is not the driver for happiness, but if one compares the list then you would appreciate that these countries are within top ten or top twenty countries in the list. I would say HDI also reflects the traditional GNP measurement and has been extended only as a measure for capital productivity in the human development sphere. The population productivity in the SAARC countries also shows the social happiness in reproduction but the challenge is inbuilt in terms of national happiness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Ranking#</th>
<th>Life expectancy at birth (years)</th>
<th>Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 births)</th>
<th>Under 5 mortality rate (per 1,000 births)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top Countries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mid Countries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAARC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, International Data Base.

The problems of a large population are reflected in living standard, hygienic and health conditions, social taboos – all these get captured in the life expectancy in years. The life expectancy in the SAARC countries are in the range of 55 years to 69 years as compared to that of developed countries ranging from 76 to 81.
years. However, the major eye opener will be the infant mortality rate which is as high as 96 per 1000 births. Further the ‘under 5 years’ mortality rate is as high as 152 per thousand if compared with that of developed nations, in which case both these parameters reflect less than 10 per 1000 births. This is really the differentiator and which is clearly linked to unhygienic living conditions, non-availability of health support, social stigma and many other social, cultural and economic factors. These mortality numbers also create a social pressure for higher reproduction as the parents are not sure of the number of siblings to survive. Another major factor is that given the low existence of capital in the hands of the family unit, the survival is at many times linked to the number of working hands in the family. Thus, the creation of capability among this rural population is an important driver for happiness.

**Poverty among rural populations – a major barrier**

Happiness has different meanings to different economic strata of population and the needs and its satisfaction defined by Abraham Harold Maslow (Maslow, 1943).

The poverty among rural population is so pervasive and prevalent that their happiness is mainly meeting the first two layers of needs – physiological and safety.

**Figure 1: Maslow’s hierarchy of need**

![Maslow's hierarchy of need](image-url)
The poverty is so overwhelming in the SAARC countries that around one-third to half of the population is suffering from acute poverty. India, Bangladesh and Nepal are reeling with more than one-third of its population under US $ 1 per day. Whatever comfort left in the numbers will further get diluted once we understand that around three-fourths to two-thirds of the population is suffering from actual poverty in SAARC countries living with an income of below US $ 2 per day.

Thus the figures of traditional estimates of poverty in this part of the world will certainly open up the challenge before Gross National Happiness. The social, cultural and, above all, religious fabric of this part of the world helps to a great extent to form a belonging to groups and enhances the social security net.

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poverty Estimates</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
<th>Bangladesh</th>
<th>Nepal</th>
<th>Bhutan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor as % of total rural population, 1999-2000</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNI per capita (US$), 2003</td>
<td>540.0</td>
<td>520.0</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>240.0</td>
<td>760.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population living below US$1 a day (%), 1999-2000</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population living below US$2 a day (%), 1999-2000</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population living below the national poverty line (%), 19992000</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Development Indicators, World Bank

### The Understanding of poverty

According to Sen, poverty is the result of capability deprivation (Sen, 1999, p.87). The approach concentrates on deprivation of basic capabilities that are intrinsically important rather than lowness of income. The standard criterion for the identification of poverty is to refer to people living on less than $1 per day or in the bottom half of those living below their nation's poverty line. We use the term 'poor' to refer to those living in poverty above $1 per day or in the upper half of those living below their nation’s poverty line. However, according to me, this is a mere definition jugglery.
and not suitable from the overall direction of Gross National Happiness. It is established that even if the limit is pushed by another US $ 1 the number represents a staggering percentage. This situation demands an alternate philosophy of development measurement.

**Poverty driver**

Poverty is a macro problem, and the causes are wide as well as deep. Political instability, natural disasters, corruption, socio-economic disparities and prejudice, lack of access to education and lack of infrastructure are just a few of the key reasons for both poverty and its endurance.

**Effects of poverty**

While the causes of poverty might be macro, the effects are felt at the micro level, creating hardship for communities, families, men, women and children. Its worst attribute is that poverty breeds poverty; it is virtually impossible to break free from the grasp of its vicious cycle. If one cannot afford proper nutrition or health care for one’s family, children grow up at a greater risk of acquiring a life-threatening or disabling disease. If one cannot afford to educate one’s children, they will have few avenues for a life different than that of their parents. If one cannot afford to buy one’s own land or home or livestock, there are few opportunities to build sustainable assets.

Interestingly, most of the world’s poor are self-employed. Without the security of formal jobs, each day they work from dawn to dusk, whether by raising livestock, selling produce in markets or weaving baskets. All or most of this money goes toward basic survival; however, there is little or no money left over to improve their quality of life or to expand their businesses. Thus, living in poverty always means that the harsh reality of today will repeat itself tomorrow.

Another root cause of rural poverty has been the enormous population growth and the pressure this has placed on the environment; this has unleashed problems such as erosion and flooding that in turn aggravate the situation of the rural poor.
**Major bottlenecks**

In many cases the cycle continues because many of the world's poor have little access to the financial support community that helps those in the developed world to bridge the gap during tough times. Without life or health insurance, diseases and illness go untreated and the death of an income earner brings dramatic hardship to a family. Without access to capital, shop-owners cannot buy products in bulk and farmers cannot buy basic tools or even seeds after a natural disaster or a poor yield in the season before. Without access to banking, money is hidden in walls or floorboards where it can be stolen or lost in a flood or fire.

In many cases local money lenders are the only available source of capital. They provide loans to support subsistence livelihood during rough times but they do so at exorbitant interest rates. Under this system, virtually the entire financial security of a borrower is passed directly to the money lender. Individuals fail to reap the rewards of their own hard work and become indebted for generations.

**Understanding the poverty situation in major SAARC countries for capability building**

In this regard, understanding the poverty situation and rural dynamics are important for capability building. The poverty dynamics in the SAARC countries are no different from each other since the core economy of these countries are agrarian and except Bhutan, the other countries are highly populated with large rural segments of the population. As per World Development Indicators 2005, World Bank ¹ and Human Development Report 2005, UNDP², Bangladesh is the poorest country in the region with around about 49% of the rural households under the net of poverty; Nepal is a close second with 40% of Nepalese living below the poverty line of US$12 per person/per month, followed by Bhutan with more than 30% of the people (96% of Bhutan’s poor people live in rural areas); India has about 29% of the population in abject poverty; Pakistan, a country slightly better off in the region, has about 10% of the population as chronically poor, but a

² [www.sd.undp.org/HDR/HDR05e.pdf](http://www.sd.undp.org/HDR/HDR05e.pdf)
much larger part of the population (about 33%) is considered vulnerable. The main poverty drivers for the region are:

- A large number of the landless population suffers from persistent food insecurity; in Bangladesh, the landless population is around 50% of the rural mass, while in Pakistan 80% of the farming community is comprised of landless labourers.

- Small and fragmented landholdings and/or few livestock with subsistence farming for livelihoods without scale productivity. In Bangladesh 29% of the rural poor belong to this group; the average landholding in Nepal is only 0.8 hectares, while in Pakistan 25 per cent of all farms are less than 1 hectare in size.

- Among extremely poor people, women in general are the most disadvantaged in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, though their status varies significantly according to their social and ethnic backgrounds.

- Fishing communities are also among the poorest and most disadvantaged groups in Bangladesh and India, while in Bhutan many subsistence farmers are still living outside the cash economy.

- Most households have little or no access to primary health care, education, clean drinking water and sanitation services.

- The rugged terrain and harsh climate do not generate good crop yields in Nepal, Bhutan and most of Pakistan. Villages are isolated, with poor communications and infrastructure and inadequate access to natural resources (reaching the nearest motor road takes anything from a few hours to a few days!).

- Poor people of the region suffer from various forms of addictions viz., country made liquor, tobacco chewing, ganja,

\[3 \text{ www.ansab.org/research_reports/report05020500.pdf} \]
\[\text{www.ruralpovertyportal.org/english/regions/asia/ind/index.htm} \]
\[\text{www.ruralpovertyportal.org/english/regions/asia/npl/index.htm} \]
\[\text{www.ruralpovertyportal.org/english/regions/asia/pak/index.htm} \]
\[\text{www.ruralpovertyportal.org/english/regions/asia/bdg/index.htm} \] [19e]
\[\text{www.ruralpovertyportal.org/english/regions/asia/npl/index.htm} \]
opium, biri, doma and ara\(^4\) which in a way are part of their happiness but in many ways are one of the causes of their poor health and deprivation.

- Frequent natural disasters like floods, and earthquake or external shocks like famine and drought, due to overdependence on nature (erratic and extreme climate), and poor and outdated irrigation facilities often force poor people to resort to moneylenders in order to rebuild their life. This pushes them deeper into poverty. This is a common phenomenon in this region.

These conditions have forced a good number of migrations out of SAARC countries in an effort to self-induce capability building. The estimates are mind boggling and create a different kind of management pressure on the mind and shoulders of the policy makers.

I have stated earlier that the root cause of poverty problems in SAARC countries lies in capability building at individual and community levels. As Professor Sen puts it, poverty is man made and an example of divide and rule:

For example, a group of peasants may suffer entitlement losses when food output in their territory declines, perhaps due to local drought, even when there is no general dearth of food in the country. The victims would not have means to buy food from elsewhere since they would not have anything much to sell to earn an income, given their own production loss. Others with more secure earnings may be able to get by well enough by purchasing food from elsewhere (Sen, 1990).

To build a capability structure we require community help and the basic formation of capital in the hands of the poor class so that this class can gradually move through the hierarchy chain to happiness. It may be concluded that microfinance as a concept is an effective weapon in the hands of millions of poor to uplift their living standards and achieve family level happiness.

\(^4\) Biri is a form of cigar made of tobacco leaf and raw tobacco very popular in the rural areas of SAARC; doma is a special kind of fermented beetle nut which increases body temperature in Bhutan; ara is a home made Bhutanese liquor specialty in Bhutan.
Microfinance and microcredit - a tool for capability building

The rural finance policy pursued in most developing countries beginning from the 1950s was based on providing subsidised credit through state controlled or directed institutions to rural segments of the population. Expansion of credit coverage through state interventions was based on various theoretical assumptions. Seibel and Parhusip (1990) mention that this approach was based on the premises that rural micro-entrepreneurs are unable to organise themselves, that they need subsidised credit for increasing their income, and that they are too poor to save. Yaron, Benjamin and Piprek (1997) have traced this tendency toward direct intervention in rural finance to Keynesian influence. Under this approach, in addition to the assumptions listed above, the key problem areas in rural financial markets include a lack of credit in rural areas, absence of modern technology in agriculture, low savings capacity in rural areas and the prevalence of avaricious moneylenders.

These distortions and imperfections in rural credit markets were sought to be addressed through government interventions from 1950s to the 1980s. This ‘supply led’ approach in rural finance caused various qualitative issues such as concerns about the financial viability of institutions on account of a high rate of loan delinquency, cornering of subsidy by well off people in what has been described as ‘rent seeking’ behaviour, the continued presence of moneylenders, and an inability to reach the core poor. On account of the above developments, the resultant shift took place in rural finance discourse and operational paradigm. The emergence of microcredit in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the backdrop of growing world attention on the deficiencies of earlier approaches in rural finance explains much of its dominant theoretical underpinnings. The initial microcredit innovations in disparate settings of Bangladesh, Bolivia and Indonesia demonstrated the success of micro lending to the poor without collateral requirements (Rhyne, 2001). Rhyne also observes that these interventions demonstrated techniques for lending to the poor with better outreach and cost recovery. Despite the contextual differences, the unifying thread of these early innovations lay in their certain common principles like reliance on character or peer pressure rather than collateral as loan security,
leveraging social capital, positive incentives for repayment and interest rates that approached or covered cost. These innovations acted as catalysts for replication across the globe and their underlying principles continue to form the substratum of microfinance interventions to date.

The universal appeal of microfinance stemmed from its ability to reach the poor without collateral and its generation of near full recovery rates. Realising the importance of microfinance, the World Bank has also taken major steps in developing the sector. Significant landmarks are seen in the formation of the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) in 1995 as a consortium of 33 public and private development agencies and establishment of the Microfinance Management Institute (MAFMI) in 2003. CGAP acts as a “resource center for the entire microfinance industry, where it incubates and supports new ideas, innovative products, cutting-edge technology, novel mechanisms for delivering financial services, and concrete solutions to the challenges of expanding microfinance” (CGAP, 2003). Since then, microfinance has shown the signs of becoming one of the most sustainable and effective tools in the fight against global poverty.

The structure fosters community feeling and support for social capital generation

The most common microfinance product is a microcredit loan which is usually less than US $100. These tiny loans are enough for hardworking micro-entrepreneurs to start or expand small businesses such as weaving baskets, raising livestock or buying wholesale products to sell in the market. Income from these businesses provides better food, housing, health care and education for the entire family. Most importantly, the additional income provides hope for a better future. Microfinance institutions (MFIs) exist in many forms – credit unions, self-help groups (SHGs) and, most often, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Asian Development Bank, 2004). This has been shown in the chart where 73% of the MFIs are having less than 2500 clients.
Many MFIs use social collateral in the form of peer groups to ensure loan repayment. Borrowers take loans in groups of five to eight individuals. If a borrower defaults on her loan, the entire group typically is penalised and sometimes barred altogether from taking further loans. This peer pressure encourages borrowers to be very selective about their peer group members and to repay loans in full and on time, resulting in the higher than 95 percent repayment rates industry-wide.

Microcredit loan cycles are usually shorter than traditional loans – typically six months to a year with payments plus interest, due weekly or even daily. Shorter loan cycles and faster instalment payment cycles help the borrowers stay current and not become inundated by large payments. Thus, microfinance can help break the cycle of poverty and debt trap in a single generation.

Impact of microfinance

It may be observed that microfinance institutions (MFIs) increased from 618 in 1997 to 3164 in 2004 with the number of total clients increasing from 13.5 million in 1997 to 92.3 million in 2004. Most importantly, the poorest clients (living on US $ 1 per day) are to the extent of 72% of the total covered under MFIs which is up from 56% in 1997.

Source: Microcredit Summit Campaign data, 2005.
Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of MFIs</th>
<th>Number of Total Clients (million)</th>
<th>Number of 'Poorest' Clients* (million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1,065</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1,567</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2,186</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2,572</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2,931</td>
<td>80.9</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>3,164</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(< $1 per day or bottom half of those living below national poverty line when first loan is received)


It is also worthwhile to observe another important pattern in that MFIs' clients are mainly women. At a macro level, it is because women have a higher unemployment rate than men in virtually every country and make up the majority of the informal sector of most economies. Women are usually the primary or sole family caretakers in many developing countries. It is observed that helping them gain additional daily income improves the condition of their entire household as women typically put their children’s needs before their own. As a result, children are more likely to complete their education and escape the poverty trap. In the process of providing women access to microcredit, a multiplier effect is generated (Whitaker, 2007).

It is observed that microfinance has definite impact on the building of social capital while it has marginal impact on income levels. At this point it is useful to clarify that while a positive contribution on the social sphere is by itself a significant achievement, the problem lies with the extension of positive impacts to sustainable economic activities.
Microfinance supply gap continues to remain at the same level⁶

During the past 30 years, microfinance has proven to be a powerful poverty alleviation tool. It is one of the only development tools so far with the potential to be financially self-sustaining.

Figure 3

*Based on CGAP data and population Growth rates from the UN Population Division
** Current and forecasted numbers based on Microcredit Summit Campaign Data, 2005

According to Microcredit Summit 2005, however, even after more than 30 years of concerted efforts, about 80 percent of the working poor (more than 400 million families) are still not having access to microfinance services. At current growth rates, the gap is expected to be lower by 8 percentage points by 2010 and as such will not be closed for decades. For microfinance to achieve its potential as a global poverty alleviation tool, the microfinance supply must grow to a scale with more structured capital flow to this segment.

⁶ Countdown, 2005.
The story of microfinance successes and happiness achieved

Now we need to look into the success stories of some of these poorest clients of MFIs and how their capability increased, enabling them to achieve substantial happiness through satisfaction of at least the first four needs: physiological, safety, belonging and esteem. The highest hierarchy of self-actualisation will also be attained over the years. The stories highlight the capability development at the individual as well as community levels through microcredit structure.

Govindammal – India7

When Govindammal lost her husband at an early age of 28, she and her two children moved back into her mother’s house. To continue the family business of making bamboo baskets, sieves and fans, she borrowed from the local money lender. Govindammal’s income of less than $1.78 per day was not enough to pay the exorbitant interest on her loan and also take care of her family. After joining a SHG in 2003, Govindammal used her first loan of $67 to pay off debts to local money lenders and build up her business. With her subsequent loan of just $89, she set up a small shop in front of her house to display and sell her products. The shop has done well and she is now making more than $4 per day, double her previous rate, and she no longer worries about being stuck in a cycle of dependence upon the local money lenders.

Govindammal proudly states, “My SHG has saved me from the dreadful clutches of the money lenders. I can face the world bravely and independently, as long my SHG is there to support me. I am now confident that I can take good care of my children and also provide them with a quality education and thereby achieve my life’s ambition.”

7 www.unitus.com/sections/partners/partners_india_asa.asp
Kishwar’s story – Pakistan

Kishwar lives with her family in a slum near the railway station in Lahore, Pakistan. Health and sanitation conditions are extremely poor, causing frequent disease and infections. Kishwar’s husband and sons together run their shoe-making and selling business, selling from the shop and taking orders from wholesalers. In 2001, their business suffered huge losses and they nearly went bankrupt. The family underwrote a loan from a moneylender to rejuvenate their business. Unfortunately, the exorbitant interest rates, coupled with harsh penalties for late repayments, caused the family’s debt to spiral out of control. In a desperate attempt for a way out, Kishwar discovered a MFI through a friend. The first loan of Rs. 5000 (equivalent to US $125) was used to purchase leather, rexine, ready-made soles, thread and other material for their shoe shop. Kishwar and her husband were slowly able to pay back the moneylender. Savings in the first year of the MFI’s loan were nominal because of this, but now their weekly profits are between Rs. 1000-2000 (US $25-$40). Kishwar plans to take the next loan to increase the product range.

Kishwar, though illiterate, understands the value of education. She has decided to use the family’s paltry resources to educate her two daughters, rather than her five sons, because she believes her daughters are more serious about their education. Kishwar has aspirations for sending both her daughters to college and also helping her sons to establish profitable enterprises of their own. In a society where male children are given first priority in everything, Kishwar has bravely broken with tradition and set an example for her entire community.

With this new sense of self-esteem and confidence, Kishwar mentors other women in her community, encouraging them to take advantage of the opportunity and to take control of their economic situations in order to make better lives for themselves and their families.

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www.grameenfoundation.org/where_we_work/south_asia/pakistan/kishwar_s_story/
A group of women in allo\textsuperscript{9} processing group enterprise (Hampal Allo Udhyami Group, Salija, Parbat) – Nepal

A three day Market Analysis and Development (MA&D) workshop was organised by an MFI in 1999 at the district headquarters for 22 women participants, who were selected as potential micro-entrepreneurs from Salija (located in the remote north of Parbat with more than 95% people living on subsistence agriculture and of which above 90% lives below the poverty line). As a follow-up process, MFI formed a group, called Hampal allo Udhyami group in August 2000 comprising of 14 interested women from the pool of the training participants. These women were then given entrepreneurship training, which resulted into preparation of a group business plan, primarily for processing allo. Due to the lack of capital, the group could not start their allo business. The group got linked to Kaligandaki Multipurpose Cooperative for a loan. The group received Rs. 3,500 (US $ 85) at an interest rate of 18%. With MFI’s technological support, the group purchased manual weaving machines, wrapping drums, and other necessary accessories, and started the allo micro enterprise in August 2000. The women themselves collected allo from their community forest and nearby farm land. The main products of the group were allo shawl, clothes, bags, mufflers, threads, and woolen mixed bags. Their products were mostly sold in the local markets, and the remaining sold to buyers in Pokhara and Kathmandu. The group repaid the credit within 16 months, and expanded their business scale with additional sets of allo processing and weaving machines. With their reputation in the allo business and enhanced skills, Ms. Ghammaya Garbuja, and Ms. Jasmaya Purja among their group members are recognised as allo trainers and resource persons in the district. The impact study of MFI shows that the average per capita income of the 14 entrepreneurs increased from Rs. 4,921 (in August 2000) to Rs. 6,400 (in November 2004).

\textsuperscript{9} Allo is a traditional cloth made from nettles.
Microfinance will get a boost as Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank, Bangladesh was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2006

Mohammed Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank, one day in 1974 met a woman from a small village in Bangladesh who made bamboo chairs for sale. Despite her endeavour, the woman was left with barely any surplus after repaying the middlemen the money for the raw bamboo. He also discovered that some 42 people in the village suffered a similar fate and were in debt for a mere aggregate amount of US $27 (then prevailing exchange rate). Mr. Yunus repaid the loan so that these people could break free from the clutches of money lenders. He also offered himself, in the process, as a guarantor for the poor at a local bank but could not get the loan sanctioned. This opened up before him the fallacy of the traditional banking system. On his own initiative, Mr. Yunus began to issue microcredits and in 1983 formed the Grameen Bank. Since then, the concept of microcredit has come a long way in Bangladesh. Many developmental agencies world over have started to comprehend its essential role in poverty alleviation, and financial institutions are realising immense opportunities in the microcredit domain. Microcredit has proved to be an important liberating force in Bangladesh societies where women in particular have to struggle against repressive social and economic conditions.

All these stories highlight the social capital formation in the hands of individuals when they are working within a group for their living. This certainly creates a sense of belonging in a community. The capability building has helped them to achieve higher living standard and happiness for their family and community.

Weber (2006, p.53) says that while the virtuous impact of microfinance is used to justify its expansion, much of this assessment is based on institutional success. He points out quite strongly this focus by observing that “as long as institutional sustainability obtains, it has been fairly common practice among the policy makers – and their commissioned researchers – to interpret financial viability as indicative of the social, political and economic success of microfinance programmes”. Simanowitz & Walter (2002, p.3) correctly observe that: “Microfinance is a compromise between social and financial objectives. To date most
emphasis has been on financial and institutional performance.” In order to bring the social aspect back into microfinance, Imp-Act, based on three years of action research covering 30 organisations in 20 countries, has been advocating mainstreaming of Social Performance Management (SPM) to improve the effectiveness of microfinance in reducing financial exclusion and poverty.

It is felt that realisation of a substantial trade off between sustainable economic impact and exponential growth, calls for courageous public policy decisions. Segmentation of credit demand based on economic and social status is key to optimum utilisation of scarce resources. Misra Alok (2006) and Robinson (2001) are probably right in observing that providing credit to people who are too poor to use it effectively helps neither the borrower nor the lender and would only lead to increasing the debt burden and erosion of self-confidence; he further suggests that this segment of the population should not be the target market for the financial sector, but rather of state poverty and welfare programmes. In addition to this, irrespective of socio-economic status, credit can be put to little productive use in resource deficient and isolated areas. In such areas, credit flow has to follow public investments in infrastructure and provision of forward and backward linkages for economic activities. Homogenisation of service delivery without fully taking into account situational context and client needs will continue to have limited impact.

**Conclusion**

The concept of measuring the Gross National Happiness through its nine indicators places the focal emphasis on human beings – the main constituent of the welfare state. The capability approach starts with total freedom of the people (socio-economic agent) of the welfare state as to their social choice. The approach establishes a direct relation between the resources available to an agent and his level of welfare (happiness). However the resources have to be ‘potential’ – that is, the agent should be able to use it. And secondly it views the formation of social capital as an endowment – a means to achieve a life that people value. In a world inundated with poverty, which Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of India, termed “the worst form of violence”, happiness in its
truest form cannot be achieved without capability building of the poorest class.

In this world of global access and sharing, the prevalence of such kind of poverty may not be good for global happiness as it will create a global divide; the unhappiness of a majority will destroy the happiness of the other privileged classes and will create negative destructive forces working at cross purposes. The social planners and political policy makers need to understand that enhancement of entitlement of the rural population and their capability creation will go a long way in improving the living standard and happiness at individual and community levels. As Gandhi pointed out: “If I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it even if I may not have it at the beginning...the difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world’s problems” (Fischer Louis, 2002). This is the pillar of the capability building initiative.

Microfinance, or microcredit, has played an important role in Asia, more specifically in SAARC countries in the development of capability at the group level on a cooperative basis. In the process, social capital formation at the lowest social network level has taken place, which not only helped the people at the bottom of the development pyramid to improve their living standard significantly, but also helped to create a multiplier effect through participation and cooperation at the social, community, regional and national levels. Thus, the concept of capability approach in the process of social capital formation through tools like microfinance and microcredits are pathways toward Gross National Happiness.

There certainly exists a possibility for linkages between multiple micro level development initiatives through government participation, banking initiatives or non-governmental organisations; such endeavours will uplift the living standard of the vast rural population, including the poor classes. This is certainly a necessary condition for Gross National Happiness although it may not be the sufficient condition for other pillars of GNH. I would like to conclude with another quote of Mahatma Gandhi: “Whenever you are in doubt ... recall the face of the poorest and weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask
Towards Global Transformation

yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything from it? Will it restore him to a control over his life and destiny? True development puts those first that society puts last” (Fischer, 2002). Without improvement in the living standard of the poorest class, Gross National Happiness can not meaningfully gain a foothold in our world.

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Microfinance in Improvement of Living Standard and GNH

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Microfinance Institution, Social Capital and Peace Building: Evidence from West Kalimantan, Indonesia

Rochman Achwan

Abstract
Microfinance institutions have been rapidly growing in Indonesia in recent years. The Fountain of Love Credit Union (FLCU) in West Kalimantan is an exceptional case. Relying on its own social capability, it scores an unparalleled financial performance. The success lies in the leadership’s ability to create simultaneous macro, meso and micro social capital. In the context of past authoritarian regime and frequent ethnic violence, however, FLCU is still unsuccessful to build an extensive bridging social capital that allows other ethnicities to become its members. Only recently FLCU is able to create Reconciliation Credit Union, promoting and supervising new credit unions run by other ethnic groups.

Introduction
Indonesia has been undergoing the most dynamic development of microfinance institutions (hereafter referred to as MFIs) in comparison to other countries in recent years (Rosengard et al, 2007). A variety of financial technologies have been embraced by NGOs, banking and government-based MFIs. Currently, there are 53,228 outlets of microfinance, serving almost 16 million loanees and 38 million depositors (Ismawan dan Budiantoro (2005). So far, studies on Indonesian MFIs have been dominated by conventional economists focusing on government-based MFIs and applying technical measures to assess their performance. Although such studies are important in showing causes of success and failure of financial performance, they fail to uncover mechanisms of various social groups and their access to MFIs. Very few studies focusing on self-society management of MFIs have taken place in Indonesia.

*Center for Research on Inter-group Relations and Conflict Resolution (CERIC), University of Indonesia, rachwan@indo.net.id
In line with the rapid growth of market of microfinance and in order to fill that void, this paper discusses a success story of the Fountain of Love Credit Union (hereafter refer to as FLCU) by showing, first, the capability creation of social capital and second, the challenges it faces in the contribution to peace building in an environment of inter-ethnic hostility. FLCU operates in the province of West Kalimantan, Indonesia as a type of self management of savings-led MFI, without any intervention of government and donor agencies but thickly embedded in ethnicity. FLCU was established in 1987 and nurtured by the Dayak ethnicity, one of five large ethnic populations in the province.

The primary concept being employed in the study is social capital. In general it is defined as social relations among individuals or groups who are able to develop norms of mutual trust and to form social networks in order to achieve certain social and economic purposes (Putnam, 2000). This definition seems to ignore social context because it assumes every individual or group to have an equal access to join in. In reality, however, such an assumption is difficult to verify. A high inequality of social stratification based on social class or ethnicity which is paramount in Southeast Asia matters in the contribution to the increase and decrease of social capital.

In order to make the concept of social capital more applicable, Szreter (2002) offers new dimensions, namely bonding, bridging and linking. Bonding and bridging social capital respectively refers to social relations based on homogeneity and heterogeneity of ethnic membership or social class. While linking social capital relates to power that pushes bridging of different social class or ethnicity more pronounced in a society. A society that possesses strong bonding and weak bridging social capital propels the sharpening of class and ethnic boundaries, while, strong bridging and weak bonding social capital supports the rise of rootless elite groups. Therefore, it is necessary to have a balanced development of bonding and bridging social capital in society. Another important aspect that should be taken into account is the idea of the outreach of social capital, something to do with coverage whether at micro, meso or macro level.
Two stages of research have been conducted in order to explore the causes of the successful institutional performance of FLCU and the challenges it faces in contributing to peace building. First, this paper reviews previous research findings on MFIs and, second, this paper discusses fieldwork interviews of 23 key informants.

**Inter-ethnic relations in West Kalimantan**

The province of West Kalimantan shares a border with the Malaysian State of Sarawak, to the north, and the province of Central Kalimantan to the east. It comprises eight districts and two municipalities. The provincial capital, Pontianak, is located at the mouth of the Kapuas River. West Kalimantan is one of the key resource-rich provinces that contribute significantly to the national economy. While it is known as having a richness of ethnic diversity, West Kalimantan becomes an arena of deadly ethnic contestation. The rise of Soeharto in power and his fall was accompanied respectively by the eruption of ethnic violence in 1967 and 1999 (Bertrand, 2004).

During the Soeharto administration, eleven deadly incidents of ethnic violence and innumerable numbers of ethnic crimes took place in the province. Although the triggering factors are very simple, i.e. small groups fighting at a music concert or in a public space, the underlying causes are not so simple and one may investigate the political and economic structures of both the province and of the country as whole to seek an understanding, which is beyond this study.

Based on the 2003 population census report of the provincial statistics agency, West Kalimantan’s total population is 3,732,950 with an average population growth rate of 2.18% a year, which is much larger than the national average at 1.37%. The ethnic composition of the population in 2000 consisted of the West Kalimantan Malay (33.75%), the Dayak (33.75%), the Chinese (10.01%), the Javanese (9.41%), the Madurese (5.51%), the Bugisee (3.29%), the Sundanese (1.21%), the Malay Banjarese (0.66%), the Batak (0.56%) and Others (1.85%).

Historically, inter-ethnic relations were coloured by social tensions between the Chinese and others during the Soekarno
period and the Madurese, the Malays and the Dayaks during the Soeharto period. The two largest ethnicities (the Malays and the Dayaks) have never been involved in open ethnic war but they continue to engage in latent conflict. The Malays dominate the government bureaucracy while the Dayaks dominated the agriculture and forestry sectors (Achwan, at al. 2005). It is in the landscape of such inter-ethnic relations that FLCU was established and nurtured by the Dayaks.

**Stock of social capital**

*Financial performance*

There has been unanimous consensus among scholars on how to measure financial performance of MFIs. The measurement consists of three indicators (Seibel, Hans-Dieter, 2001). The first deals with outreach, indicating geographical coverage of operation and total members of MFI. Second refers to financial viability, indicating capability of MFIs to self-finance their business operations, and the third relates to the percentage of non-performing loans.

By employing those three indicators, our study shows that FLCU performs financially sound practice (Achwan, 2007). Its operation covers the whole province and the total members are more than 60,000. The total assets are continually growing from Rps 110 billion in 2004 to Rps 342 billion in 2007. Currently, FLCU manages an outstanding loan from Rps 92 billion in 2004 to Rps 301 billion in 2007. The non-performing loan is less than 1%. This financial operation has been carried out without any financial support from government or donor agencies. Under what circumstances can such financial performance be achieved? There are at least three different types of social capital that influence a successful financial performance of FLCU. Those three types have been consciously created by its leaders and did exist as an historical endowment. The following types are macro, meso and micro social capital.
Macro social capital

FLCU was established in 1987 by a group of young Dayak activists and intellectuals envisioning a big, healthy and eternal Dayak-based financial institution, inspired by values and principles of credit unions. The mission was to promote the social welfare of its members by means of education and training (Pola Kebijakan Pengurus Credit Union Pancur Kasih tahun 2006). According to its founder, FLCU is not merely a credit co-operative, but it is also a social movement of the people’s economic empowerment. In contrast to conventional microfinance institutions which are based on market principles, FLCU relies on three pillars, namely self-reliance, education and social solidarity. These pillars have been a guideline for recruiting new members, disciplining savings and credit repayment, and developing specific management.

The establishment and development of FLCU were in tandem with the emergence of a social movement aimed at revitalising Dayak social identity by demanding the reinstatement of Dayak customary law in the management of natural resources. This was a long-term movement waged by the rural Dayaks against natural resource companies and local government during the Soeharto administration. The movement was led by a sister-NGO of FLCU. In order to achieve its purpose, the movement engaged in two key stages (Hadi Pramono et al). First, the counter-mapping resistance aimed at defining the boundaries of forestry lands according to Dayak customary law and empowering local community to resist the destroyers of natural resources. Up until 2004, the movement has been able to map forestry lands in 263 villages within 9 regencies, covering 7.58% out of total area of West Kalimantan.

It is interesting to examine the ways in which the movement conducted its activities. It gathered Dayak community members and leaders from various rural areas and trained them on how to map out *adat* forest lands occupied by logging and plantation companies. Moreover, the movement organised forums to discuss the impact of ‘bad laws’ upon the economic and cultural life of the Dayak rural people. It was no wonder that the first stage of the movement contributed to the rise of Dayak political consciousness and paved the way for the second stage of mass demonstration.
Such political consciousness and social solidarity made it possible for FLCU to recruit Dayak people to join in. Therefore, the establishment of MFI in West Kalimantan was consciously developed in line with the rise of the social movement. Macro social solidarity has to be created before creating financial institution. In the words of one of movement leaders:

Economic intervention has to be conducted through academic research and cultural works, especially in the Dayak dominated region in West Kalimantan. The objective is to promote self pride and social identity. Without such activities, the establishment of MFIs will be unsuccessful (interview on 19 October 2007).

**Meso social capital**

The analysis of meso social capital focuses on the capability of FLCU to develop internal and external networks with other institutions. Such networks are important in order to keep adjusting to external development. FLCU develops a minimalist approach focusing only on service savings and credit to its members. Internally, however, FLCU builds relations with an NGO which has experience in dealing with people’s economic empowerment. This relationship has made possible to design a specific and integrated scheme. By this network, a combination of social movement and technocratic works has been developed. The NGO is responsible for organising a savings movement by educating local Dayak to change habits of managing the household economy. It is expected that by conducting this movement, local Dayak eventually became members of FLCU. Second, a programme of technical assistance has been developed to serve and help FLCU members to promote their businesses. A number of projects of income generation have been implemented by organising groups of FLCU members to promote rubber plantations and vegetable production. FLCU provides credit to this group and the NGO helps in innovating production and marketing.

Externally, FLCU develops cooperation with a local monthly magazine to publish a supplement, informing recent development of local and international credit union activities. The supplement is attached to this media in every monthly publication and is
distributed to every branch of FLCU so that the members can easily buy it. According to the editor, approximately 80% of monthly subscribers are members of the credit union. Members of credit unions are considered a strategic market and local media tend to ignore them:

At the beginning, we observe that credit union has entered the life of people across religion, ethnic and occupation backgrounds. We finally decide to publish and provide a rubric with title the fountain of credit union. And in the following development, we cooperate with all credit union institutions to publish the supplement (Interview with editor of Kalimantan Review on 17 October 2007)

Another external network initiated by FLCU was establishing an association of credit unions called the Regional Coordinating Body for Credit Co-operative (RCBCC). The establishment of this body was actually a response to the rapid growth of credit union institutions in West Kalimantan. There was no doubt that the social movement for reinstated Dayak customary law during Soeharto administration influenced the mushrooming of credit unions. According to data from RCBCC, currently, this body serves 32 credit union institutions in West Kalimantan, covering more than 300,000 members with asset more than Rps 1.5 trillion.

The prime responsibility of RCBCC is to change the management of credit unions from traditional to modern, emphasising the necessity to become more transparent and accountable. Another responsibility is to defend and promote the interests of its members. The legal position of credit unions in Indonesia is quite vulnerable. The law on co-operatives acknowledges that every co-operative can run businesses so far they are in line with the purposes of establishing co-operatives. The law on banking does not legally recognise the existence of credit unions or credit co-operatives. This latter law sometime is used by a judge within the corrupted legal system in the country to blackmail the management of credit unions.

At the beginning, there was an incident of criminal act by a member of the office of the credit union. The management reported this act to local police and the police reported to the local attorney. A judge who handled this case threatened and
blackmailed the management by saying that the credit union was an illegal banking organisation. Accordingly, this illegal banking case could be brought to the court (interview with executive director of the RCBCC, 11 October 2007).

Recently, there have been two alarming developments that would influence the fate of credit union in West Kalimantan. The first relates to regional autonomy in which the provincial government has authority to collect income from taxation. West Kalimantan provincial parliament has promulgated regional law on income tax of credit unions and on dividends received by their members in addition to an institutional tax previously implemented. This local law may bring about negative consequences for the financial health of credit unions. The interest rate for savings and credit may change at the expense of members of credit unions and in turn destroy their habits of saving that have already been developed.

The second development deals with the legal draft on microfinance institutions prepared by the central government. This legal draft forces the non-banking status of MFIs such as credit unions to become formal banking institutions under the supervision of the central bank. If this draft becomes law, credit unions in West Kalimantan will have to radically change their management. As evidence from Central Java shows, the changed legal status has made ordinary people who occupy the bottom ladder of social stratification no longer have access to MFIs because the new legal status has to follow mechanisms of the market and ignores dimensions of people-centred economic empowerment.

All in all, one of the challenges credit union institutions have to face in the future lies in the political sphere. In theory, regulations and laws should be drafted and implemented in order to make a high predictability of behaviour of MFIs. In reality, however, they become obstacles for the future development of these financial institutions. Following the argument by Szreter (2002), one can draw the conclusion that linking social capital destroys the possible bridging among members and between credit unions.
Micro social capital

Discussion on micro social capital focuses on internal organization, explaining how and why the organisation of FLCU is capable of achieving a successful financial performance. There are a number of elements of micro social capital that can be found. First is a credible leadership. The founder, who is still in his fifties and currently running for governor, has implanted the philosophy of the credit union by inventing the three pillars of co-partnering, self-reliance and education. These pillars have been the life blood of the day-to-day management activities of FLCU.

The second element, this relates to the pillars, refers to peer selection and enforcement. Community members who want to become members of FLCU have to get recommendations from the current members who live and work in a similar office or community. The latter also has to be responsible for disciplining the behaviour of savings and credit repayment by the former. This mechanism works because of the already existent social solidarity that was injected by leaders of the social movement.

Third refers to financial products. FLCU invents various financial products based on social habits of the Dayak community. Saaleatn deposit which became a primadona among FLCU members is developed based on the Dayak household tradition of saving the core income for future unpredicted spending. Another deposit is developed to provide members a chance to saving their income for festivity events. A variety of deposits and credits offered by FLCU has been made possible for every member to choose one of them. In his study on MFIs in various countries, Siebel (2000) concludes that the availability of variety of financial products tend to contribute to their successful performance.

Strong bonding and weak bridging social capital

From the above-mentioned analyses, one may draw the conclusion that FLCU considers the importance of non-economic factors in order to pursue financial purposes. Leaders of FLCU have successfully created social capital in different levels. However, there are weaknesses faced by FLCU. This financial institution has been heavily dominated by the Dayak and very few
other ethnic members have become members. The domination of
the Dayak ranges from village, sub-district to provincial levels.
Such evidence can be concluded that FLCU possesses strong
bonding and weak bridging social capital. Such social capital is
not healthy considering that it contributes to the sharpening of
inter-ethnic boundaries.

Currently, in the post-Soeharto Indonesia, a new
organisational innovation is invented by the RCBCC. The so-called
Reconciliation Credit Union Programme has provided services to
other ethnic groups to establish their own credit union. This
programme seems to work because group of young Malay activists
and young Madurese activists have established their own credit
union under the supervision of RCBCC. If such inter-ethnic
cooperation continues to develop, there is no doubt that credit
union will be a strategic institution for peace building in West
Kalimantan.

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Interpreting ‘Right Livelihood’: Understanding and Practice in Contemporary Thailand*

Nissara Horayangura**

Abstract

The practice of Right Livelihood is a crucial aspect of the Buddhist spiritual path in that it connects inner transformation with external transformation at both the individual and social levels. Using case studies of eight seriously committed Buddhist practitioners in Bangkok, this paper examines different ways of interpreting Right Livelihood, both in understanding and in actual practice. The research shows that contemporary lay practitioners are re-interpreting ‘Right Livelihood’ in innovative ways to suit modern realities and are taking pro-active steps to fashion a work lifestyle that supports their spiritual self-development and promotes service to others. However, broader interpretations of ‘Right Livelihood’ that reflect a deeper understanding of how livelihood relates to the larger socio-economic system can still be further developed.

Introduction

Right Livelihood is one of the eight components of the Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path of self-development (See Figure 1), which leads to the cessation of suffering or, conversely, the attainment of ultimate happiness. In considering Gross National Happiness, then, an investigation of the interpretations of Right Livelihood, both in theory and practice, is important for several reasons. Firstly, Right Livelihood, along with Right Action and Right Speech, comprises the part of the Eightfold Path that relates to the external world; i.e., the practice of *sila* (morality). It is thus a

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* This paper is drawn from a larger research project exploring a holistic view of the integration of Buddhist practice into the daily lives of Bangkok laypeople, of which Right Livelihood is viewed as one part that is interconnected with the whole spiritual practice of each person. See Nissara Horayangura (2007). *Living the Dhamma: Integration of Buddhist Practice into the Lives of Bangkok Laypeople*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

** Independent Researcher, Thailand
bridge between inner transformation, as attained through the practice of mental discipline or samadhi (Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration), and outer transformation. The wisdom or panna (Right View and Right Intention), attained in part from mental training or meditation, can lead to a dramatic change in a practitioner’s values, commitment to upholding morality, and understanding of their very purpose in life. However, these internal changes also need to be reflected in a practitioner’s external life. Spiritual practice cannot remain confined to the meditation cushion and needs to be integrated into a practitioner’s daily life for to be considered truly following the Path, which is profoundly holistic. Only then will a balanced spiritual practice be realised and real happiness achieved.

Livelihood or work is a particularly crucial area in which to examine how people can integrate their spiritual practice into their daily lives because work takes up such a large proportion of most people’s time in contemporary society, especially in urban areas. Moreover, work is closely tied with self-actualisation, with many people seeking jobs that further their self-development and reflect their values, priorities, and aspirations in life. This is especially true of the modern world, where there are a wider variety of jobs and work is viewed not simply as a means to make a living, unlike in a simple economy. The educated middle to upper class are particularly able to take a proactive role in choosing and designing their form of work, as they are qualified for more jobs and are not under severe financial pressure. For many middle to upper class people, the issue may no longer be taking any job that can earn an adequate income but instead becomes choosing a job that can earn the most income. Yet for the spiritually inclined, the most salient consideration is not monetary remuneration, but whether a job allows for, or even directly supports, their spiritual practice.

How then do people who are committed to spiritual practice interpret what it means to practice Right Livelihood and actually go about selecting a job and fashioning their work lifestyle? Based on extensive in-depth interviews, this paper investigates eight case studies of Bangkok laypeople who self-identify as being committed Buddhist practitioners (or ‘dharma practitioners’; in Thai called phu patibat tham). It provides a comparative thematic
analysis of their different interpretations of Right Livelihood, both in understanding and in actual practice. An underlying concern is to examine what difficulties practitioners face in attempting to practice Right Livelihood and ways they negotiate them.

To widen the perspective beyond the level of the individual, this paper also explores how individual practitioners’ interpretations of Right Livelihood relate to the larger socio-economic system. How can Right Livelihood be interpreted in ways that link internal transformation not only with external transformation at the individual level, but also external social transformation? To what extent contemporary lay practitioners are making this connection bears evaluation.

**Figure 1: The Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morality (Sila)</th>
<th>Inner External Transformation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right Speech (samma-vaca)</td>
<td>(on Individual and Social Levels)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right Action (samma-kammanta)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right Livelihood (samma-ajiva)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental Discipline (Samadhi)</td>
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<td>Right Effort (samma-vayama)</td>
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<td>Right Mindfulness (samma-sati)</td>
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<td>Right Concentration (samma-samadhi)</td>
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<td>Wisdom (Panna)</td>
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<td>Right View (samma-ditthi)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right Intention (samma-sankappa)</td>
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**Avoiding ‘wrong’ livelihood**

When determining what profession to do, it is perhaps simplest, and most logical, to start by ruling out what not to do. In discussing their conceptions of Right Livelihood, all my informants first raised the issue of avoiding jobs that were not ethical (sujarit).

Most generally, they understood wrong livelihood to mean any job that causes suffering to others or breaks the basic five precepts.\(^1\) They also mentioned the Buddha’s teachings on five prohibited professions as their guide: “These five trades, O monks, should not be taken up by a lay follower: trading in weapons, trading in poisons, trading in intoxicating drinks, trading in sex, trading in false goods.”

\(^1\) An explanation of wrong livelihood with relevant quotations from the Tripitaka can be found in Harvey, 2000.

It is a short, seemingly straightforward set of proscriptions. Yet some scholars have argued that in the far more complex modern economy, these guidelines have to be understood in accordingly more complex ways. The five taboo professions can be interpreted more comprehensively to include jobs in the arms industry, production of pesticides, research involving animal experimentation, or even advertising insofar as it stimulates greed, hatred, and delusion or bends the truth (Saddhatissa, 1997, p.53; Whitmyer eds., 1994).

Several of my informants did reflect more complicated understandings of what constitutes a morally unacceptable profession. In part, it is indeed a response to the more complex socio-economic system. Yet another important reason why the dharma practitioner may adopt more finely drawn interpretations of wrong livelihood is also because they themselves have personally evolved a deeper understanding of the precepts as their practice progresses. When their understanding of the precepts becomes more refined, the grey areas of what they consider wrong livelihood expand.

One striking case of how fine a point it can be taken to is Ko. Soon after she started to practice dharma, she became very concerned about whether she was really maintaining the ‘truth’ in her journalism work or was possibly lying in some way. “I started to ask myself, if I interviewed someone for an hour, do I really know the real story? And when I’m writing, am I fictionalizing a bit when I’m reconstructing a scene? Even if I try to write in the most balanced fashion, won’t I still have some bias? I really did feel very conflicted about my work at first.” In this way, even a seemingly morally acceptable job like journalism becomes suspect as a possible wrong livelihood, as she contemplates more deeply the meaning of the precepts.

As to the prohibition on selling alcohol, Waew has expanded it beyond the interpretation that she cannot own a business that sell alcohols directly itself. She has also mandated that none of the shops leasing space in the shopping centres she owns and manages, including those in the food court, can sell alcohol. Her
company has set this as one of the conditions for tenancy, which she says is not the standard practice in the industry.

Meanwhile, Daeng has developed a subtler interpretation of the precept on stealing. It is not immediately obvious what would be amiss in her line of work – her family’s publishing company produces textbooks for schools. It seems harmless, and even socially beneficial. Daeng reveals, however, that nowadays corruption is unavoidable when bidding for textbook contracts from government schools. “To get a teacher to use your textbooks, you have to pay them a commission. It’s not clean...It’s like stealing the nation’s money, money that should really have been used for the nation’s development. Instead of the kids having low-cost books, we have to increase the price of books to cover the cost of paying off school officials.” She considers this kind of work a tainting of her precepts and has chosen not to continue it. She says, “Once you are working towards *nibbana*, you won’t risk even a little [tainting of the precepts].”

This view interprets ‘stealing’ in a more sophisticated and abstract way, not simply a matter of taking objects or money directly from another person, but ‘stealing’ on a broader societal level. In developing this understanding, Daeng cites in particular the influence of contemporary monks like Luang Ta Mahabua, whose popular radio programmes she listens to. He has espoused innovative explications of the precepts in an effort to make age-old dharma teachings relevant to current societal problems like corruption.

Mi believes corruption is not only endemic to the publishing business, but the contemporary business world at large. Through her experiences working as an auditor in a large accountancy firm and the finance manager of her family’s hotel, she says she has seen how it is virtually impossible to avoid under-the-table payments, circumvention of laws, or smooth-talking that involves lying in doing business. “You have to ‘zig-zag’ [bend the rules or bend the truth] all the time in business. If you don’t, you really can’t survive. Especially in this era of decaying morals and fierce competition.” Even if she herself may not be taking any discrete actions that explicitly break the precepts, she believes she is indirectly breaking them just by being involved in the company and the business world of today.
Currently, she works in the family business only because she feels duty-bound by her parents’ expectations, but she does so unhappily. “I feel morally conflicted working there. My conscience is troubled. I don’t like not being able to keep the five precepts, and just doing anything in order to maximise profit,” she says wearily. “If your precepts are not that refined, you can still work in business. But if they are, you can’t take it anymore.” She says she has begun to feel she can’t do it for much longer. Still, she does not feel free to ‘abandon’ her parents until they are ready to accept it. In the past year, they have begun to come around and she has subsequently started to hand off her responsibilities to other employees.

Beyond breaking the precepts, are there other grounds for labeling a job as unethical? Does wrong livelihood include occupations that incite other people’s desire (a form of mental defilement or \textit{kilesa}) for material goods or, more broadly, a culture of consumerism? When I venture to ask Waew, if she is ever troubled by this consideration when it comes to her shopping centres, she seems surprised by the notion. “I don’t look at it that deeply. For me, I see my shopping centres as providing the components people need to support their life (\textit{paj\-jaya 4} – food, clothing, shelter, and medicine),” which she considers a straightforward and positive contribution. Fai reflects a similarly limited understanding of wrong livelihood. When I ask her if it is wrong for a businessperson to sell luxury goods, she says, “You can sell anything – diamonds, whatever. Yes, it does promote others’ \textit{kilesa}, and you do have to think of ways to lure them in. But it’s not wrong, it just doesn’t help other people.”

However, Ko, takes a different view. She believes businesses that sell jewellery or other luxury items are problematic because they stimulate people’s desire for unnecessary things and encourage them to spend money wastefully. In fact, she says she had once questioned a well-known dharma practitioner who owned a jewellery business on this matter, giving her serious pause for thought. While Ko hardly thinks it was specifically due to her questioning, that dharma practitioner has since given up her jewellery business. Ko and Fai also differ in their views on advertising. Fai disapproves of advertising because in practice it often involves making exaggerated, or outright false, claims, which
amounts to lying. Ko is also opposed to advertising, but rather than basing her argument only on precept-breaking, she takes the extra interpretive step of pointing to how it incites consumerism and greed.

The concern with inciting consumerism suggests a movement towards consideration of larger, more systemic problems of the capitalist economic system. To an extent, as previously discussed, Daeng and Mi already do evince concern with societal level repercussions of jobs in business such as corruption. Mi goes further, however, in also considering the capitalist economy to be fundamentally morally flawed as the entire system is inexorably based on profit maximisation and thus greed. In response to the suggestion that business can be reoriented to be more ‘dhammic’ according to the ‘sufficiency economy’ paradigm, a view Waew has great faith in, Mi is highly sceptical. She asserts that businesses simply could not survive following such a model. As for the argument that the Buddha had not prohibited business as a profession, she says that perhaps it was possible to do business ethically in the economic system that existed during the Buddha’s time, but this is no longer the case today. In her view, working in business in the modern world is ‘un-dhammic’ because one would unavoidably be enmeshed in a greed-driven economic system.

However, most do not talk about how the system is structurally oppressive – how the capitalist national and world economies lead to drastically uneven distribution of income, exploit workers, and ravage the environment. Only Ko, the informant who appears to have the most pronounced social activist leanings, brings up this more complicated angle of wrong livelihood. In Ko’s estimation, only a small percentage of dharma practitioners reflect this understanding.

**From ‘not wrong’ to ‘right’ livelihood**

While avoiding wrong livelihood may be the first step, are there other criteria they consider in choosing a job? Is there a leap that they make between pursuing a livelihood that is ‘not wrong’ to one that is ‘right’? Are there in fact some livelihoods that they view as more ‘right’ than others? More specifically, are there some professions that are technically ‘not wrong’ but nonetheless...
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incompatible with their dharma practice, or conversely some that are especially supportive of it?

One way to conceive of the progression of considerations is in terms of the morality-mental discipline-wisdom steps of the Path. Maintaining morality in their profession may be the basic requirement. But there needs to be more to their job than that if they are to also progress further on the Path, and thus they seek work that enables them to develop themselves at the mental discipline and wisdom levels.

Another way to deepen the understanding of right livelihood is to go beyond interpreting ‘right’ in the simple moralistic sense, and to consider it in the holistic sense. In talking about livelihood, recurring themes that emerged pointed to the importance of pursuing a livelihood that brings holistic benefit – nourishing both their body and their mind, serving both themselves as well as others.

Right intention in a right livelihood

In drawing the ever-more blurred line between what is ‘wrong’ and ‘not wrong’, and, further, in bridging the gap between ‘not wrong’ and ‘right’, the crucial consideration becomes having the right intention in doing a job, an important application of wisdom to working. As Fai put it, “It’s hard to just say which jobs are okay and which jobs aren’t. It depends on the way you approach it.” In other words, the question is not strictly what job, but how one does the job, with what end in mind.

Do no harm

In the earlier case of Ko, after initially agonising over whether journalism could in fact be a ‘wrong livelihood’ because of the possible distortion of the truth it involves, she later found a way to make her peace with it. It seems she did so partly because she had to, needing the financial security of her full-time journalist job, which begs the question of whether a degree of rationalisation was involved. Even if it did, her reasoning is convincingly consistent with the dhammic principle of examining intention – looking at how she was approaching the job. “After a while, I just came to realise that there’s no way you can really know the whole
truth anyway. As long as I report what are facts, that’s as close to 'truth’ as I can get. What’s more important is that I look at my intention (chetana) towards the reader – do I have any intention to mislead them? This becomes the guideline that helps me decide more clearly what I should and shouldn’t write.” In this example, the ‘wrong intention’ would be to cause harm, which reinforces the basic understanding of ‘wrong livelihood’.

Not for the money

Beyond that, another intention in doing a job that was widely disapproved of by my informants was material greed. By this, they mean not only instances of people dominated by rapacious greed, but simply the idea of doing a job with money as the main – or sole – motivation.

A useful starting point from which to frame this discussion lies in traditional Buddhist ethics regarding wealth. Payutto delineates scriptural teachings on the subject in his book Buddhist Economics as follows:

The main theme in the Scriptures is that it is not wealth as such that is praised or blamed but the way it is acquired and used (p.61).

For the laity...there is no instance in which poverty is encouraged. On the contrary, many passages in the Scriptures exhort lay people to seek and amass wealth in rightful ways. Among the good results of good kamma, one is to be wealthy. What is blamed in connection with wealth is to earn it in dishonest ways...[to become] enslaved by it and [create] suffering as a result of it...to accumulate riches out of stinginess, and not to spend it for the benefit and well-being of oneself, one’s dependents, or other people.

A true Buddhist lay person not only seeks wealth lawfully and spends it for constructive purposes, but also enjoys spiritual freedom, not being attached to it, infatuated with it or enslaved by it. This is the point where the mundane and the transcendent meet (p.67).

When compared, my informants’ views did in many ways reflect these traditional views, albeit with some slight departures. Across the board, all of them expressed notably little concern about money, with their attitudes ranging from dismissive to
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strongly negative. Pok, who grew up solidly middle-class and now receives a modest civil servant salary, says, “Even if I were to get rich, I probably wouldn’t be truly happy. In fact, the richer you become, the more likely it is for you to go astray. So I’d rather do a job that earns little, but helps others.” Waew, meanwhile, knows first-hand how it feels to be rich, having been born into a well-off family. She thus also knows first-hand its limits, saying that the kind of happiness one can get from material possessions is utterly incomparable to the joy she has received from dharma practice. “I believe if we work hard, but not for the money, we can remain happy always. I no longer see the need for a luxurious lifestyle.”

Fai similarly changed her attitude after she started to practice dharma. “Before, my goals were to be successful in business and make lots of money. I don’t think that way anymore.” After years running her own business, she came to view wealth as a trade-off with freedom – she felt put in a position where the power was entirely with her clients, which felt oppressive. Indeed, wealth comes at a price. Mi reflects this view most strongly, going so far as to say that “wealth is a burden”. She says she’d rather trade financial security for peace of mind.

In an interesting echo, Ko also talks of re-interpreting ‘security’ in spiritual, rather than monetary, terms. “I stress ‘internal security’. By this I mean mental stability and wellbeing – the ability to remain equanimous amidst change, to not be shaken by whatever happens. Prioritising this kind of security gave me the courage to give up financial ‘security’ and resign from my job and go freelance. Besides, as a result of my dharma practice, I have become more easily content (sandot), which makes it easier for me to earn enough to support myself.”

It seems their attitude toward wealth had a more negative edge than the traditional teachings. Whereas the Buddha taught of the benefit of laypeople possessing wealth and encouraged its rightful accumulation (Payutto, 1998, p.60)\(^2\), few of my informants

\(^2\) Payutto writes, “In fact, the possession of wealth by certain people is often praised and encouraged in the Pali Canon, indicating that wealth is something to be sought after. Among the Buddha’s lay disciples, the better known, the most helpful, and the most often praised were in large part wealthy persons, such as Anathapindika.”
talk of the value of generating wealth. Instead, they seem wary of it and emphasise its detrimental effects. The way some even prefer to stay clear of wealth altogether seemed more befitting of a renunciant, going beyond the expectation for the average layperson. If anything, they stress how they have modest needs and wish only to maintain an adequate lifestyle (although their notions of what qualifies as an ‘adequate lifestyle’ do vary.)

Perhaps it is because my informants are already at least middle-class, and thus do not have to be as urgently concerned about attaining a satisfactory standard of living as less well-off people, that they can pay minimal attention to this step and instead focus on other aspects of working, beyond just making a living. In addition, the fact that many have experienced considerable wealth allows them to recognise its limitations and pitfalls. They found that despite enjoying material comforts, they still faced mental suffering or simply felt something was still missing. Although none of my informants were directly affected by the 1997 financial crisis, witnessing it and the mass societal fall-out brought home the unpredictability of economic fortunes, and the dangers of pinning one’s wellbeing solely on material wealth. Whatever the reasons, it is striking how they express not only disinterest in, but even distaste for, “working just for money”. In taking this stance, they are clearly challenging, and indeed outright rejecting, the capitalist values of mainstream society.

**Spiritual development and service to others**

If they de-emphasise working for financial motivations, what then do they view as the appropriate objectives in work and, in relation, the appropriate criteria to use in choosing a job? Showing remarkable convergence, all my informants expressed two main objectives they wish to pursue in their work. Firstly, they wish to do work that nurtures their wellbeing, and supports them in their self-development, particularly their spiritual cultivation. This work goal is in line with, and indeed can be seen to flow from, their positing of spiritual development as their broader goal in life.

Secondly, they desired their work to not only benefit themselves, but serve others as well, indicating a certain degree of social consciousness – the extent of which varies among
informants – that stems partly from dhammic principles. These two goals are in fact complementary and mutually reinforcing. In addition, as both are closely related to their dharma practice, choosing jobs in line with these goals becomes one important means of integrating dharma practice into their everyday life.

In conceiving these objectives, they again echo, but expand on, traditional teachings. According to Payutto, “The Buddhist standpoint here is that a minimal amount of responsibility to oneself for betterment and perfection is required of all individuals, and at the same time they must maintain an appropriate degree of social responsibility” (Payutto, 1990, p.81).

My informants certainly concur with this statement of goals in life and work. The difference is they go even further, professing a more passionate attitude than the fairly moderate tone of Payutto’s explication. They aim not at a “minimal amount” or “appropriate degree” but wish to pursue both objectives to the utmost of their ability.

*Spiritual Development*

Many of my informants noted that it is necessary for one to have wellbeing oneself before one can help others. As such, they concentrated first on explaining how their work relates to personal wellbeing. Moreover, by ‘wellbeing’ they mean not only material wellbeing, but also higher forms of wellbeing. Thus, one should work not only to secure self-preservation, but, further, to strive for self-development. While it is hardly uncommon, and in fact even natural, for people to desire some degree of self-development – to learn and grow – in their work, what is striking is how my informants emphasised the spiritual dimension of self-development.

They could well be taking their cue from this particular saying of the Buddha: “Wisdom is better than wealth, because it leads to the highest goal in this life” (Payutto, 1998, 67). In this teaching, the Buddha implies that in one’s life, one should be sure to devote energy to accumulating wisdom as well. But through what avenues is one to devote this energy? It is not explained further in this particular quote. Examining it more closely, he only seems to be saying that one should work on spiritual matters in
the sense of developing oneself personally, but not necessarily literally work in jobs directly related to spiritual matters.

That is a leap many of my informants have made, however. They want to pursue their spiritual goals through their very professions. The most explicit statement of this position was made by Ko, who plainly said, “I set spiritual development as my number one priority. Everything in my life should serve that goal. So I want a job that can promote my spiritual wellbeing and self-development.” In the early days of her dharma practice, however, she had a more compartmentalised approach to work and dharma practice. “I separated them. Work was one world, Dharma Practice was another world.” In fact, it seems many new dharma practitioners go through a similar phase of thinking. Waew in some ways still does separate the two, talking in terms of ‘worldly work’ and ‘dharma work’. She says she tries to do work in both areas, but says when she is too laden with ‘worldly work’ she is not able to do much ‘dharma work’.

When conceived separately, ‘dharma work’ or dharma practice becomes something akin to a hobby or extracurricular activity or, at best, sideline job. One does it outside of one’s main job, ‘worldly work’, if one has the time for it, like going to the gym to exercise. How can a dharma practitioner blend the two into one – work and dharma practice? They could either try to incorporate dharma into how they work, or into what they do for work – or both. There is a school of thought that maintains that it does not matter what your job is. Regardless what you do (so long as it is ethical), if you do it in the right way, according to dhammic principles, it is a form of dharma practice. A major proponent of this view is Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. As he wrote in a poem about work:

Work gives humanity its value
Something of the highest honour without a doubt;
If one enjoys work with a blossoming heart
before you know it Dhamma will be truly known.

Because work is the essence of Dhamma practice,
all wholesome virtues are intermixed boldly;
If you’ll compare then try the expert marksmen
who with one shot bags many birds.
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Naturally, work must be done mindfully with calm focus, patience, and industry, with truthfulness, self-control and intelligence, with confident faith and courage, truly love your work.

The more one works, the more these Dhamma flourish promoting the transcendent shore without pause; seeing the universal characteristics in everything in a flash it plunges into vimutti freed by itself

-Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, 2545, p.45.

Noi cites Buddhadasa’s teaching that “working is practicing dharma” (in Thai: “karn tham ngarn kue karn patibat tham”) as a major source of inspiration to her. “It made me see that performing one’s lay duties is also an important way to practice dharma.” This idea helped her make her peace with – or one might argue, rationalise – not being able to retire and pursue her aspiration of full-time Buddhist study and practice (in, ironically enough, the Dhammamata women’s training programme at Suan Mokkh originally spearheaded by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu himself). And in staying on at her job, applying dharma principles has helped her become at ease in what she once thought was an unpleasant work environment.

But are there still some jobs that are more conducive to spiritual progress than others? Fai is a good example of this other school of thought, which holds that some jobs are better than others if you want to practice dharma. Some jobs allow one to be “close to dharma” (yu klai thama) – jobs whose very content is directly related to dharma. After she started to practice dharma, she decided not to go back to running a business and instead devote herself to writing dharma books and being a dharma and meditation teacher (khru kamathan). She says, “In writing dharma books, clearly I get to practice dharma more this way. The two are incomparable! Can you practice dharma and do business? Sure. But there’s no way you can get as much patibat done.” Writing dharma books supports her practice because in the research process she reads a lot of other dharma books and even the Tripitaka, which deepens her knowledge about dharma. She also
appreciates how it gives her the opportunity to spend time with other people who practice dharma and talk about dharma.

Daeng takes a more moderate approach. She has not forsaken business entirely, but has reoriented it towards dharma. Two years ago she broke away from her main family business to set up her own publishing company with her brother. In addition to publishing educational books, she has also added dharma books to the line-up. For her, the benefit of doing work that is close to dharma is that “it helps my mind stay focused on dharma, which helps to build up wisdom.”

Waew, who currently is the MD of her own retailing business, is a useful point of comparison, as she particularly emphasises integrating dharma principles into how she does her business work, such as keeping calm when facing problems and managing her employees with more patience and sati, and applying dhammic principles like loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity (brahmavihara 4). But she has also started writing dharma books on the side, and has made their publication one of her company’s “special projects”. And she, like Fai, feels her book writing, the “direct” dharma work is the more “real” form of dharma practice, and more deeply fulfilling than her regular business work. Her face lights up when she talks about one of her “special dharma projects” wherein she took a few employees down to her monk-teacher’s temple and set up shop there for a few months to work on his biography. She sighs, “I wish I could do more of that.” So Waew’s approach is mixed – in some ways she does try to change how she does her work, but she also changes what her job entails by adding dharma projects into her work detail. Ultimately, she still believes the ‘what’ does matter – and prefers a more directly dhammic job.

Until she can devote herself fully to ‘dharma work’, her incorporation of the dharma book projects into her job detail is her way to bridge the gap between her ‘dharma work’ and ‘worldly work’. Making them overlap helps, to some degree, to solve the problem of lack of time to do both. In the earlier analogy of going to the gym after work, if one wanted to really devote oneself to physical activities one could simply become a professional physical trainer. Similarly, dharma practitioners can try to work
as ‘spiritual trainers’, at least part time. It is another spin on “bagging many birds with one shot”.

Nonetheless, even with a directly dharma-related job, one could still do it with a non-dhammic attitude. If so, one might actually be making little progress in one’s dharma practice, or at best one may progress only in intellectual knowledge of dharma. That in itself is not without value, as intellectual knowledge can serve as a foundation for more real application of dharma in one’s behaviour. Yet the cautionary point is that just working in a dharma-related job is no guarantee that it will equate with actual practice of dharma. One might be ‘close to dharma’ but one might not reach it.

Ko commented, a bit ruefully, that she’d noticed how some of her colleagues in projects on spiritual health often end up working too hard and getting stressed out. At one dinner I went to, following their day-long meeting, one girl sat with fried rice half-eaten, shuffling pages of work plans and fretting out loud about the elaborate AV presentation she was planning. Ironically, she was organizing The “Happy Fest” – a two-day programme packed with wellness-enhancing workshops from tai chi to therapeutic music to Zen meditation – yet was making herself unhappy working on it. Ko admits she herself feels stretched thin, overburdened by work she says she takes on because “I do feel a certain kind of greed, wanting to do all these projects and not being able to turn any down.” Alas, defilements easily accompany even well-intentioned, dharma and service-oriented work.

Thus, a dhammic job should not be over-romanticised into some saintly endeavour. Fai herself makes this point. She tells of how Luang Pho Pramot once nudge to be careful not to get attached to being a dharma teacher. When she first began to *patibat* dharma, she had been very enthusiastic about taking up a dhammic vocation and serving as a dharma teacher. “Now, I don’t feel I need to be a dharma teacher anymore. I no longer am attached (yued) to that. I no longer feel I have to be this particular kind of person – Dharma Teacher. Wearing White. Good Person,” she says in a humorously exaggerated tone, poking fun at her misguided notions. So while she still does think working in directly dharma-related jobs is beneficial, she also feels it is
important not to fall in the trap of getting attached to them or creating an egotistical sense of goodness.

**Right livelihood and the socio-economic system**

While all of my informants reflected a sense of social conscience, only a few linked their interpretation of Right Livelihood to a deeper understanding of the concept of ‘structural suffering’ or suffering generated by the problematic socio-economic system underlying contemporary society. If they were to make this connection, their understanding of wrong livelihood could be further complicated to include questioning of jobs in terms of how they are entangled in, and to what extent they help perpetuate, the present socio-economic system. Conversely, in choosing Right Livelihood, more of them could also consider to what degree the job may help ameliorate it. This includes being creative about harnessing professional skills like marketing or management to serve the social good rather than private business profits. While there is a budding movement to bring this view of professional responsibility into the public discourse, it still appears very limited and not so well-known in religious quarters other than socially-engaged Buddhist circles.

Similarly, although all my informants may be committed to serving others by ‘spreading dharma’, many only conceived of it in terms of helping individuals. If they were to develop a more sophisticated understanding of ‘spreading dharma’ to include structural concerns, they could also ‘spread dharma’ and engage in other forms of social action at a broader societal level. In particular, they could ‘spread dharma’ in a larger sense by supporting movements to inject a spiritual dimension back into the society. Already various sectors of society, such as educational institutions, NGO’s, and even economic institutions riding the current wave of popularity of the sufficiency economy paradigm, are making moves in this direction. While the individual Buddhist practitioner alone obviously cannot affect such a sea of change, they can contribute to this wider movement. In my opinion, they ought to, as they can bring a special perspective to the table, given their first-hand experience in spiritual practice. Only a few of my informants’ spiritual teachers seem to address this point, which could partly explain why more of my informants did not
connect their spiritual practice to these broader issues. Such understanding can only come with education and exposure to the concept. More support from popular monks, nuns, lay dharma teachers, as well as the media in highlighting these concerns would thus be of great value given their considerable public influence.

Indeed, the meaning of Right Livelihood can still be expanded further to encompass a more fully developed social dimension. Perhaps Right Livelihood in the truest sense requires it.

References
A Tale of Two Samut Cities: Different Paths to Development and People's Wellbeing in Samut Sakorn and Samut Songkram Provinces

Decharut Sukkumnoed* and Wipawa Chuenchit**

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse how different development paths lead to different development outcome by comparing the development paths and outcomes of two Samut provinces, Samut Sakorn and Samut Songkram. Previously, both provinces shared the same ecosystem and cultural background. 30 years ago, they took different economic development paths, resulting in a totally different economic and social structure today. Unlike modernisation theory, the richer economy does not gain a better quality of life in this case. While Samut Sakorn has much higher economic growth, Samut Songkram shows more balanced development approach and, consequently much better wellbeing outcomes. Moreover, in present day, Samut Songkram has become one of the most well-known provinces for Thai exotic products and lifestyles. This may lead Thai society to reconsider their development paths, especially during the quest for sufficiency economy.

Introduction

The analysis of the relations between a wellbeing index and social determinants of health at the macro level by Decharut and Runghip Sukkumnoed (2006) has conducted a comparative study on wellbeing and social determinants at the country and provincial levels. Part of the conclusion is that Gross Provincial Product per capita is not a necessary and sufficient condition for good health and wellbeing. A province with high GPP per capita may have unsatisfactory health and wellbeing outcomes while another province with low GPP per capita may have better outcomes.

Apart from the problem of the redistribution of economic resources, some provinces of which economic growth relies on
large-scale industrial development, such as Rayong and Lamphun, have encountered the problem of ‘development diseases’ i.e., risky health behaviours and a high rate of new HIV/AIDS patients. Consequently, these provinces have difficulty improving their health outcomes and wellbeing.

Accordingly, to explain the relationship between overall development direction and wellbeing impact requires the consideration of many factors as well as of the context in different areas. This study has compared two provinces with similar eco-cultural background but totally different economic development process afterwards, which caused different social, environment, and health outcome and impacts. The two case studies were conducted in Samut Sakorn and Samut Songkram provinces.

The study will depict the different economic development processes with different development outcomes and the relevant factors in order to promote learning among various sectors in society for public policy process which is supportive to significant improvement of health and wellbeing of people in this country.

**Historical contexts of two Samut cities**

Looking back in history, the two Samut provinces shared quite similar characteristics, particularly in terms of their eco-cultural backgrounds. As neighbours to each other, Samut Sakorn and Samut Songkram are located almost on the same terrain and influenced by the same climate of tropical rain, which previously led to similar ways of life and occupations closely bound with the natural resources in the areas. These similarities were clearly witnessed prior to the introduction of the first National Economic and Social Development Plan.

*The ecosystems of three waters and the upper part of the Gulf of Thailand*

Both Samut cities are situated on the upper part of the Gulf of Thailand. The terrain, composed of plain, lowland, and delta, is very fertile thanks to the unique combination of three types of water namely, freshwater, brackish water, and brine. With a web of river and canals, each province naturally functions as a wetland to absorb water during high tide and seasonal flooding.
The two provinces are even alike in that each has a separate river running through its land. Tha Chin River in Samut Sakorn and Mae Klong River in Samut Songkram are linked to each other by canals and were once major routes for local transportation and goods transfer between inland and offshore.

Apart from this, the ecosystem in the upper part of the Gulf of Thailand during August to November usually benefits from the annual Southwestern Monsoon, in which large amounts of rainfall brings silt down to the estuaries, creating an enriched pool of food for marine animals and migrant birds.

**Ways of life and occupations**

Before the economy expanded rapidly following the implementation of a series of national economic and social development plans, which first began in B.E.2504 (A.D.1961), the local ways of life and even the economic activities with the outside world in the two Samut cities were still thoroughly attached to the eco-cultural contexts of the areas. For example, people who live on the coastal plain earned their life from salt farming, charcoal making from mangrove woods, fishery, and fishing boat building while those who lived in the lowlands would take advantage of the extraordinary nature of the three waters to grow plants like coconut palms, lychees, and pomelos, which were widely recognised for their good taste; they would even grow rice in ditches. Besides, vegetable plantations were common in Samut Sakorn.

Several production sectors have also arisen from the above-mentioned activities. Wholesale and retail trade by water transportation prospered, and simple agricultural processing with products such as shrimp paste and coconut-palm sugar earned a nation-wide reputation. By these economic activities, Gross Provincial Product (GPP) of Samut Songkram used to be on the top rank of the country.

In terms of arts and crafts, the two provinces have been famous for their benjarong ceramic manufacture. Samut Songkram, as a producer of coconut palms, has keen knowledge and skill in Thai fiddle making, due to the fact that the coconut shell is usually used to make the sound box of a fiddle. Samut
Sakorn, however, has been well-known for a number of good bands playing *gamelan* and other Thai musical instruments.

Accordingly, Samut Sakorn and Samut Songkram were regarded as sister cities due to their geographical and cultural linkages. However, as they have grown up, these two sisters have embedded totally different sets of thoughts and visions, which seem to promise very different futures.

**Different development paths of two Samut cities**

Thirty years ago, these two Samut cities took different development paths. It was obviously shown through their urban zoning. Samut Sakorn turned opened their land zoning to welcome industrial development, while Samut Sakorn remains agricultural land. Since 1981, the growth of industrial sector in Samut Sakorn has rapidly increased, leading to the dramatic change in economic structure of Samut Sakorn province.

The share of agricultural sector in total Gross Provincial Product (GPP) was rapidly declined from around 50% in 1981 to around 20% in 1991. Oppositely, the share of industrial sector in Samut Sakorn province was dramatically increased. In 2005, the share of industrial section in GPP was more than 80% of total GPP in Samut Sakorn. The share of agricultural sector in Samut Sakorn is now reduced to only 4% (see Figure 1).

In Samut Songkram, the main economic sector in 1981 was service and agricultural sectors. From 1981 to 1991, the share of industrial sector increased only gradually. At the same time, the share of the agricultural sector in Samut Songkram was also reduced slowly. Up to 2005, the share of industrial sector in total Samut Songkram’s GPP is only around 23%. However, the share of agricultural sector has been reduced from around 30% in 1981 down to 7% in 2005 (see Figure 2).

Different economic development paths result in extremely different economic growth patterns between these two Samut provinces. Figure 3 shows the GPP of these two Samut provinces in the real term (GPP at 1988 constant price). Obviously, the growth of GPP in Samut Sakorn has increased very rapidly, while the GPP growth in Samut Songkram has been relatively slow. The end result in 2005 is that the GPP of Samut Songkram province is
22 times higher than Samut Songkram. In GPP per capita term, Samut Sakorn has nearly 500,000 Thai Baht/capita/year in 2005, the second highest province in Thailand after Rayong, while in 2005, the GPP per capita of Samut Songkram is only around 60,000 Thai Baht/capita/year (Figure 4).

Through these different economic different paths, these two Samut provinces are also different in their economic strengths. By applying the location quotient analysis, Table 1 shows that the economic strength of Samut Sakorn province lies on the manufacturing sector, like textile and garment industries, rubber and food industries, while Samut Songkram still keeps their strengths in several traditional productions, like fruits, salt, marine fishery, etc. Surprisingly, in Samut Songkram, health and social works can be one of the strong economic sectors in the province. This may also be one of the factors that lead to different development outcomes, discussed in the next part.

One of the main consequences of the rapid economic growth in Samut Sakorn is the rapid increase in total population (as shown in Figure 5) due to the higher needs of labour for the industrial sector. Inevitably, as seen in several cases, the increase in total population reduces social cohesion within the community and, at the same time, results in higher environmental quality and in more requisites for several social services.

**Figure 1: Changes in economic structure of Samut Sakorn Province**
A Tale of Two Samut Cities

Source: Calculated from the GPP and GRP data by National Economic and Social Development Board.

**Figure 2: Changes in economic structure of Samut Songkram Province**
Figure 3: Gross Provincial Products at 1988 constant price of two Samut Provinces

Source: Calculated from the GPP and GRP data by National Economic and Social Development Board.
Table 1: Ten leading economic sectors in two Samut Provinces analysed by location Quotient Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Samut Sakorn</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Samut Songkram</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001  2006</td>
<td></td>
<td>2001  2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile industry</td>
<td>4.03  4.27</td>
<td>Salt mining</td>
<td>28.06 39.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine fishery</td>
<td>1.94  3.79</td>
<td>Tobacco industry</td>
<td>15.14 7.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office equipment</td>
<td>3.02  3.55</td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>4.29  6.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garment industry</td>
<td>3.32  2.90</td>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>3.85  5.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt mining</td>
<td>5.21  2.73</td>
<td>Health and social welfare</td>
<td>3.93  4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber industry</td>
<td>2.84  2.61</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4.13  4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House-ware industry</td>
<td>1.99  2.00</td>
<td>Insurance and pension service</td>
<td>3.30  4.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper industry</td>
<td>1.38  1.96</td>
<td>Financial support service</td>
<td>2.94  3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food industry</td>
<td>1.66  1.72</td>
<td>Forestry products (Charcoal)</td>
<td>1.95  3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal works industry</td>
<td>1.66  1.54</td>
<td>Wholesale and retail</td>
<td>3.39  3.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculated from the GPP and GRP data by National Economic and Social Development Board.

Figure 4: Gross Provincial Products per capita of two Samut Provinces

Source: Calculated from the GPP and GRP data by National Economic and Social Development Board.

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Development Outcomes of Two Samut Cities

In modernisation theory, it is implied that the richer the economy, the greater the wellbeing of society. However, in reality, this is not always true. Table 2 presents different development indicators of these two Samut provinces. Although, in terms of GPP per capita, Samut Sakorn has 8 times higher income than Samut Songkram, Samut Sakorn still faces more serious problems in several aspects. Samut Sakorn province has a rate of new HIV/AIDS patients almost 9 times higher than Samut Songkram. The percentage of households affected by pollution of Samut Sakorn is 20 times higher than Samut Songkram. At the same time, Samut Sakorn also has a higher rate in risky health behaviour, crimes, and surprisingly, unemployment. Last, but not least, the percentage of households participating in community activities is also much lower in Samut Sakorn.
Table 2: Some selected development indicators of Samut Sakorn and Samut Songkram provinces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development Indicators</th>
<th>Samut Sakorn</th>
<th>Samut Songkram</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gross provincial product per capita (Baht/capita/year)</td>
<td>449,780</td>
<td>61,311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of new HIV/AIDS patients (per 100,000 population)</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of infants with low birth weight (%)</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of unemployment (%)</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of households with poverty (%)</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of households affected by pollution (%)</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of crimes per 100,000 population</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of households participated in community activities (%)</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>93.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of population with risky health behaviours (%)</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


However, Table 2 still presents only some pictures of the development outcomes of these two provinces. To present the development outcomes in overall picture, this study applies the Human Achievement Index (HAI), developed by UNDP Thailand. In HAI, the overall human development outcome comprises of 8 aspects as presented in Table 3. The index in each aspects presents in term of rank (1 = the best and 76 = the worst performance) and levels (5 levels from very low to very high).

The result from the Table 3 shows that, with the strong economic growth, Samut Sakorn is very strong in income and employment aspects (no. 3 in the country), as well as in health, transportation and communication. Although, in these aspects, Samut Songkram ranks lower than Samut Sakorn, Samut Songkram is still in the ‘very high’ and ‘high’ position. On the contrary, Samut Sakorn registers ‘very low’ performance situation in several categories including: education, housing and living environment, and participation (no.76 in the country) aspects, as well as ‘low’ performance in family and community life. Samut Songkram is only registers ‘very low’ performance in family and community life. This leads to the overall result that Samut Songkram province has a better human achievement index ranking than Samut Sakron (no. 11 compared to no. 24 in the country), though Samut Songkram has a much lower GPP per
Towards Global Transformation

capita, as earlier discussed in this paper. This result confirms that, unlike in modernisation theory, the richer economy does not always yield the better quality of life and wellbeing. In this case, it is obvious that Samut Sakorn is now facing the tension between high economic growth and severe social problems, while human development in Samut Songkram is more balanced and, therefore, higher in wellbeing outcomes.

Recently, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security announced that Samut Songkram is the best province in the country in the 2006 human security index (Social Warning Centre, 2007). This also stresses the good performance of more balanced development in Samut Songkram province.

Table 3: The ranks of the Human Achievement Index in two Samut provinces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects in Human Achievement Index</th>
<th>Samut Sakorn</th>
<th>Samut Songkram</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPP per Capita</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health index</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education index</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment index</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income index</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing and living environment index</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and community life</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and communication</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Human Achievement Index</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Rank 1 is the best performing province in the country in each aspect. Rank 76 is the worst performing province in the country in each aspect.

The home of exotic Thai products and lifestyles

It has been manifest that Samut Songkram, despite its generally assumed slower pace along the development track, is able to preserve its ecological and cultural assets much better than Samut Sakorn. Nowadays, Samut Songkram is renowned as one of the cultural oases which are still alive in modern Thai society. Each year it has welcomed more than 400,000 visitors who are inspired by the nostalgic atmosphere of the city.

Samut Sakorn, to some extent, has struggled very hard to rescue some of the last vestiges of its eco-cultural identities. Although the result now is still far from satisfactory, some efforts
have been recognised. Table 4 below shows some records of their achievements as well as those of Samut Songkram.

**Table 4: The exotic Thai products and lifestyles in Samut Sakorn and Samut Songkram**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Samut Sakorn</th>
<th>Samut Songkram</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exotic Thai products</td>
<td>-shrimp paste -sea mussel</td>
<td>-worm shell at Don Hoy Lord - charcoal making from mangrove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-’Phetsakorn’ longan</td>
<td></td>
<td>-wood at Baan Yisarn -coconut-palm sugar at Tao Tan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Salt farming</td>
<td></td>
<td>-’Ampawa’ lychees at Bang Khonthee district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-stake-trapped mackerels from Mae Klong River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-shrimp paste at Klong Khone - products from nipa palms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-fiddle making at Baan Phaya Sor -rolling cigarettes at Bang Khonthee district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exotic Thai lifestyles</td>
<td>-local fishery village, fishery canals -Seafood market at Mahachai</td>
<td>-Tha Kha floating market - Ampawa floating market -Folk museum, Baan Yisarn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Bird-watching at Kok Kham Mangrove Forest</td>
<td>-Firefly watching boat trip -Home stay at Bang Pongpang and other communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-plank propelling on a mud bank for mussel picking at Don Hoy Lord</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Samut Songkram, the preservation of these exotic Thai products and lifestyles has been overwhelmingly supported by local government as well as local civil society, with the belief that it can promote community economy and local employment. In other words, it is hoped that this development track will nurture social relationship among community and family members. Social capitals are thus intensively emphasised within this development path, as Surachit Chiravet, former president of Samut Songkram’s Chamber of Commerce stated:

We, the people of Mae Klong must not be hopeless. We are not hopeless because we have social capitals, which are the wisdom of our predecessors and our tradition. This set of knowledge from the past can be applied to serve our problem solving at present (Surachit Chiravet, 2004).
On the contrary, in Samut Sakorn social capital is not a prominent public agenda. And the call for the mobilisation of it is still too quiet to be heard.

**Future challenges of the two Samut cities**

Obviously, the future challenges of these two Samut cities are different. For Samut Sakorn, the key questions are how to turn their high income into better quality of life. As shown in Table 5, social investments in Samut Sakorn are relatively low compared to Samut Songkram, both in terms of percentage in total GPP and social investment per capita. This possibly links to lower scores in educational, environmental and participation indices. The future challenge here is to stimulate social investment in Samut Sakorn.

**Table 5: Social investment in GPP of two Samut provinces (millions of baht)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Samut Sakorn</th>
<th>Samut Songkram</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1,011</td>
<td>1,468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and social work</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>1,347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other community, social, and personal service activities</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Social Investment</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,578</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,589</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Provincial Product (GPP)</td>
<td>159,304</td>
<td>252,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage in GPP</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.618</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.423</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>482,000</td>
<td>510,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Investment per Capita (Baht)</td>
<td>5,348.5</td>
<td>7,037.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Calculated from the GPP and GRP data by National Economic and Social Development Board.*

At the same time, the recovery and conservation of natural resources and environmental quality, like water quality or air quality, in Samut Sakorn are far below environmental standards. However, natural conservation and recovery are must take place within the context of strong community participation. This leads to the conclusion that the future challenge in Samut Sakorn lies in the possibility of building strong community in a very diverse society.

For Samut Songkram, although their quality of life is higher than Samut Sakorn, they also face several challenges. First of all,
the reductions in total population and agricultural production (in constant price GPP) lead to the serious question on the sustainability of their ways of life. Samut Songkram must try harder to translate their impressive social investment into better economic performances, especially in the agricultural sector, otherwise their several present exotic productions will sooner or later become historical tales.

Second, Samut Songkarm is now facing the threats of mega-projects. Three years ago, the Thai government planned to build a highway crossing the Gulf of Thailand and the mouth of the Mae Klong River. This highway may cause several negative impacts on natural environmental, local economy, and local culture. Fortunately, a local civil group in Samut Songkram actively protested against this highway until the government decided to stop this project. However, now the new project, 800-1,000 MW coal-fired power plant, is coming to knock at their door. Although, as shown in Table 6, this coal-fired power plant is more likely to serve the 850 MW peak demand of Samut Sakorn rather than a tiny 40 MW demand of Samut Songkram, this power plant is planned to be located on Samut Songkram and may cause severe environmental and health impacts on the Samut Songkram side. It is very challenging for Samut Songkram to keep their province away from the negative impacts of mega-projects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6: Comparison of installed capacity and energy consumption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Installed capacity (Megawatts)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal-fired power plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peak demand (Megawatts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samut Sakorn province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samut Songkram province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: Own calculation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

The different development paths lead these two Samut provinces into different directions and, therefore, different development outcomes. From an agricultural base growing from the three water
ecosystems, Samut Sakorn has now become the industrial hub with the second highest GPP per capita in the country. However, Samut Sakorn cannot turn its higher economic performance into satisfactory human and social development outcomes. On the contrary, although Samut Songkram has been much slower in terms of industrial development and economic growth, they can keep their traditional production strengths and, at the same time, provide better human development and wellbeing outcomes. This certainly can be one of the good examples that, unlike modernisation theory, the richer economies do not necessary to end up with a better quality of life.

The future challenges are waiting for these two Samut cities. For Samut Sakorn, higher and better social investments are needed. Samut Songkram will be more sustainable if they can turn their strong social capital into better economic performance. It will also be interesting to see what lessons are taken from these two Samut sisters and how they will inform and urge Thai society to rethink their development path and direction, especially in the quest for sufficiency economy.

References


The Development of Thai Mental Health Indicator (TMHI): From Past to Present

Apichai Mongkol,* Tavee Tangseree,° Pichet Udomratn,♣ Watchanee Huttapanom,® Worawan Chutha©

Abstract

Thailand has realised the importance and need of developing Thai mental health indicators to investigate the mental health of Thai people. In 2000, the Thai mental health indicator for the individual level was developed to study the country-wide mental health of Thai people and to examine the change of mental health or wellbeing of Thai people. The objective of this paper is to present the processes of developing a Thai mental health indicator from 2000 to the present. The mental health indicator is a worthy and useful instrument, especially to investigate the country-wide happiness of the Thai people in 2000 and 2005.

Methods

This paper will review both research projects on the Thai Mental Health Indicator (TMHI). The sample size of the first research project on TMHI covered the population from the north-east region, but the second covered populations from all regions. Both of the TMHI research projects were split into 3 phases: Phase I, to study the content validity; Phase II, to study the first construct validity; and Phase III, to study the second construct validity, reliability, concurrent validity, and normal value. In each development of the research instrument, meetings with mental health experts, including psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, psychologists and social workers were carried out to discuss the research data in each phase. The data collectors were nurses,

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* Deputy Director-General Department of Mental Health
° Director of Khon Kaen Rajanagarindra Psychiatric Hospital, Thailand
♣ Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand
® Psychiatric Nurse, Khon Kaen Rajanagarindra Psychiatric Hospital, Thailand
© Mental Health Department, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand
psychologists, and social workers who underwent training workshops until they could use the research tool skilfully. Research statistics were descriptive statistics, factor analysis, Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient, and Kappa statistic.

**Results**

The 2000 Thai Mental Health Indicator (TMHI) had 2 versions: full (66 items) and short (15 items); with 4 domains including 1) mental state 2) mental capacity 3) mental quality 4) supporting factors); and with 20 sub-domains. The scores were divided into 3 groups: good, fair, and poor mental health. Adjusted in 2003, the Thai Mental Health Indicator (TMHI) had 2 versions: complete version (54 items) and short version (15 items) with the same 4 domains, but only 15 sub-domains. The scores were divided into 3 groups: good (118-162 points), fair (99-117 points), and poor mental health (98 points or below). The short version scores were also divided into 3 groups: good (33-45 points), fair (28-34 points), and poor mental health (27 points or below). The agreement study was found between the complete and short version TMHI with substantial results (kappa statistic 0.63, p-value <0.001).

**Introduction**

Thailand has developed a variety of instruments to measure the mental health of Thai people such as Thai Mental Health Indicator (Suwanee Kiewkingkeaw, 1987), the development of mental health indicator (Amphorn Otrakul, et al., 1997), WHO Quality of Life – BREF (THAI) Assessment (Suwat Mahatnirunkul et al, 1997), and the Norm Profile for the Thai Mental Health Questionnaire (Sucheera Phattharayuttawat et al, 1999). These instruments had some weak points such as they didn’t cover the mental health definition in the context of Thai culture; data collection was from patients at hospital settings – not a national scale population. This tool has been developed since 2000 to measure mental health or wellbeing of all Thai people (happiness and mental health are the same subject in Thai culture). The aim of this paper is to present the processes of developing the Thai mental health indicators from 2000 to nowadays. Now this tool has been used nationwide.
Methods

This paper will review both research projects on the Thai Mental Health Indicator (TMHI). In 2000, the research on the Thai mental health indicator at the individual level was done first. The 1429 study-population was selected with the multi-stage sampling method from 11 provinces in North-east region of Thailand: Khonkean, Uponrajathani, Nakornrajasima, Kalasin, Leoi, Sakonakorn, Hlongkai, Roy-et, Buriram, Chaiyapum, and Amnajareon. In 2003, the development and testing of the new version of the Thai mental health indicators was carried out. The study-population was from all regions of Thailand: central, north, north-east, east, and south. The determination of the sample size was from the following formula:

\[
N = \frac{Z^2 \alpha /2}{d^2} \cdot \frac{P (1-P)}{2}
\]

- \(Z^2 \alpha /2\) = Confidence level at 95 % (1.96)
- \(P\) = prevalence of people with low mental health (28.4 %)
- \(d\) = Maximum permissible error
  = 10 % of 28.4 % (0.028)
- \(N\) = 996.39

Owing to the multi-stage stratified cluster sampling, the determination of the sample size in the 2000 research had to multiply the design effect by 2: 996 (sample size) x 2 was 1,992. So each region had to collect a total of 400 cases. But in the later research, the sample size was calculated from research items (157 items). Each item required 5-10 cases, so sample size was 1500 cases. However the determination of sample size of both research projects was similar.

The inclusion criteria of the study population
- age between 15 years-old to 60 years-old
- live in the village at least 1 year
- can communicate, not dumb or deaf
- cooperative
The exclusion criteria of study population
- cannot reply to all the items of the research questionnaire
- being severe ill
- being in a coma or unconscious

The study population was divided into 3 groups according to the area of district government, or Or-bor-tor in Thai. These groups included: 1) Or-bor-tor level 1-2 (rich economic status), 2) Or-bor-tor level 3 (middle economic status), and 3) Or-bor-tor level 1-2 (poor economic status) as show in below figure 1.

Figure 1: The sampling method in the second and the third phases of research

Note: The economic status was classified into 5 levels of district government according to the total yearly income of each district government that obtained from customs duty, tax, service charge etc. These levels included:
- Or-bor-tor level 1 has total yearly income more than 20 millions (baht)
- Or-bor-tor level 2 has total yearly income 12-20 millions (baht)
- Or-bor-tor level 3 has total yearly income 6-12 millions (baht)
- Or-bor-tor level 4 has total yearly income 3-6 millions (baht)
- Or-bor-tor level 5 has total yearly income not more than 3 millions (baht)
The development of research tools in 3 phases

The research instruments were developed by the same principles both times with 3 phases as described in what follows.

Phase I
In the first (2000) research project on the Thai Mental Health Indicator (TMHI), a research instrument was developed by reviewing all related documents and research from both Thailand and other countries. The first instrument used 157 items to collect data in phase II and III and analyse factors (factor analysis) to study the construct validity. In this stage, the amount of items was reduced to 66. In the 2nd (2003) research project on TMHI, the instrument with 66 items was developed again by reviewing additionally all related documents and research from both Thailand and other countries at a mental health experts meeting. In this stage, the instrument had 80 items with 21 sub-domains grouped under four main domains: 1) mental state, 2) mental capacity, 3) mental quality, and 4) supporting factors.

Phase II
TMHI (2003) included 80 items, and was based on a study of the first construct validity with a 2,024 study-population who lived in the areas of metropolitan municipal government administration, city municipal government administration, and Or-bor-tor level 1-5 from 15 provinces in 5 regions. From data analysis and a mental health experts meeting held to discuss the results, the TMHI remained the same domains and sub-domains, but adjusted some questions and reduced the number of items from 80 to 73.

Phase III
The third phase studied the second construct validity and the norm of the instrument with 73 items from phase II. The data were collected with the same determination of sample size, but in new areas of 15 provinces. After analysing data, a mental health experts meeting was held to discuss the results. In this stage, the instrument was divided into 2 forms; the complete form included 54 items and the short form 15 items. After that, the normal value of both instruments was studied by separating people according
to the value obtained, to be above average, average, and under average; the instruments were then studied for reliability.

Data collectors were nurses, psychologists and social workers who underwent a training workshop and could use the research tool skillfully. Research statistics were descriptive, median and percentile to study the norm values, factor analysis to study the construct validity, Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient to study the reliability, correlation coefficient to study the concurrent validity, and Kappa statistic to study the agreement between the complete and brief Thai mental health indicator.

**Results of the development of Thai Mental Health Indicator**

1. The paper, Thai Mental Health Indicator – TMHI – version (2003), was developed under the following definition of mental health: “a good mental health or well-being results from mastering the competency of daily problem-solving, the potential to develop owner-self into a better quality of life, which covered intrapsychic goodness under changeful society and environment”. From the above definition, Thai Mental Health Indicator – TMHI – new version (2003) was classified into the same four domains as TMHI-2000 version, but reduced the 20 sub-domains of TMHI-2000 versions to 15 sub-domains as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Domains and sub-domains of Thai Mental Health Indicator (TMHI-2003)**
2. The changes made between the sub-domains in 2000 and 2003 can be compared in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thai Mental Health Indicator (TMHI)</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete version</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Subdomains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subdomains</td>
<td>Subdomains</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sub-domains that were disappeared: 1. Body image and appearance 2. Activities of daily living 3. Recreation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Physical environment Sub-domain that was combined:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Altruism was combined to the sub-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>domain of kindness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. The value of reliability (Cronbach’s alpha coefficient) in domain 1 (mental state) was 0.83, domain 2 (mental capacity) 0.81, domain 3 (mental quality) 0.86, and domain 4 (supporting factors) 0.83 as shown below in Table 2.

| Table 2: The data of descriptive statistic and reliability value of domain 1, 2, 3, and 4 of Thai Mental Health Indicator (TMHI) - Complete version (n = 2,401) |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-----------|-----|-----|-----------------|
| Factor          | Number of item | S.D. | Potential range | Obtained range | Cronbach's alpha coefficient |
| Domain          |                 |     |                 |                 |                               |
| Mental state    | 13             | 29.83 | 4.70 | 0-39 | 5-39 | .83 |
| Mental Capacity | 15             | 28.0  | 4.97 | 0-45 | 8-45 | .81 |
| Mental Quality  | 14             | 27.75 | 5.12 | 0-42 | 0-42 | .86 |
| Supporting Factors | 12          | 22.89 | 4.59 | 0-36 | 0-36 | .83 |

4. The norm values of Thai Mental Health Indicator were calculated for both TMHI-54 and TMHI-15 (full TMHI and short TMHI). The median of Thai Mental Health Indicator – TMHI-54 was 109, the points at 25th and 75th percentile were 99 and 117 points respectively and could be classified into 3 groups of mental health as shown by the following:
Thai Mental Health Indicator – TMHI-54

118 – 162 = better mental health
99 – 117 = normal mental health
98 points or below = lower mental health

Thai Mental Health Indicator (TMHI) - short form

35 – 45 = better mental health
28 – 34 = normal mental health
27 points or below = lower mental health

For more detail see the following table 3.

Table 3: The norm values of Thai Mental Health Indicator – TMHI-54 and TMHI-15 (full TMHI and short TMHI) (n = 2,390)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>TMHI-54</th>
<th>TMHI-15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>108.30</td>
<td>31.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>14.46</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>109.00</td>
<td>31.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th percentile</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75th percentile</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential range</td>
<td>0-162</td>
<td>0-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtained range</td>
<td>39-161</td>
<td>9-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. In the study of agreement between TMHI-54 (Full TMHI) and TMHI-15 (short TMHI), the kappa statistic was equal to 0.63 with statistical significance (p < 0.001) and 95 % CI = 0.60-0.66 as seen in the following table 4.

Table 4: The value of agreement study between TMHI-54 and TMHI-15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pairs</th>
<th>Kappa statistic</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TMHI-54 and TMHI-15</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.60 – 0.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

The development of the Thai mental health indicator has been done successively since 2000. The first instrument was separated into 2 forms: complete form (66 items) and short form (15). In the first effort, the study-population was only in the north-east region of Thailand and did not cover all regions. The study was done again in 2003 with a study-population from all 5 regions of Thailand. This instrument was more complete because it was constructed under the context of Thai society, especially in the domain of mental quality that emphasised kindness and altruism. This domain is in accordance with the Buddhist principle that stresses the importance of having good mental health and feelings of happiness due to having a normal mind, or keeping one’s own mind normal when contacted with stimuli. Keeping one’s own mind normal when facing a problem is in accordance with the domain of supporting factors and with the Prathampidok that the other happiness is the one derived from the external.

In this study, the normal value (normative model), in conjunction with data analysis at the 25th and 75th percentile, is used to determine the level of mental health. Because the distribution of scores is non-normal distribution, the scores are divided into 3 standard groups: good, fair, and poor mental health. The normative model is used due to not having instruments or psychiatrists to diagnose exactly whose mental health is normal or abnormal. The scores of the study population were used as a norm.

Conclusion

Thailand initiated the THMI in 2000 and completed the research instrument by 2003. In the survey of the mental health of Thai people with TMHI-15 in 2001, it was found that 28.4 percent of Thai people had poor mental health. 71.6 percent registered good and fair mental health. Meanwhile, the survey in 2003 found that 31.9 percent of Thai people had poor mental health. In 2007, the Department of Mental Health at the Ministry of Public Health has surveyed the mental health of Thai people again, and the data is currently being analysed.
The TMHI has been developed to be a reliable instrument for assessing the mental health of the Thai population under the context of Thai society and culture. It has been used to investigate the country-wide happiness of Thai people in 2001, 2005, and now. The results of the three surveys could be compared to show the trend of happiness of Thai people and could determine the policy of further promotion and prevention of mental health for Thai people.

Reference


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Decker Inc.


The Concept of Happiness: The Bridge between Western and Eastern Thought, and Empirical Evidence of Bangkokián’s Happiness Determinants

Kanokporn Nitnitiphrut

Abstract

Happiness is born from not only ‘self’ but also ‘environmental’ elements which influence the human feeling of happiness. Following the concept of Buddhist Economics, the ecosystem relationship consisting of body-mind, human-human and human-nature is used for this analysis. In addition, there are three dimensions of happiness: ‘man,’ ‘mind’ and ‘environment.’ The ‘man’ dimension is an observed happiness model with self-reported evaluation. The ‘mind’ dimension is explained by a descriptive analysis of the relationship between proxies of the Noble Eightfold Path using Thai proverbs and happiness factors such as age, gender, marital status, educational level. The ‘environmental’ dimension consists of two parts: social environment and natural environment. In terms of the pilot study, this study uses a random sampling survey using a happiness questionnaire. Bangkok citizens who were over 15 years old, and were living in Bangkok in March.

° Public Policy Development Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand.

∗ This paper is based on a thesis, ‘Happiness Concept and How Thai People Perceived: A Pilot Study Based on the Survey of Bankokians, 2007,’ Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University. Moreover, this thesis is recipient of the Honourable Mention Poster Presentation Award in Social Sciences and Humanities in the 8th National Graduate Research Conference at Mahidol University, 7-8 September 2007. The author acknowledges her gratefulness for revisions by Dr. Sauwalak Kitiprapas and Dr. Somboon Siriprachai, and grammar improvements by Prakirati Satasut and Wirunya Kokasemsook, and assistances by Attakrit Leckcivirize and Nutsuchol Intrawut. Furthermore, the thesis would never come into existence without the support and encouragement from many people. I would like to thank my family, my advisors and committees: Dr. Somboon Siriprachai, Dr. Direk Pramasiriwat, Dr. Narong Petprasert and Dr. Chaiyuth Punyasavatsut, my brotherhood and sisterhood in Political Economy Research Center, and every teacher and friend from the faculty of Economics at Thammasat University and Chulalongkorn University.

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Introduction

In Western studies, even though economics and psychology are two distinct disciplines, in recent decades many economic studies on happiness have developed under assistance from psychological theories for topics of definition and measurement, including framework and pattern of happiness. For instance, Easterlin (1974) studied the relationship between happiness and wealth by examining the population of the U.S. from 1946-1970. His findings question traditional principle that economic prosperity provides happiness to a society or individual, and this became known as the ‘Easterlin paradox.’ Furthermore, Brickman and Campbell (1971) based the concept of hedonic treadmill on a notion of adaptation level to explain the phenomena of adaptation in perception and judgment.

Eastern philosophy, especially Buddhist, does not directly explain happiness, but reducing suffering is considered a parallel of increasing happiness. Buddhist Economics as alternative theory in economics has scientifically been developed since Ernst Schumacher’s essays, ‘Buddhist Economics,’ (1966), that were later compiled into the book ‘Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered.’ It is used almost exclusively by followers of Schumacher and by certain Theravada Buddhist writers such as Prayudh Payutto and Phrabhavanaviriakhun. Later, Apichai Puntasen explained Buddhism as an alternative of economic theory in 2001 with his writing, ‘Buddhist Economics: Evolution, Theory and Application in Economics.’

‘Happiness’ is an interesting topic for both academics in economics, psychology and neuroscience, as well as policy makers. At present, economists, psychologists, scientists and policy makers have attempted to push theory, methodology and policy option relating with happiness, or subjective wellbeing, to be well-known. Thailand is a country which is very interested in

2007 make up the sampling frame. Two statistical methods are chosen: Ordered Response for the ‘man’ dimension, and Chi-square test for the ‘mind’ dimension.

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development concentrating on peoples’ happiness as a goal and has tried to develop some kinds of indicators beyond GDP.

For example, Office of Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) has recently constructed the Green and Happiness Index. However, happiness studies in Thailand, especially in economics concerning scientific exploration, still lacks knowledge, understanding and education in terms of using experiments to support human behaviours. Likewise, there is a lack of comprehension in methodology for happiness studies in economics which is an important impediment in the development of economic research and policy options. Therefore, a goal of this study is to find what the suitable happiness pattern is for Thais. This study benefits from scientific explanations from Western studies in synthesis with Buddhist Economics as representative of Eastern culture.

There are three parts in this paper: conceptual framework, methodology and results. Understanding the concept of happiness is so important, but has been ignored in most studies in Thailand in recent years. This study concentrates on constructing a proper happiness framework under cultural constraint, and then tests it. This framework adds some factors following the concept of Buddhist Economics, and expands the frontier in analysing not only ‘self’ but also ‘mind’ and ‘environmental’ elements which influence human happiness.

1. Conceptual framework of human happiness

The objectives of this study are to construct a theoretical framework and to test it. The theoretical framework should be able to answer two questions: What is happiness? How do we measure it? This part initially explains happiness concepts and the psychological mechanisms creating happiness in order to get a clear happiness definition for this study.

1.1 Concept of happiness

In many literatures, the focus of happiness, or the so-called subjective wellbeing, is on two aspects: affect and cognition. ‘Affect’ is the label attached to moods and emotions, representing people’s instant evaluation of the events that occur in their lives.
Whereas the cognitive component refers to the rational or intellectual aspects of subjective wellbeing, it has been shown that pleasant affect, unpleasant affect and life satisfaction are separable constructs. Even though its definition looks like a component or source to the concept of happiness, the difference is that its elements are constructed theoretically.

Most definitions of happiness are related with emotional states, for example, Layard (2002) defines happiness to mean feeling good, enjoying life and feeling that it is wonderful, but in contrast unhappiness means feeling bad and wishing for things. Similarly, Vermunt et al. (1989) defines happiness to be an emotional state, which is sensitive to sudden mood changes. Another source defines life satisfaction as a cognitive and judgmental state which questions an assessment of life as a whole. However, most economists who conduct studies over this issue are more interested in its determinants rather than the definitions. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, satisfaction is gratification of a desire, need, or appetite, and the pleasure derived from such gratification. On the other hand, wellbeing is the state of being healthy, happy or prosperous and welfare. Happiness can also be seen as good fortune, and as having, showing or being marked by pleasure.

Secondly, Western psychological tradition, for example, has generally left the hard question of ‘What is happiness’ to philosophers for debate, and gone on to study ‘perceived’ happiness and its correlates. In so doing, researchers have achieved a general consensus to operationalise happiness in terms of (1) positive affect; (2) life satisfaction; and (3) absence of negative affect, a part of cognitive ones such as Andrews and Withey (1976), Diener (1984), Argyle (1987), Lu (1995) (cited in Lu (2001), p.408).

From the above literature reviews, this study follows a subjective notion of happiness. It is useful to look at two polar concepts of happiness: subjective happiness and objective happiness.

Frey and Stutzer (2002b, p.4-6) explain that objective happiness refers to physiological approaches, which endeavour to capture subjective wellbeing, especially by measuring brain waves.
of human beings. This approach comes close to the idea of a hedonometer, which is directly a measure of cardinal utility. Besides, as another concept of happiness in between the polar extremes of subjective and objective happiness, experience sampling measures are typically carried out several times a day for many days to ascertain moods, emotions, and other feelings at random moments in individuals’ everyday lives.

**Figure 1 Concepts of Happiness**

The hedonic, which is an objectively oriented concept, is useful for many of the intricate questions posed by some psychologists. The more objective methods can reduce the memory biases that in turn affect retrospective reports of experience in global self-reports. Moreover, these approaches have the advantage of being precise in terms of measurement. To a large extent, these measures assess an individual’s level of affect. The subjectively oriented concept which is necessarily less precise in terms of cognitive processes may be differed among individuals and over time plays a major role, but cognition brings to subjective happiness. These concepts are useful for issues connected with happiness, which have a bearing on social aspects. Moreover, physiological and moment-based measures rely on strongly normative judgments in the sense that happiness is assessed according to fixed rules. However, our attitude toward
particular pleasures and pains is not a priori given. Individual wellbeing is not an isolated feeling, but strongly depends on the conditions in which the persons concerned live. Thus, social comparisons are of great importance and have to be taken into account. Similarly, individuals have not a fixed, once and for all given grid for measurement; they adjust to changing circumstances. A case in point is the effect of earning higher income on happiness. At first, individuals indicate a higher degree of happiness, but after some months, this increase tends to evaporate, and the level of happiness is not much higher that it was before the increase in income. These, and related aspects of subjective happiness, will be extensively discussed in this study.

1.2 Psychological mechanisms producing happiness

Frey and Stutzer (2002b, p.11-13) explained that subjective wellbeing or happiness is an attitude consisting of the two basic aspects of cognition and affect. ‘Affect’ is the label attached to moods and emotions. Affect presents people’s instant evaluation of the events that occur in their lives. The cognitive component refers to the rational or intellectual aspects of subjective wellbeing. It is often assessed with measures of satisfaction by showing that pleasant affect, unpleasant affect, and life satisfaction are separately constructed.

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Kahneman and Krueger (2006, p.7-8) reported that: ‘Findings from neuroscience research also lend some support for the view that life satisfaction measures are related to individuals’ emotional states. By way of background, note that there is strong clinical and experimental evidence that activity in the left prefrontal cortex of the brain is associated with the processing of approach and pleasure, whereas the corresponding area in the right hemisphere is active in the processing of avoidance and aversive stimuli. In particular, the left prefrontal cortex is more active when individuals are exposed to pleasant images or asked to think happy thoughts, while the right prefrontal cortex is more active when individuals are shown unpleasant pictures and asked to think sad thoughts. A recent study using several measures of psychological wellbeing reported a statistically significant correlation of 0.30 between survey reports of life satisfaction and the left-right difference in brain activation (Urry et al., 2004).’
The cognitive aspect involves a component of judgment and comparison. Happiness is thus not given and immutable, but is constructed within the person concerned and heavily depends on the social environment within which each person has been socialised and within which he or she lives. There are, in particular, three psychological processes that have to be taken into account: aspiration, adaptation and social comparison.

Aspiration, or satisfaction treadmill, demonstrates that people always evaluate their situation with regard to an aspiration level that is systematically formed by their hopes and expectations. It has a negative relation between aspiration level and happiness report.

Adaptation, or hedonic treadmill, explains that people get used to new circumstances and accordingly adjust their subjective level of wellbeing. This refers to a lot of different mechanisms; in the case of habituation, it is an automatic passive biological process.

Social comparison, or relative theory, is a relative measuring stick with respect to subjective happiness. People compare their status with those of relevant other persons.

1.3 Theoretical framework
Economists have had a long-standing preference in studying peoples’ revealed preferences by looking at individuals’ actual choices and decisions rather than their stated intentions or subjective reports of likes and dislikes. Yet people often make choices that bear a mixed relationship to their own happiness. A large number of literature from behavioural economics and psychology find that people often make inconsistent choices, fail to learn from past experience, exhibit reluctance to trade, base their own satisfaction on how well their situation is compared to the satisfaction of others and depart from the standard model of the rational economic agent. If people display their bounded rationality when it comes to maximise their utility, then their choices do not necessarily reflect their ‘true’ preferences, and an exclusive reliance on choices to infer what people desire loses some of its appeal. Direct reports of subjective wellbeing may have a useful role in measuring consumer preferences and social
welfare, if they can be done in a credible way (Kahneman and Krueger, 2006, p.3).

This part will discuss how to construct a happiness framework in economics from individuals' responses to subjective wellbeing. While various measures of wellbeing are useful for some purposes, it is important to recognise that subjective wellbeing measures features of individuals' perceptions of their experiences, not their utility as economists typically conceive of it. Those perceptions are a more accurate gauge of actual feelings if they are reported closer to the time of, and in direct reference to, the actual experience (Kahneman and Krueger, 2006, p.3).

On the other hand, to answer both well-known problems in economics, Experienced Utility is the proper theory to assess subjective wellbeing. In order to construct a Thai happiness pattern, Buddhist Economics is an appropriate theory to support the cultural constraint. Whereas, the definition of happiness under Buddhist philosophy is reducing suffering which brings an increase in happiness, and opposites from Western thought using the concept of consumption.

(1) To answer 'How to measure?'

The earliest popular conceptions of utility, from Jeremy Bentham through Francis Ysidro Edgeworth and Alfred Marshall, were as a continuous hedonic flow of pleasure or pain. Kahneman calls this conception experienced utility, and it is also similar to what Juster, Courant and Dow (1985; Kahneman and Krueger, 2006, p.4) call process benefits. Edgeworth defines the happiness of an individual during a period of time as the sum of the momentary

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3 Moreover, 'Procedural Utility' is an extended utility from 'Experienced Utility' in terms of utility from a process. Participations in family and politics are factors as a process utility in this study.

4 Juster, Courant and Dow define process benefits as the 'direct subjective consequences from engaging in some activities to the exclusion of others. For instance, how much an individual likes or dislikes the activity 'painting one’s house,' in conjunction with the amount of time one spends in painting the house, is as important determinant of well-being independent of how satisfied one feels about having a freshly painted house.'
utilities over that time period; that is the temporal integral of momentary utility.

Bentham (1789; Kahneman et al., 1997, p.375, Stigler, 1950) points out what we ought to do, as well as determines what we shall do. This usage was retained in the economic writings of the nineteenth century, but it was gradually replaced by a different interpretation. In current economics or called decision theory by Kahneman et al. (1997), the utility of outcomes and attributes refers to their weight in decisions. Decision utility is inferred from observed choices and used to explain these choices. To distinguish the two notions, Bentham’s concept shall be referred to as ‘experienced utility’ and the modern usage as ‘decision utility.’

Pleasure and displeasure are seen as attributes of each moment of experience, but the outcomes at which people set their value are normally extended over time. The basic building block of experienced utility in this analysis is instant utility; a measure of hedonic and affective experience, which can be derived from immediate reports of current subjective experience or from physiological indices. From the writings of Bentham, Jevons and Edgeworth, the instant utility is explained to correspond to the dimension of ‘intensity.’ This analysis is focused on the evaluation of ‘temporally extended outcomes’ (TEOs), such as a single medical procedure or a concatenation of a Kenya safari and subsequent episodes of slide-shows and storytelling. There are two measures of the experienced utility of temporally extended outcomes. Remember utility is a measure on past TEOs, or is inferred from a subject’s retrospective reports of the total pleasure or displeasure associated with past outcomes. Total utility is a normative concept. It is a measure on possible TEOs, which is constructed from temporal profiles of instant utility according to a set of normative rules. Decision Utility is a measure on TEOs which is inferred from choices, either by direct comparisons of similar objects or by indirect methods, such as elicited willingness to pay. Finally, predicted utility refers to beliefs about the experienced utility of outcomes. The relations among the various utility concepts define a complex agenda for this study since experienced utility can be referred to pleasure and pain, reflecting on happiness. Furthermore, this study will add the two important
representatives of procedural utility by participation and relationship factors such as politics and family. Procedural utility was developed from experienced utility by Frey et al. (2003). It extends outcome orientation of experienced utility to a process topic under thought that not only outcomes derived utility, but also utility originates from the process.

In summary, although these two main theories were created from the roots of Western thought, the instant utility definition is the hedonic value of a moment of experience which is immediately reported or recorded under respondents’ transformation function. As those respondents are Thai people, their transformation function is built from Eastern culture. In other words, the endowments of their thought are created from the Thai culture. This is an essential reason why these theories can be applied to happiness studies in Eastern culture. Since these theories are only used to answer the question ‘How to measure happiness?’ in technical terms.

Figure 2: Conceptual framework for experienced utility

On the other hand, due to extensive work by numerous psychologists spanning many decades (recent surveys are Diener et al., 1999, Kahneman et al., 1999) the measurement of utility has made great progress (Frey and Stutzer, 2005, p.3). It is now possible to approximate individual utility in a satisfactory way by
using representative surveys. With the help of a single question, or several questions on global self-reports, it is possible to get indications of individuals' evaluation of their life satisfaction or happiness. Behind the score indicated by a person lies a cognitive assessment to what extent their overall quality of life is judged in a favorable way (Veenhoven, 1993; Stutzer and Frey, 2003, p.2). The measures of reported subjective wellbeing can serve as a proxy for individual utility.

(2) To answer ‘What is happiness?’

Under cultural constraints, Chaiaumporn and Samakkarn (1991) similarly define the meaning of the quality of life and happiness. The quality of life is life happiness, and happiness is generated in terms of physical and mind. Dalkey and Rourke (1972; Dasgupta, 2001, p.15) define wellbeing as a notion wider than welfare due to the inclusion of non-welfare characteristics of social states. However, Tiberius (2004), a moral philosopher interested in the concept of wellbeing, argues that any cross-cultural investigation of wellbeing must assume a universal definition of wellbeing.

In the ‘Eastern’ tradition, there is a saying, which states: ‘No food, one problem. Much money, many problems.’ In Buddhist Economics, happiness is explained in terms of reducing pain or suffering for all living things as much as possible (Puntasen, 2006). Under the principles of sufficiency economics, happiness is defined in terms of self-sufficiency and appropriateness. If we are satisfied with living at a sufficient level, which is reasonable for our status, we will then learn the true meaning of happiness (His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, 1997). On the other hand, Bhutan considers happiness the first goal in their national development, and the definition follows their four philosophic concepts. Definitions of happiness in Eastern culture concentrate on conditions of being appropriate and self-sufficiency.

Furthermore, Frey and Stutzer (2002b) explain the psychological mechanisms to happiness, the cognitive aspect involving a component of judgment and comparison. Happiness is thus not given and immutable, but is constructed within the

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Phra Phaisan Visalo in Your Money or Your Life (in Thai), 2003, p.1
person concerned and largely depends on the social environment within which each person has been socialised and within which he or she lives. There are, in particular, four psychological processes that have to be taken into account: adaptation, aspiration, social comparison and copying; these are called the happiness theories in psychology.

In addition, Bostic and Ptacek (2001) concede that wellbeing is a personal experience, largely independent of the views of others. Moreover, positive and negative attitudes also include an index of life satisfaction. Perceptions of life satisfaction can be made globally (Diener et al., 1985), or can be made in reference to more circumscribed domain of life (Emmons, 1986; Zika and Chamberlain, 1987; Brunstein, 1993). However, in subjective wellbeing assessment, Diener et al. (1985) argues that life satisfaction should include endorsements of integrative statement about one’s feelings about life over several dimensions.

In conclusion, happiness in this study is defined in terms of cognition because such definition is better than a mechanistic view, and suitable with economic assessment and descriptive results. Furthermore, with respect to cultural constraint, the concept of being appropriate in living and self-sufficiency should be included in our happiness definition.

**Happiness analysis under Thai culture**

The definition of happiness for this study is cognition of life satisfaction. Happiness is considered as different cognition and experience for individuals. It means that given everything equal, differences in an individual’s cognition and experience can lead to difference in self-reported life satisfaction. Therefore, happiness pattern under a cultural constraint is a set of determinants leading to differences of individual’s self-reported happiness. However, in fact, human’s happiness is composed of many elements which can be divided into three dimensions based on Buddhist Economic explanatory analysis: man, mind and environment, and they are related. Happiness is influenced not only from ‘self,’ but also ‘mind’ and ‘environment,’ both in society and in natural environment. Therefore, human happiness’s analysis should use the holistic approach. Some happiness factors which are efficient in some Western countries maybe not applicable for Thailand, so this study will exclude some factors
such as ethnicity (as a factor offered by Frey and Stutzer (2002b)) because under Thai society race discrimination is not violent problem, and most Thais are Mongoloid, and includes some proxies based from Buddhist Economics concept.

The applied theories under Thai culture are two main theories: experienced utility using psychological mechanisms and Buddhist Economics. This framework aims to analyse under the ecosystem in three balance concepts: human-nature, human-human and body-mind. Human-nature is a representative of ‘self and nature,’ human and human is that of ‘self-society’ and body and mind is that of ‘self’ (Petprasert, Comment)\(^6\).

Therefore, these three dimensions can be called man, mind and environment; all of which are applied from the concept of Buddhist Economics. The first dimension of this study is a happiness model (or global satisfaction). In terms of happiness factors, there are two parts: (1) main factors: socio-demographic, political and economic factors; explained by psychological mechanisms as a tool of experienced utility, and (2) adding factors which are the so-called ‘sufficient system’ interpreted by Buddhist Economics. For the mind dimension, the Eightfold Path is used to examine individuals’ Threefold Training by using proxies of moral and merit belief. Finally, the environment dimension is composed of two parts: society and natural environment. In terms of natural environment, the ecological footprint from the Living Planet report (2006) is used to explain the present natural status in Thailand. Social environment is explained by the relation of family and community factors.

In summary, in terms of interpretative process, there are two parts: micro and macro levels. First, the micro interpretation uses psychological mechanisms under concept of experienced utility to explain an influence of happiness factors on individual’s happiness. Second, the macro analysis uses three balance concepts or ecosystem relationships in Buddhist Economics.

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\(^6\) Narong Petprasert, a lecturer from Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, as a thesis committee commented it in the proposal presentation, 4 July 2006 at Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University.
Concepts of Buddhism for living happily

To comprehend the balance concept, understanding Buddhist Economics is important. Firstly, Buddhist Economics does not directly define happiness, but only explains it in terms of reducing suffering. Threefold Training and the Noble Eightfold Path are the core of Buddha; they are the same meaning in different views. This study chooses the Middle Way concept which is a key Buddhist explanatory structure.

Wisdom is one supreme quality of the mind. It means the ability to understand everything at its own nature. Most of the time people do not have wisdom because of a veil of the persons' own ignorance or the persons' liking or not liking causing distortion. Such a special quality of mind as wisdom must be continuously trained to achieve its status of neutrality so that it can learn and understand everything at the object's own nature.

Wisdom cannot be trained alone, it is conditioning to the training of 'morality,' subsequently known as 'good conduct,' and concentration. The simultaneous training of the three, known as Threefold Training, is the requisite condition. It begins with some basic faith that always having good conduct will result in a calm mind or a mind of concentration. Concentration will support the neutrality of the mind (clear mind) that will be able to learn and understand everything at its own nature. This latter mind is similar to the quality of right intention and right views, two of the Noble Eightfold Path known as wisdom.

Given the above quality, there will be increasing understanding why good conduct is necessary for a better life. The three components of good conduct are right action, right speech, and right livelihood. They are the three additional components of the Eightfold Path. Given the right conduct the mind can be more concentrated because it will not be disturbed by bad thinking and bad conduct. This quality of mind is known as concentration. It consists of the remaining three of the Eightfold Path. They are right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. The Threefold Training is the training of the three functions of the mind: morality, concentration, and wisdom. They form into the Noble Eightfold Path or the way to be relieved from the suffering,
conflict, alienation, pain, and misery that all human beings try to avoid.

Figure 3: Conceptual framework for Buddhist Economics analysis

According to Buddha Dharma, a human being who has wisdom will not seek to maximise pleasure or utility but will seek to be relieved from pain as much as possible. With less pain, one will gain more peace or happiness. Pain in Buddha Dharma is like a temperature. It contains both heat and cool at the same time with more heat their will be less cool and vice versa. Similarly, with less pain there will be more peace or happiness in the sense of Buddha Dharma. Happiness in this case can be equated to peacefulness rather than joyfulness or gladness.
The main objective of consumption in Buddhist Economics is not to maximise pleasure or utility but to maintain good physical and mental health, the strong foundation for the generation and accumulation of wisdom, the fundamental tool to be relieved from suffering. Maximising pleasure or utility will not always lead to less pain. Most of the time, it leads to more pain.

In summary, this study uses two principles of Buddhist Economics. First, the concept of Threefold Training is used to explain mental dimension. Second, the study adds sufficient system factors under the Middle Way concept, and, to answer real world situations, self-reported assessment is used. Evaluation on sufficient income and basic income is a tool to construct moderation and reasonableness proxies.

Happiness concepts and conceptual framework in this study

Happiness is created from both outcome and process; therefore, it is difficult to evaluate its value completely. This study attempts to explain happiness under cultural constraint scientifically. Therefore, this research uses both western and eastern economic theories: experienced utility and Buddhist Economics. Core logic of combination between experienced utility and Buddhist Economics is shown in their aspect on happiness as cognition alike. From both theories, the used framework can be applied on the below figure based from Puntasen (2006).

From the happiness framework, there are three dimensions. In terms of environment, it refers to the structure of both social and natural environments, which influence human beings and human happiness. The mind part is in relationship between input conditions, the right principles of living as understood by Buddhism, and internal factors, which is the result from understanding the right principles of living that lead to happiness or suffering. Finally, the man dimension is statistical and uses econometric tests of happiness factors influencing self-reported happiness.

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7 Besides, Capability Approach is used to support explanatory variables in some factors such as health, family and education.
Human happiness is both outcome and process, not only output. There are four sections in this analytical process which are input, internal factors, external factors, and outcome and process. Under the discriminating perspective of Buddhist Economics, there is a positive view in humans which believes that humans can improve their opinion on their own life.

Input process, then, is an important process because in the Buddhist philosophy, the Noble Eightfold Path is an essentially practical way to reduce suffering, or increase happiness in parallel. Then, humans will have their endowment in right and reasonable living. After being practiced in the right way, the human capability of analytical thinking will comprehend a fact that more aspiration brings more suffering because the set point of a person with more aspiration is higher than a person with less aspiration; this reduces his/her happiness. Therefore, under the middle way in the Eastern thought, humans can distinguish by using their rationality in what is necessary in their lives and what they want.

External factors are based on Frey and Stutzer (2002b), who use experienced utility concept and develop it into procedural utility; therefore, psychological mechanisms are used to analyse these factors on human happiness. Besides, most of them are objective factors, and differences are individual. There are three groups: socio-demographic, economic and political conditions. Finally, every process influences human happiness, and this is an essential reason why happiness is the outcome and process, not only output, and why it is so difficult to evaluate factors in happiness results in factorizedly.

1.4 Model construction

From three dimension analyses, model construction is divided into three parts. The first part is the happiness model as man dimension. The second part is mind dimension aiming to examine the relation between moral-merit proxies and happiness factors. The third one is the environment dimension of which only natural environment is taken into account, aiming to show the present situation of Thailand’s natural resources.
Figure 4: Conceptual Framework for This Happiness Study

This framework is based on Puntasen (2006). Besides, a target of direction in man and mind dimension is only scope of the study in each one.
**1. Man dimension**

There are two parts in this section: the happiness model as man dimension, and the definition and descriptive analysis of factors.

**Happiness model or global satisfaction**

\[ H = H(U(SocDems, ECs, Pols, BudEC)) + e \]  

where:

- \( H \) is some self-reported number indicating happiness or satisfaction level on a given scale. 5 is completely satisfied level, 4 is satisfied in life, 3 is normal level, 2 is level of unsatisfied feel and 1 is completely unsatisfied stage in life.
- \( U(.) \) is to be thought of as the person’s true subjective wellbeing or happiness.
- \( H(.) \) is a continuous non-differentiable function relating actual to reported subjective wellbeing or happiness.
- \( SocDems \) is a set of socio-demographic factors consisting of age, gender, settlement, close relationship and marital status, education, health and religion.
- \( ECs \) is a set of economic factors: personal income and unemployment.
- \( Pols \) is a factor of political participation which this study uses as a self-report in political criticism.
- \( BudEC \) an added factor in this study is a ‘self-sufficient’ system by using NESDB’s notion, and uses the self-reported method.

This function has a set of psychological mechanisms to explain happiness function, and make differences from the classical utility functions. It comprises aspiration theory, hedonic treadmill and relative interpretation.

The model in this study is called the global satisfaction or the happiness model. A model pattern consists of four groups: socio-demography, politics, economics and sufficient systems. In the first group, there are seven determinants: age, gender, Bangkok settlement, marital status, education, health, religion. The second group is only political criticism. In the third group, there are only two factors used in an individual study: unemployment and personal income. The last determinants are constructed from Buddhist Economics using the Middle Path concept are
moderation, reasonableness and self-immunity. There are 13 used factors in this framework.

The subjective approach to utility offers a fruitful complementary path to study the world. A subjective view of utility recognises that everybody forms his or her own ideas about happiness and the good life and that observed behaviour is an incomplete indicator for individual wellbeing. Accepting this view, individuals’ happiness can nevertheless be captured and analysed: people can be asked how satisfied they are with their life. It is a sensible tradition in economics to rely on the judgment of the persons directly involved. Therefore, people are reckoned to be the best judges of the overall quality of their life, and it is a straightforward strategy to ask them about their wellbeing. With the help of a single question, or several questions on global self-reports, it is possible to get indications of individuals’ evaluation of their life satisfaction or happiness. People evaluate their level of subjective wellbeing with regard to circumstances and comparisons to other persons, past experience and expectations of the future. Measures of subjective wellbeing\(^1\) can thus serve as proxies for ‘utility.’

To evaluate global or domain satisfactions, the self-reported method is a vital economic tool in some happiness studies. This study follows the World Values Survey since it is an internationally used questionnaire. However, the set of choices deploy a descriptive style like the Eurobarometer with five choices. Although, odd choices have weak points in which a high probability is chosen by no idea respondents, by experienced utility of neither good nor bad feeling is an important concept to interpersonal comparison of personal satisfaction.

\(^1\) Subjective wellbeing is an attitude consisting of the two basic aspects of cognition and affect. ‘Affect’ is the label attached to moods and emotions. Affect reflects people’s instant evaluation of the events that occur in their lives. The cognitive component refers to the rational or intellectual aspects of subjective wellbeing. It is usually assessed with measures of satisfaction. It has been shown that pleasant affect, unpleasant affect and life satisfaction are separable constructs (Lucas, Diener and Suh 1996; Stutzer and Frey (2003), p.5).
In terms of satisfaction questions, the global satisfaction uses the question: ‘All in all, how satisfied were you with overall life in the last 2-3 months?’ Five choices are given: ‘very satisfied,’ ‘satisfied,’ ‘neither good nor bad,’ ‘dissatisfied’ and ‘very dissatisfied.’

As subjective survey data are based on individuals’ judgments, they are prone to a multitude of systematic and non-systematic biases. It therefore needs to be checked whether people are indeed capable of and willing to provide meaningful answers to the questions concerning their wellbeing. Moreover, reported subjective wellbeing may depend on the order of questions, the wording of questions, scales applied, actual mood and the selection of information processed. The relevant errors, however, depend on the intended usage of the data. Often, the main use of happiness measures is not to compare levels in an absolute sense, but rather to seek to identify the determinants of happiness. For that purpose, it is neither necessary to assume that reported subjective wellbeing is cardinally measurable, nor that it is interpersonally comparable. The subjective data can be treated ordinally in econometric analyses, so that higher reported subjective wellbeing reflects the higher wellbeing of an individual. Whether happiness measures meet this condition has been widely assessed in psychological evaluation studies. It has, for example, been shown that different measures of happiness are correlated well with one another. Reliability studies have found that reported subjective wellbeing is fairly stable and sensitive to changing life circumstances. Consistency tests reveal that happy people are more often smiling during social interactions, are less likely to commit suicide and that changes in the electrical activity of the brain and heart rate account for substantial variance in reported negative affect (see Frey and Stutzer 2002b, for references). Thus, Diener (1984, p.551; Stutzer and Frey (2003), p.6) concludes in an

early survey that ‘[the] measures seem to contain substantial amounts of valid variance.’

*Descriptive analysis of factors*

There are four groups of factors: socio-demographic factors, economic factors, political factors, and sufficient system proxies. Psychological mechanisms – aspiration, adaptation, and relative concept – are the influenced factors in income by the subjective approach. Besides, health is a factor used by the other concept of capability approach to clarify its effect on happiness. Sufficient system is interpreted by Buddhist Economics.

On the other hand, the concept of utility in economics is based on a very simple psychological notion. Economics assumes that people always know what is best for them and that they make their decisions accordingly. Moreover, it is assumed that people’s satisfaction depends on what they have in absolute terms. It is taken as self-evident that higher income and consumption levels bring about higher utility.\(^3\)

However, a more psychologically sound concept of utility should take into consideration that human beings are unable and unwilling to make absolute judgments. Rather, they are constantly drawing comparisons from their environment, from the past or from their expectations of the future. Thus, people notice and react to deviations from aspiration levels.\(^4\) There are two main processes forming individuals’ aspirations, and producing the relativity in people’s utility evaluation.

First, people make social comparisons, which drive their positional concerns for income. It is not the absolute level of income that matters most, but rather one’s position relative to

\(^3\) There are, of course, academics who oppose this notion. Frank (1985a, 1999, this volume), Galbraith (1958), Hirsch (1976), Scitovsky (1976) and, more recently Schor (1998), studying consumer culture – in particular in the United States – emphasise the important role of socially formed aspirations and expectations for consumer satisfaction (Frey and Stutzer, 2003, p.8).

\(^4\) The importance of relative judgments for happiness is e.g. shown in laboratory experiments (Mellers 2000, Smith et al., 1989 and Tversky and Griffin 1991).
other individuals. This idea of relative income is part of the more general aspiration level theory. Many economists in the past such as Marx (1849), Veblen (1899) and Duesenberry (1949) (Stutzer and Frey (2003), p.11-12) note that individuals compare themselves to significant others with respect to income, consumption, status or utility. People look upward when making comparisons. Aspirations thus tend to be above the level already reached. Wealthier people impose a negative external effect on poorer people, but not vice versa. As a result, savings rates depend on the percentile position in the income distribution, and not solely on the income level, as in a traditional savings function.

Second, people adapt to their new income or consumption level. Additional material goods and services initially provide extra pleasure, but it is usually only transitory. Higher utility from material goods wears off. Satisfaction depends on change and disappears with continued consumption. This process, or mechanism, that reduces the hedonic effects of a constant or repeated stimulus, is called adaptation. However, this study uses a cross-section study, or has only one survey. Therefore, the study is unable to recheck the respondents’ adaptive behaviours.

(2) Mind dimension

A target of this dimension is to examine the relationships of internal moral and merit on happiness factors. This requires assessing whether differences in age, gender, education, job and income are influenced by moral and merit beliefs. If these factors as part of the happiness pattern are deviated from moral and merit, then we will know which types of moral and merit influence each happiness factor that can support an analytical process. Moral and merit are assessed by using proxies in terms of Thai proverbs.

From the Threefold Training as a core of Buddhism, this study uses only four proxies following some concepts of the Noble Eightfold Path but including every concept of Threefold Training: morality, concentration and wisdom. They are right understanding (samm-diih) and right thought (samm-sa kappa) in wisdom, right effort (samm-vyma) in concentration, and right speech (samm-vc) in morality:
- ‘Good deeds beget good results, while bad deeds beget bad results.’ is a proxy of right understanding. It implies that belief in results of doing good is right understanding.
- ‘You may step over a fallen tree; don’t step over a fallen man.’ is a proxy of right thought in only good will concept or thought free from cruelty (avihimsaa-sankappa).
- ‘To apply gold leaf to the back of a Buddha image.’ is proxy of right effort. It refers to the process of attempting to root out such an ill wish and replace it with a good wish, or sincerity of good actions.
- ‘Better to die than to lie’ is a proxy of right speech. It implies belief in trustworthiness is right.

Following Buddhist Philosophy, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Threefold Training are the core of Buddha’s teachings on the path to reduce suffering in life. In Eastern culture, recognition of the influence of moral and merit on happiness factors leads to analysis and synthesis along sociological, demographic and economic dimensions.

(3) Environmental dimension
With regard to human and nature relationships, if humans understand moderation in consumption and natural cycle, they would not destroy natural resources. Then their health and environments would be better, and human well-being would improve as a result. This study uses Living Planet report (2006) to explain the present natural status in Thailand.

The Living Planet Report is the World Wildlife Fund (WWF)’s periodic update on the state of the world’s ecosystems. It describes the changing state of global biodiversity and the pressure on the biosphere arising from human consumption of natural resources. It is built around two indicators: (1) The Living Planet Index reflects the health of the planet’s ecosystems on account of the overall nature in three sides: terrestrial, marine and fresh water; and (2) The Ecological Footprint shows the extent of human demand on these ecosystems by consumption of natural resource in a given country. The ecological footprint is deemed suitable with Buddhist Economics interpretation of the human-nature relationship because it supports the natural...
environment as a part of the three balance concepts in Buddhist Economics. Therefore, this study has chosen to use only the ecological footprint data.

2. Methodology

This study chooses global self-reported happiness because it has been accepted by many tasks as the self-reported measure of life satisfaction, especially on the issues economists are mostly concerned with. It is so far the best empirical approximation available to the concept of individual welfare used in economic theory. The measurement of happiness has been proved to yield useful insights to improve understandings of the economy and society. Therefore, using the ordered stage choices in global self-reported happiness, the ordered logit or probit model are technically suitable to this study, and used in most happiness studies. Two statistical methods are chosen: Ordered Response for man dimension, and Chi-square test for mind dimension.

In terms of the pilot study, this study uses a random sampling survey using a happiness questionnaire. Citizens of Bangkok who are over 15 years old, and are living in Bangkok in March 2007 is sampling frame. In sampling and data collection, most of questions are subjective data; therefore, most of the observations in this study use interview method.

3. Results, discussion, conclusion and suggestions

This study observed 400 observations at first; however, they had some incomplete observations from important causal factors, which was in conflict with the same meaning or in recheck questions. As a result, approximately 50 observations are cut off from this sampling.

3.1 Statistical and econometric results

(1) Data and descriptive analysis

A survey in Bangkok was conducted to cover 400 observations, but about 50 observations is grey-typed data because most of them were in conflict with cross-checked questions or had too many missing items in questions. For example, for health satisfaction, some respondents reply dissatisfied (=2) in the first
question, but satisfied (= 4) in the second question. It can be interpreted that they do not concentrate on answering. In missing cases, most of them emerge from non-interviewed questionnaires. The remaining observations consist of 348 persons.

The proxy measure for individual utility is based on the answers to the following question: ‘All in all, how satisfied were you with overall life in the last 2-3 months?’ Therefore, happiness reports in this study are only covered over January to March, 2005 which correlates with the duration axiom in experienced utility. Simultaneously, the respondents were shown a table with a 5-point scale, of which only the two extreme values (‘completely dissatisfied’ and ‘completely satisfied’) were verbalised. A high general life satisfaction in Bangkok was found, with an average of 3.72 out of 5 points. Whereas, in terms of domain satisfaction, family is the highest score at average 3.96, and job is the lowest satisfaction at mean 3.25 points. Health satisfaction average is the second rank at 3.57 scores, and income satisfaction is 3.42 out of 5 points. Moreover, the average satisfaction in domains is related to a rank of domain satisfaction which can be implied from the respondents’ concern.

In terms of factors, there are three groups. At first, the most concerned factors are health and basic needs which relate directly to their life. Later, political situations, life security, and job are the median group which are related to life and property securities in the social and economic dimensions. Education and right of political participation are the last topics.

The distribution of self-reported satisfaction on happiness factors is not different. Only the old people have a high proportion of complete satisfaction compared to the young and adult. People with earnings over 50,000 baht per month report life satisfaction at ‘satisfied’ and ‘very satisfied’ at about 75%. Most private employees perceive lower satisfaction levels, and higher dissatisfaction levels than the other job status. The other happiness factors on the satisfaction report are shown similarly at satisfaction levels over 60%.

Income, as a crucial economic factor, was classified into three types in this study: personal income, sufficient income and basic income. A median value of personal income under job and
education conditions ranges between 10,001 – 20,000 baht per month for both males and females. On average, basic income for males and females is not different at 10,500 – 10,700 baht per month. Sufficient income for males is more than 1,500 baht per month, while sufficient income for males ranges between 18,400 – 18,500 under job and education conditions respectively and for females ranges between 16,900-17,000. This information is from an average age of 33-34 years old.

Factors of sufficient system can explain a proportion of the life satisfaction report. Firstly, savings as part of self-immunity proxies shows that respondents with savings at about 70 – 80% reports ‘satisfied’ and ‘very satisfied.’ However, people with no savings have higher happiness scores than those with savings and borrowing respectively.

Second, private insurance such as American International Assurance (AIA), Bangkok Insurance, Thailife Insurance, etc., and bank insurance make people satisfied more than welfare or insurance from companies, government organisations. However, state employees with government welfare are more satisfied in their life than private employees and uninsured people. Uninsured people report levels of dissatisfaction more than the other groups.

Moreover, wanting as reasonableness proxies demonstrates that people with no wants have higher satisfaction levels (about 70%) than people with wants. There are six categories in wants: mobile phone, electrical appliance, computer, car, house and others. People wanting a house are the most dissatisfied group at about 26.47%.

On the other hand, in the extreme case, an observation at ‘very dissatisfied’ is a male student with 15-24 year old in high school level. His income from his parents is less than 5,000 baht per month. He has no savings and no insurance, but wants a car.

(2) Results of the econometric analysis and macro natural data

There are three parts: (1) happiness satisfaction models as the man dimension, (2) the relations of moral-merit proxies and happiness factors as the mind dimension, and (3) macro natural data from the Living Planet Report (2006).
**Man dimension: happiness or global satisfaction model**

It is non-linear model with contrasting result from most of the previous studies, which is U-shape pattern in happiness over life cycle. An important cause comes from different factors included in happiness model. Cultural difference may have some influence; but it may not be concluded here that cultural difference is the factor determining the deviation because this study employs cross-section data, and not panel data. Cross-section data, which focuses on only a certain moment, is static and may not accurately explain the dynamics of actuality, while panel data, which is a set of relatively more continuous data, may yield better result but is difficult to obtain. Hence, this analysis can explain only in terms of the relation between happiness report and factors on happiness model.

**Table 1: Happiness results**

| Variables       | Coefficient | Standard Error | P[|Z|>z] | Mean of X | Marginal effect (very satisfaction) |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------|--------|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| Female          | 0.1307      | 0.1228         | 0.2870 | 0.5462    | 0.0285                              |
| Age             | 0.0345      | 0.0159         | 0.0299**| 33 5000   | 0.0076                              |
| Age²/100        | -0.0002     | 0.0002         | 0.3767 | 13 4951   | -0.0038                             |
| Married         | 0.1225      | 0.1687         | 0.4678 | 0.2832    | 0.0377                              |
| Education       | 0.3867      | 0.2402         | 0.1074***| 0.9335    | 0.07                                |
| Earner          | -0.3498     | 0.1404         | 0.0127**| 0.5520    | -0.0784                             |
| Sick frequency  | -0.0103     | 0.0113         | 0.3618 | 3.0694    | -0.0023                             |
| Income          | -0.0015     | 0.0028         | 0.5964 | 19 6312   | -0.0003                             |
| Self-immunity   | 0.3353      | 0.1211         | 0.0056* | 0.5462    | 0.0725                              |

Threshold parameters for index

| Mu(1)           | 0.0022      |
| Mu(2)           | 2.41083     |

Degrees of freedom = 8

Prob[Chisq > value] = 0.10916***

N = 346

**Remark:** 1) Reference groups: (1) male; (2) single, divorce and widow; (3) less 12 years in education level; (4) student, housewife, unemployment and retire. 2) (*) is at 99% confident interval, (**) is at 95% confident interval, and (***') is nearly at 90% confident interval.

The results from this study suggest that age, self-immunity, earner, and education are significant factors in influencing happiness. Self-immunity representing people’s concern on saving
and insurance has the largest effect on self-reported global satisfaction with 99% confidence interval. Age and earner are significant at 95% confidence interval. And education is significant at 90% confidence interval. In addition, the relationship between happiness factors and the estimate of people’s satisfaction do support psychological explanations used in experienced utility and Buddhist economics.

The peak point between the relationship between happiness and life cycle is 33-34 years old. After this scale, it is adult period with belonging family or having full family responsibility. Then it is normally that they have high aspiration in life and many obligations.

For job status, this study includes ‘earners’ instead of the unemployed people because the proportion of unemployed people is so small at about 4% of overall sample. The former is superior to the latter in that the former can be linked to family responsibility. At the complete satisfaction level, people, who have the status of being employed, tend to have a decreased life satisfaction, which may reflect that burden of family responsibility weighs more than the dignity of being employed.

Thirdly, self-immunity implies that saving and insurance as part of life security can be reflected in people’s life satisfaction. Furthermore, this result reflects important issue in relative consideration. It appears that people do have more life satisfaction when it comes to having self-immunity, probably having to do with the sense of possessing more life security, but this does not always apply in all cases, particularly the wealthy, who may not have an increased life satisfaction from having self-immunity according to the definition employed in this study.

Finally, education as an important factor of happiness shows that at complete satisfaction level people with high school and university education are likely to be happier with 7% probability given other things being constant. Education level higher than high school does tend increase life satisfaction due to the

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5‘Earner status’ consists of working people such as government and corporate organizations, and owners.
possibility of opportunities for such things as work, earning and health, among others.

Mind dimension: the relation of moral and merit proxies and happiness determinants

In terms of moral and merit factors, for which we may use Thai proverbs in assessment as moral-merit proxies, a target of this part is to examine the relation between moral-merit proxies and determinants leading to different happiness levels among Thais. Contributions from this part are to comprehend which happiness factors are related to which moral-merit proxies.

‘Good deeds beget good results, while bad deeds beget bad results’ implies people’s belief in demerit and merit, and the law of karma. In this empirical survey, most people comprehend these moral-merit proxies in a similar degree, excepting for age factor. At 90% statistically confident interval, age change affects this belief. Differences in gender, education, job and income are not statistically different concerning people’s belief in demerit and merit, and karma rule.

‘Better to die than to lie’ refers to the belief in truthfulness. Differences in age and marriage status influence people’s truth discrimination at 95% statistically confident interval, while job difference is at statistically 99% confident interval. It means that people who differ in age, marriage status or job, given everything equal, do differ in the truth belief. In other words, these people have probability to differ in moral interpretation of telling the truth.

‘To apply gold leaf to the back of a Buddha image’ averages around 3.33 or almost moderately. This proverb implies sincerity to make merit. Age, marriage status, education and job are happiness determinants, which contribute to difference in this belief category at 99% statistically confident interval. Dissimilarity in age, marriage status, education and job, given everything equal, leads to difference in sincerity of making merit. Finally, with regards to ‘you may step over a fallen tree; don’t step over a fallen man,’ a majority of the people agree at the mean of 3.50 score, a short step from completely agree at 4 score. This proverb implies that the individual has kindness and mercy, and gives a chance to others. From statistical results, the implication is that if
individuals differ in age and marriage status, this belief can be different at the level of 99% and 95% statistically confident interval respectively.

Table 2 Chi-square test against Thai proverbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>“Good deeds beget good results, while bad deeds beget bad results”</th>
<th>“Better to die than to lie”</th>
<th>“To apply gold lead to the back of a Buddha image”</th>
<th>“You may step over a fallen tree; don’t step over a fallen man”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>Chi-Square = 4.41 d.f. = 3</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 1.57 d.f. = 3</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 2.37 d.f. = 3</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 2.14 d.f. = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.22</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.67</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.50</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>Chi-Square = 28.11 d.f. = 18</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 30.02 d.f. = 18</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 40.26 d.f. = 18</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 38.94 d.f. = 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.06**</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.04**</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.00*</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marriage Status</strong></td>
<td>Chi-Square = 11.16 d.f. = 9</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 18.10 d.f. = 9</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 23.77 d.f. = 9</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 19.50 d.f. = 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.26</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.03**</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.00*</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.03**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Level</strong></td>
<td>Chi-Square = 14.05 d.f. = 12</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 16.52 d.f. = 12</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 25.14 d.f. = 12</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 11.36 d.f. = 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.30</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.17</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.01*</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JOB</strong></td>
<td>Chi-Square = 23.67 d.f. = 21</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 43.34 d.f. = 21</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 49.54 d.f. = 21</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 29.50 d.f. = 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.31</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.00*</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.00*</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 3.10***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Income</strong></td>
<td>Chi-Square = 13.26 d.f. = 15</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 13.13 d.f. = 15</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 18.51 d.f. = 15</td>
<td>Chi-Square = 9.21 d.f. = 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.25</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.59</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.24</td>
<td>Asymp: Sig. (2-sided) = 0.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remark: (*) is 99% statistically confident interval, (**) is 95% statistically confident interval, and (***) is 90% statistically confident interval.

In summary, the chi-square test can only examine whether two factors are related, but cannot explain how they are related. From this testing, difference in age and marital status are the most influenced factors on people’s opinions and beliefs, and non-similarity in job and education level is the second and third
conditions for distinction in the opinions and beliefs. Moreover, different belief in sincerity of making merit fluctuates the most from distinction in age, marital status, education level and job type. Differences in age and marital status are causes for differences in morale about truth, in sincerity of making merit, and in kindness, mercy and giving a chance to others. Differences in gender and personal income are not distinctive causes in every belief and opinion.

*Environmental dimension (only natural environment)*

The ecological footprint measures humanity’s demand on the biosphere in terms of the area of biologically productive land and sea required to provide the resources we use and to absorb our waste.

The footprint of a country includes all the cropland, grazing land, forest, and fishing grounds required to produce the food, fiber, and timber that the country consumes, to absorb the wastes emitted in generating the energy it uses, and to provide space for its infrastructure. People consume resources and ecological services from all over the world, so their footprint is the sum of these areas, wherever they may be on the planet.

**Table 3: Thailand’s ecological footprint**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecological Footprint (global hectares per person, in 2003 gha)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Per capita Ecological Footprint (gha/person)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biocapacity (gha/person)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological reserve (+) or deficit (-) (gha/person)</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footprint change per person(%) 1975-2003</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biocapability change per person(%) 1975-2003</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Water withdrawals**

| Water withdrawals (% of total resources)                      | 21 |

**Population (million)**

| Population (million)                                         | 62.8 |


Thailand’s footprint index defines that per capita ecological footprint (gha/persons) is lower than biocapacity (gha/person), and may imply ecological deficit in Thailand. In a period of 1975-
2003, footprint change per person is more than biocapability change per person. It means that nature is used more than her restoration. Moreover, water withdrawal\(^6\) as an ecological index explains that freshwater decrease is in moderate stress.

3.2 Discussion on relationships analysis in the ecosystem: body-mind, human-human and human-nature

In fact, environments in which an individual lives, such as family, community, and society are reinforcing factors that have influences on an individuals' feelings such as happiness, sadness, cheerfulness, and other emotional states. Therefore, happiness elements are more than self, which consists of body and mind, but also include topics of social and natural environments. Under Buddhist Economics, ecosystem interpretation can be used to consider human happiness in material, mental and environmental dimensions.

(1) Human-nature relationship

At the level of the human-nature relationship, the natural environment is an important element to support and enrich human physicality and mentality. For a long period of time, the Thai state has attempted to develop Thailand to the level of a developed country. As a result, they used many reinforcing

\(^6\) Freshwater is not included in the ecological footprint because the demand for and use of this resource cannot be expressed in terms of the global hectares that make up the footprint. It is nonetheless critical to both human and ecosystem health. Although freshwater is not considered a scarce resource globally, much of it is geographically inaccessible or not available throughout the year. Of the annual freshwater runoff that is readily accessible to human populations, about 54 percent is withdrawn for domestic water supply, industrial use or, most importantly, irrigation. Freshwater resources are far from evenly distributed around the world, and many countries withdraw more than can be sustained without placing pressure on freshwater ecosystems. A widely used indicator of water stress is the withdrawals to availability (wta) ratio. This measures a population's total annual water withdrawals against the annual renewable water resource available to it: the higher the ratio, the greater the stress being placed on freshwater resources. According to this measure, withdrawals of 5–20 percent represent mild stress, 20–40 percent moderate stress, and above 40 percent severe stress.
policies in investment, consumption and export. From these policies, the result is destruction of natural resources. From 1975 to 2003, the usage of natural resources per person increased at around 60%, but the bio-capability rate (per person) decreased at 4%. This means that Thais destroy natural resources such as soil, water, air and forest at a rate faster than the rate of natural restoration. This leads to impacts such as waste water, air pollution, and toxic soil, among others. These problems affect humans in terms of poor physical and mental health.

However, to support the topic of human impact on natural resources, this study chooses the Happy Planet Index to explain this topic. For example, if Thailand has higher life satisfaction, a similar rate in life expectancy and a greater footprint than Vietnam, then Thailand’s Happy Planet Index rating is less than Vietnam. Singapore has more life satisfaction and life expectancy than Thailand, but the Happy Planet Index is less because of the effect of a higher footprint on natural resources.

(2) Human–human relationship
Humans as social animals concern themselves with social environments such as family, community and society. The relations between human and human are an important condition in the happiness of living together. Moreover, sacrifice is an implied element that should be used in living together because it is the foundation of a peaceful society. If individuals can sacrifice and reduce their selfishness, a society can be good and sympathetic.

In terms of family, frequencies of family participation in this study have an influence and affect the report of family satisfaction to a high level. Besides, pertaining to married status in the happiness model, its sign on satisfaction level is positive. This means that married people have the probability to be happier than the other statuses because they have partner in their life, and the number of family participations relates to higher reported family satisfaction scores.

(3) Body-mind relationship
The mind and body relationship, according to Buddhist Economics, has its base in consumption moderation. Balance in mind and body is important to consumption decisions. For
example, smoking is a result of desire, or preference, but the body is affected by negative externality, in addition to affecting others’ health and environment. Conceptually, if individuals can balance their life under the right understanding, they can have good wellbeing and will not incur any externality on society and the environment.

On the mentality side, the belief in moral and merit can have an influence on many happiness factors such as age, marital status, educational level and job type. Besides, from the happiness model, frequencies of illness, which functions as a factor on the physical side, can have a negative effect on human happiness.

In summary, under the concept of Buddhist Economics, happiness, at a 'self' level, or body and mind relationship, can be obtained from practice in perception, concentration and wisdom, which are core elements of the teaching of Buddha. However, environments such as family, community, society and nature do encourage human happiness because humans are social animals. Happiness analysis should thus consider and incorporate both internal and external factors.

3.3 Conclusion and suggestions

(1) Conclusion
It is generally acknowledged that human happiness is complex and varies from person to person and that we cannot explain happiness only in physical terms but have to take into account environmental factors, which are significant in shaping the perceptibility of various levels of happiness and suffering. Hence, certain ideas offer themselves as alternatives to the question of happiness in such theoretical frameworks as Buddhist Economics and experienced utility, the latter which chooses to employ tools in psychology to explain various forms of satisfaction. These ideas, though not fully sufficient as the answer to the question of happiness, are of great importance to the understanding and explaining of subjective dimension of happiness.

The study, which adopts Buddhist Economics as one of its main frameworks, focuses on the idea that balance can be
achieved in three aspects, which are man, mind and environmental. This is known as Balance Concept, and, for this study, the aspect of man, or physical state, is explored in form of the happiness model, which is constructed from the survey and employs self-reported method as the main methodology. The study considers the aspect of mind as the defining factor in explaining relationship between ideas and attitudes of individuals toward the question of happiness in order to understand whether different attitudes and perceptions have any effect happiness. Finally, the environmental aspect can be separated into two divergent perspectives, which are, firstly, environment defined in social terms such as society, community and family; and, secondly, environment that is defined in terms of natural resources, which are considered in accordance with information from Living Planet Index in order to provide a general picture of environmental aspect in physical term.

Looking at these three levels of relationships, if an individual can live with balance in terms of body, mind and environment, such balance can lead to happiness. Hence, the implication is that not only variables within the self dimension matter; environment, society and nature, also have significant influence on human happiness.

(2) Suggestion and limitations of this study

A limitation of this study is the sample size of observations, which is part of the pilot study that empirically tests happiness pattern. Therefore, further studies should test this framework with a larger sample.

Considering the empirical evidence in Thailand’s happiness study, there are two social benefits: Thailand’s happiness index and public policies. Firstly, by examining happiness patterns for Thais and using macro data such as processes from NESDB’s Green and Happiness Index (2007), this study brings relevant components into the happiness model to find the results of Thailand’s happiness level. However, this pattern should be adjusted in every period such as four, five or six years depending on the suitability of social, cultural and economic conditions because social and cultural conditions are likely to change. The advantage of updating to realistic conditions can help in
measuring Thai happiness levels at every period. Secondly, after recognising what factors lead to happiness and how people are concerned with each factor, policy makers should be careful to formulate and implement policies related to those happiness factors. However, happiness is also an outcome, not only an output. Difficulties are expected in assessing the policy impacts. Policy makers can only support policies leading to happiness.

Lastly, an essential aspect for research, academics and people interested in this topic is for them to keep in mind that happiness is not the answer for alleviating poverty and enhancing social welfare. Many happiness reports in the past, using happiness indices such as Happy Planet Index, found that Thais are happier than people in the US, England and other richer countries. This point should be considered with care because it may lead to some misinterpretation in applying happiness indices. It may also become an unfair justification for policy makers to neglect their responsibilities on such issues as poverty and social welfare.

Besides, with careful attention in applying GNH, we should be cautious because social, cultural and economic structures of Thailand and Bhutan are significantly different. At any rate, constructing happiness models and developing happiness concepts along with traditional but still effective indicators such as Green GDP and wellbeing indices may be an intelligent choice. These indices can still reflect some facts of happiness conditions within our society, even though they ignore the subjective approach. However, adding subjective indicators and interpretations in these efficient indices can be an acceptable method for most of the relevant organisations, academics and communities.

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Macroeconomic Determinants of the Happiness of the Poor: A Case Study of Pakistan

Muhammad Shahbaz* and Naveed Aamir♣

Abstract

There is not much research on welfare-economics from the perspective of human wellbeing (happiness). The main reason is that this is qualitative and subjective phenomena are not easily captured by measurement. In the present endeavour, we tried to capture it (happiness) from the opposite side of the poverty index. We employed the modified ARDL technique for long-run friendship between the happiness of the poor and some macroeconomic influencing factors; short-run dynamic behaviour is scrutinised through ECM.

The findings about the happiness of the poor and its determinants show that the happiness of poor individuals is highly influenced by macroeconomics shocks prevailing in the economy. Economic growth or a rise in GDP per capita decreases the level of the happiness of the poor due to an upper-echelon phenomenon over a long span of time in Pakistan. Inflation influences the purchasing power of poor segments of population and definitely affects the happiness negatively for both the long-term and short-term. Enhancement in remittances seems to push happiness or welfare levels of the poor upward significantly. Increases in indirect taxes, especially sales taxes, are associated with low levels of happiness of poor individuals in a small developing economy like Pakistan. Trade-openness improves happiness rankings of poor segments of the population through direct and indirect channels. Finally, a low level of happiness is associated with low urbanisation over a short period of time.

* Research Officer at Social Policy and Development Centre in Karachi, Pakistan.
♣ Economist at Social Policy and Development Centre in Karachi, Pakistan.
Introduction

The debate on whether it is population that increases poverty or population accompanied by a lack of education and civic amenities to justify a poor person’s status, still needs to be resolved along with policies to be formulated at the national level. But all this leads us to another query as to whether the efforts put forth by governments in raising the level of GNP/GDP is really translating into the wellbeing of an individual and enhancing the level of human development. Several studies find that happiness has some linkages to future economic success (Pollak, 1970; Easterlin, 1974; Veenhoven, 1993; Clark and Oswald, 1994; Winkelmann and Winkelmann, 1998 and, Diener and Biswas-Diener, 1999). The reality is that life opportunities for a number of people are expanding. Unfortunately, at the same time there are a large number of people who are still caught in the vicious circle of poverty and misery, ill health and lack of opportunities. Richard Easterlin (1974) was the first economist to make prominent use of happiness data when he reported that despite increases in personal income over time, people were not reporting an increasing level of happiness. The pattern of economic growth without increase in happiness would result also if people became accustomed over time to increases in income, as in the model of Pollak (1970). In Japan, income rose by a multiple of five between 1958 and 1987, and happiness remained stationary (Veenhoven, 1993).

Happiness seems to be based on relative income rather than absolute income and even adapts to changes in the level of income. Sometimes differences in happiness arise depending on which cohort or which ethnic group is followed over time (Blanchflower and Oswald, 2000 and 2004). There appears to be transitory income effects that do not often translate into permanently different levels of happiness. Di Tella, MacCulloch and Oswald (2003) presented results which were consistent with adaptation to income over time. Thus, while analysing growth patterns for determining the level of wellbeing and happiness one should be very clear how a person’s current income should enter the utility function. In this connection, Easterlin (1974) explained “Happiness scores carry no meaning, they are not comparable
Macroeconomic Determinants of the Happiness of the Poor

across people, people redefine their happiness scores over time; happiness should depend on health, environment, leisure and variables other than income.” Happiness is more a qualitative and subjective matter; nevertheless, it is not absolutely impossible to translate it into quantitative terms. No doubt, it keeps on changing with time and perception. Luttmer (2004) has also mentioned that what people mean by ‘happiness’ might shift over time. Infact, he uses measures of wellbeing like the incidence of depression, poor appetite and poor sleep that are less likely to be purely subjective and finds similar results as those obtained using standard subjective happiness data. Easterlin (2004) suggests that there is complete adaptation to income but incomplete adaptation to life’s events like marriage or disability. Being married has significant and positive effects on satisfaction with one’s economic situation, although these effects are much stronger on happiness. In this context of social dimensions, Brickman, Coates and Janoff-Bullman (1978) argued that individuals who had become paraplegic or quadriplegic within the previous year reported only slightly lower levels of life satisfaction than healthy individuals.

Regarding the variables associated with true utility like the levels of employment and unemployment, cross-sectional and panel studies reveal that unemployed individuals tend to report low happiness scores (Clark and Oswald, 1994; Winkelmann and Winkelmann, 1998). This outcome seems reasonable given that other odds like divorce, addiction, depression and violence are correlated with unemployment. But, at the same time, the comparison is also valid regarding the effects on the happiness of workers who lose their safety net with the gains they accrue on account of a lower rate of unemployment. Sometimes the rate of unemployment decreases when unemployment benefits fall. Di Tella, MacCulloch and Oswald (2003) show that in Europe, the happiness gap between employed and unemployed did not narrow with the increase in benefits during the period from 1975 to 1992. When unemployed people start taking up jobs because of lower level of benefits then they automatically become better off. On the contrary, in this scenario, it is difficult to pass judgment on the level of welfare. This is because the remaining unemployed receive a lower level of welfare on account of the reduction in the level of
benefits. Similarly, some of the unemployed get their welfare increases because the average duration of their unemployment spell declines. According to Di Tella, Haisken-de-New and MacCulloch (2005) there is a strong adaptation to income but no adaptation to job status. A natural explanation behind adaptation is that people adjust their desires – a phenomenon sometimes called ‘preference drifts’ (van Praag and Kapteyn, 1973).

Considering the situation of transition economies, Blanchflower and Oswald (1997) explain the effects of unemployment on happiness and find that the strong negative effect in a number of Western countries carries over also to transition countries. They conclude that the magnitude of reduction of the reported wellbeing caused by unemployment is similar in Eastern and Western Europe. Analysing more the transition economies, Rose and Carnaghan (1995) suggest that more educated people in transition economies are less likely to approve of the command economy; on the other hand, the collapse of output in traditional industries in the early stages of transition may leave many highly educated people very frustrated, as skills acquired under the old system are now obsolete. In the early years of a radically changing economy where survival is at stake, returns to education are likely to be small and formal education may be of limited use in terms of making a basic living. Veenhoven (1996) points out that there is usually a high positive correlation between satisfaction and education in low-income countries.

As discussed earlier, an individual’s happiness or utility is not just a function of income at a point in time, as in the standard model most often used by economists, but that happiness adapts to changes in income over time and that at a point in time, happiness also comes from relative levels of income. In reality, there is a very complex link between macroeconomic policies and individual’s life satisfaction or happiness. The reason behind this phenomenon is the strong influence of demographic and other micro-level variables. The entire concept of human development requires closely integrated policies at various levels of the socio-economic system. Just throwing money at the problem cannot give happiness. There are people who give weight to some of the social aspects of life like health, environment, and leisure; if these
variables are negatively correlated with GDP per capita then increased GDP might result in an unchanging level of happiness. This makes a strong case for replacing GDP per capita with other measures of welfare.

Veenhoven (1996) notes that, in Western countries the number of happy people exceeds the number of unhappy people by about three to one, the reverse pattern is observed in third-world countries, particularly when many people live at a subsistence level. Easterlin (1974) argued that there is little relation between income and happiness across countries, although within countries rich people are consistently happier than the poor. The explanation for this, according to Easterlin, is that it is relative, rather than absolute income or wealth that matters to people. Interestingly, there is some evidence that relative income is also important for individual wellbeing. In particular, those who see themselves as being at the 'poor' end of the spectrum are much more likely to be dissatisfied than the 'rich'. (Clark and Oswald, 1996) finds that job satisfaction is strongly influenced by relative, rather than absolute income. Veenhoven (1996) also notes that the correlation between happiness and income is much stronger in poorer countries. Moreover, in poor countries with higher rates of inflation, poor people tend to show lower levels of wellbeing than rich people as inflation always hurts the people of the lower bracket. Especially in the emerging market economies, macroeconomic trends have quite a significant effect on individuals’ life satisfaction. Thus, the process of reforms must stabilise higher levels of inflation.

The trade-openness route is a very important mechanism to enhance the level of happiness of poor individuals in the world because it not only tends to improve income but also provides some additional resources in order to overcome the issue of poverty and hence raise the utility level (Winters, 2000; Nicolas, 2001; and David and Scott, 2005). An admixture of export-promotion and import-substitution policies can help a state manage its poverty better, raising the happiness of poor segments of the population in the society, rather than a solely inward or outward looking policy, since the states that have adopted either of these two (or both) policies have done little to improve the happiness of the poor compared to the other factors. Another
argument in favour of the beneficial effects of trade on raising the happiness level of deprived segments is put forward by Bhagwati and Srinivasan (2002). They point out that if a country wants to maintain an export-led development strategy, that is, if a country wants to rely on free trade, it must maintain a framework of macroeconomic stability. Because stability implies low inflation, it is another channel through which trade positively influences the happiness of the poor, since the satisfaction of the poor tends to be hardest hit by high inflation (Bardhan, 2004).

The present endeavour is unique from all studies on the basis of the fact that it opens new directions in welfare economics in the case of a small developing economy like Pakistan. We utilised the time series data from the 1973—2006 time period and employed advance modified ARDL technique for long-term association of variables and ECM procedure for short-term association. The balance of the paper is organised as follows: section B explains the model and data collection procedure, section C describes methodological structure of the study and section D interprets the empirical results. Finally, section D presents conclusion and policy recommendations.

**Model and data collection**

In light of the above discussion, the algebraic equation for empirical investigation being modelled is the following:

\[
\text{Happiness Index}_{\text{HP}} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \text{GDP} + \alpha_2 \text{LINF} + \alpha_3 \text{LTR} + \alpha_4 \text{LFDI} + \alpha_5 \text{LTAH} + \alpha_6 \text{LREM} + \alpha_7 \text{LURB} + \alpha_8 \text{LME} + \eta_i
\]

Where:

- $\text{HP}$ = Happiness Index (Head-count ratio)

1 Our Happiness Index is based on the assumptions of head-count ratio that is also called poverty index but here there is an inverse relation between poverty and happiness. This indicates that high poverty rate means low happiness because happiness is influenced by the level of satisfaction. The food basket of the poor is with less food items at high levels of poverty, which describes low satisfaction and obviously declines the happiness graph. There is no particular formula to measure this index and we know happiness is a qualitative phenomenon and could not
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\[ GDP = \text{Real GDP per capita}, \]
\[ INF = \text{Inflation proxied by CPI}, \]
\[ TR = \text{Trade as share of GDP}, \]
\[ FDI = \text{Foreign Direct Investment}, \]
\[ TAX = \text{Tax revenue as share of GDP} \]
\[ REM = \text{Remittance as share of GDP}, \]
\[ URB = \text{Urbanisation as share of total population}, \]
\[ ME = \text{Macroeconomic Shocks} \]

Box-plot Representation

The data period is from 1973 to 2006 and World Development Indicators (WDI), International Financial Statistics (IFS) and Economic Survey of Pakistan (various issues) have been utilised to obtain the data of said actors in the concerned model.

be easily measured in the literature. Most studies in the literature measured happiness through different kinds of ‘dummies’. So we tried to show a Happiness Index from the opposite side of the poverty index. The value of the index ranges from 0—100 (0 means no poverty and high levels of happiness and 100 shows high levels of poverty and zero level of happiness (satisfaction).
Methodological construction

Unit root estimation

In order to scrutinise the integrating level of variable standards, tests are employed like DF-GLS and KPSS. In order to find out the order of integration, ADF (Dicky & Fuller, 1979) and P-P (Philip & Perron, 1988) tests are often used respectively.\(^2\) Due to their poor size and power properties, both tests are not reliable for small sample data sets (Dejong et al, 1992 and Harris, 2003). They conclude that these tests seem to over-reject the null hypotheses when it is true and accept it when it is false. While three newly proposed tests seem to solve this arising problem: the Dicky Fuller generalised least square (DF-GLS) de-trending test developed by Elliot et al. (1996), and KPSS by Kwiatkowski-Phillips-Schmidt-Shin (1992).

On the assumption that there is a need to test the order of integration of variable \(X_t\), Elliot et al. (1996), enhance the power of ADF test by the de-trending procedure and DF-GLS test is based on null hypothesis \(H_0: \delta^*_o = 0\) in the regression:

\[
\Delta X^d_t = \delta^* X^d_{t-1} + \delta^*_1 \Delta X^d_{t-1} + \ldots + \delta^*_p \Delta X^d_{t-p+1} + \eta_t, \ldots (2)
\]

Where \(X^d_t\) is the de-trended series and null hypotheses of this test is that \(X_t\) has a random walk trend, possibly with drift as follows:

\[
X^d_t = X_t - \delta^*_0 - \delta^*_1 t, \ldots (3)
\]

Basically, two hypotheses are proposed, (i) \(X_t\) is stationary about a linear time trend and (ii) is stationary with a non-zero mean, but with no linear time trend. Considering the alternative hypotheses, the DF-GLS test is performed by first estimating the intercept and trend utilising the generalised least square

\(^2\) We also utilised these two tests but decision is based on Ng-Perron test including two other tests.
technique. This estimation is investigated by generating the following variables:

Subject:

\[
\tilde{X} = \left[ X_t, (1 - \beta L) X_2, \ldots, (1 - \beta L) X_T \right] \cdots (4)
\]

\[
\tilde{Y} = \left[ X_t, (1 - \beta L) Y_2, \ldots, (1 - \beta L) Y_T \right] \cdots (5)
\]

and

\[
Y_t = (1, t) \beta = 1 + \frac{\bar{\alpha}}{T} \cdots (6)
\]

Where \( T \) represents number of observation for \( X_t \) and \( \bar{\alpha} \) is fixed.\(^3\)

OLS estimation is followed by this equation:

\[
\tilde{X} = \tilde{\phi} Y + \phi Y_t + \epsilon_t \cdots (7)
\]

and OLS estimators \( \tilde{\phi} \) and \( \phi_1 \) are utilised for the removal of trend from as \( X_t \) above. ADF test is employed on the transformed variable by fitting the OLS regression\(^4\):

\[
\Delta X_t^d = \lambda_\epsilon + \rho X_{t-1}^d + \sum_{j=1}^{k} \gamma_j \Delta X_{t-j}^d + \mu_t \cdots (8)
\]

\(^3\) The power of envelop curve is one-half at \( \bar{\alpha} = -13.7 \) when the model has constant and trend term, and at \( \bar{\alpha} = -7 \) when it has only constant term (see Elliot et al, 1996 for comprehensive study)

\(^4\) For the critical values see (Elliot et al, 1996) of null-hypothesis which is \( \rho = 0 \).
In alternative hypothesis, \( \tilde{\alpha} = -7 \) in the required equation of \( \beta \), above, then they calculate \( X_i^d = X_i - \phi \), fit the ADF regression on new transformed variable and employ the test of the null hypothesis that is \( \rho = 0 \).

Against the null-hypothesis of ADF, Kwiatkowski, et al, (1992), the test assumes that series to be trend stationary under assumption of null hypothesis. The KPSS statistics are based on the value of residuals gained from OLS regression of \( Z \) on explanatory variables \( W_i \):
\[
Z_i = \delta W_i + \mu_i \quad \text{(9)}
\]

While LM estimation procedure defined as:
\[
LM = \sum_i S(t^2)/(T^2 f_c) \quad \text{(10)}
\]

Where \( f_c \) is an estimator of the residual term with zero mean and \( S(t) \) is a collective residual function such that \( S(t) = \sum_{r=1}^T f_r \), based on the residuals.

**Modified ARDL bounds testing**

We employ the modified autoregressive distributed lag (MARDL) bounds testing approach suggested by Pesaran et al. (2001) as the most appropriate specification to carry out co-integration analysis among happiness of the poor and its determinants. The bounds testing approach has numerous advantages. The main merit lies in the fact that unlike other widely used co-integration techniques, it can be applied irrespective of whether the variables are integrated of order \( I(0) \) or integrated of order \( I(1) \). Fortunately, the modified ARDL method is free of any problem faced by traditional techniques in the literature. Another merit is that it has better small sample properties. Moreover, a dynamic error correction model (ECM) can be derived from modified ARDL through a simple linear transformation (Banerjee et al. 1993). The ECM integrates the short-run dynamics with the long-run equilibrium without losing long-run information.
The modified ARDL approach to co-integration involves estimating the conditional error correction version of the ARDL model as follows:

$$\Delta y = \lambda_1 + \lambda_2 y_{t-1} + \lambda_3 z_{t-1} + \lambda_4 x_{t-1} + \sum_{i=2}^{p} \gamma_i \Delta y_{t-i} + \sum_{j=0}^{p} \alpha_j \Delta z_{t-j} + \sum_{k=0}^{p} \omega_k \Delta x_{t-k} + \mu_{t-1}$$ (11)

Where $\lambda_1$ is the drift component and $\mu_t$ is the assumed to be white noise error processes. The modified ARDL approach estimate $(p+1)^k$ number of regression in order to obtain optimal lag length for each variable, where ‘p’ is the maximum number of lags to be used and ‘k’ is the number of variable in the equation. The optimal lag structure of the first difference regression is selected by the Schwarz-Bayesian criteria (SBC) to ensure an absence of serial correlation in the estimated residual. Following Pesaran et al. (2000), two separate statistics are employed to ‘bound test’ for the existence of a long-run relationship: an F-test for the joint significant of the coefficients of the lagged levels in Eq. (11) (so that null hypothesis $H_0: \lambda_2 = \lambda_3 = \lambda_4 = 0$ means no evidence of existence of long-run relationship while alternative hypothesis is $H_1: \lambda_2 \neq \lambda_3 \neq \lambda_4 \neq 0$ indicates existence of long-run relationship among variables in the concerned model. Two asymptotic critical value bounds provide a test for co-integration when the independent variables are I(d) (Where $0 \leq d \leq 1$): a lower assuming the regressors are I(0), and an upper value assuming purely I(1) regressors.

If the F-statistic exceeds the upper critical value, we can conclude that a long-run relationship exists regardless of whether the underlying order of integration of the variables is I(0) or I(1). If the F-statistic falls below the lower critical values we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no co-integration. If the F-statistic exceeds the upper bounds, one may reject the hypotheses of no long-run relationship. However, if the F-statistics falls between these two

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5 SBC is known as selecting the smallest lag length to specify a parsimonious model. The mean prediction error of AIC based model is 0.0005 while that of SBC based model is 0.0063 (Min B. Shrestha, 2003).
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bounds, inference would be inconclusive. Moreover, when the order of integration of the variable is known and if all the variables are $\mathcal{I}(1)$, the decision is made based on the upper bound. Similarly, if all the variables are $\mathcal{I}(0)$, then the decision is made based on the lower bound.

Then, the long-run relationship is estimated using the selected ARDL model. If variables are co-integrated, the conditional long-run model can then be produced from the reduced from solution of Eq. (11), when the first differenced variables jointly equal to zero, i.e., $\Delta x = \Delta y = \Delta z = 0$. Thus,

$$y_t = \hat{\beta}_0 + \hat{\beta}_2 x_t + \hat{\beta}_3 z_t + \nu_t \ldots (12)$$

Where $\hat{\beta}_0 = -\lambda_1 / \lambda_2$; $\hat{\beta}_2 = -\lambda_3 / \lambda_2$; $\hat{\beta}_3 = -\lambda_4 / \lambda_2$, and $\nu_t$ are the random errors. These long-run coefficients are estimated by the modified ARDL model in equation-11 by OLS. When there is long relationship between variables, there exists an error correction representation. Therefore, the error correction model is estimated generally as in the following given reduced form:

$$\Delta y_t = \sum_{i=1}^{p} \lambda_i \Delta y_{t-1} + \sum_{j=1}^{m} \beta_j \Delta x_{t-j} + \sum_{k=1}^{n} \beta_k \Delta z_{t-k} + \eta ECM_{t-1} + \omega_t \ldots (13)$$

To ascertain the goodness of fit of the ARDL model, the diagnostic test and the stability test are conducted. The diagnostic test examines the serial correlation, functional form, normality and heteroscedasticity associated with the model. The stability test is conducted by employing the cumulative sum of recursive residuals (CUSUM) and the cumulative sum of squares of recursive residuals (CUSUMsq). Examining the prediction error of the model is another way of ascertaining the reliability of the modified ARDL model. If the error or the difference between the real observation and the forecast is infinitesimal, then the model can be regarded as best fitting.

Interpreting style

Prior to inspecting the order of integration of individual series, DF-GLS (Dicky-Fuller Generalised Least Square) by Elliot et al, (1996) and KPSS (Kwiatkowski, Philips, Schmidt, Shin, 1992) tests have

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been employed in the present study.\textsuperscript{6} Results of both tests are reported in Table-1; all variables are non-stationary at their level form except TRADE but at 1\textsuperscript{st} difference, all the said variables are stationary. One may conclude that variables are having a mixed order of integration. Results of latter test also prove that all the series are trend stationary. The results in Table-1 show that the majority of variables are \(I(1)\), although TRADE is integrated at \(I(0)\). The ambiguities in the order of integration of the variables lend support to the use of the modified ARDL\textsuperscript{7} bounds approach rather than one of the alternative co-integration tests. After finding integrating order of all variables, the two-step modified ARDL co-integration (See Pesaran et al., 2001) procedure is implemented in the estimation of equation (1) for Pakistan utilising annual data over the period 1973-2006.

### Table-1: Unit root estimation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>DF-GLS Test</th>
<th>KPSS-Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level</td>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHN</td>
<td>1.380</td>
<td>-3.235**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LME</td>
<td>-2.065</td>
<td>-5.927***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGDPC</td>
<td>-1.824</td>
<td>-4.916*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTRADE</td>
<td>-3.508**</td>
<td>-3.018***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCPI</td>
<td>-0.674</td>
<td>-2.900***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LRIMT</td>
<td>-1.882</td>
<td>-3.616**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFDI</td>
<td>-2.766</td>
<td>-3.236**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LURB</td>
<td>-1.845</td>
<td>-3.833*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTAX</td>
<td>-2.525</td>
<td>-7.153*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * (**) *** representing significant at 1\% (5\%) 10\% level of significance.

In the first stage, the order of lag length on the first differenced estimating the conditional error correction version of the ARDL model for equation 2 is usually obtained from unrestricted vector auto-regression (VAR) by means of Schwartz

\textsuperscript{6} The KPSS test may be conducted under the null hypothesis of either trend stationarity (the default) or level stationarity. Inference of this test is complementary to that derived from the Dickey-Fuller. Mostly KPSS test is utilised in conjunction with those tests to scrutinise the possibility that a series is fractionally integrated (neither \(I(1)\) nor \(I(0)\); see Lee and Schmidt(1996).

\textsuperscript{7} We just estimated co-integrated vectors in ARDL on the assumption of (Pesaran et al, 2001) and Narayan Perkash (2005) methodological framework.
Bayesian Criteria and Akaike Information Criteria, which is based on the minimum value (AIC) as shown in Table-2. In such small sample of observations we cannot take leg length more than 2 lag orders. The total number of regressions estimated following the modified ARDL method in the equation No.2 is \((2+1)^8 = 19683\).

**Table-2: Lag length criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lag-order</th>
<th>Akaike Information Criterion</th>
<th>Schwarz Criterion</th>
<th>Log Likelihood</th>
<th>Determinant resid covariance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>- 25.209</td>
<td>- 21.911</td>
<td>475.357</td>
<td>1.73E-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>- 30.166</td>
<td>- 23.875</td>
<td>603.585</td>
<td>1.69E-27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short-run Diagnostic Test-Statistics
- Serial Correlation LM, \(F = 0.614\) (0.44)
- ARCH Test = 0.855 (0.85)
- Normality J-B Value = 4.30 (0.12)
- Heteroscedasticity Test, \(F = 0.529\) (0.42)
- Ramsey RESET Test, \(F = 0.835\) (0.79)

The results of the bounds testing approach for co-integration show that the calculated F-statistic is 9.580, which is higher than the upper level of bounds critical values generated by Pesaran et al (2001) and Narayan P (2005). One may conclude that there are seven co-integrating vectors, implying that the null hypothesis of no co-integration cannot be accepted and there is indeed a strong co-integration relationship among the variables in this model. Having found a long-run relationship, we applied the modified ARDL method to estimate the long-run and the short-run elasticity (see Pesaran and Shin, 1999; Pesaran et al., 2001; and Narayan Perkash, 2005 for more details).

The results of happiness contributing factors are given in Table-3, which indicates that the level of happiness of poor segments of the population is highly influenced by macroeconomic shocks because during the macroeconomic shocks, the contribution of growth towards a decline in poverty is slowed down, which further reduces happiness levels of poor individuals in the society.\(^8\) Surprisingly, the co-efficient of economic growth is

\(^8\) As we mentioned that there is an inverse relationship between poverty level and happiness rankings.
proxied by GDP per capita, showing a negative impact on the happiness of the poor. This situation indicates the phenomenon of upper-echelon, where, in Pakistan, income distribution is highly skewed and a very small portion of national income remains for poor segments of the population. This seriously declines the level of happiness of poor households in a small developing economy like Pakistan.

**Table-3: ARDL bound testing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>Lag Order 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LHN</td>
<td>9.850</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LME</td>
<td>5.392</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGDP</td>
<td>7.912</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINF</td>
<td>9.111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTR</td>
<td>29.558</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LREM</td>
<td>10.897</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTAX</td>
<td>10.897</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFDI</td>
<td>3.163</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LURB</td>
<td>1.928*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Critical Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Bound Value</td>
<td>Upper Bound Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Bound Value</td>
<td>Upper Bound Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 %</td>
<td>5.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 %</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* ARDL estimation shows that there are seven Co-integrating Vectors that is strong indication of long-run relationship among said variables

\(^{a}\)Critical values are obtained from Pesaran et al (2001), Table CIII (III): Unrestricted Intercept and no Trend

\(^{b}\)Critical values are obtained from Narayan (2005), Table CIII (III): Unrestricted Intercept and no Trend, p.1990.

Inflation or monetary instability directly and indirectly reduces the purchasing power of poor personnel in the country through its detrimental channels. Poor segments of the population are more vulnerable to inflationary pressures than the upper class or non-poor. Due to restrictions in financial markets for non-money monetary assets, the poor class holds a greater proportion of their wealth in cash than the rich because inflation erodes
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purchasing power along with a decline in happiness or utility from low food. Trade-openness and remittances (international migration) seem to strongly enhance levels of happiness of poor individuals in the country. Trade-openness pushes happiness trends upward through the consumer-surplus channel particularly and the productivity growth side generally or ‘learning by doing’. Remittance inflows are a key and stable source of foreign capital, and revenue in developing economies because there is no need to depend on external factors like foreign loans and aid. Through direct and indirect channels, remittances improve the happiness ranks of the poor in the economy.

Table-4: MARDL OLS regression results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable: LHN</th>
<th>Co-efficient</th>
<th>t-values</th>
<th>Inst-values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.4560</td>
<td>1.719</td>
<td>0.0990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LME</td>
<td>-1.0182</td>
<td>-71.912</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGDP(-1)</td>
<td>-0.0800</td>
<td>-2.736</td>
<td>0.0118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINF</td>
<td>-0.0442</td>
<td>-3.680</td>
<td>0.0012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTR</td>
<td>0.1075</td>
<td>5.544</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LREM</td>
<td>0.0145</td>
<td>6.258</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTAX</td>
<td>-0.0774</td>
<td>-2.512</td>
<td>0.0194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFDI</td>
<td>-0.0048</td>
<td>-1.244</td>
<td>0.2259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LURB</td>
<td>0.0124</td>
<td>0.274</td>
<td>0.7865</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R-squared = 0.99914
S.E. of regression =0.0074
Log likelihood = 116.6737
Durbin-Watson stat = 2.167

Adjusted $R^2$ = 0.99884
Akaike criterion =-6.7296
Schwarz criterion =-6.3173
F-statistic = 3358.883

Happiness levels are highly influenced by high rates of taxes after GDP per capita in Pakistan. Actually, in tax collection more than 70 percent share of indirect taxes – and in indirect taxes more than 60 percent share of sales taxes – directly retards the purchasing power of poor individuals, reducing the happiness rankings rapidly of the bottom 20 percent of the population in Pakistan. Foreign direct investment is another happiness-declining factor but insignificant. One may conclude that foreign direct investment in Pakistan is mostly going in services and banking sector but not in productive or employment generating activities, bringing up the question as to how the poor can receive benefits from FDI and enhance their utility. Internal migration or
urbanisation is improving happiness level insignificantly. This shows that in Pakistan cities are over-crowded and could not absorb the migrant populations effectively. That is why an increment in the happiness of the poor is low due to stagnated socio-economic activities particularly and political activities generally. Having found a long-run relationship, we applied the modified ARDL method to investigate the long-run, but for short-run dynamical behaviour, we followed the equation-1 and utilised the given model below for short-run dynamics:

$$ \Delta LHN = \beta_0 + \sum_{j=0}^{n} \beta_j \Delta LME + \sum_{j=0}^{n} \beta_j \Delta CPI + \sum_{j=0}^{n} \beta_j \Delta GDP + \sum_{j=0}^{n} \beta_j \Delta FDI $$

$$ + \sum_{j=0}^{n} \beta_j \Delta REM + \sum_{j=0}^{n} \beta_j \Delta TAX + \sum_{j=0}^{n} \beta_j \Delta TR + \sum_{j=0}^{n} \beta_j \Delta URB + \eta_{t-1} + \epsilon_t $$

After establishing the long-run relationship between happiness and its determinants in the case of Pakistan as discussed in Table-4, Table-5 reports the short-run coefficient estimates obtained from the ECM version of the modified ARDL model. The ECM coefficient shows how quickly/slowly variables return to equilibrium and it should have a statistically significant coefficient with a negative sign. The error correction term $CE_{t-1}$, which measures the speed of adjustment to restore equilibrium in the dynamics model, appears with a negative sign and is statistically significant at the one percent level, ensuring that a long-run equilibrium can be attained. Bannerjee et al., (1998) hold that a highly significant error correction term is further proof of the existence of a stable long-run relationship. Indeed, they have argued that testing the significance of $CE_{t-1}$, which is supposed to carry a negative coefficient, is relatively more efficient way of establishing co-integration.

The coefficient of $CE(-1)$ is equal to (-1.40) for the short-run model and implies that deviation from the long-term deviation in the happiness of the poor is corrected by 140 percent over each year at one percent level of significance. The lag length of the short-run model is selected on the basis of Schwartz Bayesian Criteria (SBC).

Results of short-run behaviour in Table-5 are not much different as compared to long-run performance. In short span of time happiness is much declined due to detrimental impacts of
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macroeconomic shocks in the country. Inflation and taxes also reduce happiness for a short span of time, while economic growth improves utility level or happiness of poor segments of the population. Trade-openness, remittances and urbanisation enhance the happiness of poor individuals in the country.

Table-5: ECM version of MARDL approach

| Dependent Variable: $\Delta LHN$ |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Variables                  | Co-efficient           | Std. Error             | Inst.value*      |
| Constant                   | 0.0023                 | 0.0033                 | 0.5035           |
| $\Delta LME$               | -1.0401                | 0.0254                 | 0.0000           |
| $\Delta LINF$              | -0.1148                | 0.0379                 | 0.0067           |
| $\Delta LGDP(-1)$          | 0.0628                 | 0.0305                 | 0.0530           |
| $\Delta LFDI$              | -0.00023               | 0.0022                 | 0.9195           |
| $\Delta LREM$              | 0.0086                 | 0.0031                 | 0.0106           |
| $\Delta LTAX$              | -0.0401                | 0.0194                 | 0.0519           |
| $\Delta LTAX(-1)$          | 0.0443                 | 0.0184                 | 0.0255           |
| $\Delta TR$                | 0.0721                 | 0.0117                 | 0.0000           |
| $\Delta LURB$              | 0.1377                 | 0.0339                 | 0.0006           |
| ECT(-1)                    | -1.4081                | 0.2084                 | 0.0000           |

R-squared = 0.99036
Adjusted R-squared = 0.98554
Akaike info criterion = -7.31181
Schwarz criterion = -6.80298
Durbin-Watson stat = 1.80616
F-statistic = 205.51

* Instability. Value means probability value or significance level

Finally, a short-run model passes short-run diagnostic tests of no-serial correlation and autoregressive conditional heteroscedasticity. There is no heteroscedasticity and the Ramsey test estimation shows that the model is well-specified while error term is normally distributed as shown in Table-2.

Finally, we examine the stability of the long-run parameters together with the short-run movements for the equation. To this end, we rely on cumulative sum (CUSUM) and cumulative sum squares (CUSUMSQ) tests proposed by Borensztein, et al. (1995, 1998). The same procedure has been utilised by Pesaran and Pesaran (1997), Suleiman (2005) and Mohsen et al. (2002) to test the stability of long-run coefficients. The tests applied to the residuals of the ECM model along with the critical bounds are graphed in Figure-1. As can be seen in the figure, the plot of CUSUM stays within the critical 5% bounds for all equations and
the CUSUMsq statistic exceeds the critical boundaries due to mis-specification of the short-run model.

**Conclusions and policy recommendations**

The findings about the happiness of the poor and its determinants show that the happiness of poor individuals is highly influenced by macroeconomics shocks prevailing in the economy. Economic growth or a rise in GDP per capita decreases the level of the happiness of the poor due to an upper-echelon phenomenon over a long span of time in Pakistan. Inflation influences the purchasing power of poor segments of population and definitely affects the happiness negatively for both the long-term and short-term. Enhancement in remittances seems to push happiness or welfare levels of the poor upward significantly. Increases in indirect taxes, especially sales taxes, are associated with low levels of happiness of poor individuals in a small developing economy like Pakistan. Trade-openness improves happiness rankings of poor segments of the population through direct and indirect channels. Finally, a low level of happiness is associated with low urbanisation over a short period of time.

The present endeavour indicates the need to improve trade-related infrastructure because openness cannot serve as a reliable substitute for a domestic development strategy, especially to lower levels of society. The government should pursue more effective trade liberalisation and trade-stabilisation policies to enhance the wellbeing of the disadvantaged segments of the country. The government should introduce incentives to divert the foreign direct investment to small manufacturing enterprises or cottage-based industries.

There is also need to improve the supply side of the economy to stop the detrimental impacts of macroeconomic shocks to vulnerable groups. In order to bring the issue of poverty reduction to the central stage of economic policy making, what is required is the adoption of a new approach for the allocation of funds to poor actors in the economy. All this needs a realistic assessment of poverty for poverty reduction plans and obviously an increase in the happiness of poor segments of population.
References


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