



**Communication/Culture and the Sustainable
 Development Goals (CCSDG):
 Challenges for a New Generation**
 Chiang Mai University, Thailand
 17-21 December 2015

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1. Background

A five-day conference titled “Communication/Culture and the Sustainable Development Goals (CCSDG): Challenges for a New Generation” was held in Chiang Mai from December 17 to 21 2015, providing a forum for around 90 participants from throughout the world to explore the complex interplay of communication, culture and sustainable development in the face of today’s global challenges. The conference was hosted in Chiang Mai by the Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD), Chiang Mai University, in partnership with the Asian Congress of Mass Communication (ACMC), the BGreen Project, the Connect4Climate project of the World Bank, RMIT Melbourne, the Southeast Asia Research Centre (SEARC) and Department of Media and Communication at City University of Hong Kong, and Wageningen University.

2. Conference Structure and Participation

The conference was structured into plenaries, panels, and keynote presentations based on short paper presentations, as well as question-and-answer sessions and open discussion rounds.

A broad spectrum of speakers with various backgrounds and experience presented their work, including renowned scholars and researchers, university students, and practitioners. Among the participants were representatives from different universities, academic institutions, international NGOs and Civil Society Organizations, e.g. Australian National University, Harvard University, De La Salle University Dasmarias of the Philippines, City University of Hong Kong, Chulalongkorn



University, UNDP, UNESCO, IUCN, World Bank, MAP Foundation for Migrant Workers, and the Global Forest Coalition. Further, a number of online and print media representatives took part in the event. In total, 90 participants from all over the world attended the event, including panel presenters, chairs, respondents, side-event presenters and observers. The conference attendees came from 16 countries, i.e. Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, Singapore, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, England, Germany, the Netherlands, Australia, the US and Canada, underlining the global relevance and commonality of the conference themes.

Throughout the conference, chairpersons introduced the panellists and speaker of each session, kept the time and moderated the discussions. In the plenary sessions, scholar respondents enriched the presentations with their well-informed perspective and expertise. In addition, a number of parallel activities and side-events were organized during the event, including field trips, film screenings, and a photo exhibition.

3. Key Thematic Areas

The concept of this conference is based on a growing realization that communication and culture play a crucial role for achieving sustainability and sustainable solutions, particularly in the current global context, which includes climate change, natural resource degradation, population growth, or increasing fundamentalism. It remains a challenge for researchers to assess the role and importance of communication and culture in the context of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially for the ASEAN region. Particularly in regards to culture, it is the first time that the international development agenda has recognised its relevance within the framework of the SDGs, also referred to as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, e.g. related to education, the environment, economic growth, or sustainable consumption.

Against this backdrop, the conference centered on different aspects of the complex relationship of communication, culture and sustainable development, and addressed how communication and culture can be understood, defined and practiced in order to find sustainable solutions for different stakeholders. Current and future challenges and potentials of communication and culture in the context of development were identified and evaluated from different complementary and trans-disciplinary perspectives. Key topics included, for example, the transition process from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the SDGs, the role of media for sustainable social change, socio-cultural perspectives on sustainability, or the role of indigenous knowledge systems in development issues.

The following is a summary of key issues and important messages raised during the event.



3.1 Sustainability Redefined: Transitions from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals

In September 2015, the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York set the post-2015 development agenda in the form of 17 SDGs and 169 associated targets. These newly adopted goals are successors to the MDGs, which were comprised of eight goals and 21 targets to be reached by 2015. These measurable and time-bound global targets, the first of their kind, were adopted in 2000 to address a number of essential global priorities, such as the reduction of poverty, hunger, disease, and gender inequality. A number of developing countries have made considerable progress towards the accomplishment of certain MDGs, but the overall progress was sporadic across goals, countries, and regions¹. Nonetheless, there is wide agreement that the MDGs have played a significant role in addressing poverty, hunger, and disease worldwide. Building on the successes of the MDGs, the SDGs set out an ambitious set of universal ‘zero’-goals and targets to be achieved worldwide by 2030, including the end of extreme poverty and hunger, gender equality, ensuring quality education, and reducing inequality within and among countries.

Rethinking Sustainability

The development of the SDGs was based on the recognition that environmental issues were under-represented and had not been mainstreamed effectively in the MDGs. Particularly in regards to climate change and other serious environmental threats in today’s world, there is global agreement that environmental objectives need a stronger emphasis alongside the poverty-reduction goals. Furthermore, at the national level, countries like India have begun to consider environmental protection as the key to the achievement of all other development goals.

In her talk **“Culture, Communication and Capacity for Sustainable Development: Revisiting Green Policies in India”** Kiran Prasad, Sri Padmavati Mahila University, India, explored how social movements in India have started to alter the meaning of sustainability as well as to build capacities for balancing growth with environmental conservation. In this context, she depicted how policy makers and the wider community have strengthened efforts at the local level by creating awareness and action on green initiatives to address impending environmental hazards. A number of green initiatives, e.g. waste minimization (“Cut the Crap”), recycling and the innovative use of resources (“From Waste to Wealth”), or the creation of eco-sensitive zones, and eco-villages have secured a sustainable dimension of development at the grassroots level. As India has an ecological consciousness and a vast store of environmental wisdom, emphasizing the integral unity of humankind and nature, the presentation further elaborated on the capacity of culture for ecological action, i.e. the reinvigoration of cultural traditions and values on environmental protection, as well as on their combination with modern technology for the achievement of sustainability.

The SDGs and targets integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions and recognize their inter-linkages in achieving sustainable development. As private companies have substantial impact on people’s wellbeing and on the environment, they have their own role to play in sustaining economic and social development. Over the last decade, there has been an escalating trend among businesses worldwide to engage in discussions on Corporate Sustainability and to integrate the SDGs into their business initiatives. In her talk, **Kamala Vainy Pillai, from the Curtin University, Australia,**

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presented the findings of an international research team², titled “**Companies’ Accountability in Sustainability: A Comparative Analysis of SDGs in five Countries**”. She elaborated how a number of factors (e.g. intense economic competition, or growing stakeholder awareness) have led to a dramatic increase of Corporate Sustainability (CS) reporting in Asia over the past years. Comparing five countries from emerging markets and developed nations, the presentation focused on how companies integrate SDGs in their business activities, on their SDG goals and objectives, priorities, and impact measurements. Albeit there is a global trend for businesses to place more emphasis on sustainability, the presentation showed that companies essentially act as practical agents with varying ethical motivation when engaging in sustainable practices. Image reputation, good government relations, and strategic long-term risk management are among the main motivations of companies for strategically integrating sustainability into their agenda.

The respondent to this session, **Loes Witteveen, Wageningen University, Netherlands**, summed up the two presentations by highlighting the importance of goals and their operationalization, the need to redefine sustainability and to develop an analytical framework in the context of the SDGs, as well as the urgency to take action.

Strategies for Common Transition and Sustainable Development

In the face of decreasing resources and ever-increasing levels of extraction, production, and consumption worldwide, it is crucial to acknowledge other, more sustainable forms of production. Commons-based peer production is an emerging and innovative model of collaborative production that can contribute to the provision of sustainable solutions.

In his talk “**Re-aligning Economics and Politics for a Commons-centric Society**” **Michel Bauwens, Founder of the Peer2Peer Foundation, Thailand**, presented how this international organization studies, documents and promotes Peer-to-Peer approaches in a very broad sense, and how it relates to the development of sustainable solutions. He introduced the rationale behind Peer-to-Peer approaches which center around the ability of people to connect to each other, to create shared resources, and to distribute value. Against the backdrop that the commons economy in our today’s society is of great importance, he outlined how ethical entrepreneurial coalitions create thriving livelihoods around shared resources.

With his approach, Michel Bauwens proposes a development strategy that simultaneously transforms the logic of civil society, the private market economy, and the state, and that goes beyond the state-private dichotomy towards a commons-centric model. Considering the crisis and current depletion of finite natural resources facing today’s world, this can be a very powerful approach for achieving sustainability and sustainable goals.

The lack of monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms was identified as one of the major shortcomings of the MDGs, and related data was all too often years out of date. In light of these shortcomings, the monitoring and evaluation of the progress of the SDGs has to be based on data that is accurate, timely, and available to all stakeholders, including academics, policy makers, NGOs and the wider public. There is ongoing political discourse on the SDGs and of a data revolution, postulating that the former can’t be achieved without the latter. The main purpose of such a data revolution is to fill large data gaps and to ensure that no-one remains excluded of the monitoring process. In her talk, **Ana von Teschenhausen, Independent Researcher, Brazil**, “**In The People We**

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Trust - Role and Challenges of Crowdsourcing and Citizen Science in the Context of the Data Revolution and the SDGs”, focused on two collaborative approaches for data collection and analysis: crowdsourcing and citizen science; most specifically on their role and challenges in the context of the current data revolution. Challenges include the lack of trust of leaders in tools of communication that are revolutionizing how information is shared, particularly as crowdsourcing and citizen science do not belong to the dominant legitimacy paradigm. The presenter concluded that a change of discourse is needed so that free knowledge access and production can become legitimate alternative methods of data production.

The respondent, **Michael Best, UNU Macau**, highlighted that without Peer-to-Peer production of knowledge and crowdsourcing the ability to understanding and monitoring progress of an enormous project like the SDGs is limited. Thus, in order to realize a legitimate understanding of the SDGs, Peer Production and crowdsourcing have to become trustworthy sources of data.

In her presentation, “**Communicating SDGs: Communication and Culture and Women**”, **Mrinalini Rai, Advisor to Global Forest Coalition**, highlighted the significance of local and indigenous knowledge systems, particularly those of women, for sustainable development. These cultural contributions provide good examples of environmental management practices and offer valuable insights for addressing biodiversity loss and climate change, yet they remain largely ignored in international policies. The speaker proposed to implement and review the SDGs via a transformative process. This process includes the recognition of culture and the transfer of knowledge through communication, the broad engagement of multiple stakeholders in action and review, as well as the acknowledgement of local identities, cultural diversities, and grassroots participation. After elaborating further on the interconnectedness between culture and communication, she outlined the work of two Civil Society Organisations, the Global Forest Coalition (GFC), and the Women Major Group (WMG).

3.2 Communicating Sustainable Development

Communication and *culture* are both keys to sustainable development, at the same time as being development goals in themselves. To date, development has mostly focused on poverty and education but the rapid advancement of Information Communication Technologies (ICT’s) is changing that. People can now communicate any time and any place, catalysing a wider array of opportunities to the development sector. The world today is interconnected and interdependent. By promoting the free flow of ideas, as is the case in UNESCO’s mandate, a truly transformative environment can be enabled through the advancement of communication. Disadvantaged groups can now actively participate in their own community’s development.

In the regional context, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) will transform Southeast Asia and have a tremendous impact on the 6.8 billion people who call it home, as a unified market and production base fosters a globally competitive economic region. The media and journalists will play an important role in this process, and development workers and civil society in general, need to ensure that ASEAN meets regional priorities and that its historical experiences are taken into account.



The unimpeded flow of information to all global citizens is crucial in the achievement of the SDGs but must also be reflected as a goal in itself. Needless to say, without the use of communication techniques it is not possible to realise the absolute free flow of information.

Communicating Risk: Perception and Management

The global society is facing an unprecedented amount of risk in the forms of domestic and international conflict, ever-increasing environmental disasters and challenges to food security. How we communicate these risks, and how this communication is thus received by the public, is important to strategize effective response mechanisms that are, in turn, more likely to foster sustainable development. In this context, the presentation, ***'Risk Communication and Public Safety in the Era of Terroredia'***, by Mahoud Eid, from the University of Ottawa, Canada, discussed the close and mutually beneficial relationship between acts of terrorism and the subsequent media coverage of these acts, as a means to promote both sides. The presenter used the recent activities of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) as an example, as ISIL is very conscious of its relationship with the media in the post-9/11 atmosphere.

Likewise, Katrina M. Sanchez and Dennis John F. Sumaylo from the University of the Philippines Mindanao, presented their paper ***'IEC Strategies on Risk Management and other Precautionary Practices of Residents in Barangay Matina Crossing 74-A'***, highlighting the site of a devastating flash flood in 2011. Their presentation looked at the influence of ICT strategies that were developed in the aftermath of this flood. These strategies focused on spatial segments of vulnerability, awareness and adaptation practices for residents.

Cornelia Wallner³ presented the joint study ***'Mass media effects on risk perception and intended pro-environmental behavior: How different styles of newspaper articles are perceived by the reader and influence risk perception on personal and societal level'***. The researchers' study was an exploration of whether public knowledge of risks provides capacity for action, whether the perceived risk is socially constructed and how context and culture can explain the differences. By using print media coverage of the horse chestnut leaf-miner as an example, the study demonstrated that the type of article made a significant difference for the perceived qualitative levels of risk. People felt less informed by the more complex and fragile articles than they did by the tabloid articles. According to Cornelia Wallner and her co-authors, communicating environmental risks via mass media is a central issue for effective environmental change management and thus critical to the attainment of sustainable development.

Maya Velmuradova, from Aix Marseille Université, France, presented the findings from her study; ***'Development Communication and the Social Integration of the New Services and Techniques: Acceptance, Appropriation and the Role of the Perceived Value of Use (PVU). Multi-Site Case Study within the SME Support in Central Asia'***. Maya Velmuradova's study was a response to certain researchers' suggestions of the need for consideration of 'communication for development and social change' as a problem of 'techniques and society'. In the multi-site study, the presenter investigated the Perceived Value of Use (PVU) concept and modelled the mechanism on small and medium sized enterprises (SME) in Central Asia, with the intention to replicate the process in the African context.

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The CCSDG conference provided a forum for young academics to gain exposure and experience at an international conference. Such academics included **Regine M. Legaspi, Marco Sealnoie Maestro, Janel Anne G. Pagui and Marco M. Polo** from **De La Salle University, Philippines**, who presented their collaborative study; *‘Evaluation of the Crisis Response Activities of the Catholic Clergy in the City of Dasmariñas: A Basis for a Crisis Management Plan’*. The students’ investigation was into the characteristics of crisis response mechanisms within the clergy and the efficacy of such tactics as applied to that specific cultural context, which often called for discretion. The research concluded that the clergy utilized low cost and time-efficient methods of communicating crises, though they were not always the most appropriate to the situation.

Once again, from **De La Salle University, Philippines**, **Daniel Joseph N. Cruz and Artin G. Umali** presented their research *‘An Evaluation of How Television Users View Abs-Cbn’s News Coverage About MERS-CoV’*. Their study looked at media coverage of the MERS-CoV virus and public reaction to it. The research found that there were positive kinds of news information in terms of efficiency, timeliness, and the use of easy to understand scientific and medical terms. However, on the other hand, negative kinds of information included the sense of threat and fear of MERS-CoV spreading and this in turn counteracted the positive media coverage. Mr Cruz and Mr Umali recommended news media to be more factual and helpful and less sensational in future reporting on similar issues.

Information and Communication Technologies, Media and Social Change

Even outside of crisis scenarios, ICT and different media forums can have a dramatic impact on the sustainable development of global society. **Daniel Hayward** made a presentation on behalf of **The Mekong Land Research Forum**, now housed at the **Regional Centre for Social Sciences and Sustainable Development (RCS) in Chiang Mai University**. The forum aims to highlight quality research conducted on land issues in the Mekong Region. An online resource allows users to access this research and analyse it within the context of key issues on land (such as “land policy and land law” or “land dispossession/land grabbing”). Furthermore, a research network conducts regular workshops in order to debate such issues, and help find ways to communicate academic research to the policy-making field. As a result, it is hoped that the Forum will contribute toward evidence-based progressive policy reform, encouraging sustainable development that is inclusive for the rural poor, ethnic minorities and women in particular, who face disadvantages in making a living as a result of insecure land tenure.

Another example of such ICT strategies includes the **MAP Foundation**, a grassroots Non-Governmental Organisation that seeks to empower migrant communities from Burma, who are living and working in Thailand. Representing civil society at the CCSDG conference, MAP presented their activities that are supporting migrant communities to create and access information that is relevant to them as well as providing space for migrant participation in advocacy and policy-making. The MAP Multimedia Programme is using communication as a tool for sustainable development by producing advocacy materials in migrant languages, such as Burmese, Shan and Karen in order to effectively reach and empower the migrant community. Under this program the foundation is producing a wide range of audio, video and print materials to address issues that are facing migrants within their own cultural context.

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There was a strong emphasis on the role of media in social change, reflected in the presentations of international academics present in the CCSDG conference. **Boonlert Supadhiloke**, for instance, from **Bangkok University**, presented his paper *'The role of mass media and culture in building social capital in young people in rural Thailand: A Sufficiency Economy Perspective'*. In the first of two presentations to be given by the presenter, he shared the results of his study, which sought to establish whether mass media and culture facilitate or hinder the development of the rural youth within the framework of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SE). According to Boonlert Supadhiloke's findings, television, radio and Internet usage was a medium for enhancing group networks in young people. Furthermore, this form of media in conjunction with cultural engagement was seen to equalise socio-economic groups.

Boonlert Supadhiloke's second presentation was derived out of his study *'A Transition from Analogue to Digital Television in Thailand: A Great Challenge for Sustainability'*, which found that despite the launch of 24 digital channels in 2013, there have not been any significant positive impacts on the equality and diversity of news and entertainment programmes, rather a build-up of government-owned network providers. Furthermore, additional challenges were facing rural communities who could not access the digital networks, nor was there sufficient public relations campaigning that educated the public on the service.

Another example of communication challenges reflected in the context of Thailand, was presented by **Jerimiah Morris**, based on his paper from **Mahidol University (co-authored by Norrachai Nanthakij): Sustainable Organising: Discourse of an eco-university**. The presenter discussed the success of the university's transition to a leading green university in the region, in the context of theories of mindfulness. According to Jerimiah Morris, the university was met with challenges in the successful implementation of green policies because it had focussed on organisational mindfulness as a top-down, managerial form of communication on the program, rather than mindful organising, which would have included a dynamic process of specific ongoing behaviour or actions conducted through a social process relying on extensive and continuous interactions among workers.

This concept of mindfulness was then discussed in depth during the CCSDG International Conference's panel discussion; **Mindfulness, Religion and Social Communication**⁴, which explored the predominantly-Buddhist tradition and its role in sustainable communication techniques, at the same time as acknowledging the presence of mindfulness characteristics in the belief of 'non-self', which is present in Christianity. According to the panellists, and in line with Jerimiah Morris's presentation above, mindfulness can be applied in every aspect of our lives, and therefore must be considered in the application of the SDG agenda, the interpretation of our perceived risks and in the reduction of suffering. The speakers discussed how mindfulness interplays with the global context of climate change, ongoing terrorist activities and other instances of the human experience.

Adipon Euajarusphan went on to present another perspective from the Thai context, in his presentation of research from the **Communication University of China**, titled *'Media Use and Information Needs of Urban Farmers: A Case Study of the Bangkok Metropolitan Region'*. The presenter's research found that there was a high need of information on agricultural innovations, farming techniques and pest management for urban farmers in Bangkok. Furthermore, the research affirmed that Internet, television and print media were the most used sources for information on



agriculture. In terms of credibility, 78% of respondents assigned medium level credibility to media, and 20% assigned a high level of credibility as an information resource.

From **Jinan University, Guangzhou, China**, **Chen Jinyun's** study '*Can Online Social Network Foster Young Adults' Civic Engagement?*' discussed differences between online and offline civic engagement, particularly in regards to the attitudes of young adults. The presentation reflected on the question of whether online and offline civic engagement activities are interrelated and if they promote each other. The presenter confirmed that indeed there is a positive relationship due to interactions, increased exchange of information and group incentives.

In order to maximise the efficacy of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) and the media within the region, development discourse has stated that all members of ASEAN should call on their member states to report on their status of ICT in education and emphasise the importance of ICT for sharing best practices and experiences within the ASEAN. As such, **Pornpun Prajaknate from the National Institute of Development Administration, Thailand**, presented her research: '*A synthesis of the studies on information communication technologies for education projects in ASEAN: Can We Close the Digital Divide?*' After presenting regional rankings, including the fact that Laos is the only country in ASEAN that has not got an ICT Policy, whilst Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Singapore have all made the most progress in terms of information communication technologies, Pornpun Prajaknate named implications in overcoming the divide, including the fact that rural areas are still very much lagging behind the urban areas.

Another group of young academics, also from **De La Salle University**, presented the paper; '*A Study on the Basis for Promotion of Philippine Independent Film Industry through Cavite Filmmakers Association*'. The presentation by **Ruth F. Gervacio, Rael B. San Pedro, Samantha Louis A. Serquiña and Isolde E. Valera**, discussed how despite a prominent independent film industry, mainstream media continues to dominate all audiences. Therefore, the presenters concluded, there is need for further promotion of local, independent cinema.

Communicating Ecological Crises

The global forum is indeed plagued by risk, but none threaten humanities existence more than that of climate change and its unpredictable, uncontrollable and ever-increasing effects. How we maximise communication in the frame of ecological crises is therefore the key to sustaining our existence on planet earth. **Ya Yang, Renmin University, China**, presented her paper: '*The Analysis of Social Resource Mobilization on New Media: A Case Study of Chinese Environmental Protection Video "Under the Dome"*'. Environmental issues inspired the presenter's research, particularly the air quality in China. She examined social mobilization behaviours triggered by environmental issues through the video "Under the Dome" and compared them with "The Inconvenient Truth". According to her findings, ICT makes social participation and mobilization more accessible for marginalized social classes and grassroots movements. Whilst the video has achieved its mobilization goals, it pays more attention to arousing emotion than it does to resource mobilization.

Similarly, in their presentation, based on the paper '*Rural Communication Services in the Delivery and Adoption of Saline-Tolerant Rice Variety among Farmers in Amtali, Barguna District, Bangladesh*' from **University of the Philippines Los Baños**, **Mohammad Kamrul Hassan and Cleofe**



S. Torres shared that their aim had been to meet the knowledge and information needs of various stakeholders in the rural sector, especially the farmers: the rural communication services (RCS). The study, focussed on rural Bangladesh, found that the government was the main RCS provider. Farmers trusted their information and found it useful. However, feedback channels were found to be limited and a better communication model was therefore suggested.

Researcher **Lili Wang**, from **Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China**, presented her paper *'Shifting from authority to Grassroots? The Comparison of Official Media Credibility and Unofficial Media Credibility in Natural Disasters'*. The presentation was focussed on how official media is linked with the government and subsequently, the extent to which people rely on it for important information. However, the study found that this government-sponsored media is not always accurate, for example about natural disasters, and thus investigated whether there is more reliance on unofficial media. According to Ms Wang's findings, official media has more credibility than unofficial media during reporting of two earthquakes and it continues to play an important role in setting the media agenda.

Finally, the research paper, *'Localization of IEC Materials of Carrascal LDRRMO Through Disaster Management Training'* was presented by **Dennis John F. Sumaylo** from the **University of the Philippines, Mindanao** and documents and evaluates the methods of localization of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) trainings through the experiential learning cycle and the pyramid of persuasion in reaction to low disaster response compliance rates. The case study site providing the context for the research was home to Indigenous Peoples and was also prone to flooding and attractive for mining ventures. The researcher found that all DRRM presentations were taken directly from Red Cross materials and presented in English with minimal translation. Furthermore, trainings also lacked experiential learning opportunities and evaluation tools.

3.3 Culture in the SDG's 2030 Development Agenda

Culture has a myriad of definitions. It is a system of human knowledge that may be tangible or intangible. It is an adaptive mechanism for survival, a body of learned symbolic behaviour. Culture, along with communication, is a fundamental pillar in sustainable development rhetoric, as demonstrated in the new development agenda. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development considers that in the face of mounting challenges, including environmental degradation and climate change, there is a corresponding need for new approaches to be defined that account for these human challenges. These new approaches must acknowledge the role of culture as a series of factors that can contribute to genuinely sustainable development.

In the light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in order to achieve the goals set within, the global community can no longer participate in a system that highlights division and inequality. The outcome document notes that all cultures contribute to sustainable development, which is in itself a reflection of the progress made since the implementation of the MDG's. For example, Indigenous Peoples have a much higher profile in the SDG outcome document – they are directly mentioned several times within the text – more than they did in the MDGs. Non-discrimination and non-exclusion are cornerstones to the successful application of the 2030



Sustainable Development Agenda. According to current development rhetoric, these must be realized as universal values, which are at the heart of a functioning, stable and peaceful global society.

Sustainability, Culture and Identity

Culture, already established as a complex term inclusive of nuanced social dynamics, can be explored from the perspective that culture and identity is what is inherited at birth. In this complex dynamic each unique culture's preservation is fundamental in the 2030 development agenda, at the same time acknowledging that change is inevitable in development, and therefore total resistance to it is counterproductive. Within this context, the research of **Danesto B. Anacio, from University of the Philippines Los Baños**, entitled, *'American Episcopal Missions, Material Use and Consumption Pattern Shifts in Sagada, Northern Philippines: Contexts for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals'*, described a transition which has narratives relevant when considering the achievement of the SDGs. The study, which examined the observed changes to the traditional culture of Sagada society, following the arrival of American missionaries in the early 1900's, noted that there were, indeed, rapid changes. The presenter noted that some of these changes were observed in the architecture, the farming practices and the labour systems that were now employed in the region and were not always in line with sustainable practices that were once prioritized. According to Danesto Anacio, whilst the people of Sagada were welcoming of the arrival of the Americans, in hindsight, some of the culture transitions have not always been for the betterment of the community.

Within the new development agenda, the dismantling of a culture that encourages human trafficking is prominent. **Fiona Servaes**, a representative from civil society, presented the case of **Urban Light Foundation**, an organization dedicated to rebuilding, restoring and empowering the lives of boys who are survivors of trafficking and exploitation in Thailand. Ms Servaes outlined the situation and push factors that foster the movement of young boys and men into the sex industry in Thailand and the country's context within the global framework of the US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. The situation of trafficking in Thailand has been well documented in the past year, as a consequence of the downgrade to the lowest category of the TIP report and ongoing reports of the trafficking of men, women and boys inside and out of Thailand.

According to the presenters, **Warit Wipulanusat from Walailak University, Thailand and Kriengsak Panuwatwanich from Griffith University, Australia**, innovation does not spread equally across different social groups, therefore the process is bounded within socio-psychological factors and for construction companies, and effective, sustainable, diffusion is needed through better understanding of the process. Their collaborative research, *'Innovation Diffusion in the Built Environment: A Review'*, explains that innovation diffusion is a crosscutting issue across many fields, including rural sociology, medical sociology, anthropology and economics. The presentation concluded that leadership and team climate is very important within the company structure and organizational culture perceptions.

Indigenous identity and traditional knowledge is widely recognised as integral to the preservation of culture. According to the presentation of **Assistant Professor Maitreyee Mishra, Manipal University, India**, titled *'Traditional Knowledge Systems, Culture and Environmental Sustainability: Concepts from Odisha, India'*, nature is an intrinsic part of Indian culture, whether it is mainstream or

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indigenous communities, yet Odisha is suffering the effects of environmental degradation at the hands of corporate and government interest. This research draws on the relationship of sustainable practices and traditional knowledge systems in the region and how these integrate with understandings of environmental conflicts in neoliberal India and dynamic cultural contexts. She concluded that traditional knowledge is central to physical, emotional and spiritual links between human and nature, and thus, could be key for achieving the SDGs.

Likewise, independent consultant, **Remeen Firoz from Bangladesh**, presented the research she conducted, in collaboration with Development Researcher **Jonas Dahlström from Sweden**. The research, entitled *‘Indigenous Communities of the CHT – Coping with Environmental Perils and Scoping Future Adaptive Capacities’*, explored the experience of the Indigenous Peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in relation to climate change. The study demonstrated a concrete link between the degradation of the land of the CHT and the self-perceived erosion of the traditional culture of the people that live there.

The research paper, *‘Media Literacy Strategy for Teenagers Based on Local Wisdom of Yogyakarta, Indonesia,’* presented by **Mario Antonius Birowo, Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta**, discusses the modernisation of traditional knowledge transmission. According to the presenter, media literacy is the ability to choose, mindfully view and reflectively judge media input. The study looked at methods of transmitting traditions and history in junior high school with examples including traditional musical instruments, historic murals, and the experience of making batik art. The recommendations made by the researcher included teenagers needing alternative activities to media exposure so that they can reflect upon and appreciate their own cultures.

One final presentation was made by the undergraduate students of **De La Salle Univeristy Philippines**; *‘Cultural Anthropology and Preservation: Easter Sunday Tradition “Salubong” in Selected Churches in Cavite’* was the collaboration of **Yvonne Basera, Ellie Calonzo, Camille Guillarte and Artin Umali**. Their study looks at the lack of consistency between the symbols within the “Salubong” procession during Easter in the Philippines, as projected by the church institutions and as practiced by the participants/followers themselves. The students concluded that this highlights cultural variation within the Cavite area.

Migration and Ethnicity

Although culture is indeed something that is stationary, the diffusing influence of migration and interacting ethnicities, whether that is over a long or short period, inevitably creates challenges in the absolute preservation of culture and thus is an intersectional relationship that needs to be understood in order to implement the SDGs effectively. **Patchanee Malikhao from Fecund Communication, Hong Kong**, shared her research in the framework of social capital versus media capital in the case of Chinese tourists in Thailand. In the paper entitled *‘Tourism, Digital Social Communication and Development Discourse: A Case Study on Chinese Tourist in Thailand’*, the presenter examined the repercussions for tourists when local perceptions are influenced by different factors. According to her, by categorizing a group of tourists and examining the root causes of public perception of these groups, one can begin to address the factors leading to the perceived cultural erosion. However, the speaker concluded by asking the question of whether tourism involves a trade of cultural values in exchange for easy income.

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Likewise, **Xu Minghua and Enny Ingketría**, from **Huazhong University of Science and Technology, China**, presented their co-authored research, *‘Imagining Chinese Indonesians in Contemporary Cultural Politics: Maintaining their Identity through the Chinese Media’*. According to the presenters, as a globally dispersed group, the basis for identity as ‘Chinese’ is unstable and there is a big influence through the reach of extensive Chinese cultural production, for example movies from Hong Kong. The paper investigates how such transnational media influences Chinese identity in Indonesia. Multiculturalism in Indonesia is seen to have failed, since minorities retain a sense of fear in their status and identity. According to the researchers, the possibility of cultural synthesis between China and Indonesia cannot take place through multiculturalism. Therefore Chinese-Indonesians have to negotiate with their role as a minority in the country.

‘Political Beliefs and Different Frame Building for an Inter-Religious Conflict: A Comparative Analysis of Malaysian Newspapers’ was presented by **Yang Lai Fong and Leong Wai Kit** from **Taylors University Malaysia**. The focus of this study was the coverage of protests against the building of a Hindu temple in an Islamic-majority area, during 2009. The content of two different newspapers, only one of which was English-language, was analyzed. The study found that much more coverage was found in the Malaysian-language paper, with *The Star* (English-language) clearly being pro-government. The two newspapers reported religious conflict with different intensity and prominence, due to the political context of these papers

The CCSDG International Conference was concluded with a thematic session focusing on China. The following papers were presented during this session; *‘A Study of Linguistic Landscapes in Nanning City, China’*⁵, *‘Legal Regulation or Self-regulation? Copyright Disputes of Chinese Online Video Industries: Case Studies of De-Piratisation of QVOD, Fansub Group and Xunlei’*⁶, *‘The Morality Kidnaps News and Opinions: A Common Public Ideology of the Contemporary China’*⁷, and *‘E-Mail, telephone, and face-to-face communication: Workplace communication in Chinese multinational companies and domestic companies’*⁸. This final session allowed for an in-depth exploration into the current research that is being conducted on the world’s most populous country.

4. Complementary Activities and Side-Events

4.1 Interactive Practice Session

In the interactive session **“Learning the Practice of Rural Development Professionalism: Challenging the professional 2.0”** by **Loes Witteveen, Rico Lie & Patchanee Malikhao** participants reflected upon necessary competencies of rural development professionals in the global South, as well as upon adequate learning environments in higher education for the development of these competencies, particularly the use of film. For higher education programs, the need was identified to focus more on competences related to listening and observing in order to do justice to a complex social reality. Relevant questions were discussed in small groups, followed by a lively plenary discussion facilitated by **Patchanee Malikhao**.

4.2 Field Visits

Field visits were organized to two different locations: with support of the Karen Network for Culture and Environment (KNCE), a group of conference attendees visited Hin Lad Nai, an ethnic Karen village in Chiang Rai province that has recently been awarded for its best practices in forest conservation.



The participants had the chance to discuss with the villagers about their community-based resource and tourism management. A second group of participants joined a field trip to URBAN LIGHT, an NGO working on human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of boys (see also: the presentation of Fiona Servaes, p.11), as well as to the Thai Freedom House, a not-for-profit community learning center dedicated to assisting refugees from Burma and members of minority groups of Thailand.

4.3 Film screenings

The Action4Climate competition launched by the World Bank encouraged young filmmakers from all over the world to create a video documentary in order to raise awareness of climate change, share experiences and inspire action. More than 230 videos from 70 countries were submitted, bringing to life the serious consequences of climate change across the world and highlighting the actions taken by local communities to tackle it. A selection of award winning C4C films was screened at the conference, among them the first three winners of the different age groups as well the C4C special awards.

4.4 Exhibition

Finally, the conference hosted an exhibition titled “Cultural Crossroads of the Golden Triangle” by Victoria Vorreiter. Photographs, textiles, musical instruments and other cultural objects from diverse ethnic groups of the region where Burma, Thailand, China and Laos meet, were displayed. At the same time, an ethnographic video by the curator was screened during the exhibition. The collection presents the result of 10 years work of recording and documenting ethnic minority cultures in the region.

5. Evaluation and Feedback

The conference received a very positive overall evaluation from the participants and presenters. They expressed a high satisfaction with the conference themes as well as with the structural and logistic organization.

Conference Themes and Activities: Positively highlighted were the great variety, rich content and relevance of the conference topics. Also the complementary activities, such as the field trips and the film screenings received excellent feedback as they offered new insights and practical learning experiences. Further to this, participants appreciated the excellent networking opportunities and spaces for collaboration that opened up during the event.

Preparation, Organization and Logistics: The overall preparation, organization and management of the conference were highly appreciated by the participants. For example, the conference venue and location were perceived as central and convenient. Positive emphasis was particularly given on the accommodation, including the well-organized service and food quality. However, it was suggested to improve transportation facilities around the venue. Room for improvement was also seen in the information sharing through the conference’s website which faced some minor technical difficulties. Moreover, in order to attract more presenters and quality papers, participants suggested improving the advertisement for future conferences through a broader range of communication channels, especially in order to reach more scholars from China.



Suggestions for Future Conferences: Presenters and participants proposed to narrow down the focus of upcoming conferences only on the SGDs and strategies for their communication, in order to make the new goals more attainable in the post-millennium era. Moreover, a number of topics were suggested to be elaborated in future events, such as the place of communication and culture in sustainable development, specific contributions of specific communication media in particular contexts, including the potential of visual communication, or the function of professional chance facilitators and their required competencies.

Referring to the COP21 Climate Conference in Paris, attendees emphasized the importance to shed further light on climate change, particularly on aspects on adaptation and mitigation, on emerging health issues, new diseases and health communication strategies. In face of the soon to be established AEC, the conference organizers were encouraged to include an ASEAN perspective on culture, communication and sustainability issues, including global warming and the reduction of the greenhouse effect. It was suggested to enhance regional cooperation and to develop theories on common ASEAN issues through improved groundwork, as well as to scale-up existing sustainable solutions in the region. Needs and opportunities for cross-cultural knowledge sharing and exchange were stressed, and researchers were asked to make their findings accessible to the larger public, e.g. through the use of alternative media. Moreover, it was suggested to include more non-western and indigenous research and theory into the debate on sustainable development. In this context, benefits, challenges, and adequate ways of engaging indigenous peoples into the international discourse were discussed in greater detail.

There will be a number of publications emerging from the conference: a selection of papers is going to be published as special issues in relevant academic journals or considered for publication in specific book series.

¹While some the MDGs were met, such as to halve the number of people living in extreme poverty, other targets remain unreached, including the reduction of child and maternal mortality, or the achievement of universal education.

² Composed of: Kamala Vainy Pillai, Curtin University, Australia; Gaelle Duthler, Zayed University, UAE; Pavel Slutsky, Chulalonghorn University, Thailand; Inka Stever, Zayed University, UAE; and Katharina Wolf)

³ on behalf of her co-authors Rebecca Rogers, Bernhard Goodwin, Werner Heitland, Wolfgang Weisser, Anja Uretschlager and Hans-Bernd Brosius, from Technische Universität München and Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich

⁴ Chandrika De Alwis, University of the Sunshine Coast, Anthony Le Duc, Asian Research Centre for Religion and Social Communication, Shelton Gunaratne, Minnesota State University, Patchanee Makikhao, Fecund Communication and Yoke-Sim Gunaratne.

⁵ Kai Yao and Jonathan Rante Carreon, Huachiew Chalermprakiet University, Thailand.

⁶ Xijing Zhao, National Chengchi University, Taiwan and Jie Gu, Communication University of China.

⁷ Yujun Wang, Zhejiang University, China.

⁸ Qinyu E, Communication University of China and Xuejun Chen, Kent State University, USA.