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## From the Editor

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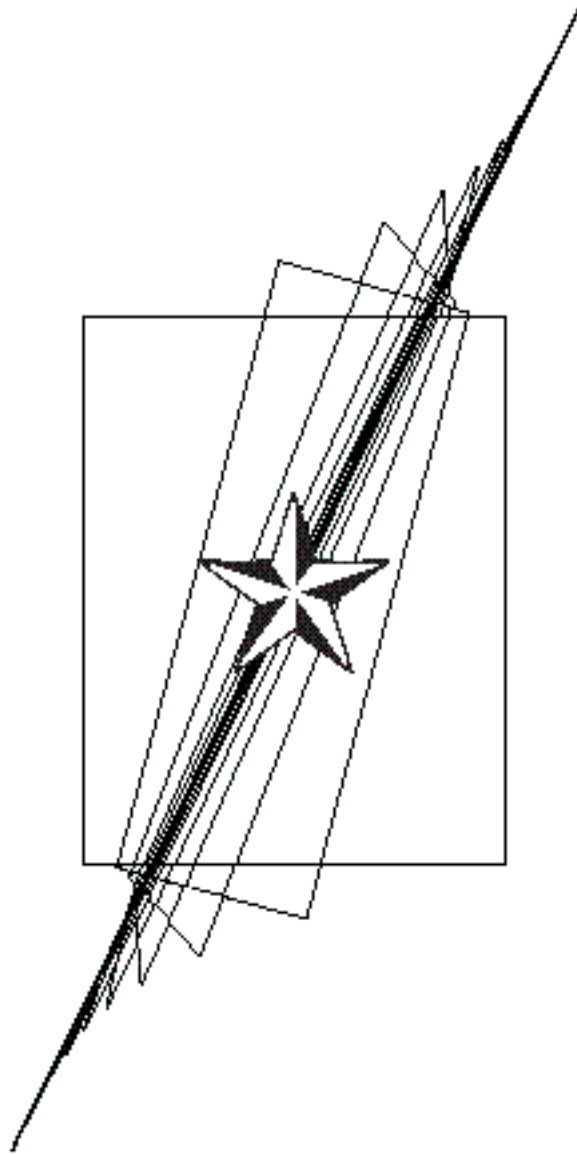
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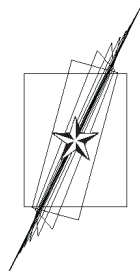
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# ASIA-PACIFIC SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

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## Table of Contents

### From the Editor

*Romeo B. Lee*

### Research Articles

- Indigenous Movements in Southeast Asia: An Analysis Based on the Concept of 'Resonance' 1  
*Isabel Inguanzo and Claire Wright*
- Social Capital in Thai Social Enterprises and Related Communities 18  
*Thammarat Marohabutr*
- Testing the Portfolio Risk in Philippine Microfinance Institutions 32  
*Nestor T. Necesito*
- Assessment of Antecedents of Online Consumers' Information Search Behavior 46  
*Jong Suk Ye, Renee B. Kim and Gyun Kim*
- Global Reproductive Health: Perspectives, Challenges, and Future Directions 61  
*Dennis V. Blanco*
- Neoliberal Restructuring of Education in the Philippines: Dependency, Labor, Privatization, Critical Pedagogy, and the K to 12 System 80  
*David Michael M. San Juan*

### Research Briefs

- Of Culpability and Blamelessness: The Narratives of Women Formerly on Death Row in the Philippines 111  
*Diana Therese M. Veloso*
- NGOs in Banking: Institutional Transformation and Ownership and Control of Cambodia's ACLEDA Bank 128  
*Edmund Terence Gomez and Kee-Cheok Cheong*
- Ethics of Public University Executives 142  
*Wariya Chinwanno and Karansupamas Engchuan*

Peer Education Counseling Services for HIV, Health Promotion and Gender Equality: Designing a Job from Strategic Information on MSM, TGW, and PWID <i>Roberto E. Javier Jr.</i>	146
Research Agenda on History and Culture in Relation to Peace and Development in Mindanao Focus on the Homeland <i>Rolando C. Esteban</i>	156
Growth of Citizen Movements and Changes in the Political Process in Korea and the US: Similarities and Differences <i>Sung-jin Yoo</i>	170
<b>Book Review</b>	
How Does the Asymmetric Relationship between India and New Zealand Make Sense for Today's Indo-Pacific Region? <i>Monir Hossain Moni</i>	181
Guidelines to Contributors	185

## From the Editor

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Systematic evidence, such as that published in the Asia Pacific Social Science Review, is usually expected to affect, in some ways, our thinking and doing—and down the line—our quality of life and our society as a whole. Impact making is foremost in the minds of many of us (i.e., journal article writers and journal editors), the reason that we exert our best efforts to explain our research evidence well so that it gets understood and appreciated. Allow me to drumbeat the key findings and their potential application of some studies presented in this Review's edition in the hope of heightening their overall impact level.

Authors Ortiz and Wright, of Salamanca (Spain) and Nuevo Leon Universities (Mexico) respectively, in their study of indigenous social movements in Southeast Asia (pp. 1), highlight an important result. That is, that these movements, over the past 30 years, have utilized varying strategies in advancing their respective causes in the region. This means that, while some movements, as the authors report, used influential allies to communicate their demands to political and national authorities, others elected to cast their demands according to society's and State's values. These social movements have adopted differing strategies, because each has been confronted with distinct challenges owing to their respective unique sociocultural roots and milieus. In the midst of their differences, however, these social movements are reported to have shared a common ground in terms of their master frame. The authors note that, throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, their shared frames had revolved around human rights and environment and in the 2000s around participatory-oriented frames. In fostering the formation and growth of social movements in a non-monolithic region of Asia Pacific, it is clear, from the data and our experience in general, that we can only prescribe the master but not wholly dictate their operational frame. There is simply no one-size-fits-all template in this case.

Author Marohabutr of Mahidol University (Thailand) examines two big terms (social capital and social entrepreneurship) that he amply and simply defines in his report (pp. 18). He says that social capital refers to non-monetary resources, such as generosity, trust, harmony, honesty, and perseverance, while social entrepreneurship refers to prioritizing social benefits over profit maximization. In a world of pervasive and seemingly relentless commercialism (where money is definitely king!), his key finding reminds us (lest we forget) that it is not all about financial capital that makes a business successful; he relentlessly points, too, to the integral role of social goods. I should note that, in many small towns across much of Asia Pacific, there is no shortage of generosity, which is a highly valued social good. For example, we know about wet market vendors selling their products, not on fixed prices but according to buyer's available cash; about medical doctors in private practice accepting rice, chickens, and vegetables as payments for their rendered services; or about small-scale merchants lending money to each other based on verbal agreements. On occasions, in our own benevolent ways, we let some people get away from the financial debts they owe us. These flexibilities are most certainly absent in highly urbanized population centers let alone in giant enterprises. We need more social entrepreneurs with a conscience and a big heart for the benefit of the marginalized sectors in our region. Both as a concept and an experience, social capital and social enterprises are life changing and should be taught to our school-going populations.

Author Necesito from Fairmont Raffles Hotel Makati (Philippines) tests (his word) the portfolio risk of 119 microfinance institutions in his homeland (pp. 32). He concludes that profitability as represented by return on equity and cost efficiency as measured by the operating expense to loan portfolio and the percentage of loan portfolio to total assets, have the strongest impact on portfolio risk. In other words, institutional rather than macro-level factors are affecting the portfolio risk of microfinance institutions. The author justifiably draws attention to the long-term financial sustainability of microfinance institutions while also being cognizant of the role that these institutions play in meeting the financial needs of a large number of poorer Filipinos. Institutional



financial sustainability is commonly addressed by infusing more financial capital into and by diversifying the products and services of microfinance institutions. However, these two-fold strategies, once adopted, carried out and made to work well, are bound to alter the core structures, processes, complexities, and outcomes of microfinance institutions. In effect, microfinance institutions would metamorphose into higher-level entities, and with their restructured personalities, their priorities would now change along with their overall impact. The author's piece reminds me of the case of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh (scour the Internet for detailed information on the institution). More importantly, it reminds me of the precarious future of our microfinance agencies. As the rest of Asia Pacific countries modernize, there would be scores of microfinance institutions that would emerge. We need to offer them with more data as guideposts. Honest-to-goodness data about successful and sustained microfinance operations in the region will be simply invaluable.

Our Research Briefs in this edition likewise offer potentially high-impact findings, and with real world applications. The evidence reported by Author Veloso on Filipino women who are formerly in death row could be used to draw the attention of relevant agencies to the plight of incarcerated women. Contrary to popular claims, the numbers of women in prisons across Asia Pacific have been rising, which is indicative more of their troubled backgrounds (e.g., domestic abuse) than of their propensity for criminal activities (e.g., drug pushing). For this reason alone, we need to strengthen our efforts for empowering women. The evidence discussed by Authors Gomez and Cheong is drawn from a case study of a non-government organization in Cambodia that has successfully coupled its microfinancing goals with a thriving commercial banking enterprise. But as the authors say, and as cited earlier, the commercialization process has posed a serious drift in the mission of the non-government organization. Their data are a great resource and are very useful for others who are also aiming to level up their microfinancing services into full-blown commercial enterprises, certainly in pursuit of their own financial sustainability. The findings of Authors Chinwanno and Engchuan focus on the ethics of public university executives in Thailand. Earlier, in the Review's December 2015 edition, we presented Author Chinwanno's data on the ethics of Thai politicians. Whether the information on ethics pertains to university executives or politicians, it is always an important input for improving institutional governance.

I must say that the impact of our research findings should go beyond policies, programs, institutions, and us—the intellectual elite. If impact would be made much broader, then research knowledge has to be understood and embraced by the general population, and made part of their conceptual and behavioral schema. We need to work doubly hard to fulfil this vision, however. Rather than just publish our findings in journals, we have to translate our research knowledge in ways that can be appreciated by the general public. For example, we can break down this knowledge into bits and pieces of messages and integrate them into the mass and social media, being the most popular forms of communication channels on earth. A line or two core messages, which are drawn from our research, for example on social movements, women in death row, social entrepreneurship, microfinance institutions, or ethics of institutional executives, could form part of the scenes or the actors' dialogues in telenovelas and radio dramas (these media forms are extremely popular across the region). This strategy demands that researchers must build a collaborative, long-term arrangement with media and other real-world specialists. It is more than high time for us academics to go out of our comfort zone and to be in the mainstream.

I trust that the foregoing are useful as you go through the six research articles, six research briefs, and a book review featured in this June 2016 edition of the Review.

Thank you.

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