# BOOK REVIEW
# Hirose Nishihara, A., Matsunaga, M., Nonaka, I., Yokomichi, K. (Eds.): KNOWLEDGE CREATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND JAPAN, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p. 236

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Considering Nonaka's seminal works on Knowledge Management and the particular research interest that has been created thereupon, "***Knowledge Creation in Community Development: Institutional Change in Southeast Asia and Japan***" only comes as a natural addition to the existing scientific literature on the topic. Edited by a group of Tokyo-based scientists, the book is an interdisciplinary attempt to community development and quality of life issues.

To the editors, traditional approaches to the enhancement of quality of life were based on a business management pathway that has been continuously stumbled upon: human resources management, data management, corporate governance, accounting or financial management were considered as some of the tools that practicioners have been used to employ in their quest to improve social standards for the community. This book launches a challenge to consider extended options of solving social aspects and improving quality of life, by encouraging decision-makers to look at knowledge management as a useful means to reach social targets.

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The authors believe that public administration and NGO's can socially innovate when they manage to improve individual and collective mindsets. Changing mindsets does not simply occur by the use of traditional business management, but a deeper, psychological connection is needed: information has to be used as a tool to shift knowledge and thoughts, which will later result in improved habits of doing. Knowledge creation is regarded as a useful process for public or local authorities to ameliorate their problem-solving abilities and to enhance community development.

"*Knowledge Creation in Community Development: Institutional Change in Southeast Asia and Japan*" is a collection of case studies at community level in Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and Japan. These countries have been selected as examples since all of them have undergone major challenges throughout their histories, starting with twentieth century wars up to the more recent 1997 Asian or 2007 global financial crises, which (probably apart from Japan, which is considered separately from the rest of the Asian countries in the book) resulted in sharp double-edged societies: wealth here and poverty there. The book focuses on knowledge management-based social innovation in order to reduce societal gaps and improve living standards.

The book opens with an introductory chapter that aims to explain the main concepts to be used throughout the volume, leaving then space for local case studies. Interesting enough, the theoretical concepts such as 'ba' (Nonaka, Konno, 1998; Nonaka et al., 2000) or the SECI model are continuously relived throughout the book, in each case a connection being made between real life example and theory. Chapter 2 looks at how Joko Widodo, mayor of the Indonesian city of Solo, improved the efficiency of public administration by taking more time to listen to and discuss with people. While it might obviously seem like 'the method' to run a community, in many instances this is not yet the case, so it is worth to have a look at how Widodo has chosen not to use a coercive approach widely used in Indonesia, opting instead for recognition of opinions and ideas of people (p. 32), putting them together in a shared voice.

Chapter 3 tackles a challenging view on Thai public administration: while Thailand is recognized for its strong centralization pressures, the municipality of Yala has managed to reverse the situation and de-centralize its social management. This resulted in improved public services for people irrespective of their race or religion, in a restored public safety and in an environment where peace and reconciliation are promoted (pp. 49-51).

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the historical case study of the Japanese City of Mitaka, whose belated post-Second World War reconstruction was a gift of four majors (starting with 1970) opening up for citizen collaboration and participation, accepting ideas from the inhabitants and putting them into practice. Chapter 5 looks at Da Nang City in Vietnam, which, similar to Yala in Thailand, used de-centralization as a tool for offering better care to the tailored needs of its citizens. Chapter 6 touches some bases with social entrepreneurship, as it presents how Antonio Meloto has empowered the poor Filipinos to change their lives. This has happened as a result of a change of mindsets: people were encouraged to commit more individually in order to create more value, to select integrity and honor instead of money (p. 126), to be good and kind to their fellow and to donate or at least offer a pat on the back in times of need (p. 115). The vision of

Antonion Meloto resulted in a strongly bounded civic community, always there to support whenever necessary. Chapter 7 as well finds joint arguments with social entrepreneurship when it looks at the case of Mr. Yokoishi, whose start-up has helped the local community even though it was treated with lack of faith in the beginning.

Chapter 8 looks at how Khun Chai created labor opportunities in Doi Tung, Thailand, developping the local coffee farmins sector and improving the payment schemes (p. 172), which not only resulted in a higher social responsibility, but also in a move away from opium production. Chapter 9 sticks to Thailand, presenting how individual and collective thought can solve societal issues.

Chapter 10 presents the conclusions of the book, reiterating the main ideas of the case studies, focusing on the best ways of how to involve people in the community in the problem-solving process. The conclusions highlight that social innovation is made unique by the large array of stakeholders living within the same community, each of them having different demands and, thus, placing different types of pressure on the public authorities. These pressures can be challenged by bringing people toghether, listening to them and trying to find joint solutions.

Published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2018, "*Knowledge Creation in Community Development: Institutional Change in Southeast Asia and Japan*" is one of the first books to look at community developpement from a knowledge management perspective. Thanks to its widely innovative approach, the book can be considered a road-opener. Moreover, starting from this book, the authors have produced a second volume, called "*Knowledge Creation in Public Administration: A New Paradigm for Innovative Governments in Asia*", which also presents a new approach to management in local governments. Both volumes are clear indications that soft-power plays its role in community management. By undergoing devastating wars in their recent histories, Soth-East Asian countries have been used to rather partiarchal, dictatorial styles of management in the past half of the century. Under such circumstances, a softer approach to management, based on participation, information and knowledge-sharing, is regarded as innovative. If this innovation has produced positive results in the hard-power dominated South-East Asia, as the case studies show, then for sure it can be an eye-opener for public administrations in the rest of the world too.

# References

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