

JCAP CONFERENCE

A Call To Dialogue on the Sustainability of Life In the ASEAN Context

1. Background

The conference on sustainability was first mooted in the 2013 JCAP Extended Consult by three JCAP Networks (Buddhism, Islam & JCIM). The initiative was a response to Goal 3 of JCAP's Outline of an Apostolic Plan 2014-2019 which calls for *collaboration in mission*. A year later in the 2014 JCAP's Extended Consult (Oct 23-24), seven Networks-Secretaries (Buddhism, Islam, JCIM, Social Apostolate-Migration & Reconciliation with Creation (RWC), AJCU and FORMATION) deliberated on organizing this Conference. Fr. Joel Tabora's call to make this a JCAP Conference was accepted. At the 2014 JCAP Extended Conference, Fr. Cyril Veliath, SJ gave a copy of the proposal to Fr. Mark Raper, SJ. The JCAP Consultors deliberated on the proposal and on January 12, 2015, Fr. Eric Villandria (JCAP Socius) met Jojo Fung regarding the comments of the JCAP Consult. At the Oct 23-24, 2015 JCAP Extended Consult, Pedro shared the concept paper and received many invaluable insights. The latest addition of Basic Education to this collaborate effort makes this initiative a truly Jesuit-led conference of Asia Pacific region.

2. Rationale

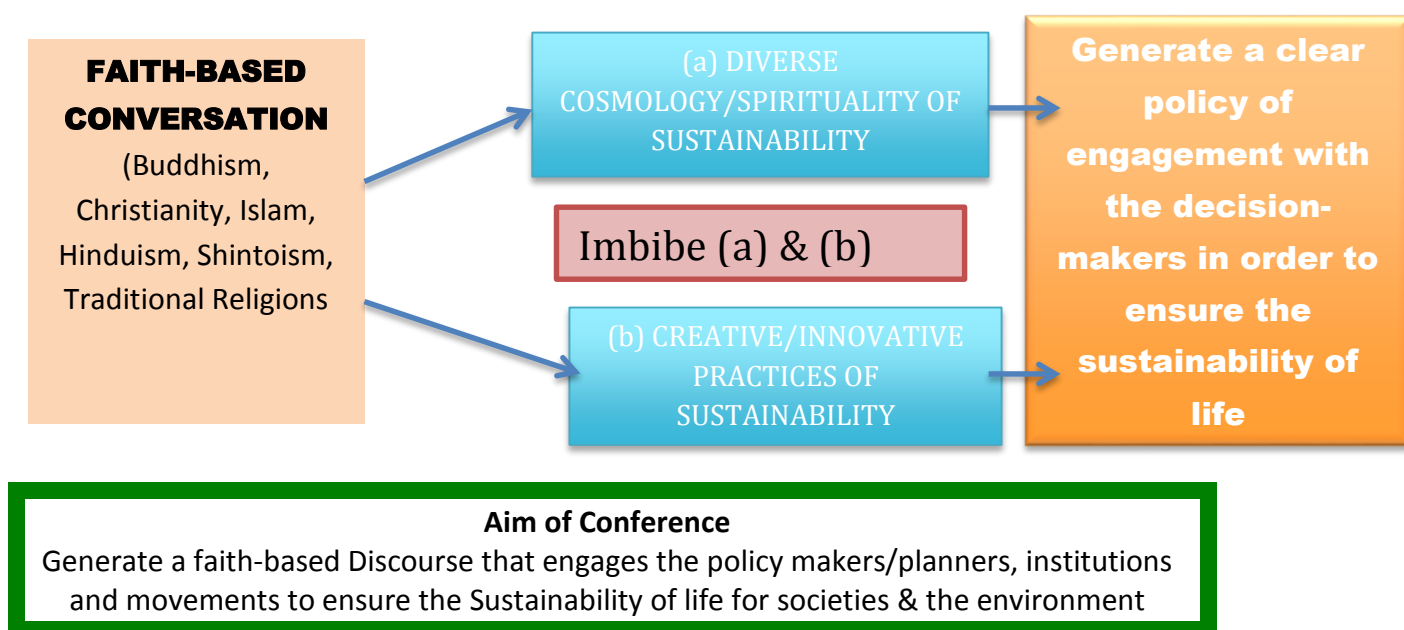
The recent UN Conference on Sustainable Development Goals (September 25-27, 2015) in New York with the ensuing document entitled *Transforming Our World* (TOW) calls on the member states to translate the "17 Sustainable Development Goals which 169 associated targets which are integrated and indivisible" in order to ensure the sustainability of life for "planet earth and its ecosystem in our common home." The document calls on the international community to translate "the 17 Sustainable Development Goals with 169 associated targets which are integrated and indivisible"(TOW 18, 59).¹ The UN pledges to "acknowledge the natural and cultural diversity of the world and recognize that ***all cultures and civilizations*** can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of, sustainable development" (TOW 35). This pledge responds to the call of Kari Oca II to "culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development."² Indeed "the scale and ambition of the new Agenda requires a revitalized Global Partnership to ensure its implementation" especially in "a spirit of global solidarity, in particular solidarity with the poorest and with people in vulnerable situations" (TOW 39).

In lieu of the ASEAN Roadmap 2015, this dialogue on sustainability of life for the marginal communities in ASEAN region becomes all the more urgent and relevant as we realize the adverse and even suicidal impact of the current interventionist model of development on their lives. The adverse impact ranges from the lack of good/ethnic governance, current model of development on their lives, increasing "financialization" of the natural and human resources, rapid deforestation, desertification, acidification of the ocean, chemical intensive farming that causes poor health, the pollution of the air, land and water. We believe the building of a truly caring and sharing ASEAN community requires the inclusion of the diverse mystical cosmologies, people-centred movements for change, multileveled and multipronged strategies of advocacy, participatory processes of achieving sustainability of the local and regional communities.

In the spirit of global partnership and solidarity, inspired by vision of *Laudato Si'* of the earth as “our common home” “our common origin, and a future to be shared with everyone” “which God has entrusted to us” (LS 202, 232), the Jesuits of the Conference of Asia Pacific wish to respond to “the gravity of the ecological crisis” by looking “to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue” that encourages the different “religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity” (LS 201). In the light of the prevalent injustices, ranging from “inequality, corruption, poor governance and illicit financial and arms flows” (TOW 35), this call to dialogue will “integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (LS 49). This dialogue aims to motivate the diverse faith communities, institutions, including the “Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources” (TOW 39). The dialogue on the sustainable of life “demands the constant and active involvement of local people from within their proper culture” (LS 144). Only such an inclusion of the people’s culture and participation ensures an “integral ecology” (LS 137-162) that calls for “a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land” (LS 179, cf. 146, 180).

The encyclical’s call to a sustained relationship “with God, with our neighbor and with the earth” (LS 66) resonates with the Society of Jesus’ preparatory document of GC 36 entitled *The Call of the Eternal King* “to develop sustainable ecological and social practices both within our Jesuit communities and apostolates that will heal a broken world.”³ This Jesuit-initiated dialogue attempts to translate the call of the Eternal King in the vision and missions of our institutions and related movements for change to include and incorporate the ancestral wisdom, beliefs and practices that constitute the diverse mystical cosmologies of the Asian religio-cultural communities and enable them to better negotiate the emerging challenges within the ASEAN context.

3. Overall Objectives The objectives of the 2016 Conference are:



- (a) Include the diverse mystical cosmologies on sustainability of the local communities in the strategic planning of the policies, development studies and the community-empowerment programs of our institutions;
- (b) Commit funds to engage the policy makers of the many agencies (governmental, regional and international) to ensure a more sustainable and equitable livelihood of the majority affected by the current model of development.

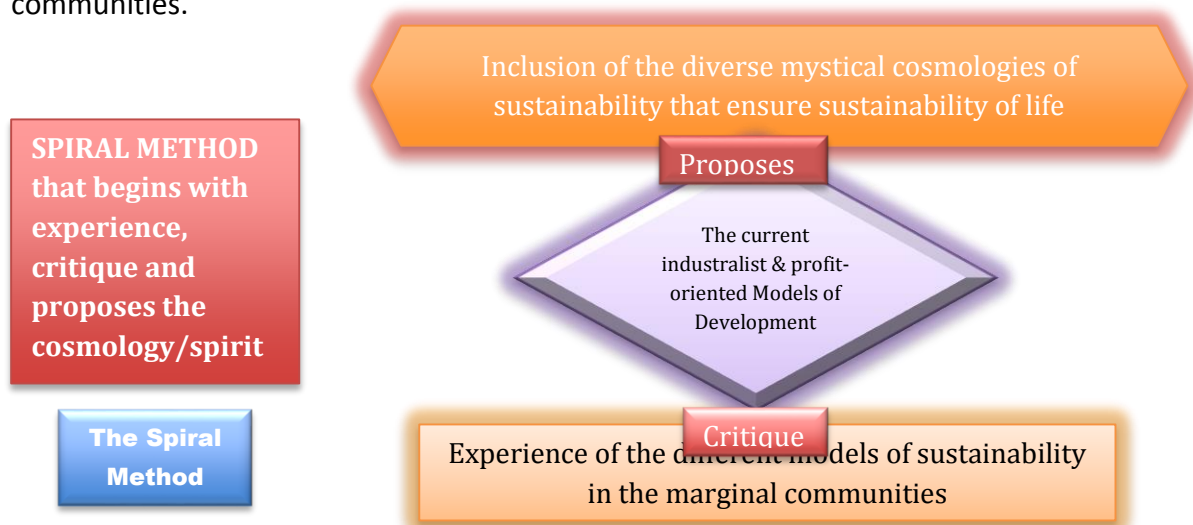
4. Take-Away For Scholastics Collaborators, Presenters & Participants

- (a) **Scholastics.** Learn about the local beliefs and practices of the religio-cultural marginal communities in their years of formation so as to be transformed in their attitudes and lifestyle, prayer, worship, and relationship in the community and pastoral practices.
- (b) **Participants who are collaborators/presenters.** Prioritize the mystical cosmologies of sustainability in the development programs of our respective institutions/organizations while we engage the policy makers to bring about a more sustainable development of the marginalized.

5. Outcomes. This conference hopes to

- (a) Offer thought-leadership to policy-makers through a faith-based dialogue on sustainability of life for the marginal communities in the **electronic and published Copies** of all the papers presented in the conference;
- (b) Challenge the participants to a conversion that lives with “less more” and motivate them to seek ways to use social media to influence the decision-makers, planners and developers (e.g. politicians, economists, entrepreneurs...etc) to a simple lifestyle that consumes less energy and water, plant more trees, conserve the forests that makes life sustainable.

6. **Methodology.** The conference will engage the spiral process that begins with **experience** through **immersion** that facilitates certain **engagement** with the communities.



Through the immersion-engagement on the first day, the participants and the presenters will have a first hand experience of the adverse impact of the industrialist model of

development on the sustainability of life of our vulnerable communities. The participants will engage the communities and learn more about the spiritual and human values that makes life sustainable in the marginal religio-cultural communities.

Furthermore, the conference will honor the experiences embodied by the presenters and participants. The presenters are expected to base their papers on (i) personal/communal experience of engagement of the mystical cosmology of sustainability; (ii) present a critical analysis of the crisis of sustainability of the existing model of development, (iii) offer her/his reflection in the light of the respective wisdom and religious teachings of her/his religio-cultural traditions (Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, traditional religions) (iv) share the best praxis/practices especially the innovative strategies of sustainable actions for the marginal communities that calls for engaging the policy makers/planners, institutions, movements, the local-regional communities and the civil society.

Endnotes

¹ See the UN Document, *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals*, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7891TRANSFORMING%20OUR%20WORLD.pdf>

² See the KARI-OCA II DECLARATION, entitled the “Indigenous Peoples Global Conference on Rio+20 And Mother Earth”, p. 5. The Declaration was accepted by a collection Acclamation that took place at the Kari-Oka Village, at the Sacred Kari-Oka Púku, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 17 June 2012.

³ GC 35, D. 3, *Challenges To Our Mission Today*, no. 32, “Care of the environment affects the quality of our relationship with God, with other human beings, and with Creation itself. It touches the core of our faith in and love for God, “from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying.”