

**A debate on differences between the vision and path towards  
'development' in South-East Asia : with particular reference to  
Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia**

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## I. Introduction

South-East Asia has experienced considerable rapid growth in its economy. Meanwhile, however, it has also emerged that there have been yawning gaps between ‘the stereotyped vision held by governments’ in principle and ‘the reality experienced by the popular echelons of the society’ at the grassroots. The gaps may be more or less summarised into three sectors in terms of social anthropological dimensions: the gaps between 1) ‘cultures’ and vision, 2) ‘acting subjects’ and vision, and 3) ‘real life at the grass roots’ and vision (see, Foster-Carter 1985). In other words, South-East Asian countries have implemented national development projects at the expense of more parochial values such as those of traditional worldviews, people at the grassroots and socio-cultural mechanisms. As a result, the popular echelons of society in South-East Asia have claimed another vision and path, a people-centred [or bottom-up] approach to development, as an alternative to the conventional and orthodox way of looking at ‘development’; an alternative which is, as I will argue in detail later on, holistic, micro-, qualitative and practically objective.

Bearing in mind the gaps and differences mentioned above, my aim in this article is basically to argue that different ways of looking at ‘development’ are a response to whether people are treated as an end or as a means, thereby emphasising that the vision and path towards ‘development’ *should not* be development-centred but people-centred. In this vein, I will call the types of development the ‘development-centred approach’ and the ‘people-centred approach’, rather than the ‘top-down approach’ and the ‘bottom-up approach’.

In the next section of the article, I will explore Immanuel Kant’s moral *formulae* to build up the conceptual framework for the main argument in this article. In the main section, my article will proceed to analyse the differences between the image of national development and that of grassroots development, taking case studies of each country: differences in framework (rural development in Thailand), in perspective and perceptual units (rural poverty in Indonesia), in rationale (ethnic rationalisation in Malaysia), and in methodology (transmigration in Indonesia). In the last part, I will attempt to suggest a more people-centred approach to development in search of more appropriate development.

## II. Conceptual Foundations

Here I will consider Immanuel Kant’s philosophy of morals to pave the conceptual foundations for my argument. By doing so, I do not mean that South-East Asian countries always understand the dignity of people merely in terms of ‘instrumental value’. However I do mean that, in the process of development, people themselves, especially marginalised people, should enjoy objective priority over conditional and subjective visions towards development, on the grounds that development itself is ultimately for the sake for people themselves. In this regard, Immanuel Kant said:

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*act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only. [...] Man, however, is not a thing, and thus not something to be used merely as a means; he must always be regarded in all his actions as an end in himself. (Kant 1969:53-4)*

Immanuel Kant's philosophy of morals puts emphasis on 'dignity of people' and 'humanity'. The formula above is probably the best-known version of Kant's moral *formulae*. When he explained this formula, Kant wrote movingly of the radical differences between people and mere things. If things have any value at all, Kant said, their value is only extrinsic, conditional, and subjective. Things therefore have value only insofar as someone or other happens to regard them as valuable, either for their utility or for emotional reasons. Kant also proceeded to offer the conceptual claim that, unlike things, people have intrinsic worth; thus, they are objective ends. To say that people are objective ends is to say that they *should* be regarded as having absolute worth, whether or not they are also desired as contributing to any purposes. Ultimately, what Kant stipulates is that we may not regard or treat others only as instrumentally valuable, merely as a means to satisfy certain purposes (Sullivan 1994:67-70).

### **III. Different Framework: 'Khor Jor Ko' in Thailand**

In this part, I will mention different frameworks of development between national level and grassroots level, taking an example of externalities on the way to modernisation in Thailand. Thailand can be considered to be a typical instance in terms of different ways of looking at the form of development and the dichotomy of framework between the political elite and grassroots people.

Thailand indeed had great potential in its capacity and ability to carry out 'modernisation *with* development', as Norma Jacobs pointed out in comparison with Japan during the mid-nineteenth century.

Both countries [Thailand and Japan] were independent, both were largely homogeneous in culture, both had a strong sense of national identity, both had creative and often brilliant elites who were strategically located in decision-making positions from which they could innovate constructively, both had bureaucratic staffs able and willing to implement elite decisions, both were realistic about foreigners' intentions and power and sensed the need for social innovation rather than reliance on verbalization to meet the threat, both had key, cash crops to use as the material means by which to implement productive change. (Jacobs 1971:3-4)

However, she continued in regard to 'modernisation *without* development'

"Yet, Japan developed but Thai did not, while the prognosis of most foreign observers of the nineteenth century was that Siam would develop while Japan would not."  
(Jacobs 1971:4)

In other words, in Thailand, especially since 1932, there have been yawning gaps between national ideology towards modernisation and on-the-ground reality, and between the national vision towards development and people's interests. The gaps here become clearer if we take as an example environmental issues related to the forest in Thailand. In Thailand, it is true that such 'modern' sectors of GDP as manufacturing industries (plywood, furniture, etc.) have contributed to economic growth and in turn to national modernisation. However, it should also be noted that, meanwhile, over-exploitation of the forest has been conditioned by politico-economic corruption and has brought degradation of the natural environment and even degradation of indigenous cultures. Moreover, it is doubted whether the benefit generated from the manufacturing industries has been sufficiently redistributed and reinvested for those who are involved in industrialisation. As a consequence, relying mostly on Theravada Buddhism, the grassroots echelon has demanded more holistic modernisation with on-the-ground development, and has launched its own non-governmental organisations and tried its own initiatives to that end. However, there still exist different ways of conceiving of modernisation and development even conflicts, between the national development planners and the grassroots echelons.

For instance, during the 1980s, the Thai government planned to settle some 250,000 families living on degraded forest land in the Northeast Region over five years under the *khor jor kor* [relocation scheme for the poor in degraded forest lands]. This scheme was inspired by the government's economic policies and the global demand for such manufactured products as wood chips and paper pulp. The proposal, under the administration of the Steering Committee for Internal Security, involved re-planting degraded forests with commercial *eucalyptus* plantations. This scheme brought socio-cultural despoliation of the poor and massive destruction of primary forest ecosystems. As a consequence, so-called development monks and peasants resisted the government policy and the military-led evictions and were accused of hindering national prosperity and development (Taylor 1993:2-6). In this issue, we can identify two broad kinds of approaches to development: a development-centred approach and a people-centred approach, that is, a modernisation-oriented one deeply rooted in commercial capitalism and a holistic one based on people and nature.

### 1. 'Modernisation-oriented' Approach to Development

It is possible to identify some universal elements of modernisation theory in the policy practices of Thai government. Firstly, as mentioned above, the scheme was inspired by the government's economic policies and global demand. It can be said, therefore, that the practices were inspired primarily by commercial capitalism, the mechanism of entrepreneurship and capital, and regarded the commercial mechanism as a process which the indigenous people should undergo and take part in for the sake of development (Webster 1984:53). Secondly, the process of implementing the scheme, brought changes in the indigenous people's living patterns and massive destruction of forest ecosystems. That is, the Thai government concentrated on patterns and means of development, regardless of living patterns and socio-cultural conditions of people.

It was their primary understanding of the policy practices that the manufacturing industries could have priority over any socio-cultural costs to people because Thai development was following essentially the same proposed pattern of industrialisation as the developed countries, in line with Rostow's assertion that "all societies pass through a single, unique sequence of stages" (Barnett 1988:26; Roxborough 1979:16; Martinussen 1997:64). Thirdly, to a great degree, the scheme was implemented at the expense of socio-cultural degradation and transformation of socio-cultural systems of the poor for the sake of national development. In other words, the scheme implied an 'evolutionary process', from 'traditional society' to 'the age of high mass-consumption'. The socio-economic and cultural costs to people and degradation of the natural environment were seen as the preconditions for 'take-off', the second of Rostow's fixed stages towards modernisation, which he called the '*five stages of economic growth*': traditional society, preconditions for take-off, take-off, drive to maturity, and the age of high mass-consumption (Foster-Carter 1985:13-15; Rostow 1960:4; Webster 1984:52; Martinussen 1997:63-4).

## 2. 'Holistic' Approach to Development

By contrast, the collective actions of the development monks and peasants were based on the holistic principles of Theravada Buddhism: the principle of the good of the whole and the interdependence of society, culture and nature; the principle of restraint (from personal greed), social equity and generosity; and the principle of respect for the community and loving-kindness (Taylor 1993:2-3). These holistic principles were voiced loudly in the case when the capitalist Thai state was relentlessly pursuing the development of its export-oriented industries, regardless of the cost to local people. That is, with the holistic approach to development, people stood up against greed-motivated capitalist government, degradation of forest, and denigration of their lives.

Consequently, since the development works in Thailand pioneered the approach, the holistic approach to development has had an increasing voice in many other places, criticising an increasingly vulnerable dependence on an international market economy and a differentiated consumeristic and materialistic society. In this respect, Naan, a leading development monk, argues that spiritual and material development must go side by side and we need the spiritual dimension in all development activities. In the same way, Khamkian, another development monk, considers the political machinations of the state and modernisation to be the cause of most problems confronting grassroots people. He therefore believes that the grassroots people have had a constant struggle with poverty and hunger because the state has followed the main stream, greed-motivated capitalist economy (Taylor 1993:15-18).

## IV. **Different Perspectives and Perceptual Units** : *Poverty Issue in Indonesia*

In this part, I will talk about different perspectives and perceptual units of development which cause different images of '*Pembangunan*' (development), taking an example of rural poverty in Indonesia.

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The last quarter-century since the Indonesian regime introduced and implemented a development-oriented policy, the 'REPELITA' [Five Year Plan] and '25-Year Development Plan' in 1969 has been a period of extraordinarily rapid changes in Indonesia. The economy has expanded by almost 500 %, and real GDP per capita has increased considerably, from \$190 in 1965 to \$1,172 in 1996 (Hill 1994:56; World Economic Factbook 1997/8:221). In the meantime, Indonesia had, by the late 1970s, achieved slight declines in the incidence of poverty, and by the early 1980s, poverty had begun to decline dramatically and income inequality was also on a downward trend (IBRD 1990:1). Despite the progress made in the last quarter-century, however, poverty reduction and even distribution of economic development throughout the archipelago still remain alarming challenges to the Indonesian government. Sajogyo and G. Wiradi well pointed out the knotty problems well:

the "eight pathways towards more equity" were made specific in 1979 at the start of the Third Five Year Plan. The "equity" principle became the first concern, with "growth" second and the third being "stability" in the social and political processes, combined into the "Three-as-One Development" [...] There has also been progress in terms of "more equity", evidence of a lower infant mortality rate, an increase in life expectancy and literacy rates for the period. But with regard to how much of the rural population will reach a modest target of 77 on the PQLI [Physical Quality of Life Index] scale by the year 2000, [...], it is estimated that only 34 percent will achieve this target. This suggests that greater efforts aimed at equity are required to reduce the gap between the urban and rural sectors (Sajogyo and Wiradi 1985:1-2).

In the World Bank's report, the problems are also well indicated. It categorised several poverty situations in Indonesia. Of the categorisations, the first two appear to be most significant in terms of poverty reduction and even distribution of economic development. They are: 1) while all Indonesians have experienced income gains, at least 30 million Indonesians (about 17% of the population) remain in absolute poverty; and 2) the variance in the regional incidence of poverty is quite high (IBRD 1990:2).

### **1. Macro-Perspective**

President *Soeharto* reported to Parliament on 16 August that Indonesia's economic growth rate in 1992 had been 6.3 percent. His speech also highlighted the increase in GNP, regardless of the alarming challenge that between 25 and 30 million people, largely in rural areas, were still classified as in absolute poverty (Sjahrir 1993:13). Here, we need to focus on the primary indicator which is used as a criterion of economic achievement, as it implies the quantitative rationale of the macro-perspective. In his speech, Gross National Product [GNP] was the crude indicator of economic development. In measuring GNP, however, informal sectors, given groups of people and social classes are excluded, since GNP is a very blunt instrument designed to measure large-scale 'formal' sector activities and economic development without much attention being given to demographic profiles. In other words, GNP figures fail to distinguish between groups of people, especially between rural and urban areas, within a country (Redclift 1987:15-16).

Under the New Order, the *Soeharto* regime's major analytical unit for economic analysis was intrinsically not a marginal area such as a *kampung* and a rural area, in which 'poverty' tends to be relatively worse, but national generalisations (Booth 1994:7). In fact, 'poverty' in Indonesia seems to be related intimately to 'marginal' and 'peripheral' zones on the way to industrialisation (Parnwell and King 1990:1-23). In the macro-paradigm view of national development, the characteristics and roles of the entire capitalist economy mechanism in Indonesia as a whole, especially in the context of modernisation, development and nation-building, are significant analytical objectives.

With this view, the New Order Government has prioritised macro-economic growth, not paying full attention to the micro-phenomena of socio-cultural and other arenas (Sajogyo and Wiradi 1985:4).

## 2. Micro-Perspective

Based on the measurement of GNP, the macro-perspective, development-centred approach, has left diverse features of micro-scale of development out of consideration. Here we first need to consider how micro-matters are represented in the measurement of GNP, on the grounds that it indicates how and to what extent the qualitative rationale of micro-perspective is excluded. Rural poverty, for example, in which the majority of poor people live but which has not been fully reported statistically, is not represented in GNP figures. Furthermore, the macro-measurement has disguised the number of dependents within families, the number of single parents, elderly people without dependents and women's informal activities in rural areas. The macro-perspective, therefore, embodies a series of attitudes that have contributed to the irrelevance of much of its output to the problems of contemporary Indonesia, especially in rural areas. Moreover, it should be noted here that, in the macro-perspective, in the light of modernisation, people are treated as objects to be mobilised for national development, rather than as subjects of their own development (Edwards 1989:117-8).

What, then, does the micro-perspective say about how to tackle the concomitant features of development, as seen in the macro-perspective? We need here to clarify the fundamental components of the micro-perspective since they provide some significant basis to pave the micro-foundations for the 'marginalised' and 'peripheralised' people, who are excluded in the macro-perspective. In contrast with the macro-perspective and bearing in mind the limitations of the development-centred approach, the micro-perspective has claimed that the macro-perspective has obscured equal distribution of the benefits of economic growth by divorcing subject from object and restricting socio-economic feedback to the empirical tradition, and that the key to a more appropriate process of development lies in the participation of marginalised people in constructing an understanding of the way in which their world operates (Edwards 1989:126-7). First, the micro-perspective claims that the process of development should have much room for the notion of indigenous people as 'acting subjects' in their own right. While the development-centred approach has failed to stress the interplay and mutual determination of 'holistic' and 'local' factors and relationships, the people-centred approach has recognised the central role played by human action and consciousness. In contrast with the macro-perspective, therefore, it has tended both to emphasise and to respect people's own definition of their situation (House 1970:11). Secondly, the micro-perspective argues that the

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process of development should always take it for granted that grassroots knowledge, the knowledge of local language, cultures and social arrangements, in all their specificity and diversity should be considered as the foundation for understanding socio-economic changes in different geographic and social settings (Chambers 1985:3). Thirdly, the micro-perspective puts emphasis on a much needed account of local variables in their micro-diversity, focusing on a general understanding of small-scale rural societies, supplemented here and there by observations of actual cases (Mair 1984:11). Fourthly, the micro-perspective firmly holds to a 'people-centred' approach to socio-economic changes, especially in rural areas. It focuses on the indigenous people and their worldviews, such as their images of the future and their view of socio-economic changes. It can, therefore, be called a 'bottom-up approach' or a 'human-centred perspective' (King 1999:33).

## V. **Different Rationales:** *Ethnic Rationalisation in Malaysia*

In this part, taking an example of ethnic rationalisation in Malaysia, I will consider two kinds of different rationale as the operational agents of different images of development between Malays and non-Malays: the 'subjective rationality' of the Malay elite and the 'practical objectivity' of non-Malays and peasants. According to '*A Dictionary of Philosophy*' (1996), 'objectivity' is 'independence of awareness', 'independence of opinion' and 'impartiality of judgement' (Mautner 1996:298-9). '*The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*' (1994) indicates that "Pieces of behaviour, beliefs, arguments, policies, and other exercises of the human mind may all be described as *rational*. [...] To accept something as *rational* is [...] in accordance with some acknowledged goal." (Blackburn 1994:319). '*The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*' (1995), however, refers to '*practical rationality*' in an alternative angle to the conventional one:

Acting rationally simply means acting in a way that is maximally efficient in achieving one's goals. [...] Achieving one goal may conflict with achieving another, and therefore require that a rational action be one that best achieves one's goals only when these goals are considered as forming a system. [...] To act rationally is to act on universalisable principles, so that what is reason for one person must be a reason for *everyone* (Audi 1995:675).

By 'subjective rationality' and 'practical objectivity', nevertheless, I mean here that 'subjective rationality' is the subjective ideology of a handful of the elite, especially the Malay elite, which is assumed to be superior to objective and universalisable principles for all, and 'practical objectivity', on the other hand, is a judgement system opposed to the 'subjective rationality' above, whereby the value of objects is determined by universal and holistic factors, and not merely by certain factors such as the elite's bias.

### 2. **Subjective Rationality**

To mitigate ethnic differences, the British arranged a rational socio-political system, the Bargain, when they relinquished colonial authority over Malaya in 1957. The Bargain included constitutional advantages for the Malays.

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The constitution provided special privileges to Malays in land acquisition, educational assistance, and civil service employment. To meet the terms of the Bargain, the leading Malay [UMNO], Chinese [MCA], and Indian [MIC] parties formed a coalition government in 1957 known as the Alliance, with the understanding that non-Malays would prevail in the economic sector while Malays would control the political sector. On 13 May 1969 following a national election, however, the rational formula was challenged and rioting ensued. The Malaysian government viewed the riots as a threat to the ethnic Bargain which had been the rational formula for civic stability. Through the watershed event of 13 May 1969, the rights of Malays were extended by reserving for them a proportion of positions in higher education and certain businesses, and sedition acts were passed that prohibited discussion of such “sensitive issues” as the prerogatives of Malay rulers, special rights for Malays, and official status for the Malay language (Neher 1991:104-5).

The government’s economic response to the 1969 riots was the NEP [New Economic Policy], which has been superseded by ‘*WAWASAN 2020*’ [Vision 2020] since 1990. The plan was meant to change the fundamental structures and ethnic divisions of Malaysia by directing the increments of rapid economic growth disproportionately to the Malay sector. The means to this end were the granting of special privileges in business ownership, tax breaks, investment incentives, and employment quotas (Neher 1991:114-5). Ironically, however, while, under the NEP, Malays would be able to gain control of at least a 30 per cent share of the economic pie, subjective rationality for Malays, especially the Malay elite, had become the instrument of capital accumulation and mass control by an elite group that extended into the upper levels of the Malay middle-class.

## **2. Practical Objectivity**

In contrast with the achievement of NEP, national rationality has brought in some externalities. That is, the rationality of the Malay elite has concentrated on its subjective framework, the mode of national development and the political formula, especially concerned with elite groups, not on practical objectivity, minorities and peripheral groups. As mentioned above in relation to the dominant rationality the increased rationalisation of government inevitably generates a rationalised bureaucracy that handles its affairs in a systematic and scientific manner without ‘practical objectivity’ specific sensitivity to the problems of minorities and peripheral groups. State governance is further exercised through the imposition of majority values on the other populations. One consequence is the heightening of ethnic consciousness among neglected minorities and peripheral groups threatened by the cultural and political hegemony of the majority and core groups (Lee 1990:483). In other words, the ethnic prejudice has caused by-products stemming from lack of practical objectivity in Malay peripheral societies as well as in non-Malay minorities. The dichotomy between subjective rationality and practical objectivity in relation to rural areas can be characterised by the ‘peasant poverty issue’ and the ‘ethnic struggle in land reform’.

In 1974, for example, a series of demonstrations broke out over the alleged poverty of peasants in the Baling area. In the demonstration, students, peasants and Malay and non-Malay intelligentsia, voiced the same protest against the subjective rationality of elite groups over the deterioration in the living conditions of the peasants. In the end, their claims of practical objectivity were terminated upon the arrest of the leaders. Again, in 1987 there was an attempt to call for objective land reform. It was led by the Chinese-dominated DAP [Democratic Action Party]. Members of the DAP attempted to infiltrate Malay peasants working on some government-sponsored land schemes. Ultimately, the claims were curtailed by the incarceration of the party leadership (Lee 1990:488-9).

## **VI. Different Methodologies: *Transmigration in Indonesia***

In this part, I will argue that the differences between the national vision towards development and grassroots realities are to a certain extent rooted in different methodologies in the process of development. To support the argument, I will take the example of the resettlement project known as transmigration in Indonesia.

The transmigration programme in Indonesia is a resettlement project which is officially reported to have sought to wed the underutilised labour of the inner islands [Java, Bali, Lombok, and Madura] and the underutilised land of the outer islands [Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Nusatenggara, Maluku, and Irian Jaya]. In the light of this vision, over 3.6 million people moved by 1984 and the government planned the movement of a further 65 million in the next twenty years (Colchester 1986:61). Officially, the transmigration programme has put emphasis on its potential contribution to regional development and in particular on the utilisation of natural resources in the outer islands. In practice, however, its primary objective has always been to move as many people as possible, even when the geographical conditions of the settlement regions did not favour arable agriculture.

### **1. Quantitative Implementation**

Transmigration projects in Indonesia involve the physical movement of groups of people from densely populated core areas to frontier areas, according to the statistical data of population density in the inner and outer islands. According to the report of the World Bank, in 1983 the population density in the inner islands of Indonesia was already 691 persons/sq.km., much higher than 104 in China, 210 in India and 630 in Bangladesh. As a result, its ever-increasing population has been considered to be the main barrier to the development of Indonesia (Kebschull 1986:31). When the government was faced with these quantitative disparities, in the third five-year development plan (Repelita III, 1979-84), 366,000 families, nearly 1.5 million people, were settled under the sponsored programme, more than twice the number settled in the preceding 75 years (World Bank 1988:3). The funds and support for transmigrants are also statistically calculated in quantitative figures.

The official support, for instance, provides each family [per month] with: 50 kilogram of rice, 3 kilogram of sugar, 81 litre of Kerosene, 2 kg of salt and 1 kg of soap. The subsidy is given for a period of 12 months in upland settlements and for 18 months in swampland areas (Kebuschull 1986:43-4). Moreover, the transmigrant families receive 0.25 hectare with a house plus one hectare of cleared arable land, ready for cultivation. The amount of land was, however, based on the quantitative assumption that this was the maximum a family could cultivate without the help of draught animals or traction (Otten 1986:24-5).

## **2. Qualitative Adjustment**

In contrast with the quantitative vision of the Indonesian regime, Mariel Otten argues

Indonesia as a whole, is not critically overpopulated. Overpopulation in Indonesia is a local phenomenon which has resulted largely from ecological, social and political conditions. [...] It is very important to understand that the demographic inequality between the various islands is not simply a matter of statistics. Population density figures have to be related to other factors, such as soil fertility, land use, industrial employment etc. On the top of this, historical, social and political development over the centuries has played an important role in determining the current demographical situation (Otten 1986:6).

Nevertheless, the primary objective of the transmigration programme has always been the movement of people according to the quantitative statistics, regardless of qualitative constraints. In many transmigration areas, project failure is largely the result of poor soil conditions. Many transmigration sites in the outer islands have soil conditions unsuitable for sustained intensive agriculture and settlement. Many of these areas are in tidal swamp forests with peat soils, which are often unsuitable for irrigation and intensive cultivation, even with major technological intervention. Transmigrants in Central Aceh, for example, complained about barren soil full of rocks. In some parts of Sumatra and East Kalimantan, transmigrants complained that the land allocated consisted largely of quartz sand. Complaints were also voiced by transmigrants in Irian Jaya who were allocated swamp soil, completely useless for farming. In Central and South Sulawesi, transmigrants complained because they were expected to cultivate soil less than 10 cm in depth, a depth that will not sustain crops. Loss of life due to endemic diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea is common, caused by a lack of potable fresh water for household purposes and by poor sanitation, especially during the dry season. Malaria is also common, especially in the early phases of resettlement in many tidal swamp projects. Consequently, many transmigrants have become disillusioned (Abdoellah 1993:4-6). Overall, it can be said that, on the pretext of national development, the Indonesian government has attempted to transmigrate as many people as possible to the outer islands, irrespective of the qualitative costs, viz., physical and material, even cultural and environmental, to people.

## VII. Overview

To argue that these are the different ways of looking at ‘development’, according to whether people are treated as an end or as a means, I have described the yawning gaps between development-centred and people-centred approaches, that is, between ‘the stereotyped vision held by governments’ in principle and ‘the reality experienced by the popular echelons of society’, in the field in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. In doing so, taking such examples as ‘*Kor Jor Kor*’ in Thailand, the ‘poverty issue’ in Indonesia, ‘ethnic rationalisation’ in Malaysia, and ‘transmigration’ in Indonesia, I have argued that the discrepancies stem from different orientations (development-centred and people-centred), namely, the ‘different frameworks’ (modernisation-oriented and holistic), ‘different perspectives and perceptual units’ (macro- and micro-), ‘different rationales’ (subjective rationality and practical objectivity), and ‘different methodologies’ (quantitative implementation and qualitative adjustment).

Having said this, we return once again to Immanuel Kant’s moral formula:

*“Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only. [...] Man, however, is not a thing, and thus not something to be used merely as a means; he must always be regarded in all his actions as an end in himself.”*

Indeed, the vision and path of development in any of the countries of South-East Asia, not only in those countries mentioned above, should be people-centred rather than development-centred. One may here argue that the matter of development is not a matter of ideal morals found only in philosophical books or religious scriptures. As Kant movingly argues, however, if we realise that development itself is of extrinsic, conditional and subjective value, ultimately, for the sake of people with an intrinsic and objective value, it becomes clear who should have priority and centrality.

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