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# Asia Pacific:

# PERSPECTIVES

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**Special Issue: REDEMOCRATIZING SOUTH EAST ASIA THROUGH CITIZEN,  
CORPORATION, AND GOVERNMENT ALLIANCES**

***Is There Room for More Social Responsibility in Asia's Business and Economic  
Turn Around?***

>>.....Joaquin L. Gonzalez III 1

***Government and Citizen Engagement at the Local Level in Thailand: Nan  
Municipality's "Roundtables" and "Expert Panels"***

>>.....Alex M. Mutebi 16

***The Penang, Malaysia Experiment in People, Private, and Public Partnerships:  
Process, Progress, and Procedures***

>>.....Tan Pek Leng 29

***Citizens, Government, Business and the Transformation of a Ravaged Philippine  
City: The Case of San Fernando, Pampanga***

>>.....Edel C. Guiza 44

***Initiating Participatory Democracy in Indonesia: The Case of Surakarta  
Municipality***

>>.....Pratikno 59

*Asia Pacific: Perspectives* is a peer-reviewed journal published at least once a year, usually in April/May. It welcomes submissions from all fields of the social sciences and the humanities with relevance to the Asia Pacific region.\* In keeping with the Jesuit traditions of the University of San Francisco, *Asia Pacific: Perspectives* commits itself to the highest standards of learning and scholarship.

Our task is to inform public opinion by a broad hospitality to divergent views and ideas that promote cross-cultural understanding, tolerance, and the dissemination of knowledge unreservedly. Papers adopting a comparative, interdisciplinary approach will be especially welcome. **Graduate students are strongly encouraged to submit their work for consideration.**

\* 'Asia Pacific region' as used here includes East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Oceania, and the Russian Far East.

## ABSTRACTS

### Is There Room for More Social Responsibility in Asia's Business and Economic Turn Around?

by Joaquin L. Gonzalez III, Ph.D.

This article provides an overview of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and its impact on social development with a special emphasis on Asia. One underlying argument that it makes is that, although many of the CSR interventions being applied globally are relatively "new" to Asia, CSR, when operationally defined as "corporation-community collaboration (CCC) towards social development," becomes a vintage concept familiar to generations of Asian entrepreneurs and the communities they serve. However, in spite of its long history, Asian corporation-community collaboration in social reform is an under-studied area of policy research and attention even in recent CSR conferences and publications in Asia. From Bangladesh in South Asia to China in East Asia, currently, heavier emphases by scholars and practitioners is being accorded to global and regional-level CSR issues such as human rights, environmental and health concerns, worker welfare, corruption, and social safety nets as well as firm-level CSR issues such as board governance, ethical fund management, shareholder accountability, corporate restructuring, and corporate citizenship. The article attempts to move beyond the over-exposed CSR motivations into an examination of new trends within relatively old frontiers. It also tries to create a social dimension to the already overflowing financial and economic stories about CSR. The article also discusses the role of governments in CCCs.

### Government and Citizen Engagement at the Local Level in Thailand: Nan Municipality's "Roundtables" and "Expert Panels"

by Alex M. Mutebi, Ph.D.

This article presents a case on decentralization and citizen participation in local government decision-making in Thailand. Recent developments in Thailand have aimed to decentralize responsibilities and finances to local governments in order for them to deliver services to the citizenry with greater efficiency, social equity, accountability and responsiveness than was the case before the promulgation of the 1997 Constitution. That constitution specifically made public participation an important objective at the local level. In theory, fiscal and democratic decentralization coupled with citizen participation are supposed to translate into local government that not only delivers better services, but one that also engages citizens in the design and implementation of policies, programs and projects. This paper presents the case of how the citizens of Nan municipality--years before the promulgation of the 1997 Constitution--incorporated the use of voluntary citizen "roundtables" and "expert panels" into municipal decision-making, and discusses some of the lessons we can learn from that experience despite major barriers (legal, institutional, financial).

### The Penang, Malaysia Experiment in People, Private, and Public Partnerships: Process, Progress, and Procedures

by Tan Pek Leng

Participatory democracy is not part of the natural order of things in Malaysia nor is fiscal decentralization anywhere in evidence. However, citizen participation in municipal governance is being experimented with in isolated locations. Penang can be regarded as one of the front-runners in this respect, when considered within the overall milieu of political autarchy in Malaysia, but the process is in its infancy and progress is intermittent in comparison with other global best practices. Nonetheless, the lessons that can be learned from failings and small beginnings are better than none. Penang embarked on this journey of citizen participa-

tion with the Sustainable Penang Initiative (SPI) which sought to engage tri-sectoral partnership in identifying and monitoring community indicators of sustainable development. Through a series of roundtable discussions, representatives of the public, private and community sectors identified and prioritized issues that needed urgent resolution. The roundtables generated a tremendous amount of energy and fervor because it was the first time that such a vast array of community groups had gathered together with public officials, political representatives and private sector delegates to address head-on the threats to Penang's sustainability.

### Citizens, Government, Business and the Transformation of a Ravaged Philippine City: The Case of San Fernando, Pampanga

by Edel C. Guiza

After more than ten years of devolution, the Philippine local landscape is energized by success stories of local governments who dared to innovate and make a difference in the lives of their constituents. This case study is one such story of a group of people who capitalized on their crisis and worked together to survive and transform their city amidst the ruins of volcanic eruption, floods and typhoons. The study will try to answer the following questions: How were the citizens of San Fernando, a calamity prone and ravaged area, able to transform their city? What was the role of the local government and its leadership? How were they able to generate the needed revenues to finance the transformation and improve the delivery of basic services? What were the results? What are the practical lessons and insights that can be gained from their experience? What are the prospects for sustainability and replicability? As a backdrop to the San Fernando case, a brief review of the country and its relevant political, economic and historical features will be discussed with special focus on the decentralization policy, specifically the salient provisions of the 1991 Local Government Code institutionalizing citizen participation to promote good local governance. The San Fernando case is best understood in the context of national policy and related national trends.

### Initiating Participatory Democracy in Indonesia: The Case of Surakarta Municipality

by Pratikno

Citizen participation in public policy making was absent in Indonesia during the centralized and military-bureaucratic authoritarian regime, 1965-1998. Following the meltdown of the government in 1998, decentralization was promoted and the first free and fair election in the last 44 years was conducted. The emergence of civil society organizations and freedom of the press has colored the political reform. This article shows that political reform aimed at decentralization and democratization do not guarantee an increase in citizen participation in public policy making. Local parliaments' increased strength in local government structures does not increase people's involvement or control over policymaking and implementation. Local bureaucracy tends to be defensive and reluctant to change its exclusive policymaking. A more politically active society, civil society organizations and the local press are able to speak loudly but are unable to develop more effective participation. The sustainability of any promotion of citizen participation will be endangered unless greater energy is invested in most municipalities in Indonesia, making it possible