

(Abstract)

## **People's Reality, People's Process and Alternative Developments in Urban Asia**

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Asia's urban poor have been viewed by government officials, international organizations, and by citizens of advanced countries in general as people "left out of the development process," as people who would have to be brought into the "formal sector" in the future. However, in reality, these people have not the way to "formal sector" progressively, but face a number of barriers in joining the "development process" or the "formal sector." They are positioned at the bottom of the domestic and global hierarchy with exclusionary walls and borders. Clearly, here is a problem that is similar to the one pointed out by Prof. Ferguson.

In my presentation, I clarify the nature of these barriers from an economic viewpoint, and point out that a number of creative, community-based efforts by the poor people themselves to overcome such barriers already exist. These efforts, I suggest, have the potential for breaking the global economic and social hierarchy.

First, from the viewpoint of economics, I argue that the poor can develop themselves and improve their economic lot in their own ways if only the barriers would be removed. Such barriers include 1) difficulty of access to land and particular location; 2) difficulty of access to credit; 3) difficulty of access to market.

Next, I highlight the development of the "People's Process" in Asia – i.e., collective efforts undertaken by the poor people themselves to overcome these access problems. In particular, I highlight five elements that are commonly observed in these efforts: 1) community-based nature ; 2) creativity ; 3) learning from other participants (horizontal exchange) as a key to spreading the practice; 4) construction of networks at various levels; and 5) orientation toward the process rather than the result.

Asia's urban poor have the potential of realizing an alternative path of development – the People's Process. This is a process in which the poor people create and extend their own spaces not only in the economic sphere, but also in the political, social, and cultural spheres. If such processes transcend state boundaries and become global, then they have the potential for breaking down the walls and barriers that define the political and economic hierarchy that Prof. Ferguson speaks of. The breaking down of such barriers requires the enlargement of the poor people's own social space.

For us citizens of advanced countries, this line of analysis suggests that we should not be bound to the tired concept of "development"; we should rather work to remove the barriers that prevent the poor from taking their own initiatives in their path to betterment. Our responsibility is especially great because these barriers have been put in place by advanced countries and by the rich.