

A BUDDHIST APPROACH AS AN ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC PARADIGM:
A CASE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF ENGAGED BUDDHISTS

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บทคัดย่อและแฟ้มข้อมูลฉบับเต็มของวิทยานิพนธ์ตั้งแต่ปีการศึกษา 2554 ที่ให้บริการในคลังปัญญาจุฬาฯ (CUIR)
เป็นแฟ้มข้อมูลของนิสิตเจ้าของวิทยานิพนธ์ ที่ส่งผ่านทางบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts Program in Southeast Asian Studies
(Interdisciplinary Program)
Graduate School
Chulalongkorn University
Academic Year 2015

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แนวพุทธสำหรับเป็นกระบวนทัศน์ทางเลือกทางเศรษฐกิจ:
กรณีศึกษาเครือข่ายพุทธศาสนิกสัมพันธ์เพื่อสังคม



วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต
สาขาวิชาเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา (สหสาขาวิชา)
บัณฑิตวิทยาลัย จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
ปีการศึกษา 2558
ลิขสิทธิ์ของจุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Thesis Title	A BUDDHIST APPROACH AS AN ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC PARADIGM: A CASE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF ENGAGED BUDDHISTS
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พาเวล บาร์โตลิก : แนวพุทธสำหรับเป็นกระบวนทัศน์ทางเลือกทางเศรษฐกิจ: กรณีศึกษาเครือข่ายพุทธศาสนิกสัมพันธ์เพื่อสังคม (A BUDDHIST APPROACH AS AN ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC PARADIGM: A CASE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF ENGAGED BUDDHISTS) อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก: ดร. ทราญแก้ว ทิพากร, อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์ร่วม: ดร. บาร์ต ดาหิยา, 118 หน้า.

ศตวรรษที่ 20 อาจถือได้ว่าเป็นช่วงเวลาที่เกิดความเสียหายมากที่สุดในประวัติศาสตร์ของมนุษยชาติ จากความคิดเห็นของนักวิชาการหลายท่าน ความเสียหายที่เกิดขึ้นบนโลกในรอบ 60 ปีที่ผ่านมา มีความรุนแรงมากกว่าความเสียหายที่มนุษย์ก่อขึ้นทั้งหมดในรอบ 10,000 ปี ทั้งความเสื่อมโทรมของสิ่งแวดล้อมที่รุนแรง ความยากจนที่เพิ่มมากขึ้น การลู่ทางสังคมที่เกิดขึ้นบ่อยครั้ง และความอดอยาก ทั้งหลายเหล่านี้เป็นเพียงปัจจัยส่วนหนึ่ง ซึ่งอาจทำให้การดำรงอยู่ของมนุษย์ตกอยู่ในความเสี่ยงร้ายแรง

เราจำต้องยอมรับว่า ความเสียหายเหล่านี้เกิดขึ้นจากระบบกลไกระดับโลกที่อยู่เบื้องหลัง ซึ่งก็คือ ระบบเศรษฐกิจทุนนิยมเสรีสมัยใหม่ อันเป็นระบบที่ตั้งอยู่บนพื้นฐานของการเติบโต และขับเคลื่อนโดยความต้องการ การบริโภค และการใช้ทรัพยากรธรรมชาติอย่างเกินขอบเขต อย่างไรก็ตาม การครอบงำทางเศรษฐกิจเช่นนี้ก่อให้เกิดการตระหนักรู้ถึงความเป็นจริงในวงกว้าง โดยอาศัยแนวคิดทางความเชื่อที่ศาสนา

ดังนั้น จึงเป็นที่ประจักษ์ว่า เราไม่อาจดำเนินตามแนวทางเศรษฐกิจแบบปัจจุบันได้อีกต่อไป และต้องการกระบวนทัศน์ทางเศรษฐกิจรูปแบบใหม่ วิธีทางพุทธศาสนาเป็นแนวคิดหนึ่ง ซึ่งตั้งอยู่บนพื้นฐานขององค์ความรู้ทางจิตวิญญาณ และได้ให้แนวทางในการเผชิญกับระบบเศรษฐกิจกระแสหลัก

วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาความเป็นไปได้ในการสร้างข้อโต้แย้งต่อระบบเศรษฐกิจเสรีนิยมสมัยใหม่ในปัจจุบัน โดยอาศัยการเปลี่ยนแปลงทางจิตวิญญาณจากภายใน ซึ่งตั้งอยู่บนพื้นฐานของความรู้ทางศาสนา เช่น พุทธเศรษฐศาสตร์

ในการค้นคว้า ผู้เขียนได้วิเคราะห์โครงสร้างและการทำงานของเครือข่ายพุทธศาสนิกสัมพันธ์เพื่อสังคม (INEB) องค์การนอกภาครัฐซึ่งก่อตั้งโดย อาจารย์สุลักษณ์ ศิวรักษ์ เมื่อปี พ.ศ. 2532 ในขั้นต้น ผู้เขียนได้กำหนดองค์ประกอบของความรู้ทางจิตวิญญาณเชิงพุทธศาสนาที่ INEB ได้ใช้เป็นหลักในการดำเนินงาน เช่น การศึกษาทางเลือก พุทธเศรษฐศาสตร์ วิชาหกิจเพื่อสังคม หรือสิ่งแวดล้อม ในขั้นต่อมา ผู้เขียนได้ศึกษาการปรับใช้ความรู้ทางจิตวิญญาณในเชิงปฏิบัติ เพื่อที่จะตรวจสอบความมีประสิทธิภาพขององค์ความรู้ดังกล่าว

สาขาวิชา เอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา

ปีการศึกษา 2558

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5787571420 : MAJOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

KEYWORDS: SPIRITUALITY / NEOLIBERALISM / BUDDHIST ECONOMICS / SOCIALLY ENGAGED BUDDHISTS / BUDDHIST ETHICS

PAWEL KAZIMIERZ BARTOSIK: A BUDDHIST APPROACH AS AN ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC PARADIGM: A CASE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF ENGAGED BUDDHISTS.
ADVISOR: SAIKAEW THIPAKORN, Ph.D., CO-ADVISOR: BHARAT DAHIYA, Ph.D., 118 pp.

The 20th century was probably one of the most destructive in the history of human kind. As underlined by many scholars, the scale of the destruction on planet Earth in the last 60 years is highly superior to damages done by humans in the last 10 000 years; tremendous degradation of environment, galloping disparities in poverty, growing numbers of social revolutions, hunger - to name just a few elements of what is leading our existence into the braking point.

We must assume that behind these destructive behaviours hides a global structure making them possible: the neoliberal capitalist economy. Based on idea of growth, powered by excessive greed, consumption and exploitation of natural resources, thanks to dogmatic and quasi-religious way of thinking, this economical hegemony shaped the global understanding of reality.

There are no doubts that we cannot continue to follow the present economical way and we need a new economical paradigm. To face the mainstream economy, Buddhist tradition proposes a way based on spiritual wisdom.

Within this master thesis I try to find the answer to the question of whether the spiritual, inner change, based on mystic knowledge, such as proposed by Buddhist economics, can constitute the counterpoint to the present neoliberal economy.

In order to achieve it, I am analysing structures and actions of International Network of Engaged Buddhists, an NGO created by Professor Sulak Sivaraksa in 1989. I first define which elements of Buddhist spiritual wisdom are used by INEB in its main fields of activities such as alternative education, Buddhist economics, social enterprise or environment. In the second position I am looking for the practical application of this spiritual knowledge in order to verify its efficiency.

Field of Study: Southeast Asian Studies

Academic Year: 2015

Student's Signature

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like first of all to express my kind appreciation to Dr. Saikaew Thipakorn and Dr. Bharat Dahiya, my thesis advisors, for their understanding and advise in editing this paper; their spiritual kindness and selfless assistance, mixed with professionalism, created a big comfort into my academic path.

My deep consideration goes to Professor Apichai Puntasen for his precious wisdom.

I would like to express my admiration for Professor Sulak Sivaraksa, for his academic and spiritual understanding of the structure of the present reality.

Special thanks to Ms. Michiko Yoshida and her advise without which this thesis would not have been made.

I am also grateful to all International Network of Engaged Buddhists employees for their precious help.

I am indebted to Kingdom of Thailand to surround me with energies of change in which the analysis and understanding of Buddhist philosophical message created new and extremely helpful patterns in my own, spiritual development.

CONTENTS

	Page
THAI ABSTRACT	iv
ENGLISH ABSTRACT	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTER 1 - Introduction	1
1.1. Statement of the Problem.....	1
1.1.1. Problems of Neoliberal Paradigm.....	2
1.1.2. A World in Need of Spiritual Economy.....	5
1.2. Research Objectives	8
1.3. Hypotheses.....	8
1.4. Research Methods	9
1.5. Conceptual Framework	10
1.6. Significance of Research	11
1.7. Literature Review	12
1.7.1 Neoliberalism.....	12
1.7.2. Buddhist Economics	12
CHAPTER 2 – Questioning Neoliberalism.....	14
2.1. Brief Historical Overview of Neoliberalism.....	14
2.2. Definition and Features of Neoliberalism	18
2.3. Where Did the Success Come From?	21
2.4. Problems and Contradictions of Neoliberalism.....	30

CHAPTER 3 – Buddhist Economics	36
3.1 Historical Overview and Features of Buddhist Economics	36
3.1.1 Small is Beautiful	36
3.1.2 Gross National Happiness	39
3.1.3 Bhikkhu Buddhadasa	39
3.1.4. Venerable P.A. Payutto	40
3.1.5. Shinichi Inoue.....	42
3.1.6. J.W. Wickramasinghe	43
3.2 Buddhist Sources for Creating Buddhist Economics	43
3.3 Global Buddhist Economics – The World Happiness Report.....	50
3.4 Buddhist Economics in Thailand.....	54
3.4.1 King Bhumibol’s Sufficiency Economy	54
3.4.2. Understanding of Buddhist Economics by Professor Apichai Puntasen	59
3.4.3 – International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)	64
3.4.3.1 Historical Overview and Features of INEB.....	65
3.4.3.2. Spiritual Principles and Practices applied by INEB in Their Practical Activities	70
CHAPTER 4 – Examining International Network of Engaged Buddhists in Practice	75
4.1. A spiritual political economy: interviews with Professor Sulak Sivaraksa and INEB employees	75
4.2. Practical Results of INEB Activities.....	82
4.2.1. Alternative Education: “Spirit in Education Movement” and INEB Institute ..	83
4.4.2. Environmental Ecology and Climate Change: Inter-religious Climate and Ecology Network (ICE)	87

4.2.3 Peace and Reconciliation: International Forum on Buddhist-Muslim Relations	89
4.2.4. Tha Sawang Community.....	90
4.2.5. Suan Nguen Mee Ma Co., Ltd.....	93
4.2.6. Questionnaire on INEB Trainings	96
4.3. Revisiting of the Conceptual Framework.....	99
CHAPTER 5 - Conclusion	103
REFERENCES	109
VITA.....	118



LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1 Conceptual framework by Pawel Bartosik.....	10
Figure 2 Adjectives describing markets and state by Pierre Boudrieu.....	30
Figure 3 INEB Activities by Pawel Bartosik.....	82



CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

1.1. Statement of the Problem

In multiple patterns of human way of thinking, the dogmatic way is characterised by stubborn conviction of the once truth and is often connected to such synonyms as intolerance, prejudice, discrimination, fanaticism, injustice, racism, and provinciality – to name just a few. Without criticism and questioning, basing only on the beliefs system, this behaviour exempts humans from the obligation of the verification of those truths, leaving us in an unconscious lethargy, taking us far away from the awareness of obligation of personal development based on curiosity and research.

Dogmatism, with its ignorance, arrogance and rigidity, is a part of all social institutions and has been probably the permanent element of the human history. Being a component of familial, political, and religious realms significantly slowed down the development of humanity by non-criticism and non-questioning. The history of fascism, communism, and religions gave us a very forcible example of how dangerous, deadly, and destructive those dogmatic ideological patterns can be. The anxiety to face ambiguity, suggested by Dr. Judy J. Johnson from Canadian Mount Royal University as one of the causes of dogmatism based certainly on human fear, blocks any larger vision and critical thinking. It makes the holistic perception impossible and ties humans in narrow thinking and understanding of reality.

Taking into consideration the tremendous degradation of life in the large spectrum of human activities in the last 60 years, we have to assume that the destructive dogmatic thinking is also a part of our present reality. Many scholars, such as Dr. Rupert Sheldrake, Dr. Bruce Lipton, Dr. Gregg Braden, Dr. Graham Hancock, and Dr. Deepak Chopra who are working in the fields of physics and biology, spread enormous number of evidence that Newtonian, Darwinian, and the mechanistic way

of understanding reality ruling the mainstream scientific world are based on the dogmatic assumptions and theories, blocking us from the larger and deeper academic inquiry and keeping us in stagnation which very often leads to the degradation. What if the present mainstream economy which is applied successfully in majority of countries and is based on fake theories which are repeated for many years began an official way of thinking? Can the economy be infected by the dogmatic way of thinking, wrapped with pseudo religious enthusiasm leading to a form of fundamentalism? Is it possible that such constructed system of beliefs is responsible for the destructive degradation of environmental, social and political patterns of humanity, leading to quasi annihilation of life in the planet Earth?

1.1.1. Problems of Neoliberal Paradigm

Analysing the history of neoliberal doctrine, I will examine in the second chapter of this master thesis how deeply those who believed and still believe in this mainstream economy were ingrained in the dogmatic way of thinking and up to what point of the so-called “principles” of this economy are based on quasi religious convictions and not on scientific facts.

It is no surprise that, according to many analyses done by World Wide Found, World Bank, and United Nations, the biggest and the most destructive period of the quasi annihilation of life in the last 10, 000 years of the history of human kind started in the twentieth century – exactly the time when the crusaders of neoliberalism started to be popular by implementing their policies based on greed, selfishness, growth, consumption, and endless utilisation of resources. We need to connect those two facts.

In order to show the most terrifying statement of the condition of the present reality, we need to quote the UN statistics of child mortality: 29 000 children under the age of five die every day in this planet, mainly due to preventable causes. This number of 21 children dying by a minute must awake our biggest interrogation about the management of the economical resources and its distribution in the present world.

The environment, with its destruction, is obviously the most tangible part of our reality in which we can realize the scale of the problem. According to the Living Planet Index 2014, the measurement tool of WWF shows that between 1970 and 2010, the size of animal population decreased by 52% (WWF 2014:16). The authors of this report underline that, whether it is a question of forest, fishing or water resources, we are using them so fast that they don't have time to regenerate by themselves. The following data of World Resources Institute, between the year 2000 and 2010, the world lost 13 million hectares of forests each year, leading to this tragic statistic statement: 80% of the Earth's natural forests have been already destroyed..

The World Health Organisation states that in 2012, around 7 million people died in our planet as a result of air pollution exposure. Excessive air pollution, increasing dramatically each year, has a direct link to unsustainably managed sectors such as transport, industry, and waste management.

Water resources already constitute a problem of 1/6 of Earth's population, which is to face water shortage on a daily basis. If we continue the way we consume water on the present scale, we will face 40% global water deficit by 2030 (UN 2015:11).

The intensive extraction of fishery arrived as a result of mass production and mass consumption of the capitalist industrialisation; FAO has estimated that 70% of the world's fish species are either fully exploited or depleted (UN).

The rate of environmental degradation puts the survival of all Earth's species at risk, including humans.

But the environment is not the only victim of economy based on growth; as mentioned by many scholars, capitalism under the name of neoliberalism, corporatism, globalization, neo-conservatism, and libertinism, acted destructively in many aspects. Professors David Harvey, Peter Gowan, Kean Birch, Noam Chomsky, and other scholars argue that the neoliberal movement is “a political project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites” (Harvey 2005:16). Going through privatisation, financialization, management/manipulation of crisis and state redistributions, and globalized neoliberal agenda has a purpose called “accumulation by dispossession” by Harvey. This way of accumulation of the capital by the few riches, helped by the subtle and pervert language of freedom and democracy, does not keep any respect for human dignity, citizen rights on the national and international level, and ethical and moral values. The market thinking paradigm based on competition, consumerism, materialism, and money oriented targets deeply penetrating human communities and infected family relations, leading to the increasing solitude and separation of relativeness to each other. Accretion practices used worldwide are the root causes of tremendous suffering of the population; peasants expelled from their lands during soil privatisation and commodification without care for their wellbeing; multiple forms of propriety rights which evaluated from state, collective or common ones, deprive citizens of their rights to water, seeds, and other natural resources; the use of credit system together with national debt and usury enslave entire nations in never ending debt servitude.

The present condition of the world proves that the well-being of individuals which can be only achieved by entrepreneurial freedom based on free trade, free market,

and private propriety rights is a failure. Apart from the huge increase of wealth for the few, the World Development Indicators 2001 of the World Bank shows clearly that the rate of economic growth per capita of developing countries (except China) drop from 3.2% between 1960 and 1980 to 0.7% between 1980 and 2000. The neoliberalism was also not capable to deal with the growing level of global inequality: in the same report of the World Bank, the income of the richest, 50%, as share of the poorest, 50%, (excluding China) grows tremendously from 4% more unequal in 1980 until 77% more unequal in 1998. According to “Global Wealth Report” by Credit Suisse, almost half of the world’s wealth is now owned by just 1% of the population.

Describing the key trends in poverty, The Stanford Centre on Poverty and Inequality states in its 2014 Report that from 1973, when the poverty rate was at its lowest because of rapid economic growth at this time, this rate is constantly growing for the next four decades, arriving to 15% of global poverty rate in 2012 and 21.8% of the child poverty in the same year (The Sanford Center on Poverty & Inequality 2014:5-6). The World Development Indicators from 2013 shows that 1.2 billion people live with less than 1.25 USD dollars per day. Once again, the miraculous vision of neoliberal, glorious future of the world where poverty disappears, thanks to miraculous rules of the free market, turned out to be devastatingly false.

1.1.2. A World in Need of Spiritual Economy

There are no doubts that in order to survive as human species, we cannot continue to follow this ethically questionable and destructive economical paradigm; we desperately need to question it and to raise the awareness on its real objectives.

Among many alternatives to economic globalization, the Buddhist tradition proposes a different approach. It advocates on achievement of the well-being and not on the achievement of welfare which characterises the Western perspective of economy. Having the serious repercussions on society and environment, the growth-oriented economy also influences the mental state of humans due to the lack of tools for analysis of the human mind. From the Buddhist perspective, the GDP measurements of the Western point of view on economy are not taking into consideration those mental states and as such, are not complete. Using the description of the nature of the process of the mind, Buddhist economists created a tool. This analytical knowledge of the mind, based on the inner knowledge and interior evolution, is a key idea to face multiple problems such as the environmental ones, all sorts of inequalities, criminality, drugs, etc. The wellbeing-based economy emphasises the mental health of the members of society and leads to understanding the structure of the problem and as such, can lead to the liberation from material-based ideology of life.

Within this master thesis, I will try to find the answer to the question if the spiritually based inner change, heaving its roots in the Buddhist mystic knowledge such as applied by the Buddhist Economics, can constitute the counterpoint to the present neoliberal economy. In order to achieve it, I will compare the neoliberal doctrine of economy with the Buddhist economic approach in form of activities of International Network of Engaged Buddhists.

I will start my analysis by the historical context and definition of neoliberalism describing its assumptions; I will see how these assumptions are implemented in practice. Through this analysis, I will look for reasons of the worldly success of neoliberalism; discover its manipulative propaganda organized by the powerful network of multiple organizations being based on quasi religious statements leading to dogmatism build on such rhetorical figures as greed, selfishness, competition, and

hegemony, perversely smuggled under ideas of freedom, democracy, liberty and independence – I will show the problems and contradictions of this system. This part of my research will undermine the legitimacy of neoliberalism as based on the deeply questionable, or even inexistent, moral and ethical rules. The description of destruction of our planet today, both on human and ecological levels, will confirm fake assumptions of neoliberal movement and the need of change.

Secondly, I will analyse the Buddhist economic ideas. After going through the historical description and features, I will analyse the elements of the Buddhist science of the mind which are considered as the bases of BE. The examples of application of BE will be followed by describing The World Happiness Report, Sufficiency Economy of King Bhumibol and the intellectual work of Professor Apichai Puntasen. In all of those manifestations of Buddhist Economics, the need of application of the spiritual, inner knowledge as a necessary stage on the road to the new economic paradigm will be underlined.

In the third position, I will take into consideration the International Network of Engaged Buddhists in order to present their spiritually based expertise in different fields of activities of this Thai NGO. Once again, my analyses will start by the historical overview and features of INEB; I will follow it with the verbalization of Buddhist principles used by INEB in their work to finally describe few of their activities in practice.

In conclusion, I will follow the statement of undisputed need of evolution in the present, economic way of thinking. By underlying incompatibility between the mainstream economy and Buddhist economics, I will confirm the efficiency and persistence of INEB's activities due to spiritual strength, being a model of rediscovering and returning to our spiritual and mystic knowledge, as a solution of the necessary change.

1.2. Research Objectives

This research will examine the following objectives:

1. To critically review neoliberal economy by looking into its materialistic paradigm based on manipulative propaganda tools, leading exclusively to the achievement of the material welfare. The main focus of this part of the research will underline the development of morally questionable neoliberal ideas of greed, selfishness, growth and competition, necessary for farther development of globalized economy of consumption. This lack of ethics and morality in the economical thinking will be seen as the main reason of destruction in many layers of human activity in the present time.
2. To underline spiritual wisdom as the core value of the Buddhist economics leading to human well-being. By explaining key ideas of the Buddhist ethics and morality such as compassion, generosity or collaboration, I will examine this mind-based science of the old wisdom named Buddhism, in order to verify its efficiency as a new paradigm.
3. To examine the International Network of Engaged Buddhists case at the normative and operational level.
4. To draw lessons and reflect on recommendations for future research on the subject.

1.3. Hypotheses

I have the following hypotheses:

1. Taking into consideration the alarming state of the devastation of the contemporary reality, both on human and ecological level, the present economic paradigm is no longer sustainable.

2. By rediscovering the spiritual wisdom of humanity, we can access a source of valuable information, helping us to overcome problems in the present world.
3. Buddhist economics, rooted in ethical and moral rules of the Buddhist tradition, explaining mechanisms of the science of the mind, can become a learning platform to counterpoint the mainstream economy.
4. In order to achieve it, the inner, spiritual application of wisdom at personal level firstly has to take place; this wisdom must be understood and accepted individually, before Buddhist economy can be successfully applied.

1.4. Research Methods

This research uses the qualitative descriptive method based on in-depth interview and literature review. To collect data, I will use the following techniques:

1. Literature review: collection of the written materials on geo-political, social, and economical condition of the contemporary society, spirituality, neoliberalism, Buddhist economics, Buddhist ethics, Buddhist philosophy, from books, articles, journals and internet resources.
2. Structured interviews: conducted with several academics and intellectuals of Thailand such as Professor Apichai Puntasen for his understanding of the theory of Buddhist economics and Professor Sulak Sivaraksa for his commitment and understanding of the need for change based on spirituality. The personnel of INEB will be a useful source of information to understand how Buddhist economics are implemented in practice.
3. Questionnaire survey: a research document consisting of a series of questions about implementation of Buddhist wisdom by INEB
4. Participatory observation of the Bangkokian office of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists.

1.5. Conceptual Framework

In order to develop ideas of the present Master Thesis dissertation, the comparative analysis of two economical concepts, neoliberalism and Buddhist economics, will follow the logic of the following diagram:

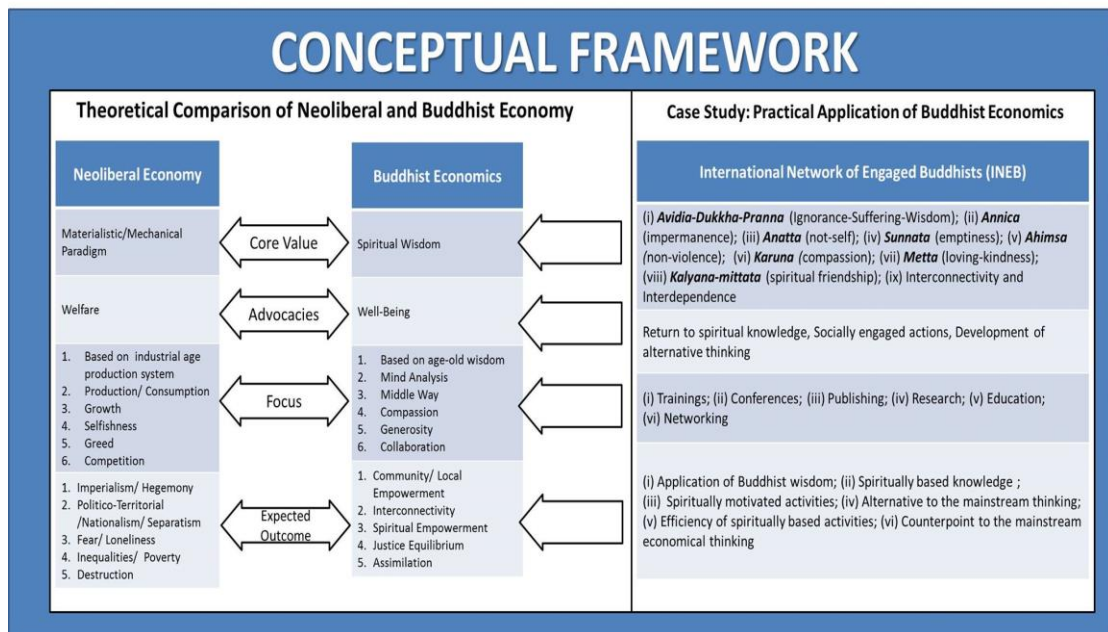


Figure 1. Conceptual framework by Pawel Bartosik

To develop main components, I follow research of Professor David Harvey, proving the fundamental feature of the neoliberalism, namely “capital accumulation by dispossession”, realized for the benefit of a very narrow part of the society. As such, this system constitutes the continuation of imperialism and is destructive for the human kind. From another part, I analyse the concept of Buddhist economic approach of Professors Apitchai Puntasen and Sulak Sivaraksa, based on spiritual wisdom, in order to assess if this understanding of economy can constitute counterpoint to the mainstream economy. Through the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, I verify how Buddhist economics are implemented in reality.

1.6. Significance of Research

The history of the humanity multiplies cases of manipulative systems to fulfil lusts of power, domination, control, and financial richness. With time, we realise how unworthy one system was, how many people suffered from it, and how big the destruction was. Assuming that the standards of the present mainstream economy, accepted and developed worldwide, are built on ethically questionable principles and are leading to the progressive destruction of our planet, understanding of their causes is more than necessary. By the courage to face the mainstream way of thinking, Buddhist economics brings another visions and solutions, giving the opportunity to compare two systems and to access helpful wisdom for understanding and possible change. By doing that, its input is of great importance.

From this perspective, those who dare to present their constructive critique and to propose the new paradigm is indisputable. In the Siamese intellectual tradition, important figureheads such as Apitchai Puntasen and Sulak Sivaraksa present their academic deconstructive argumentation of the present economic patterns in order to unmask the real intentions of the mainstream. In the same time, both propose concrete vision of how to give remedy to the current problem. INEB is a concrete application of the vision built on the conviction of the need of spiritual change in order to proceed to the global rethinking of the present situation.

The spiritual approach of Buddhist economics exposes how far we drifted from our common mystic wisdom and how deeply we are absorbed by the present system of values in which competition towers over collaboration, hatred over love, and war over peace and compassion. This same spiritual wisdom reveals imperfections of the mainstream economy and its erroneous assumptions. As such, its importance justifies research on the subject.

1.7. Literature Review

1.7.1 Neoliberalism

In order to understand the structure of the neoliberal doctrine, I explore two books of Professor David Harvey, “A Brief History of Neoliberalism” and “The New Imperialism”. This academic, deconstructive analysis meticulously shows how erroneous assumptions were created; I analyse when and how an artificial, dogmatic, and as such fanatic ideology reigns in the world. I also follow the two main ideas of Professor Harvey and other scholars such as Peter Gowan, Kean Birch, Vlad Mykhnenko, Suzan George, Noam Chomsky, Thomas I. Palley, John Cavanagh, Jerry Mander, Ha Joong Chang, Alfredo Saad-Filho, Deborah Johnston, Christopher Snowden, Sulak Sivaraksa, and Apichai Puntasen, that neoliberalism is a prolongation of the old social pattern of a small group of people making a profit on others by all means.

By analysing research of French scholars, Alain Bihr and Pierre Bourdieu, I show how the manipulative usage of the right verbal figures participates to create the successful message.

1.7.2. Buddhist Economics

In order to examine the historical path of Buddhist economics, I go through the research based on books written by E.F. Schumacher, “Small IS Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered”, Venerable Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, “Dhammic Socialism”, Priyanut Piboolsravut, “An Outline of Buddhist Economic and System”, several books of Venerable P.A. Payutto, Schinchi Inoue, “Putting Buddhism to Work”, and J.W. Wickramasinghe “People Friendly Economic Development.” The

core approach to Buddhist economics is presented through books and articles of Professor Apichai Puntasen and Professor Sulak Sivaraksa, by analysing them through the prism of spiritual approach to changes.

The academic research of Professor Apichai Puntasen is explored by the analysis of his books and articles such as “The World's Crisis and the Response to the Crisis by Buddhist Economics”, “Why Buddhist Economics Is Needed as a New Paradigm for Better Understanding of Happiness”, “The World's Crisis and the Response to the Crisis by Buddhist Economics”, and “Buddhist Economics: Evaluation, Theories and its Applications to Various Economic Subjects”.

Professor Sulak Sivaraksa inspires me with his publications such as “Buddhism and the Socio-political Setting for the Future Benefit of Mankind”, “Conflict, Culture, Change: Engaged Buddhism in the Globalizing World”, “Global Healing: Essays and Interviews on Structural Violence, Social Development and Spiritual Transformation”, and “Rediscovering Spiritual Value. Alternative to Consumerism from a Siamese Buddhist Perspective”, “Religion and Development”, “Siamese Resurgence”. “A Thai Buddhist Voice on Asia and World of Change” and “Wisdom of Sustainability”.

Finally, I analyse the publications of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists.

CHAPTER 2 – Questioning Neoliberalism

2.1. Brief Historical Overview of Neoliberalism

Officially, the apparition of neoliberal movement is connected to the period after the Second World War, when on April 1st 1947, Professors Friedrich August von Hayek together with Ludwig von Mises, Milton Friedman, and other scholars mostly economists, historians and philosophers, created “The Mont Pèlerin Society”. The invitation of Professor von Hayek had a purpose to discuss the state and development of classical liberalism, with its free market in opposition to Marxist or Keynesian approach keeping conviction of importance of the intervention of state and social policies into the realm of economy.

Obviously, the ideological bases of Neoliberalism were born many years ago. In order to understand the movement, we need to come back to eighteenth century’s Adam Smith’s Liberalism. In the “Wealth of Nations”, the father of modern economics developed the idea that in order to achieve the highest possible profit in their business activity, humans are driven by their own selfish interest. This altruism free behaviour, being a moral justification of the accumulation of wealth, can only flourish in the patterns of the free market, free from state intervention. Only then, the egoistic interest of the producer can be transformed into the public good. And this correlation between personal interests and social interests is created by the “invisible hand of the market”, which is a collection of forces acting on the market (competition, prices, etc.), provoking the concrete conducts and behaviours of people.

The main ideas of Laissez-faire, another economic system which was born in France also in eighteenth century, underline the non-interference of the government in transactions among private parties in the form of subsidies, regulations, and privileges

– we should simply, “let it go”. Followers of this movement believe in the physical order of the nature, as a self-regulating, harmonious system in which the free individual should act economically. To maximise the self-regulation of the market of the free man, the market should be competitive.

In 1938 in Paris, the French philosopher, Louis Rougier, organized a meeting officially called as Colloque Walter Lippmann. During this meeting, 26 economists and intellectuals, including Friedrich August von Hayek and Ludwig von Mises, discussed the inefficacy of liberalism, proposing for the first time the adoption and promotion of the word “néo-libéralism”, as a modified continuation of liberalism. Once again, the key terms of the market economy such as free enterprise, competition, price mechanism and limited state intervention were discussed.

After the Second World War, in the economically destroyed reality, majority of countries followed the Keysian liberal model of economy which became dominant until the seventies of the twentieth century. John Maynar Keynes, British economist, underlines in its theory the interventionism of the state and social policies into the economy particularly during the period of crisis; the main goals of interventionist state were full employment, economic growth, and prosperity. The need of influence by the state into the market, which is particularly important and justified during the reconstruction of post-war reality, was in the same time the pretext to reorganisation of the political landscape; in many countries, communists or socialists parties started to be powerful, threat-ruling capitalist elites of the time. In the beginning of 1970s, the growing rate of unemployment and inflation of the economy of many countries, due to the crisis of accumulation of the capital, announced the end of Keysian era; in the same time, the upper classes needed to verify the new approach to the economy.

They found the training ground in Chile which began the first experiment with neoliberal state formation, starting by coup d'état in 1973. Salvador Allende, the socialist president elected in 1970, was advocating for national interventionism of the state and social reforms, choosing "The Chilean Path to Socialism", which obviously were not in line with the development of neoliberal policies of this time. His victory during the presidential elections was an unpleasant surprise for USA; declassified documents of the U.S. National Security Archive and Department of State Office Historians prove clearly that CIA was working to prevent Allende from winning the presidential elections and was actively involved in the coup d'état. In September 1973, the military junta under the command of general Augusto Pinochet took control of the country. His economic management of the country was conferred to the group of economists from the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, known as "Chicago Boys". The specialists trained in majority at Ph.D. programs of the Department of Economics of Chicago University under Milton Friedman. Deregulation, privatization, and free market policies were the main focus of their interests, introducing through them the neoliberal policy on a grand scale.

The year 1973 was also the year of oil crisis. The oil embargo proclaimed by the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries had an important influence to global politics and economy; the energy crisis resulted into recession in many countries, giving foundation for the implementation and development of neoliberal tendencies and showing weaknesses of the Keynesian welfare state. Ronald Reagan, President of the US and Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, became the most staunch supporters and promoters of neoliberalism.

The Iron Lady, elected in 1979, started the application of the neoliberal doctrine in Great Britain by its famous single word TINA, short for "there is no alternative." Being a disciple of Von Hayek and Milton Friedman, as well as a social Darwinist, Baroness Thatcher was once in power to introduce the key reforms which ally with the

neoliberal philosophy of governance: the important reduction of the state, decomposition of trade unions, lowering taxes, flexible labour market, privatisation of the state-owned companies and above all, financial deregulation. The main idea of Margaret Thatcher was that the welfare state leads to the demoralisation of the citizens, loss of motivation and as such, to their low economical activity. In order to change those patterns, she applied the rules of free market, limiting the roles of the state to the faith with inflation.

During the presidential elections in 1980 in the United States, Ronald Reagan won the presidency, and like Margaret Thatcher, he was in favour of the limitation of the role of the state that should be mainly present on the level of foreign affairs and defence. Reagan's administration acted from the beginning in favour of privatisation of the biggest national enterprises, free trades, tax diminution, decentralisation, and inflation fight. The supply became one of the main responsibilities of Reagan's economists, pushing entrepreneurs to bigger production and large investment. Both Thatcherism and Reaganomics favoured investment in the stock exchange markets.

The period of the flowering of neoliberal agenda, which started in seventies, is also characterized by the creation of multiple think tanks which began the powerful organizations promoting the main ideas of this economical paradigm. In majority of cases, these entities took form of the research institutes, being private and tax exempt, sponsored by corporations and foundations. They were heavily opposite to state regulations, advocating the virtues of the "free" market, pushing other neoliberal policy agendas by influencing a large scale of the policy-making processes, academic systems, mass media, and general public opinion. By organising all kinds of meetings, publishing books and articles, and doing briefings, they became extremely influential in providing advice and consultations. Many of them used aggressive marketing strategies using hundreds of millions dollars of budgets.

According to the research described in “Neoliberal hegemony: A Global critique”, there are 41 neoliberal think tanks in North America, 36 in Europe, 7 in Asia, 2 in Africa, 3 in Australia/New Zealand, and 15 in South America. (Plehwe, Walpen & Neunhoffer 2006:42) In order to name few of them, the “Heritage Foundation” created in 1973 is considered as one of the most conservative think tank in the USA. As to date from December 2013, the organisation runs the budget of more than 112 million USD, promoting deregulation of industry, free market, privatisation, state restriction and many others. The “Institute of Economic Affairs” based in London was created in 1978 with a purpose to promote free markets economics. The Canadian “Fraser Institute” had also followed the main ideas of neoliberal agenda promoting property rights and market based approach to economic activity. “Adam Smith Institute” was the first intellectual force behind the privatisation of the state-owned assets pushing the neoliberal approach in a large scale of reforms in the United Kingdom.

At the end of 1980, neoliberalism became the economic orthodoxy, spread worldwide by International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organisation, and others.



2.2. Definition and Features of Neoliberalism

The prefix “neo” of the noun “neoliberalism” suggests revive of the old model in the new form. Indeed, neoliberal economists rediscover and mainly put into action all the ideas of Adam Smith, focusing their activities on free market by pushing away the state intervention from economic matters. Oxford Dictionaries define the adjective neoliberal as “modified form of liberalism tending to favour free-market capitalism” whereas the Collins English Dictionary describes neoliberalism as “a modern politico-economic theory favouring free trade, privatisation, minimal government intervention in business, reduced public expenditure on social service,

etc.". The Webster Dictionary proposes the definition underlying "the blending of liberal political views with the emphasis on economic growth. Encyclopaedia Britannica uses the nouns "ideology and policy model that emphasises the value of the free market competition."

No matter where the neoliberalism was spread on this planet and by which manner, we can enumerate the core policy reform measures adopted worldwide which are the key patterns helping us to understand the meaning of the movement:

1. Privatization of national, public sector by selling government-owned enterprises, services and goods to the private investors. In order to transfer the national economic power to the private one, all should be privatised such as schools, hospitals, toll highways, banks, railroads, even natural resources such as water, etc.
2. Deregulation consists of the extension of the state's role into economic activity by regulations facilitating a market-oriented economy.
3. Application of rules of the "free market" particularly emphasising the free trade (removal of tax and tariff barriers), the free mobility of the capital on national and international level and strong property rights.
4. Elimination of public and social services (like education or health care) versus enhancement of individual responsibility for once life.

Indeed, Thomas I. Palley discussing the main policies associated with neoliberalism states that "these include deregulation of financial markets, privatisation, weakening of institutions of social protections, weakening of labour unions and labour market protections, shrinking of government, cutting of top tax rates, opening up of international goods and capital markets, and abandonment of full employment under the guise of the natural rate" (Saad-Filho & Johnston 2005:25).

In “A Brief History of Neoliberalism”, Professor David Harvey proposes to understand the definition in two ways. The first one sees neoliberalism as “a theory of political economics practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade”, but in reality, after analysing the development of the movement, Harvey suggests that we can “interpret neoliberalization as a utopian project to realize a theoretical design for the reorganization of international capitalism or as a political project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites” (Harvey 2005:2,19).

Harvey’s idea is fully rethought by others scholars. Kean Birtch and Vlad Mykhnenko confirm it by stating that their book “has generally supported the argument made forcefully by David Harvey and Peter Gowan that the neoliberal economic order which emerged after the dismantlement of the Bretton Woods System (1944-1976) was built to serve the interests of a “New Wall Street System” and heralded the rise of the new Western imperialism” (Mykhnenko 2010:257).

In the introduction of “Profit over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order” by Noam Chomsky, Robert W. McChesney follows once again the main understanding saying that “neoliberalism is the defining political economic paradigm of our time – it refers to the policies and processes whereby a relative handful of private interests is permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit” (Chomsky 1999:7).

In her speech at the “Conference of Sovereignty in Globalising World”, held in Bangkok in March 1999, Susan George arrived with a presentation of neoliberal agenda leading to the statement that “we are talking about the alienation and the

surrendering of the product of decades of work by thousands of people to the tiny minority of large investors. This is one of the greatest hold-ups of our and any generation”.

John Cavanagh and Jerry Mander, editors of “Alternatives to Economic Globalization”, using the word globalization as synonym of neoliberalism following the logic of the statement that “it was designed and created by human beings with a specific goal: to give primacy to economic – that is, corporate – values and to aggressively install and codify those values globally”. As key feature, those scholars enumerate the promotion of hyper growth and unrestricted exploitation of environmental resources and new markets to fuel the growth, privatisation, and commodification of public services and of the remaining aspects of global and community commons, global cultural and economic homogenization of the intense promotion of consumerism, integration and conversion of national economies, corporate deregulation and unrestricted movement of capital across borders, dramatically increased in corporate concentration, dismantling of public health, social and environmental programs already in place and finally, the replacement of traditional powers of the democratic nation-states and local communities by global, corporate bureaucracies. (Cavanagh & Mander 2004: 34,35).

2.3. Where Did the Success Come From?

As I mentioned in the first chapter of this Master Thesis, taking into consideration the profit and loss accounts of the neoliberal policy, scholars do not leave doubts that this is a failure. Thus, if it is the case, we need to question where the international success of the neoliberal way of thinking is coming from. How is that possible that neoliberal economic order began an economical hegemony of thinking in the entire planet?

Professor Barbara Piontek, a Polish economist, states that in order to implement its ideology, neoliberalism uses successfully the following channels:

1. military actions such as in Chile, Argentina, Iraq and Libya
2. democratic measures manifested by huge ideological pressures spread through corporations, medias, institutions, universities and schools; by defining the state as the common enemy; by creating one way of acting such as TINA; by creating powerful and multiple think tanks; by publishing a lot of books and academic research promoting neoliberal system of values; by promoting chaos and uncertainty; by manipulating the meaning of terms and concepts; by convincing intellectuals to the neoliberal way of thinking, etc.
3. financial resources through World Bank or International Monetary Fund which began the centres of promotion of free market fundamentalism and neoliberal orthodoxy leading to slavery
4. lobby of political parties

Tremendous success of capitalist economy is hidden behind an extremely powerful propaganda which uses verbal metaphors and rhetorical figures with words such as the invisible hand of the market, freedom, competition, selfishness, and hegemony, shaping their moral attitudes and the way of thinking. Analysing this effective ideological support, we discover the main patterns of neoliberal propaganda.

In “The Theory of Moral Sentiments” and “Wealth of Nations”, father of the modern economy, Adam Smith, uses for the first time the term “invisible hand of the market”. The consequences of this term were tremendous: assuming that there is “an invisible hand” which regulates the perfect “natural market”, Smith launches the construct of faith. Harvey states that “the hidden hand of the market was the best device for mobilizing even the basest of human instinct such as gluttony, greed,

and the desire for wealth and power.” (Harvey 2005:20). The belief that there is a natural and perfect “free market”, being self-regulated by its own logic, legitimises conviction to be sure about the rightness of their ways to act and to think. From this perspective, we understand why crusaders of neoliberalism pushed all their efforts to eliminate state influence with conviction that any interference into the “perfect”, “pure” and “free” structure is unwanted. “Invisible hand” also introduces a language close to religion with its mystic connotations and far away from materialistic assumptions of economic science. This perspective justifies obviously the conviction of superiority of the capitalist system under another manifestation of economy, pushing abolition of any state intervention which assures the proper functioning of the “invisible hand of the market”. And as those neoliberal economic processes were the only right ones, they had to be treated as “naturals”, “objectives” and as such, should be considered as “divine” – this is probably the reason why a prime minister of one of the European superpowers so often repeated the statement, “there is no alternative.” On the other hand, if the market is perfect, everything should function under its rules. Based on the faith in dogma and lack of rationality, this way of thinking can take the form of fundamentalism, eliminating such medieval inquisitors, all and everyone who dare to think differently. Any attempt to undermine the neoliberal dogma was perceived as an insult to the sanctity and opposition to the one and only truth. As such, those who do not follow or do not agree with the mainstream way of thinking can be punished by civil war, arrests, tortures or shots, as it was the case in Chile, or by stigmatization and marginalization by mainstream media, as what happened in other countries.

The utilisation of the word “free” describing the market had very important consequences. The connection between the word “freedom” and the shaping of human consciousness is a powerful tool; naming the market free, we face the basic ethics of the human kind, the basis of human motivation. However, Professor Ha Joong Chang states, “The free market doesn’t exist. Every market has some rules and boundaries that restrict freedom of choice. A market looks free only because we so

unconditionally accept the underlying restrictions that we fail to see them.” (Chang 2011:1). Professor Sivaraksa underlines: “As the result of this free market fundamentalism, environments have been destroyed and economies have collapsed. (...) Their faith (neoliberal ideologues) in the emancipatory power of the free market must be based on unmitigated greed.” (Sivaraksa, *The Wisdom of Sustainability. Buddhist Economics for 21st Century* 2009:12). Egyptian Economist, Amir Samir, describing “pure” economy, is going in the same direction by underlying the hoax of the mainstream economy as “pure economics is not a theory of the real world, a really existing capitalism, but of an imaginary capitalism. It is not even a rigorous theory of the latter (...). It is only a para-science, closer in fact to sorcery than to the natural science, which it pretends to imitate.” (Amin 2004:11).

A French professor of sociology, Alain Bihr, makes the detailed analysis of the rhetoric of the capitalist discourse in its book “*La Novlangue Néolibérale. La Rhétorique du Fétichisme Capitaliste*” (New lingo. *The Rhetoric of Economic Fetishism*). He summed up the faith into the free market stating that the neoliberal fetishism of the free market is a barbarian religion in which the capital is hidden, but obviously good covered with taboo. It is a religion that preaches apology of surrender of human beings to products of their own labour (until the sacrifice) and exploitation (to death) of human labour to their previous results, over which humans lost control. This is a religion that exalts the vampirism of the capital – this deity incarnated into things (means of production and means of consumption) and signs (currencies, securities) – which in order to exist must be fed by the work of millions of men and women being exploited all around the world, condemning at the same time even greater number of people to poverty, misery, and ultimately to death, only because the system do not need them or can not employ (and so exploit) them; at the same time, the system deprives humans to independently produce what they need. (Bihr 2008:169) ¹.

¹ My translation

Professor Harvey shows clearly that the choice of words such as freedom or social justice, becoming the political slogans, can be invoked as mask specific strategies beneath vague rhetorical devices. The word “freedom” resonates so widely within the common sense of understanding (...), that it becomes a button that elites can press to open the door to the masses to justify almost anything”. He adds that in the historical context of 1970s, “by capturing ideals of individual freedom and turning them against the interventionist and regulatory practices of the state, capitalist class interests could hope to protect and even restore their position” (Harvey 2005:39,42), and this is exactly what happened; the main discourse of politicians of this era such as Reagan or Thatcher was based on this assumption.

Another word commonly used by neoliberals was selfishness. Stating in “The Wealth of the Nation” that “it is not from benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest” (Smith 1986:119), Smith operates in moral and ethical categories of egoism and selfishness which cannot, in his opinion, build the prosperous economy of the country. Any citizens should act autonomously, maximising their own profits; only this behaviour, under the supervision of the invisible hand of the market, can lead to a better level of life. Smith’s one’s “own interest” took the name of “individualism” later on. There is no surprise that von Mises wrote: “There is no contrast between moral duty and selfishness interests. What the individual gives to society to preserve it as society, he gives, not for the sake of aims alien to himself, but in his own interest”, which leads him to this dangerously radical statement, that “egoism is the basic law of society” (Mykhnenko 2010:3). Talking about the free market ideology, Professor Ha-Joo Chang explains how it was built stating “free market ideology is built on the belief, that people won’t do anything good unless they are paid for it or punished for not doing it.” (Chang 2011:255), underlying egoistic interest of human beings undertaking life activities.

From this philosophical approach to life, we understand why greed, being the moral consequence of egoism, became omnipresent in the applications of neoliberal policies worldwide. Siamese Professor Sulak Sivaraksa does not leave any doubts on the infectious contamination of greed by neoliberalism:

“The economic forces of globalization, forced upon much of the world by the countries of the North, transnational corporations, and institution such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Found, and the World Trade Organization, not only condemn many to poverty but provide a breeding ground for hatred and greed, which in turn gives rise to violence. The demonic religion of consumerism is based on promoting greed, and in the name of this greed all sorts of violence is committed. The mass media, which are controlled by the transnational corporations (TNCs), are part of the problem of structural violence. They distort people’s worldviews and preach the religion of consumerism. They work hand in hand with TNC’s to promote a lifestyle of consumerism and create a global monoculture. Television effectively brainwashes people and acts as a propaganda machine for TNC’s. It deludes people into thinking that the more goods they accumulate the happier they will be. Even if such a consumer lifestyle is unattainable by majority of the world’s people and is an ecological impossibility (...)” (Sivaraksa, *Conflict, Culture, Change; Engaged Buddhism in the Globalizing World* 2005:8).

Simultaneously with ethos of greed via selfishness, neoliberal approach to ethics went through the world competition. Quoted already in this dissertation, Adam Smith built the basis of the modern economy described one of its pillars as in the statement, “Consumption is the sole end and purpose of the production” (Smith 1986:155, vol2). Consumption needs production which, in case of capitalism, is based on price competition. According to many scholars such as Chomsky and Harvey, the only one purpose of this competition is what Marx and Engels called “accumulation

of the capital”; as capitalist economy does not produce goods to satisfy human needs, the overproduction is maintained by the spirit of competitiveness. This behaviour, once put on a pedestal, infected all sectors of human activities started by countries followed by companies, family life, education, etc. Susan George sees competition as the central value of Margaret Thatcher and neoliberalism itself: “competition between nations, regions, firms, and of course, individuals. Competition is central because it separates the sheep from the goats, the men from the boys, the fit from the unfit. It is supposed to allocate all resources whether physical, natural, human or financial with the greatest possible efficiency”. Professor Harvey understands competition as deliberate action of the neoliberal performance; he traces it as a secret weapon because the “international competition and globalization can be used to discipline movements opposed to the neoliberal agenda within individual states” (Harvey 2005:70). If it is not by persuasion and foreign diplomacy of institutions such as International Monetary Fund, World Bank or others, then it is by force and violence of the military pressure, as in the case of Chile. It can lead also to the “consolidation of oligopolistic, monopoly, and transnational power within a few centralized multinational corporations” (Harvey 2005:80).

Anwar Shaikh developed a very interesting understanding concerning competition in his article, “The Economic Mythology of Neoliberalism”. Analysing the meaning of competition within the nation, it is clear that “it rewards the strong over the weak” (Saad-Filho & Johnston 2005:45), and on the level of discussion between nations, even if in theory, neoliberals were convinced and they pushed the ideology that international competition serves to foster economic development of poor countries which in reality, “the neoliberal which pushes for the unfettered free trade can be viewed as a strategy that is most beneficial to the advanced firms of the rich countries” (Saad-Filho & Johnston 2005:48). In other words, international competitiveness follows the same logic: to reward the strong and to punish the poor. However, having the reflexion about entrepreneurship as a heart of economic

dynamism, Professor Ha-Joong Chang argues that even if the entrepreneurship of citizens in poor countries is much higher than in developed ones, the latter are still the winners because they are supported by a whole host of collective institutions, the company laws and commercial laws, the educational system that supplied highly trained scientists, engineers, managers and workers, the financial system, the patent and copyright, etc. (Chang 2011:165-166). This example shows just that the collaboration inside any community is a key to success, not competition, as what the neoliberals wanted us to believe.

Finally, here comes the word “hegemony”. Once the individual conviction of neoliberalists built on faith and beliefs, becoming such a powerful manifestation of pride, arrogance, dogmatism and prejudices, their actions have been settled in applications of the hegemonic discourse agenda. “Hegemony requires the active consent and participation of the ruled and thus, finds expression in coalitions and compromises designed to integrate diverse social forces into historical power blocs” (Plehwe, Walpen & Neunhoffer 2006:3). In “Profit over People”, Professor Noam Chomsky sketches how the 250 years old idea of David Hume, or some of the later by Franklin Henry Giddings or Edward Bernays are applied in the present democratic society, creating the principle of “consent of the governed”. This principle follows the idea that in order to introduce a way of thinking of the few to many, the consent of the population is first needed. Bernays states that “the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society” and “the intelligent minorities must make use of propaganda continuously and systematically” as they are the only ones “to understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses”. Once this stage is achieved, we are in the context named by Chomsky as “consent without consent”, as the populations believing in official way of thinking do not even realize that their consent to the consent is not really necessary. Only at this stage, the implementation of business agenda is possible (Chomsky 1999:43,45,53,55).

Analysing the neoliberal business of hegemony, I have to admit a tremendous success of this marketing of the propaganda, which shaped the people's worldview of entire planet not only geographically but also it was introduced to many different fields of ideas. Creating with an investment of hundred millions of dollars, an enormous international network of highly efficient idea shaping organisms which I mentioned in chapter 2.1, "they have built this highly efficient ideological cadre because they understand what the Italian Marxist thinker, Antonio Gramsci, was talking about when he developed the concept of cultural hegemony. If you can occupy people's heads, their hearts and their hands will follow because they have made neo-liberalism seemed as if it was the natural and normal condition of the human kind". This statement leads Susan George to the very important and morally tragic finding that "no matter how many disasters of all kinds the neo-liberal system has visibly created, no matter what financial crisis it may engender, no matter how many loses and outcasts it may create, it is still made to seem inevitable, like an act of God, to be the only one economic and social order available to us.". Professor Harvey sees the consent generated to legitimise the neoliberalism in spreading it through multiple channels, "powerful ideological influences circulated through corporations, the media, and the numerous institutions that constitute civil society – such as the universities, schools, churches, and professional associations." (Harvey 2005:40).

The social consensus was also created by the perversity of utilisation of proper words. The French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, published in May 2000 in "Le Monde Diplomatique" an article entitled "La nouvelle vulgate planétaire" ("The New Planetary Vulgate")². By analysing the comparison of nouns used by neoliberals to describe the market and the state, Bourdieu underlined that those oppositions and equivalences are mirrors of transformations of the contemporary society. The

² My translation

following chart highlights how efficient the neoliberal propaganda agenda was in shaping the positive feedback of citizens:

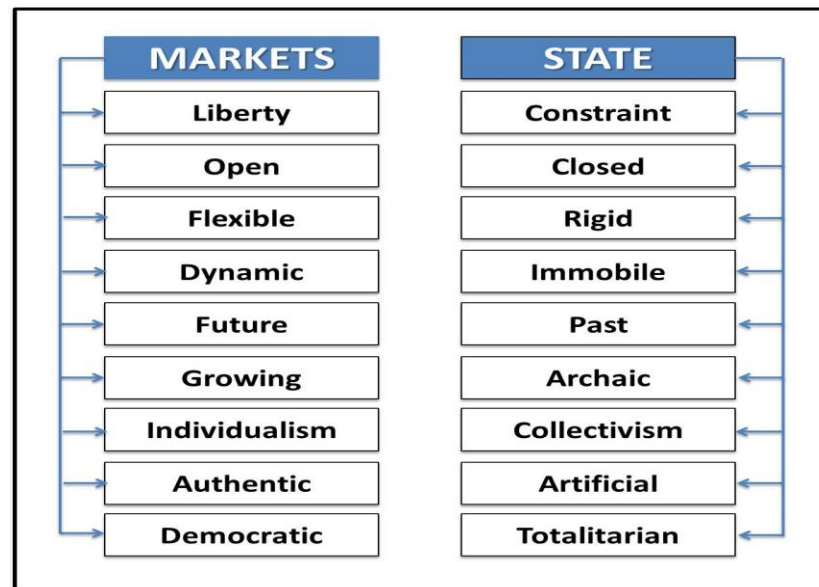


Figure 2: Adjectives describing markets and state by Pierre Boudrieu

2.4. Problems and Contradictions of Neoliberalism

Launching the propaganda of neoliberal policies in the 1970s, fanatically enthusiastic or cunningly ruthless proponents of this way of thinking promised to the world that once any state barriers to the development of the only one right and free market will be abolished, humanity will enjoy and profit from its economical growth. Without any restriction to the flow of the capital, investments will have opportunity to flourish, bringing down the unemployment rate and above all, poor countries will finally have the chance to have access to the money supply in order to be modernised. Democracy, freedom, and prosperity for all nations will finally take place. As proved by many scholars, none of those assumptions was realized; under wisely the pervert choice of terms, another reality emerged.

As mentioned by Harvey, one of the top earners in the USA in 1978 shares 2% of the national income while this number was raised to 6% in 1999. In UK, the top 1% of income earners has doubled their share of the national income from 6.5% to 13% since 1982. The ratio of the median compensation of workers to the salaries of CEOs was 30 to 1 in 1970 and attained the astronomical score of 500 to 1 by year 2000, which is manifesting in their remuneration of 1,269 million US dollars in 1973 to 4,367 million in 1995. In the same time, when the income of an American family rose about 0.6% in 70s, it grew only 0.1% in the 90s. The decline in the average American salary dropped from 479.44 in 1973 to 395.27 in 1997 (Harvey 2005:17-19).

In the same time, the percentage of US citizens living in poverty rose from 11.1% in 1973 to 13.3% in 1997 which represents more than 35 million people. Even worst, the wretchedness level of poverty reached 41% in 1997 from 30% in 1975, putting almost 15 million Americans in extreme impoverishment (Castells 2010:136).

Professor Harvey, as well as Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy, developed the idea that the neoliberal project was thought as the restoration of class power. In order to achieve this structural social shift, Harvey described many elements as the “accumulation (of the capital) by dispossession”, proving through a large number of data that the real purpose of neoliberal activity was not to generate wealth and income pro bono publico of citizen of this planet but to redistribute the capital. Abolishing any restraint which could slow down crusade of corporate development, the accumulation practices began kernel of activities of followers of neoliberal religion including the commodification and privatisation of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; conversion of various forms of property rights (common, collective, state, etc.) into exclusive property rights; suppression of rights to the commons; commodification of labour power and the suppression of alternative (indigenous) form of production and consumption; colonial, neo-colonial, and imperial processes of appropriation of assets (including natural resources);

monetization of exchange and taxation, particularly of land; the slave trade and usury, the national debt and, most devastating of all, the use of the credit system as radical means of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2005:159). Describing main features of accumulation by dispossession, Harvey reveals the real intentions hidden behind the neoliberal agendas, pointing contradictions between theory and practice. Dismantling the structure of the favourite mechanisms of neoliberalism such as privatisation and commodification, Harvey demonstrates that those mechanisms were implemented in order to create the new fields for capital accumulation, unreachable so far for corporations; that is why privatisation was pushed: all kinds of public utilities such as water, telecommunications, and transportation; social welfare provision namely social housing, education, health care, and pensions; public institutions such as universities, research laboratories, prisons and even warfare have been all privatized (Harvey 2005:160). The planetary transformation of everything into commodities took place. Discussing the issue of financialisation, Harvey let us discover that the total daily turnover in financial transactions grew from 2.3 billion USD in 1983 to 130 billion in 2001; however, “deregulation allowed the financial system to become one of the main centres of redistributive activity through speculation, predation, fraud and thievery.” Those financial manipulations lead to all sorts of crisis which according to Harvey, permit the construction of “crisis creation, management, and manipulation of the world stage” in order to allow “the fine art of deliberative redistribution of wealth from poor countries to the rich” and “the transfer of ownership and power to those who keep their own assets”. Finally, Professor Harvey states that the neoliberal hegemony became “the prime agent of redistributive policies, reversing the flow from upper to lower classes that had occurred during the era of embedded liberalism” (Harvey 2005:161-163). The consequences of endless procedures of the accumulation of the capital at all prices influence our human reality in almost all aspects. And the most terrifying of Harvey statements is that talking about rights, neoliberal system acts without pity and compromise as we all have “to accept that we have no alternative except to live under a regime of endless capital accumulation and economic growth no matter what the social, ecological, or political consequences are. Reciprocally, endless

capital accumulation implies that the neoliberal regime of rights must be geographically expanded across the globe by violence (as in Chile or Iraq), by imperialist practices (such as those of the World Trade Organisation, the IMF, and the World Bank) or through primitive accumulation (as in China and Russia) if necessary” (Harvey 2005:181-182).

Deregulation, presented by neoliberal propaganda as liberation of the market from any state restrictions, was in reality, a kind of monopolization of the market by cartels, corporations or big enterprises for endless capital accumulation. Deregulation creates the discourse favouring the privatisation of public services such as education, health, pensions or labour market. Regulating the access to those services by money, we are facing the pauperisation or even deprivation of those services to the big part of societies, creating as such a big field of growing inequalities, racism, discrimination, etc. Deregulation was also empowered in liberal rhetoric by competition as healthy and ethically good element of the free market which is the only one having the potential to save the world. The truth about the logic of the competition in which the stronger always defeats the weaker was hidden in purpose. The entire capitalist logic awards those with bigger profits from accumulation and punishes those who cannot compete, sacrificing them to bankruptcy.

Privatisation, as one of the main points of interest of neoliberal adepts, not only became a general obligation during application of this policy in every country, but also took a form of dogmatic unquestionable fetishism. Any attempt to disprove it was a pretext to consider it as an attack to freedom and democracy. However, the purpose of any private property is to gain profit. From this perspective, the state ownership has a completely opposite task which is a social mission. The privatisation of health care or education is directly connected to commodification in which human beings become customer, with tremendous social consequences in form of discrimination, inequality, and belittling. Thanks to excellent propaganda apparatus

of neoliberal ideology, a big majority of people is convinced about the superiority of private services and ignorance of everything assigned to state; this statement is only a result of erroneous message spread by professionals of neoliberal communication.

The free trade, another key idea of neoliberal economy, was popularised as a way to economic development and well-being of every nation and consumer. In reality, liberalisation of trade and financial barriers had become the main prerogative of Washington Consensus and implemented by International Monetary Found, World Bank and the US Treasury Department in order to open the inexpensive labour market of underdeveloped countries to enrich international Western corporations and economies of rich countries. The debt enslavement and degradation of human life, particularity in rural sphere, took a form of spreading poverty and tragedy of millions of peasants forced to leave countryside and to settle down in urban slums. As underlined by Professor Sivaraksa, none of those institutions fulfilled its original assumption to generate prosperity for all or to eradicate poverty. He reminds once again:

“The World Bank strategy for creating wealth has been to impose deregulation, privatisation, and structural adjustment on the economies of nations. Deregulation is the removal of government restrictions on business. Privatization is the transfer of ownership from the public to the private sector. Structural adjustments are requirements imposed, usually on third-world countries, in order to receive loans from the World Bank or similar lenders. (...) In fact the institutions and instruments they created have brought about increased inequality in wealth, as well as environmental degradation and cultural deterioration. Using the World’s Bank own definition of poverty, the number of poor people has increased (Sivaraksa, The Wisdom of Sustainability. Buddhist Economics for 21st Century 2009:10).

Once again, the dogmatic dream of reduction of poverty by miracles of neoliberalism proved to be a lie.

As we can see in this chapter, the history of neoliberal doctrine is full of contradictions. Mystical traditions from different ages and civilizations agreed in their message that a system based on immorality described by words such as greed, unlimited growth, selfishness, egoism, competition, hegemony, and materialism must turn into disaster; the present state of the world described in the introduction of this thesis is its proof. Named as sins, negative thoughts, mind poisons or pathological behaviours, those human characteristics have always and everywhere been judged as negatives, covering the right vision of our true human nature, slowing access to the higher levels of spiritual development, and awakening animalistic instincts of human beings. Such lacks of spiritual, moral and ethical approaches, which characterise the neoliberal capitalism, constitute its biggest strength and should arouse our biggest vigilance. Contrarily, the cornerstone of Buddhist economics lies in spiritual knowledge applied in the social action.

CHAPTER 3 – Buddhist Economics

3.1 Historical Overview and Features of Buddhist Economics

3.1.1 Small is Beautiful

In 1974, British economist E.F. Schumacher, published his book “Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered” where, for the first time, the term Buddhist economics was used. Schumacher’s idea to advocate for another approach to the economic activity was born from his understudying of misconceptions and fake assumptions of the capitalism. He underlines the lack of spiritual approach and the persistent dogmatism of mainstream economists: “Economists themselves, like most specialists, normally suffer from a kind of metaphysical blindness, assuming that there is a science of absolute and invariable truths without any presuppositions. Some go as far as to claim that economic laws are as free from ‘metaphysics’ or ‘values’ as the law of gravitation” (Schumacher 1974:44).

As a human labour is a fundamental source of wealth, Buddhist approach to its functions is different from Western understanding. By organising “meaningless, boring, stultifying or nerve-racking” working activities, pushing humans to emphasise concern with goods more than with people, eradicating compassion and encouraging “a soul-destroying degree of attachment”, striving for leisure as an alternative to work, the western understanding of labour constitutes an opposition to the Buddhist way of thinking: “The Buddhist point of view takes the function of work to be at least threefold: to give a man a chance to utilise and develop his faculties; to enable him to overcome his ego-centeredness self by joying with other people in a common task; and by bringing forth the goods and services needed for a becoming existence” (Schumacher 1974:45).

Schumacher followed the spiritual wisdom of the Buddhist tradition by applying principles of Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path, underlying especially the “Right Livelihood”. It is clear for him that there must be not only such a thing as Buddhist economics, but also, that there must be “no conflict between religious values and economic progress” as “spiritual health and material well-being are not enemies: they are natural allies” (Schumacher 1974:44).

In this statement, Schumacher launched the core perspective and challenge of Buddhist economics which lies in a different approach to the criteria of measurement of the economic performances. As “spiritual health” and “religious values” cannot be measured by the same tools as those used by the mainstream capitalist economy (such as Gross Domestic Product, Purchasing Parity Power, and so on), a different perspective of knowledge must be applied. In case of Buddhist economics, the knowledge of the mind analysed from the Buddhist perspective can constitute the challenge from the material-centred vision of economy to the mind-centred ones. Schumacher compared the materialist who is mainly interested in goods with the Buddhist who is mainly interested in liberation. And as Buddhism is “The Middle Way”, it is antagonistic to physical well-being: “It is not wealth that stands in the way of liberation but the attachment to wealth; not the enjoyment of pleasurable things but the craving for them.” From the consumerist perspective of economy based on growth, greed, selfishness, and competition, this statement is extremely difficult to be considered as capitalism measures the ‘standard of living’ by the amount of annual consumption, assuming all the time that a man who consumes more is superior than a man who consumes less. From the perspective of a Buddhist economist, this approach is excessively irrelevant: since consumption is just a means to human well-being, the aim should be to obtain the maximum well-being with the minimum consumption. Finally, Schumacher wrote: “The keynote to Buddhist economics is simplicity and non-violence. From the economist point of view, the marvel of Buddhist way of life is the utter rationality of its pattern – amazingly small means leading to extraordinarily satisfactory results” (Schumacher 1974:47,48).

For Nicholas Bennett, the economics of enough is based on values diametrically opposed to the capitalist ones as “morality is inconsistent with greed; Western economic practice is based on greed. Compassion is inconsistent with capital accumulation; Western economic theory is based on the need for capital accumulation. Mindfulness is inconsistent with advertising; western economics is based on the endless creation of new desires through advertising and other means” (Bennett 2001:9).

Pongsathorn Tantirittisak underlines in his master thesis written under the direction of professor Puntasen, that the mainstream economics has its objectives in an achievement of the welfare while Buddhist economics focuses on the well-being and “is the study how to develop the mind while having interaction with materials, and how to manage materials in accordance with the development of mind”, the definition developed by Professor Apichai Puntasen when he states that “Buddhist economics is a subject dealing with how an individual and a society can achieve happiness and peace through human interaction with material world, under the condition of resource constraints” (Tantirittisak 2001:2).

Professor Laszlo Zsolnai answering to the question “What does Buddhist economics mean?” states:

“Buddhist economics can be seen as a radical alternative to the Western economic mind set. Western economics represents a maximizing framework. It wants to maximise profit, desires, market, instrumental use, and self-interest and tends to build a world where ‘bigger is better’ and ‘more is more’. Buddhist economics represents a minimizing framework where suffering, desires, violence, instrumental use, and self-interest have to be minimised. This is why ‘small is beautiful’ and ‘less is more’ nicely express the essence of the Buddhist approach to economic questions”.

The Buddhist approach to economy continued to flourish after the publication of Schumacher's book.

3.1.2 Gross National Happiness

In 1972, the King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, proposed a new indicator that measures the quality of life which he named Gross National Happiness or GNH, creating this abbreviation to obviously associate it with GDP, showing to the Western civilization another dimension of measurement for the well-being of the nation. Based on Buddhist philosophy, the King suggested that to assure the proper development of a nation, two elements have to be taken into consideration: material and spiritual development must go head to head. To assure this kind of progress, four pillars must be promoted: sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, preservation and promotion of culture, environmental conservation, and good governance. Obviously, these four elements are supranational, and over any religious convictions, they can be applied into any tradition. The four pillars are further elaborated into domains such as psychological well-being, living standards, health, education, community vitality and balanced use of time. Bhutan has developed 36 sub-indices, 72 indicators, and 151 variables to define and analyse the happiness of the Bhutanese people.

3.1.3 Bhikkhu Buddhadasa

Venerable Bhikkhu Buddhadasa (1975), one of the most eminent figures of the twentieth century, devoted his life to explain the complexity of materialistic deviation of humanity and to propose solutions based on return to Buddhist spiritual message. Developing his idea of Dhammic Socialism, "a social doctrine of spiritually-based activism" (Jackson 1988:269), Buddhadasa sees roots of materialism in extreme

selfishness of the so-called developed countries which impose their occidental philosophy of life worldwide. The impossibility to recognise and live the reality of “enough” constitutes the direct way to greed which empowers ideas of “I” and “mine”, cutting humans from compassion, generosity and loving kindness. Buddhadasa believes that in order to overcome problems of contemporary civilisation, “we must turn our attention to the source of the problems: society. Whatever system is laid out for the functioning of the social group, the principles of such system must be for the good of society as whole and not just for individuals or for any person.” (Buddhadasa 1993:59). The main philosophy of its Dhammic Socialism is based on the highest law of Nature to keep what we need, and to try to accumulate or produce something extra for the benefit of the whole society. This is the definition of the socialism according to the laws of Nature, Dhamma, the way of God, or with the basic principles of any religion. Buddhadasa did not believe on the efficiency of international organizations or governments, as they are trying to solve the world’s problems by treating symptoms, not causes; it is by fully becoming a human being, putting the welfare of others before our own selfish interests, that we realise the fullest sense of human existence. (Buddhadasa 1993:63,64). All efforts of the present civilization should be concentrated on morality as “all the problems in the world, past present and future, are caused by lack of morality” (Buddhadasa 1993:140). Bhikkhu does not blame the economy for the present state of the world as the economy is only the merely result of human behaviour based on the ethics of each individual.

3.1.4. Venerable P.A. Payutto

Venerable P.A. Payutto (1992) underlines the lack of the present Western economy which avoids any reflexion on ethics and morality, trying to concentrate all their efforts on concrete, mathematical factors and measurable quantities. However it is obvious that in order to confront the present state of the world, economy has to

take into consideration the abstract factors which influence our economic choices such as our fundamental fears, desires and emotions. The conceptual framework of Western economics using a very narrow scope of analyses, being disconnected from ethical, social and environmental problems, is in his opinion of the primary cause of the present troubles of humanity. This objectivity of the mainstream economy “shows only one side of the truth which concerns the material world (...). One-sided scientific solutions are bound to fail, and the problems are bound to spread.” (Payutto 1992:16). Dealing with the definition, Payutto underlines that Buddhist economics is only one of many disciplines of one interconnected whole, subject to Dhamma, the same natural laws by which all things function and as such, have to be ruled by moral and ethic principles because “one of the most profound lessons of Buddha’s teachings is the truth that the internal, subjective values are directly linked to the dynamics of external objective reality” (Payutto 1992:23). As any economical activity is deeply rooted in the human mind, starting from the want, going through choice and finishing by satisfaction, economy is conditioned by ethics and morality; without having an access to the ethics, no one from the present economic problems can be resolved. According to Payutto, present economics being devoid of ethical training and governed by ignorance of mechanism of mental values and human desire is a major shortcoming (Payutto 1992:27). Enumerating major characteristics of Buddhist economics, Venerable underlines the middle way approach leading to the realization of true well-being and not harming one’s self and others. Following one of the keys of Buddhist idea of balance between extremities, Buddhist economics is in favour of the moderate and wise consumption leading to well-being, in opposition to the mainstream economic equation of maximum consumption leading to maximum satisfaction. Then, acting without harming any living creature in the planet, including ourselves, Buddhism is clearly applying this behaviour in any economic activity.

3.1.5. Shinichi Inoue

Shinichi Inoue (1997) is described as a quintessential Buddhist economist educated and leading his professional activity in Japan. As the head of Miyazaki Bank in Kyushu, he was in favour of more spiritually engaged form of economics philosophy. Explaining the difference between Eastern and Western understanding of economy, Inoue starts his analysis by the contrast of Buddhist cosmology with its entire universe being at the centre and anthropocentric worldview of Christian culture that puts human being as central element of its cosmology. This western approach leads to a life based on self-centred and selfish way called by Buddhism the “ego-mind” way, which is the main reason of suffering, blocking one from the achievement of Enlightenment. Being selfish, the Western tradition is devoid of idea of interconnectivity and interdependence of all forms of life on Earth and acts as a hunting culture by sustaining their need by taking what is needed. In the Buddhist agrarian tradition, the connection to economics is based on a cooperative community spirit in which people understand their affiliation to the context of the whole (Inoue 1997:19-24). Enumerating the essence of Buddhist economics, Inoue quote three key phrases that underline its main points:

1. an economics that benefits oneself and others
2. an economics of tolerance and pace
3. an economics that can save the earth (Inoue 1997:67)

To challenge the 21st century, he proposes transition based on the Buddhist meaning of freedom which is freedom from attachments and not freedom as choice and right to do anything we want as in the case in the Western world. In order to do it efficiently, we need “to put Buddhism to work to see that economics and the

moral and spiritual life are neither separate nor mutually exclusive.” (Inoue 1997:126).

3.1.6. J.W. Wickramasinghe

Sri Lankan Professor J.W. Wickramasinghe (2000), underlying the self-centred approach of the modern Western economic orthodoxy as a root cause of tremendous degradation of life both on physical and psychological level, bringing unimaginable misery and agony for millions of poor people, uses Buddhist’s “Middle Path” as a methodological tool. This Middle Path will “provide necessary co-relationship between motivation and altruism”. He argues that Buddhist economics approach is considered as a mixture between material and spiritual values, which should be treated both with same importance. In the same time, this vision assumes that one should act economically only if he and the entire society could share the benefit of its actions, an approach dramatically opposite to the Western philosophy of selfishness as the main engine of human activity inside the society.

3.2 Buddhist Sources for Creating Buddhist Economics

Philosophia Perennis (The Eternal Philosophy) is the common universal knowledge of human kind transmitted through the ages from generation to generation as the spiritual heritage of all mystic traditions of the planet Earth.

Ken Wilber enumerates seven essential aspects of this doctrine:

1. Spirit exists
2. Spirit is found within
3. Most humans do not realize this Spirit within, as we are living in a world of sin, separation, and duality, which is a fallen or illusory state.

4. There is a way out of this fallen state of sin and illusion, a Path to our liberation exists.
5. If we follow this Path, we can achieve Rebirth or Enlightenment in the form of direct experience of Spirit within, a Supreme Liberation.
6. Liberation marks the end of sin and suffering
7. Existence takes form of social action of mercy and compassion on behalf of all sentient beings. (Wilber 2000:83)

Eternal Philosophy informs us about the lack of knowledge or erroneous perception of the reality. According to all mystic traditions of the world, we do not perceive the reality as it is; to see things as they really are, we need to overcome obstacles that prevent us from experiencing the Divine, as such real dimension. The recognition of this state of ignorance is essential.

Buddhist tradition shares the same vision where “avidya” (ignorance), understood as a lack of “prajñā” (knowledge), is its main point of reflection. This fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the reality is the result of the lack of understanding of “dukkha” (suffering) summarised in the Four Noble Truths. “Dukkha”, commonly translated into English as suffering, lack of satisfaction, stress or anxiety, is the flywheel of Buddhist research. In Four Noble Truths, Lord Buddha gives foundations of His teaching.

The Noble Truth of Suffering is the first one:

"Birth is suffering. Also old age is suffering. Also death is suffering. Also grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair, is suffering. Also not to obtain what one longs for is suffering. In brief, the five constituent groups (of mind and body) that provide fuel for attachment are suffering".

In the Second Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering, the Lord Buddha explains the reason of suffering:

"Craving with leads to continuation with existence, which is connected with enjoyment and passion, greatly enjoying this and that. Craving for sense pleasures. Craving for continuation. Craving for discontinuation".

"Tanhā", which in the Buddhist tradition means literally thirst and is commonly translated as craving or desire, is the root cause of suffering. As P.A. Payutto states: "Tanhā is the craving for sense objects which provide pleasant feelings, or craving for sense pleasure. In brief, tanhā can be defined as waiting to have or waiting to obtain" (Payutto 1992:30).

Then comes the third Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering:

"The complete fading away and cessation without remainder of craving – liberation, letting go, release and non-adherence".

Cessation of cravings is the ultimate aim of Buddhist practice; if our development during interminable incarnations projects us to understanding of impermanent

cravings as causes of suffering, then we are ready to leave the cyclic existence of repeating cycle of birth, life and death (Samsara), to escape from suffering and to join the imperturbable stillness of the mind devoid of desire, aversion and delusion in Nibbana.

In the last Noble Truth of the Practice Leading to the Cessation of Suffering, Lord Buddha states:

“The Noble Path with Eight Factors: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right endeavour, right mindfulness, right concentration”.

This truth is about Buddhist practice; this is a guide to “how to escape from dukkha”. Concentration on that puzzle of human nature is the way to be saved from tyranny of Samsara.

This is not an easy task to face the suffering, as the recognition of what leads one to the well-being and what keeps him or her from; this recognition is impossible without the right knowledge. Buddhist tradition enumerates three marks of existence namely “anicca” (impermanence), “dukkha” (suffering), and “anattā” (not-self).

Living in an enormous strength of selfish “ego”, humans became more and more separated from one of the primordial principles of the universe – interconnectivity. Being dependent on “mine” and “I”, they are subjugated to the egocentric desires. As 20th century Taoist philosopher and writer Wei Wu Wei wrote:

“Why are you unhappy? Because 99.9 % of everything you think, and of everything you do, is for yourself – and there isn’t one”.

This recognition of inexistence of “self” means the cessation of suffering. The art is to understand from one side that “self” is only an illusion, a constantly changing conglomerate of predispositions, memories, traits, and impressions; and from another side, that the true nature of emotions is transient and ephemeral; they come and go as clouds in the sky. Ken Wilber describes it as follows:

“I have body, but I am not my body. I can see and feel my body, and what can be seen and felt is not the true Seer. I have desires, but I am not my desires. I can know my desires, and what can be known is not the true Knower. I have emotions, but I am not my emotions. I can feel and sense my emotions and what can be felt and sensed is not the true Feeler. I have thoughts, but I am not my thoughts. I can know and intuit my thoughts, and what can be known is not the true Knower. Thoughts come to me and thoughts leave me, but they not affect my inward I” (Wilber 2000:126).

Anything that arises and ceases in human existence has no solidity. It is impermanent per se, and the five aggregates described in Buddhism as material form, sensation, perception, mental formations and consciousness, cannot be by their own nature, permanent, independent and unchangeable.

Once the mirage of emotions is understood, ignorance is replaced by wisdom, and the desire for the real well-being became the desire for what is right and skilful, called in Buddhist tradition as “chanda” – the desire to act. Living more and more under the guidance of wisdom and “chanda”, we liberate ourselves from the interior conflicts, leading to live in harmony with society and nature. The selfish satisfaction of “tanhā” is replaced by “well-being like” satisfaction of “chanda”.

There are two texts of great significance in which Lord Buddha draws a picture of the journey to a happier life. In the first one, Dhammapada, the chapter titled “Happiness”, talks about living without hate, domination of passions, without the

pursuit of sensual pleasures, without the Three Poisons (craving, anger and ignorance), without the dualities of winning/losing, overcoming attachments for objects, and being surrounded by wise people – these are some of the elements which facilitate our research of happiness. According to Buddhist ethics, among the three poisons of mind, craving is the most dangerous. Translated into English as desire, passion or greed, this poison is particularly pervert and dangerous. Based on unattainable perspective, humans create some goals with the belief of its fulfilment and promise that they will bring them happiness. Once we achieve what we wanted, our satisfaction seems to be contented for a short period of time; then we will start and restart again to starve for another ephemeral realization of the promise of happiness. Therefore, cravings born from greed will never make us happy; we cannot be satisfied by impermanent emotions born from our inconstant thoughts.

In “Traibhumikatha”, the Siamese version of the Buddhist Cosmology and the first written text of Thai literature, King Phra Maha Thamma Racha I of the Sukhothai Kingdom described the domain of “Preta” (hungry ghost) as where humans are contaminated by greed and that will be reincarnated in their next existence. Pretas are hungry ghosts or evil creatures with slender necks and enormous bellies, a corporal metaphor of their mental situation as their bellies signify enormous appetite while their necks show very limited possibilities to calm it. They are always hungry but they can never satisfy their hunger; thus, suffering a lot. One becomes an inhabitant of Pretas realm when his karma is marked by greed, hate, lust, and aberration.

Professor Puntasen underlines the difference of the meaning of happiness in the Western philosophy and Buddhist tradition. According to Western tradition, happiness arises from accomplishment of pleasures, which is considered by Buddhist tradition as hedonism and not happiness. This narrow meaning of happiness as pleasures’ generated spiral, in which the fulfilment of desire leads in reality to suffering, is not

the real happiness. As Puntasen states, “in Buddhist Economics, pleasure from acquisition should be correctly called as “dukkha” (suffering). This difference between the understanding of pleasure in mainstream economics, “sukha” and Buddhist Economics is the main point of departure between two” (Puntasen, *The World's Crisis and the Response to the Crisis by Buddhist Economics* 2009:12).

According to Buddha Dhamma, the pleasure from non-acquisition leads to real happiness taking forms of loving kindness, compassion, or sympathetic joy. In order to liberate us from suffering, Lord Buddha advocated the Middle Way behaviour; assuagement of basic needs, such as food, medicine, clothes and a living place, provides us the elimination of primordial insecurity and should be the essence of human consumption.

In “The Noble Eightfold Path”, Buddha presents the way leading to the cessation of suffering and shows a path to enlightenment. This universal, consistent, and primordial message and this apology of the word “right” are one of the ultimate messages of superior knowledge. With its right understanding, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and concentration, Buddha shows us what to do in order to reach Nibbana, the supreme liberation. When the true value of The Noble Eightfold Path is threatened by the fulfilment of artificial desires such as greed, selfishness, ostentation and superficial flaunting of wealth and personal possession, “individuals become greedy, selfish, possessive, pretentious, jealous and ultimately ignorant” and the “corruption, crimes, political upheaval, dog-eat-dog competitiveness become rampant in society. Under such circumstances, the true quality of life (chanda) that involves balanced approach to life and encompasses right effort, diligence, industriousness, impartiality, honesty, truthfulness, moral courage and uprightness gets neglected”(Mahanta 2009:87).

3.3 Global Buddhist Economics – The World Happiness Report

On July 19th 2011, in the Bhutan sponsored resolution number 65/309, the General Assembly of United Nations invited members of states to apply the holistic way in development in order to promote sustainability. Thanks to this initiative, the international community was invited to have a reflexion on the new economical paradigm. In April 2012, 800 representatives from religious communities, governments, international and civil society organizations, scholars and businessmen attended the High Level Meeting entitled “Well-being and Happiness: Towards a New Economic Paradigm” held at the UN headquarters in New York. In order to assure the international approach, Bhutanese government launched the New Development Paradigm idea and the International Working Expert Group made up of 71 specialists with a wide range of expertise. In December 2013, the Royal Government of Bhutan submitted to the United Nations the final report named “Happiness: Towards the New Development Paradigm” as a contribution to the post 2015 development agenda.

On April 1st 2012, the first World Happiness Report was published describing the state of the world happiness, the causes of happiness and misery, as well as the policy implications. Prepared by specialists from different fields such as economics, psychology, neuroscience, statistics, health, public policies, under the umbrella of United Nations Sustainable Development Solution Network, these measurements of the well-being and happiness were introduced in order to represent the progress of the nation by different measurement tools than GDP. Second report covers the year 2013 and the third one was published in 2015. All of them demonstrated that well-being and happiness are extremely important indicators of nation’s economic and social development, and should be seriously taken into consideration in policy making procedures. World leaders also used them in order to reshape the global agenda into sustainable development that includes the well-being as an essential element. Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute, Columbia University, and one of authors of this report, underlined moral and ethical elements making up the

meaning of happiness, stating “this report gives evidence on how to achieve well-being. It is not by money alone, but also by fairness, honesty, trust, and good health.” Professor John Helliwell from the University of the British Columbia and co-author of the report, is convinced about the importance of application of well-being in the large scale of policies: “as the science of happiness advances, we are getting to the heart of how the factors the define quality of life for citizens. We are more encouraged by the governments around the world which are listening and responding with the policies to put well-being first. Countries with strong social and institutional capital not only support greater well-being, but are more resilient to social and economic crisis.”

The 2015 report issues a score on a scale from 0 to 10 based on Gallup World Poll data collected between 2012 and 2014 in more than 150 countries. The report uses six key variables including (I) real GDP per capita, (II) healthy life expectancy, (III) availability of social support, (IV) freedom to make life choices, (V) generosity and (VI) perception of corruption in government and business.

Since the first report in 2012, understanding the importance of happiness in the measurement of public well-being has become more and more pertinent. Governments of many countries are using existing knowledge and research about happiness in order to create proper policies. The subjective well-being and measurement of humour of citizens, as part of social development, are in many cases considered as important as economic or/and environmental development. In the eight chapters of 2015 report, authors go from the present data on happiness to the elaboration of studies about more specific topics.

Chapter two, named “Geography of Happiness”, presents the ranking of countries in which 0 point is considered as the worst score and 10 is the best one. Switzerland, followed by Iceland, Denmark and Norway are on the top of the ranking, with the

score going up to 7.5 points. Countries considered unhappy receive less than 3.7 points, situated in the majority of African continent. Obviously, countries, such as Greece and Syria, show declining figures due to their political instability.

In chapter three, correlations between the subjective well-being, gender and age are discussed. In this evaluation of the life quality, positive and negative experiences are taken into consideration. The positive ones are happiness, smiling and laughing, enjoyment, well rest, feeling safe at night, and interests while negative experiences are named anger, worry, sadness, depression, stress, and pain. This research proves that the quality of life of women is slightly superior to men's. On the contrary, the same quality of life varies when we take into consideration the age and regions of the world. Such an analysis shows that age, gender and regions are important in the evaluation of the quality of life and its evaluation.

Chapter four treats the problem how to make a policy when happiness or life satisfaction are the goal. In the mainstream way of analysis based on cost-benefit approach, there is no place to include immeasurable, subjective level of feelings and emotions. Governments should develop new methods of policy analysis based on happiness as the measure of benefit. And social sciences should focus on research explaining causes of happiness, how it can be achieved and at what cost.

Neuroscience of happiness constitutes a core reflexion in chapter five. Four pillars of well-being namely the sustaining positive emotion, resilience and the recovery from adversity, empathy/altruism and well being, mind wandering/mindfulness and affective stickiness, are malleable and can be transformed under the influence of learning or experience. Learning programs to cultivate kindness, generosity or alertness exist already, able to cause changes in the mechanisms of the brain in the very short period of time. Happiness and well-being should be as such considered as skills and strengthen by learning process.

Since the third part of human population is comprised by children, chapter six is concentrated on the future of their mental health. Enumerating three main characteristics of the development of a child (educational, behavioural and emotional), there are no doubts that emotional development is the most important while school success arrives at the last position. Mental health is undoubtedly a key driver of satisfaction in adulthood. Concentration on mental health of our children is the most important investment in our future.

Presenting the paradigm of the Italian civil society based on friendship in chapter seven, once again, the importance of positive, social relationships based on trust, kindness and sharing was underlined, with the conviction that those elements contribute to the individual happiness and the happiness of the nation. Those human capacities of pro-social actions and ability to live as an individual inside a community should be important elements of the development of democratic mechanisms.

Finally, focusing and investing in the social capital is the reflexion point of chapter eight.

The pro-social behaviours of citizens, supporting common goods and not selfish short-term profits, by generalized trust, good governance and mutual support among individuals, are fundamental to create environment of happiness. High social capital, encouraging social support system, volunteerism, generosity and honesty in public administration are direct causes of well-being. Creation of the social capital should be done through education, moral instruction, professional modes of conduct and public policies reducing inequalities in access to the various pillars of well-being such as income or health.

3.4 Buddhist Economics in Thailand

3.4.1 King Bhumibol's Sufficiency Economy

On July 19th 1974, during the Commencement Ceremony at Kasetsart University, the King Bhumibol Adulyadej, gave a speech in which the idea of Sufficient Economy was launched:

“The development of the country must be fostered in stages. It must start with the construction of infrastructure, and the provision of food and basic necessities for the people by methods which are economic, cautious and conforming with principles. Once the foundation is firmly established, progress can be continually, carefully and economically promoted. This approach will prevent incurring mistakes and failures, and lead to the certain and complete achievement of the objectives”.

In December of the same year, in the speech given on the occasion of his anniversary, the King states:

“No matter what others say – whether they will accuse Thailand to be old-fashioned or obscurantist. So long as we have enough to live on and to live for – and this should be the wish and determination for all of us – without aiming for the apex of prosperity, we shall already be considered as the top in comparison with other countries in the present world”.

Those two speeches contain the key ideas of the Sufficiency Economy, in which the step-by-step development of the nation based on self-reliance, self-immunity, common sense and moderation constitute its main ideology. After publishing the book entitled “The Story of Mahajanaka” in 1992, in which the King deliberates on

the destructive effects of greed and delusion, another important message to the nation and the world was given in December 1997, few months after Thailand experienced the severe consequences of the economic crisis, underlying the need of self-sufficiency and self-reliance, His Majesty said: “To be a tiger is not important. The important thing for us is to have a sufficiency economy, which means to have enough to survive”.

In the Ph.D. dissertation, Dr. Priyanut used Buddhist teachings from “Tripitaka” and applied the Four Noble Truths as methodology for Sufficiency Economy. He states that poverty is considered as a cause of suffering and the provision of material well-being is the cessation of it. Achievement of the cessation is in right livelihood. Then, the objective of life in Buddhism is the cessation of suffering in inner state of mind, and not in the material well-being; the effort should be done on inner development first.

In 2001, The Office of National Economic and Social Development Board in Association with Crown Property Bureau created the Sufficiency Economy Working Group, looking to interpret and elaborate the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy in order to develop a framework; their syntactic and semantic analysed components put the definition of SE into three points:

1. From the form and function point of view, Sufficiency Economy is a philosophy used as a “guide for the way of living/behaving for people of all levels towards the Middle Path”. The Middle Path is understood as secularised, normative prescription and not religious statement of faith. Sufficiency Economy is scalable on the level going from individual through nation to biosphere and is governing every level of human activity.
2. From the contexts point of view, Sufficiency Economy was established in 1970s, long time before the Asian crisis in 1997. However, in the post-crisis

environment, Sufficiency Economy can be considered as a solution to globalisation or paradigm shift, stressing particularly a Middle Path approach to economic activity avoiding extremities.

3. From the definition point of view, the meaning of “sufficiency” is represented by synonyms such as moderation, reasonableness, and requirement for self-immunity system. In order to achieve sufficiency, knowledge and morality are necessary. Ethically and morally, people should manifest honesty and integrity, living with perseverance, harmlessness, and generosity.

The National Economic and Social Development Board describes Sufficiency Economy as a philosophy which stresses:

“The middle path as an overriding principle for appropriate conduct by Thai people. It calls for national development and administration to modernize in line with the forces of globalization. ‘Sufficiency’ means moderation, reasonableness, and the need of self-immunity for sufficient protection from impact arising from internal and external changes. It is necessary to strengthen the moral fibre of the nation, so that everyone adheres first and foremost to the principle of honesty and integrity”.

Three core components – moderation, reasonableness and self-immunity – based on knowledge and integrity constitute principles of Sufficiency Economy.

Peter Warr, analysing Thai King’s speeches, sees five central themes which characterise Sufficiency Economy and which can be applied to the level of individual, firm, community and the whole country. All of them cover philosophy of life, starting from the establishment of sensible (non-excessive) material aspirations, realised without excessive risk, with the attention for the self-reliance, with concern for the protection of others and with attention to the non-material aspects of life.

This path of life is perfectly alienated with the Buddhist philosophy, with its essence of understanding human suffering caused by greed, hatred, and delusion, and misunderstanding of humanity about the nature of self, understood as isolated entity. Only wisdom of awakening about the real nature of the self mixed with compassion towards others can let us stop the endless vicious cycle of frustrated pursuit of material things (Warr 2011:29-31).

Dr. Sauwalak Kittiprapas analyses Sufficiency Economy as a part of alternative human-centred economic approach also called as Buddhist Economics or happiness economics. Underlying the different perceptions and core values between the alternative and mainstream economics, using as such different analytical frameworks and indicators for development, goals and results, she states that Sufficiency Economy focuses on balanced life-style and consumption while production “aims for self-immunization, security for basic needs or social protection, and the recognition of relationship among various lives and nature”. From the social point of view, “the society should live in harmony, empathy, compassion, generosity, and “the middle way” lifestyle” (Kittiprapas 2011:47). Dr. Kittiprapas also underlines the connection between the understanding of happiness in the Buddhist tradition and Sufficiency Economy. Happiness, arising from material achievement, does not have an important value as ephemeral and impermanent. Through wisdom and intellectual development, we can reach the highest level of happiness based on moderation, contentment, and morality; this level of understanding of happiness leads to compassion, cooperation, and sharing. Thanks to peaceful mind and development focused on the mind, Sufficiency Economy creates the context for more peaceful society.

Royal projects connected to Sufficiency Economy was implemented by the King of Thailand in the early 1950s and took its logic in the observation that in the development era farmers, being the biggest part of Thai population, will suffer the

most in the reality undermining the rural development. That is why Thai King's experimental project started in rural environment. In 1969, the King created a non-profit organisation named "The Royal Project" in order to solve problems of deforestation, poverty, and replacing the production of opium by other crops mainly fruits and vegetables. They are classified into categories covering agriculture, environment, public health, occupational promotion, water resources, communications, and public welfare. In 1988, another non-governmental organisation was created, "The Chaipattana Foundation", with the aim to develop projects of national and social benefits to the Thai people. The main focus of this organisation is to turn around agricultural development, environmental quality, sustainable management of natural resources, social development and cultural conservation. Until 1980s, Royal projects were spread in the entire Thailand, covering more than 3,000 different initiatives. In 1994, his Majesty, The King, proposed the concrete model of self-reliance family farm patterned on the example from Saraburi province few years earlier, which avoided the monoculture based on chemicals, making as such the farmer dependent on fluctuations of external market. His idea also covered the technology of water supplies, defending farmers from growing difficulties of water shortage in the dry season. All production should serve to cover the household consumption first; any surplus was destined to be shared with community in the first instance, then the community was designed to engage with external market in order to sell the excess products. After the Asia financial crisis of 1997, the self-reliance economy, which assures the best immunity against external shocks, was applied at national level.

For more than 20 years, multiple networks emerged in the entire country. The Inpaeng Network, with its 100,000 members, was raised when farmers slipped into debt with the cash-cropping cultivation of cassava. Taking the decision to stop concentrating on it, they decided to grow rice in place for their own consumption. Applying the motto, "grow what we eat and eat what we grow", using a small capital of THB 5000 borrowed by the NGO to buy rattan seeds, dividing their plots into rice,

fruit trees, vegetables, and mushrooms, they became self-sufficient. By growing the network, a market run by community enterprises was created. Using exchange based on barter, the community was satisfied, selling after the surplus on the external market. This successful network serves as an example in order to create other similar networks not only in Thailand (The Yamana Network, The Panpon Network, etc.), but also in the entire world. Its application takes place not only in rural environment but also constitute the example of economical pattern for small, medium, and big enterprises such as Siam Cement.

3.4.2. Understanding of Buddhist Economics by Professor Apichai Puntasen

Professor Apichai Puntasen, one of the most important intellectuals of the contemporary Thailand, has advocated for many years the understanding and promotion of Buddhist perspective of economy, underlying in his work incompleteness of the neoliberal, mainstream way to perceive it. Being cut off from any form of spiritual inside, neoliberal economy is pernicious to humanity.

Professor Puntasen describes two core values accepted by mainstream economists without questioning: selfishness justified as a rational behaviour and competition which leads to economic progress as the only one. Buddhist economics is based on different paradigm of the human nature. Capitalism underlines scientific materialism paradigm of selfishness. The entire context of capitalist “happiness” can be described through the word “having” which is having more pleasure or utility arises only from possession. From the Buddhist perspective, “doing”, “being”, “being related with”, and “giving” are as important as “having” compassion, collaboration, shearing instead of self-interest (Puntasen, Why Buddhist Economics is Needed as a New Paradigm for Better Understanding of Happiness 2007:5).

From the same point of view, competition is replaced by cooperation in the Buddhist economist approach; from the spiritual understanding, the nature of human being is not to compete. As we all share suffering of human incarnations, we cannot be driven by competition which is always destroying. Professor states:

“The economics that is currently taught everywhere only pay attention to a material-based science without any attempt at further development based on mind-based science; it has decided to ignore the part that it considers inaccurate or non-measurable. Hence, the concepts of desire and greed are ignored, and the only relevant concept remaining in economics of self-interest. All activities related to desire and greed as well as needs are treated as self-interest. By ignoring reality, economics deliberately distorts facts. The subject is no longer able to reflect reality. Because of this fact, mainstream economics should instead be correctly called autistic economics” (Puntasen, *The World's Crisis and the Response to the Crisis by Buddhist Economics* 2009:18).

Professor Puntasen shows that the destructive meaning of the capitalist economy raises from the lack of tool for holistic analysis of the mind and from distortional understanding of the word happiness, always connected in the Western tradition to prosperity, pleasure and gratification, conviction that happiness rises from consumption. In the Buddhist tradition, the Pali word “sukha” should be in this case translated as wellness, not happiness. The first meaning of “sukha” is the lack of pain. The next level known as “kamasukha” defines “sukha” as acquisition of things or sensual pleasures. A higher level of happiness is “niramissukha” arising from non-acquisition, finding pleasure in giving, meditation or helping others be relieved from pain. The highest level of “niramissukha” is “vimuttisukha”- liberation from all impurities of mind or all the defilements. To improve the level of “sukha”, one is required to do mind training. The main aim of such training is the achievement of wisdom, “paññā”, which is the ability to see things as they really are. Achievement

of this awareness concerning the meaning of happiness is necessary for a paradigm shift.

Three main economic theories – production, consumption, and distribution - are widening with Buddhist perspective by Professor Puntasen. The mode of production in Buddhist Economics is being defined as paññā-ism, the necessary condition of the mind to achieve understanding of the object's own nature. The Sanskrit word “paññā” means wisdom; wisdom of realizing that the mind often distorts the truth based on our own likes and dislikes. This wisdom must be developed with “sila” (good conduct) and “samādhi” (concentration). “Sila” manifests in good intentions and “samādhi” in calm, supporting the neutrality of the mind able to learn and understand without distortion; “sila” is good action, right speech, and right livelihood while “samādhi” means right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. These three functions of the mind, paññā, sila and samādhi, are ways of the liberation from suffering.

Those who achieve the wisdom of “paññā” will not seek self-interest or competition; such a person will seek to be relieved and relieve others from pain. From the perspective of the Buddhist Economics, this wisdom should be used to protect and control technology, capital and natural resources. There is no question of exploitation of workers; instead, the process should use human creativity and contentment. Renewable resources should be used as much as possible. Waste should be kept at a minimum; we should stop production in purpose of overdrawn consumption. Consumption must be moderated; this is a natural law of harmony and balance in nature. Overconsumption must be considered as an abnormality from the wisdom point of view, as leading to greed and destruction. Moderate consumption in everything is needed. With Buddhist selflessness and compassion leading to cooperation, the distribution system will be more paññā-ist than capitalist.

Professor Puntasen, interviewed by me for the purpose of this thesis on November 5th 2015 in Bangkok, summed up his understanding of the present economy. Talking about the neoliberal economy, he states that the main assumption of capitalism in the era Milton Friedman was a conviction about the selfish motivation of humans, letting them act in the egoistic way, without thinking about the well-being of others. The conviction that follows human self-interest which will be at the end creating the profit for others is the main misunderstanding of this time. However, when Adam Smith developed its ideas more than 200 years ago, resources were omnipresent, overpopulation was not a problem, and economists were not preoccupied; this is not the case in the present time.

Professor reminded his old idea of how he understands the patterns of the way from wealth to well-being, reminding that philosophical doctrines on well-being of West and East were similar; Plato and Aristotle underlined how evil the economy based on money can be; it is when one starts to buy more than what is needed to fulfil greed. During centuries, buying cheap and selling with profit enriched colonial powers, giving basis of behaviour of the present corporations, making the construction of market efficiency as the only one important and necessary. In this mechanical construction, covering with the idea of individual freedom, there is no necessity to raise spirituality or to discuss morality or ethics. Reagan and Thatcher show how powerful they could be following this ideology.

Discussing Buddhist Economics, Professor Puntasen verbalises the main problem of the whole West which is to do not consider religion as a science. Being understood as a faith, argumentation into religious matter is not the right action in Western reality. Then, as Buddhism is neither a religion nor philosophy, the mind-based science instead, it operates in the realms of matter and energy, going as such further that western comprehension of the reality based on physicality only. Mind operates

in multiples layers which are not considered seriously by physics; and those layers are not the only one truth. Giving the example of a two-year old child, Professor explains the difficulty to conceive a structural argumentation convincing the child about another truth from the only one he believes on; efficiency of explanation depends on wisdom and maturity of the listener. Western civilisation is per se based on technological, physically measurable vision of the reality and it is very difficult to propose another vision.

In the present world, people are very confused between understanding happiness and “comfortability”. The term “comfortability” is directly and automatically connected to money in today’s reality; the more money a person has, the more things can be bought and the more the feeling of happiness can be felt. Obviously, confounding those two terms must lead to turmoil and unhappiness; the lack of wisdom that real happiness had nothing to do with materialistic comfort of external world constitutes a big danger. However, Professor Puntasen stated that only the personal experience of one can change this situation and that there is nothing to do until the moment in which one does not decide to go through this change. He underlines also the positive changes in economic field, quoting Professor Joseph Stiglitz as an example in order to mention growing consciousness about non-measurable needs such as happiness or other human needs which must be taken into consideration in economy.

Being questioned about the biggest weakness of Buddhist Economics, Professor Puntasen sees to simplicity that, as any “simple” issue is by its nature, is difficult. Buddhist Economics has an interest in accumulation of “paññā” (wisdom) and not in the accumulation of wealth; wisdom cannot be achieved by propaganda tools or promotional activities as wisdom is not to be sold or to be imposed; wisdom is to be taken and understood by those who are ready to do it, indifferent of country or belief. From this perspective, Thailand, being the Buddhist country, has, according to Professor Puntasen, some 10% of citizens who understand Buddhist message; as anywhere else in the world, it is about readiness to hear the message. And as

majority of people is looking for easy and cheap solution, the profundity of wisdom was never an easy issue.

It is in international or regional integrations that Professor Puntasen sees the biggest risk of the present economy. The bright side of those integrations is always promoted by the fortunate part of the society which does not want or does not see the dark side of those economical arrangements. The question of power was raised, which in the present world is in the hands of those who had more capital, always acting quiet for their own benefit, omitting society as such.

Professor Puntasen also underlined the wind of change concerning the promotion of Buddhism in the world. Since China occupied Tibet, the raising interest of Americans to understand Buddhism took place. Majority of the present economic textbooks include Buddhist understanding and approach to economy, proving the power of wisdom. “When wisdom comes faster than stupidity, we have the chance to survive”, he said. We need to talk about the different alternatives to not err in our human path or to see that the direction once chosen is wrong.

Finally, Apichai Puntasen reminded three marks of existence, which in Buddhism are called as impermanence, suffering, and non-self which guide Professor in his life. As everything is constantly changing, we cannot get stuck in one vision; our existence is happening only here and now, without attachment to the past or the future; and without to seriously consider ourselves as being in reality inexistent.

3.4.3 – International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)

3.4.3.1 Historical Overview and Features of INEB

International Network of Engaged Buddhists was established in February 1989, in Thailand.. The main concept in its creation was based on the Buddhist idea of spiritual friendship, “Kalyāna-mittatā”, which underlines importance of human connection and relationship with good, virtuous, noble and admirable friends. With this vision, 36 ordained and lay persons from 11 countries, Buddhist and non-Buddhist thinkers and activists, gathered together applying the Lord Buddha’s advice from Upaddha Sutta which is “heaving admirable people as friends, companions and colleagues is actually the whole of the hole life. When a monk has admirable people as friends, companions and colleagues, he can be expected to develop and pursue the noble eightfold path”. Indeed, INEB is rooted in the philosophy of personal relationship, connected directly to the spirit of sangha, community. The leading founder of the network is Professor Sulak Sivaraksa, with the 14th Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh and Maha Ghosananda, as its patrons.

After its creation, the network rapidly expanded covering all continents with its partners, represented by 7 organisations in East Asia, 27 in Southeast Asia, 13 in South Asia, 1 in Australia, 2 in Europe, 3 in North America, 3 in South America and 1 in Africa. It was thought as a web of individuals and organisations unified by conviction of necessity to connect the spiritual knowledge with the social action as indissoluble elements. This central priority on INEB, the development of Socially Engaged Buddhism (SEB), constitutes the paradigm of the network for a healthy, just and peaceful world. As a SEB leader, the network serves as tool of information and resources, linking activists, spiritual leaders, academics and young people in areas of common concern. SEB is understood as empowerment of more self-reliant and harmonious communities. By using the Buddhist concepts of interdependence and interconnectedness, INEB seeks to develop the new social paradigm by linking regional and international groups dealing with social issues. Both philosophy and

practice of INEB are based on Buddhist roots of compassion, social justice, non-violence and co-existence. By using Four Noble Truths, the network has a mission to confront and end suffering, using analysis and action based on this approach.

INEB is a non-profit and non-governmental organisation sponsored by exterior donors and foundations. General goals of INEB activities are:

1. To promote understanding, cooperation, and networking among inter-Buddhist and inter-religious social action groups.
2. To identify and address the structural and personal suffering facing our communities, societies and the world.
3. To articulate the perspective of engaged Buddhism regarding this suffering, and to train Buddhist activists to respond effectively.
4. To serve as a network of information and resources on engaged Buddhism.
5. To facilitate conferences, education and training that supports and strengthens socially active individuals and groups based on Buddhist values and practices.
6. To cooperate and collaborate with activists from other spiritual traditions and social change organizations.

Principal fields of concern and engagement are:

1. Peace building and reconciliation
2. Environment
3. Women's empowerment and gender equality
4. Alternative education
5. Human rights and social justice

6. Alternative development and Buddhist economics
7. Community development
8. Reform and revival of Buddhist institutions
9. Youth and spiritual leadership development
10. Inter religious/faith dialogue and collaboration
11. Buddhist art

The main platform of intellectual exchange of ideas and the development of the organisation are General Conferences, held annually since 1989, and from 1995, they have been scheduled every two years. In 2009, the 20th Anniversary Conference of INEB was organised in Chiangmai, under the title “A Festival of Peace and Social Transformation”. In this interactive, experiential and skill building conference organised as an exchange of ideas and discussions and not as a lecture or reading of papers, the Socially Engaged Buddhist vision was discussed as an identity:

“This identity is one of tolerance and ecumenism towards others faiths and systems of thinking, inner cultivation of the mind/heart and spirit through meditation and contemplation, and progressive social action to not only relieve the suffering of others in the world but also to uproot the structures of injustice imbedded in our economic, political and cultural systems” (INEB 2009:28).

In the statement of the conference, we discover the main critical concerns; from the intertwined disasters of consumerism and environmental destruction, the vital need to empower and educate young people, the pervasive oppression of women, all gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgendered men and women, the denial of human rights and meaningful livelihood, the need to preserve Buddhism and all traditional culture and religion, to finally the obscenity of war, civil strike, and violence.

In 2011, the conference took place in Bodhgaya, India entitled, “The Future of Buddhism. From Personal Awakening to Global Transformation”. More than 250 participants from 31 countries gathered at the auspicious site of Bodhgaya, coinciding with the 2,600-year celebration of Buddha’s enlightenment at this place. The diversity of participants, with religious and secular backgrounds, originating from different countries illustrated the strong spirit of non-sectarian Buddhism whom INEB pays homage. As always, in the case of INEB conference, events had spiritual, intellectual, relational, practical, informational, and celebrating aspects. Twenty workshops led by experts were offered, grounded in social issues such as new media, dharmic education, climate change, conflict transformation, sustainable communities, waste management, death and dying, humanitarian assistance, non-violent communication skills, Buddhist economics, organic agriculture and green marketing, youth awakening and others. Being consistent with INEB’s philosophy of sharing and learning experiences with one another and the spirit of spiritual friendship across generations, gender, ethnicities and religious affiliations, one of the main aims was achieved, namely the interconnectivity, as a basic state of mind of human’s behaviour. The intellectual discussion of participants were mixed with some practical skills of non-violence, meditation, filmmaking and website design. During this conference, the Right Livelihood Found was launched based on the Buddhist four noble truths as ethical basis for social enterprises. The conference closed with candle-lit procession to the Mahabodhi temple led by Bhikkhuni Dhamananda and Professor Sivaraksa.

In 2013, Kuala Lumpur hosted another conference under the title, “Inter Faith Dialogue for Peace and Sustainability”. The Conference hosted three big events: Youth Empowerment for Social Justice, Peace and Sustainability, Buddhist Muslim Study Tour, International Buddhist Muslim Forum on Sustainability, and Inter-Faith Dialogue for Peace and Sustainability.

Facing materialism, consumerism, urbanization, corporate globalization and nationalism, people of all religions are forced to confront themselves with challenges such as the growing number of suicide, loneliness, depression, poverty, inequality, communal conflict, climate change, and environmental degradation. Organizers believe that religious practices and teachings are necessary to overcome material approach to life. As personal transformation is the root of external transformation, the inner change has to take place and that it is possible through spiritual application of ethics and morality. By increasing dialogue, understanding and collaborating inter-religious level, INEB concentrated its efforts on divisions – between institutions and sects in the Buddhist tradition and religious traditions. Taking into consideration the two biggest religions in Southeast Asia, Buddhism and Islam, underlying tensions appearing between in many countries of the region, INEB advocates for relations based on mutual respect and compassion. Inter-sectorial and inter-faith dialogue and collaboration are fostering greater understanding and cooperation between those two religions. The overall goal of the conference was to create a just, peaceful, and sustainable global society; their specific objectives were enhancement of better understanding between Buddhist and Muslim communities, development of mechanisms for future collaboration, promotion of inter-faith dialogue, exchange and collaboration, and finally, celebration of spiritual friendship. Participants covered a large scale of topics, including the following areas:

1. Planet, people and profit: business for New Economy
2. Tradition and modernity: spirituality and religion in a changing world
3. Conflict transformation
4. Faith, climate and ecology: inter-faith response to climate change
5. Responses to nuclear and alternative energy
6. The pursuit of happiness: policy for wellbeing and “Gross National Happiness”

7. Loneliness, illness and death: spiritual guidance for challenging times
8. Half the sky: Women in the society
9. Yuppie, hippie, dropout: young leaders making new path
10. Eating is a religious act: mindfulness and food system
11. Spiritual arts

In January 2016, “Covering Streams: Engaging for Holistic Development” will be the main focus of another conference organized this time in Sri Lanka.

Another way to spread information and ideas is by magazines and books publication. “Seeds of Peace”, published thrice annually, with its 70 issues started in 1995, is the international magazine promoting aims and objectives of INEB.

3.4.3.2. Spiritual Principles and Practices applied by INEB in Their Practical Activities

In order to understand the Buddhist spiritual basis of INEB activities, I will enumerate and discuss few key principles constituting just a part of the deep and complex wisdom of Buddhist message, which I consider as primordial.

The Pali word “pañña” means wisdom. This methodological tool describes the knowledge of the true nature of reality, which in Buddhist tradition is covered by four terms namely impermanence, suffering, non-self, and emptiness. This mental ability leads one to see things as they really are and to distinguish between truth and falsity. This wisdom has nothing to do with intelligence, but it is a manifestation of the natural order of things called Dharma – a very complex term signifying inter alia ultimate reality. Understanding this eternal laws and its application in human existence assures not only the achievement of Nibbana, final liberation, but also a

prescription for basic ethical and moral rules which should be applied in social activities. From this point of view, Socially Engaged Buddhism is de facto an obligatory way to follow spiritually based principles.

The Pali word “anicca” means impermanence; as everything is changing, nothing can be considered as permanent. Without having wisdom, humans create attachment for inexistent, as constantly changing ideas, which are the essential cause of suffering. In Theravada tradition, Vipassana meditation is the way to realise this truth.

Fourth Noble Truths, described in the chapter 3, are considered as a deep analysis of the psychological reality and methodology of behaviour and not as a philosophy; its key point is the human need of experience of something permanent, which is a sign of unawareness about the real nature of reality. If attachment causes suffering, its eradication leads to liberation, which can be achieved by Noble Eightfold Path.

According to Buddhism, “anattā”, referring to the perception of “not-self”, is obviously subjected to impermanence and as such, does not exist and our tendency to believe in it is a fake assumption. Understanding that an “I” is conglomeration of a constantly changing impression, memories, traits and predispositions put this “I” into categories of illusion.

Finally, “suññatā” (emptiness) means impermanent nature of all phenomena including not-self in the context of Dharma. The phenomenon cannot exist independently, but being the effects of certain causes, they always exist interdependently of each other: they do not have their own nature. This understanding of interdependent manifestation of events leads to wisdom going beyond illusion caused by delusion of duality based on oppositions such as white and black, love and hate, positive and negative, or “me” and “others”. Until the “I”

and “mine” do not recognise the essence of emptiness, suffering will stay present. And as long as humans are vulnerable to identify themselves with material form, feelings, perception, mental formations, and sensory consciousness, as named in Buddhism five aggregates, they will be stuck in the habitual and erroneously accept the identity of the “I”. Exceeding ignorance of emptiness is Enlightenment and the end of suffering.

This analytic knowledge, based on intellectual grinding of thoughts appearing in our mind, must be confirmed by the practice. “Vipassana” or “samatha” is a meditative technique necessary to overcome blindness of unawareness, without the simple impossibility of understanding the ultimate reality. Those practices serve to develop focused mindfulness, unified with analytical learning. Meditation is a practical tool to access the non-conceptual wisdom, the way to understand our misleading perception of reality, being as such the gate to liberation from suffering.

In order to understand INEB’s motivations to act, based on spiritual knowledge, we need to describe other terms of the Buddhist science of the mind, namely non-violence, compassion loving kindness, and interconnectivity.

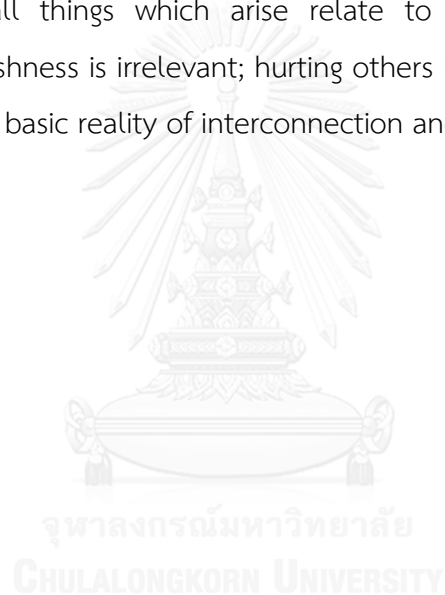
“Ahimsa”, non-violence, assumes that all living beings have a spark of the divine, spiritual energy; hurting any of them means simply to hurt us; it is indeed the first precept of Buddhist ethics. Despite the debate about the translation of this word and reflexion of many scholars on whether we should use the word non-violence, non-injury, do not hurt, or do not kill, this moral principle concerns any manifestation of life in the planet including humans. Abstention from violence should be applied not only in physical level; this supremacy of love should be manifested verbally and mentally. By avoiding all violent means, we escape from karmic consequences and by following this high virtue, we obey the universal law. Professed by such figureheads of the recent history as the 14th Dalai Lama, Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) or Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), applied the

principle of “Ahimsa” to all spheres of life and still have tremendous impact on various civil and political rights movements in the entire planet.

“Karuna”, compassion, one of the four “divine adobes” (along with loving kindness, sympathetic joy, and equanimity), is in fact the concept of love; it can only arise with wisdom. The Buddhist meaning of it has nothing to do with the Western concept of this word, considered as feeling or emotion. Buddhists understand compassion as activity, the common transgression of suffering and not co-suffering or helplessness as it is a case in the West. By understanding our common, human condition of suffering, the desire to improve the situation is named compassion, putting this concept into categories of social activity. This kind of act of compassion can be done not only exteriorly, but also by the improvement of ourselves during the practice of mediation; thus, by inner retrospection. The intentionality of compassionate interactions, by its energetic vibrations, is in fact the way to help others by this indirect way. Compassion must be complemented by wisdom and vice versa; wisdom without compassion is useless and compassion without wisdom is a sign of lack of understanding of the ultimate reality of suffering of all human beings. For this reason, wisdom and compassion should be developed together.

Loving kindness, “mettā”, as antidote to selfishness, anger, and fear, is considered, in the Buddhist tradition, as a mental state or attitude and not a feeling as perceived in the occidental meaning. “Mettā” also arises from the practice and can be maintained only by practice. It could be translated into English as amity, inoffensiveness, benevolence, fellowship, friendship, and others words. The welfare and happiness for others, despite of all self-interest, is “mettā”. This is one of highest state in the Buddhist tradition and probably the reason of the famous statement of the Dalai Lama: “My religion is very simple. My religion is kindness.”

Finally, in order to understand INEB impulse to action, we need to mention the Buddhist understanding of interconnectivity. The ancient Sanskrit concept describing the natural order of the Universe, being a consequence of the observation of the world as it is, is known as the concept of “Rta”. It is also understood in the categories of causality, as everything in the Universe, including our planet, has a cause. As such, interdependence and interconnectivity are the essence of what Buddhist philosophy describes as dependent origination. By metaphorically described as the Indra’s net (using the net of Vedic god Indra, being compared to the spider-web with jewels in which each jewel is reflected in all of other jewels), we receive the message that all things which arise relate to all other things. From this perspective, any selfishness is irrelevant; hurting others by selfishness or egoism does not acknowledge the basic reality of interconnection and interdependence.



CHAPTER 4 – Examining International Network of Engaged Buddhists in Practice

4.1. A spiritual political economy: interviews with Professor Sulak Sivaraksa and INEB employees

The Zen Master and a global, spiritual leader, Thich Nhat Hanh, presenting Sulak Sivaraksa in the preface of the “Seeds of Peace” states that Professor has a clear picture of what is happening in the present world. He underlines Professor’s active participation as a teacher and an organizer, his understanding of ethics and morality, his dedication and devotion to help others, using the gift of gathering people together by dialog, and leading to compassionate and peaceful solution.

Being influenced by such figureheads of 20th century, Buddhist thinkers such as Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto, the Dalai Lama or Thich Nhat Hanh, Professor Sivaraksa, developed this approach towards Buddhist practice, interconnected with socio-political context of the present world. By developing socially engaged Buddhism, he answers the question how we can apply Buddhist teachings while facing modern problems. He called his tactic “Buddhism with a small ‘b’”.

In this understanding of the Buddhist practice, Professor Sivaraksa starts with the primary importance of individual’s inner development. Recognising the omnipresent suffering as primordial teaching of the Lord Buddha, Professor underlines that without understanding the mindfulness, tolerance, and interconnectedness as result of personal, spiritual path, one will not be able to help others. If, on the contrary, understanding the individual and personal suffering will project one to help others to understand and go beyond suffering, connecting individual path and social reform, this approach should be fruitful.

Applying the interpretation of the Buddhist Five Precepts, namely abstention from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, and consumption of toxic substances, Professor Sivaraksa makes an accurate connection with the world's present social state. This adjustment of the spiritual knowledge to contemporary society raises questions about our attitude towards:

1. wars, social conflicts, or animals for slaughter in case of the precept about killing.
2. abstention from stealing , connected in his vision to capitalism and depletion of natural resources.
3. sexual misconduct leading to the reflection about the global, patriarchal structure of the male dominance and exploitation of women.
4. false speech connected to the mainstream media and education, misleading humans by the propaganda of lies.
5. toxicity of international peace and justice makers forcing farmers of the poor countries growing cocoa, heroine, tobacco, and coffee only because international corporations do not let them survive by growing rice or vegetables.

In “The Wisdom of Sustainability” (2009), Professor Sivaraksa developed his vision about globalization and structural violence. Talking about society's resources, he uses “inequality” and “unfairness” as key words to describe worldwide distribution, leading millions of human beings to poverty and suffering. Without being able to ensure these basic needs, a big part of world's population is indeed discriminated and persecuted by present, capitalist system of production and management. Explaining roots of this situation, Professor Sivaraksa refers to the Three Poisons represented in the Buddhist tradition which are greed, hatred, and delusion.

Individually, through the practice of mediation and contemplation, those poisons can be uprooted and transformed into generosity, loving kindness, and wisdom. Collectively, Professor sees the Three Poisons as negative patterns of behaviours of rich and powerful leaders of the present economic and political system. He associates greed with the present economy of growth, namely capitalism, consumerism or globalization. By pathological need of accumulation and idea of materialistic possession, the present civilization risks extinction, as we do not have any more natural resources to satisfy it. Hatred took form of militarism in the structure of one of the biggest and more powerful industry, using all legal and illegal methods to increase its turnover. Delusion in the vision of Professor Sivaraksa is interpreted as mainstream media advertisement; by promoting useless products and by presenting unwholesome ideas, the society is misled and concentrated on meaningless activities, taking them far away from meaningful life; promoted loneliness and separation that deteriorate the human well-being on an unprecedented scale.

Describing the structural violence of the globalized capitalism, Professor does not follow the blind pursuit of the worship of big international organizations such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund. Without any moral legitimacy, being nourished exclusively by greed, those executive forces of capitalism do not serve people; their only one purpose is their own empowerment. By replacing traditional morals and ethics, the market ideology enslaves people in poverty and interminable debt, using in the same time the propaganda of today's world as a highest mark of human development, and of today's global economics as an only future; any rejection of this rationale is perceived as inferiority, naivety, and weakness. In this pervert reality, the personal empowerment has to take place in order to survive.

The mindful awareness alongside with simplicity and humility create a proper space for interconnectedness between each other and the environment around as; this inner development has to take place in order to change the world. We must start from ourselves; peace cannot be achieved by people who live their interior experience without peace. With the same logic, if we manifest greed, hatred, and delusion as human beings, those patterns will also govern institutions, governments or any other organizations; any social change has to start at the individual level.

INEB Executive Secretary, Mr Samboon Chungprampree, confirmed once again in the interview given on November 11th 2015, that in order to work for the society and for ourselves, we need two key elements which are wisdom and compassion. Human interconnectivity plays also a crucial role in the socially engaged activity. The understanding of impermanence, suffering, and the idea of non-self are without any doubts necessary for a quality of life and to perform those tasks.

Taking the “Spirit in Education Movement” as an example, Mr Samboon explains the persistence of Noble Eightfold Path as a platform of helpful Buddhist pattern in educational activity. Having knowledge of principles of the right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration, participants of those trainings have to recognise another approach to life. Understanding the meaning of the wisdom of non-self by both inner introspection and intellectual understanding, they become more humble and more ready to develop compassion in order to help others. This transformative education operates as such in two levels, inner and outer dimensions are covered. Applying this model in Thailand, Laos, and Burma, the results are tangible. INEB takes care about the follow up and help synthesize all of their actions.

Some of the biggest assets of INEB, based also on spiritual wisdom, are non-sectarianism, collaborative mind, and interconnectivities. Network’s practitioners always take into consideration the different systems of belief and base its work on

collaborations with civil societies, other NGOs, local communities, government representatives, etc., creating as such a platform for common learning based on discussion and dialogue.

Mr Samboon believes in the success of alternatively organised education as general awareness embraces more and more the questioning of the mainstream, classical way of thinking. We can observe certainly bigger acceptance and concentration on all sort of alternative thinking that it was a case in the 1960s when Professor Sivaraksa started the idea of INEB.

INEB applies in its activities a holistic approach based on the Middle Way philosophy, trying to explain to those Buddhists who want to stay in the meditative posture to act for the society, and at the same time, to explain to those socially active that the introspective based on meditation is the key for better efficiency. Making the reference to the big international organisations, focused uniquely in physicality of human activities, with the exclusion of what is spiritual, Mr Samboon stresses the need of the holistic understanding of reality. Facing the climate change issues for example, wisdom and practical knowledge of the faith groups can be an extremely important element of the construction of consensus concerning this matter, facilitating on the same time efficiency of the penetration of this knowledge inside communities. This collaborative openness to human interactions is one of the main characteristic of INEB strategy. In case of peace embedded activities, INEB always looks to find the platform of communication even in the case of the most extremist groups, polishing the art of compromise, type of humility necessary in the social work.

Talking about the future of socially engaged activity, Mr Samboon states the constant growth of this engagement for the well-being of the citizens. He also underlines the

need of the spiritual dimension of these actions, as those based on the wisdom and practice having its roots in ancient traditions.

My interview with the Academic Director of INEB Institute, Theodore Mayer, started from the discussion about difficulties that activists of Socially Engaged Buddhists movement have to face in the reality of unjust structural violence, one of the terms used and analysed by Professor Sivaraksa. The enormity of oppression caused by the financialisation of the economy based on growth by all means and the required change among people who do not realise its destructive part, is first of those difficult elements. The second one is the general concentration of the present world on “me” and “mine”; a lot of people spend much time on personal healing during this complicated period of our present history, without realising that individual healing cannot be completed without social healing with an active participation of all of us. Socially Engaged Buddhism wants balance more than the selfish concentration.

As we all keep specific attachments to some ready made ideas, being the result of cultural, historical or psychological habits, the very complicated issues cannot be solved without personal reflection and change, whether there are old authoritarian, male leadership patterns manifested by a board of inter-religious organisation composed exclusively by men. The role of teachers in INEB Institute is to show the range of theories about a topic, then to leave to the students their own judgment of it, without rejecting the vision which does not agree with the teacher’s personal convictions.

Another problematic issue raised by Mr Mayer is the complexity of teamwork. Taking into consideration once again the case of economy, as we all keep many traces of its oppressive influence inside of us that we have not really healed, automatically each of us has another point of view of what is required in order to find the solution. In the context of the work relationships, these tensions raised from the personal

attitudes which create all sorts of discomforts that require generosity, kindness, and respect from everyone. By giving this example, Mr Mayer underlined the importance of inner, personal retrospection and development, in our quest of maturity as human beings.

Answering to my question about how to measure the efficiency of spiritual activities, Mr Mayer underlined difficulties arising from lack of measurement tools of spirituality as such. The efficiency of spiritual message is hidden behind the understanding of wisdom and willingness to the active participation in order to change the reality. By becoming more realistic, kinder and more compassionate person, participants of spiritually based trainings become stronger. This inner change is necessary to make exterior activity efficient and should precede it. However, in this case, it is difficult to talk about efficiency.

Another problem arising from the logistics of such alternative initiative is the battle for resources. Without being helped by the mainstream funding, the socially engaged activists must do a significant effort to improve their finance management. However, according to Mr Mayer, by raising awareness about the importance of the challenges possible through the socially engaged movement, private donations are becoming more frequent.

Enumerating the biggest strengths and weaknesses of INEB, the non-sectarian approach was quoted as the first. The organization is flexible, being able to change priorities in the changing (as in case of the climate change, for example). By organizing regular conferences, the network gives the possibility of face-to-face meetings, connecting people from different backgrounds, cultures, and battles advocating for the right cause. Professor Sivaraksa is a very experienced master on how to put people together. Discussing weaknesses, the unclear forward direction of what INEB is doing was underlined together with unspecified long-term mission of the

organisation. This structural weakness obstructs the holistic, long-term vision of what spiritually engaged activism is for. The lack of continuity of some programs was also quoted. Finally, we talked about the classical human mistake of those who think that there is nothing to be inspired from the opposite camp: obviously, mainstream has some excellent elements which should be imported in order to enrich INEB performances.

4.2. Practical Results of INEB Activities

Taking into consideration an enormous work done by INEB in the last 26 years, I enumerate 11 fields of INEB activities. However, as for 2015, three major areas of work also have to be enumerated namely Peace/Reconciliation, Environment/Ecology/Climate Change, Alternative Education/Training and Buddhist economics. By analysing those three areas, I will draw the structure of how each of those activities is structured by spiritual approach, how INEB applies it practically and what the result of this application is.

Field of activity	Name of activity
Peace and reconciliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inter Religious Dialogue on Climate Change ● Buddhist-Muslim Forum
Environment, Ecology, Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inter-religious Climate and Ecology Network
Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bhikkuni ordination
Alternative education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SEM - Spirit in Education Program ● INEB Institute

Human rights and social justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple publications and campaigns • Call for Solidarity – Buddhists in Bangladesh, Buddhists in India
Alternative development and economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No active programs
Youth and spiritual leadership development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young Bodhisattva Program
Inter Religious Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddhist-Muslim Dialogue
Reform and revival of Buddhist institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddhist Revival in India • Monastic schools, eco temples, etc.
Community development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through affiliate organizations
Dhammic culture and art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local performances and affiliate organizations • Concert of Sacred Music

Figure 3. INEB Activities by Pawel Bartosik

4.2.1. Alternative Education: “Spirit in Education Movement” and INEB Institute

The Spirit in Education Movement, created in 1995, is probably the most important INEB initiative in the alternative, educational field. As Western education is based on intellect, being business-like oriented and competitive, some Siamese alternative thinkers found this movement in order to face the negative trends of Western education. Through the holistic understanding of development based on spiritual and cultural wisdom, this movement advocates for the promotion of common

values of all religious and spiritual traditions, participatory approach of civil society, ecological consciousness and the preservation of indigenous and ethnic wisdom. Its main philosophy is based on the conviction that the true education should bring about an awareness and understanding of ourselves, that enables humans to act with compassion and skilful means to transform destructive patterns of living and to help others.

By organising research, courses, trainings, and demonstrations, the movement encourages activities empowering small communities in their awareness and knowledge about small scale technologies, sustainable agricultural and forestall ecology, and management skills of income-generating activities. Buddhist economics, abilities of conflict resolutions, utilisation of “ashima” (nonviolence), defence against risks of globalization, and power of meditation in social action are also parts of these programs. By strengthening the civil society, INEB realises one of its primordial missions.

The need of putting in action the new approach is born through wisdom of awareness which Professor Sivaraksa verbalises it in the following way:

“Today’s universities, according to eco-scholar Thomas Berry, are ‘the most dangerous institutions in the world’. They produce armies of economic rationalists who march away from real problems. Pursuing “value-neutral” science, they overlook genuine moral and spiritual issues, and are deeply implicated in a global economy that puts rationality at the service of financial interests while subverting efforts at personal and political integration. Despite for smokescreen for philanthropy for the humanities and liberal arts, big money for big science is big business. Berry has proposed that universities appoint deans of morality to ensure that questions of value be taken seriously.” (Sivaraksa 2009:42).

This deviation of importance of humanistic knowledge is without any doubts an opening of the gate by which greed, hatred, and ignorance find easily their legitimacy:

“It is really a system of imposed ignorance, reinforcing the internalized power structures and immunizing us against self-understanding. For education, to be more effective, it has to be dialogical, inclusive, and compassionate, and needs to heal the rift between body and mind. Buddhist practice addresses these issues through the cultivation of mindfulness, which includes meditation and precepts, which are guidelines for living a moral life.” (Sivaraksa 2009:43-44).

Buddhist understanding of education wants to discover what is hidden as a potential in each individual and create the appropriate conditions in order to allow one to create oneself and to learn what was discovered. From this perspective, education should be multi-levelled, based not only on the intellectual data but deeply rooted in life’s experiences:

“For Buddhists, the objective of education is liberation from ignorance. Buddha taught the threefold training – wisdom, ethics and concentration. Wisdom is the recognition of the interdependence of things. True wisdom is to understand the nature of the reality without prejudice or attachments, seeing things as they are. When attained, this understanding blends with compassion, and helping others becomes an endless personal mission.” (Sivaraksa 2009:44-45).

As students are not taught critical thinking, we are living in the society which accepts “established knowledge” without criticism. The same unquestioning leads us to accept the economic growth instead of sustainable development, egoism instead of kindness of sharing, exploitation of natural resources instead of their preservation, and finally, structural violence of our governments and institutions instead of faith

for justice and freedom. This kind of confusions can only be removed by wisdom of right education.

Since 1996, Spirit in Education Movement organised a three-month curriculum for religious leaders from Asia. Including the perspective development, exposure to grassroots initiatives and management skills training, its purpose was a creation of small-scale community development projects with a participatory approach based on respective, spiritual beliefs. The annual follow-up program is conducted in each participatory country. In 1997, a similar training course was organised by INEB for leaders from Assembly of the Poor, another NGO. The aim of this course was the empowering of poor farmers, affected by governmental development projects and activities of the big corporations, in order to help them to start their own development, sustainable projects based on their cultural values. Through this experience, INEB developed a way to empower leaders of communities, often marginalized and struggling for survival. Facing debt, lack of education, and food insecurity, communities are encouraged to develop projects of credit unions, income-generating plans or sustainable agriculture. Empowered by spiritual wisdom, based on each one's faith, with the respect to their ethnic groups, tribal cultures and gender awareness, those communities will be able to face what forces of globalization have caused destruction. In order to find the appropriate model for communities, the instruction is using knowledge and wisdom based on spirituality, holistic worldview, ethics and morality. Using forest walks, meditations, yoga, and other contemplative practices, participants will strengthen their own spirituality. In such healthy communities, governance is much more human and natural.

Using its long philosophical and practical experience, the network developed the next step in its educational mission - INEB Institute. This institution of higher learning follows the main commitment of the network, joining two indivisible forms of personal inquiry and engaged social practice as a core of its activity, by learning,

teaching, and doing the research. Underlying interconnectivity and interdependence of all phenomena, the Institute is looking for explanation of the fake awareness of the separation and individualism, and is targeting young people to enable them to act with the idea of wholeness and commitment to work for others. As this kind of approach must start from an individual, the so-called inner change, INEB Institute focuses on individual's transformation by Buddhist principles based on peace and harmony. Teaching skills of contemplation, the interpersonal skills of listening and dialogue, technical, analytical and leadership skills, the Institute will prepare student to play a role of agent of change in society. This holistic, person-centred, and transformative way to study is rooted in the Buddhist tradition and non-violent approaches developed in Asia. The first promotion of the master's degree program in Socially Engaged Buddhism will start in August 2016.

4.4.2. Environmental Ecology and Climate Change: Inter-religious Climate and Ecology Network (ICE)

The ICE Network is a pan-Asia, local-to-local, collaborative network of diverse spiritual communities aiming to build resilience and empowerment in the time of climate change. By sharing experiences, learning about the presence of droughts, flood, sea level rise, coastal erosion, cyclones, deforestation, pollution, alternative energies, loss of valuable ecological practices, loss of seed's diversity, indebtedness of the rural population, chemical poisoning of the air and the soil, and many others – the Network's purpose is to influence national public policy in Asia, by stimulating and strengthening diplomatic discussion around climate change at international level. This aim is achieved by cooperation with multiple stakeholders such as civil society organisations, faith-based organisations, gender and age based groups, and business networks. Climate change is fundamentally a problem of ethics, manifested by our personal relationship with the nature from one side or the greed and power based inclinations of the minority to place the majority in the situation of poverty and

insecurity from another side, as it is the case of international corporations imposing their rules at all corners of this planet. These attitudes may be the cause of conflicts, starting from family level, finishing at international insecurity.

In order to face climate change issues, ICE Network acts in tripartite approach organised around integrated faith-based response. As faith traditions were always important in Asia, the spiritual leaders are the most valuable to raise awareness on climate change and/or biodiversity in order to encourage a long-term, sustainable and equitable development; this micro level approach finds its strength in local, community-based efficiency of the targeting population. At the macro level, the same faith leaders have the biggest chance to reach the audience when they are advocating values and ethics, starting from local level policies and transmuting them into the national level, for health, safety and socio-economic-environmental well-being. Finally, awareness born in communities, challenged into local and national level, will find its repercussion at the global stage when faith-based response advocating for new paradigm will provoke new behaviours towards planet Earth.

ICE network covers the following areas in its activities

1. Education: public awareness of climate change biodiversity, ecology and social justice, trainings for clergy and lay people as change agents
2. Personal change and eco-ethics: religious and inter-religious actions and awareness on personal change and environmental transformations
3. Change of community and religious institutions: eco-temple and eco-villages
4. Institutionalisation of the network: organisational capacities and development by sharing and learning experiences or solving collective problems

4.2.3 Peace and Reconciliation: International Forum on Buddhist-Muslim Relations

As the biggest religions in South and Southeast Asia, Buddhism and Islam need an extensive cooperation. Facing an important number of disturbances such as rise of extremism, hate speech, hate campaigns leading to violence, prejudices, fear and hatred caused by ignorance, misconceptions, stereotypes, and finally the misuse of religion by certain religious, political and other interest groups and individuals, in June 2013, INEB, in collaboration with the International Movement for Just World and Religions for Peace, organized a consultative meeting on “Contemporary Issues in Buddhist-Muslim Relations in South and South East Asia.” Religious leaders from those regions endorsed the Dusit Declaration and committed themselves to implement the action plan across the region. By engaging the multi-stakeholders partnership with governments, inter-governmental bodies such as Association of Southeast Asian Nations, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and United Nations, the forum underlined the need of holistic peace, including inner peace, peace among humans, and peace with nature. The main objectives of International Forum on Buddhist-Muslim Relations are:

1. To serve as a platform for intra-religious and inter-religious initiatives in education and advocacy
2. To enable rapid reaction/solidarity visits/early warning/conflict prevention in the event of conflict
3. To develop and provide tools and materials for constructive engagement and strategic common actions, and;
4. To develop the effective use of media for positive messaging, particularly via the social and alternative media.

In the Yogyakarta Statement from May 2015, spiritual leaders underlined once again that both Buddhism and Islam are “religions of mercy and compassion committed to justice for all human kind. Both traditions respect the sacredness of life and inherent dignity of human existence, which is the foundation of all human rights without any distinction as to race, colour, language or religion.” As such, any form of call for hatred, war, discrimination or violence is irrelevant. The religious diversity based on principles of peace should advocate for peaceful coexistence ruled by universal mercy and compassion, human dignity and non-violence, living in harmony with the environment. Pluralism, tolerance, and religious freedom should be considered as a norm in the society, and by virtue of the self-introspection, automatically invalidates any manifestation of hate, hate speech or retaliation.

4.2.4. Tha Sawang Community

Among multiple activities in the field of Buddhist economics, Tha Sawang Community in Baan Paew District is an example of the collaboration between INEB and local communities.

Being advised by the World Bank and others international organisations, Thailand followed in the last 60 years such a called development and economic growth based on the Western industrialisation model, manifested by construction of infrastructure and implementation of policies of capitalism. By redirecting investment into the urban development, the disparity of income between rural and urban populations increased, pushing the rural population to migrate to the cities or condemning those who stay in their original, rural communities to misery. The development of infrastructure changed the nature of rural settlements from self-sufficient and nature-based livelihoods to communities depending on trade.

By indebting people caught up in the capitalist system, the local, moral structure once destroyed, communities had to face social problems such as alcoholism, depression, familial violence, stealing, etc. The community's hopelessness plunged the people into the vicious circle of stagnation.

Venerable Luang Por Naan was one of the first Buddhist monks to pioneer community development after witnessing villager's problems. He decided to help locals with the technics of the practice of mindfulness meditation in order to overcome hopelessness and despair. By leading a meditation retreat for the villagers annually for many years, Luang Por Naan participated he development of the well-being of the community.

Being inspired by the rice bank initiative in Lampong Province, Venerable used his knowledge about, teaching this idea during Buddhist holiday and meditation retreats. At the end, villagers decided to create a similar rice bank in form of cooperative. Regaining hope, villagers expended it by creation of buffalo bank, savings group and small store, leading them to the financial self-sufficiency, reduction of debt and fundamental change of well-being. Automatically, the acquired experience was shared among nearby sub-districts, helping other communities to overcome issues of poverty and hopelessness. With time, the initiative of organic farming and marketing assistance to the concept raised, organised together with another national, international organizations, such as INEB and community workers, until the rice from the Tha Sawang community became an export commodity.

This economically successful example is a vital proof how knowledge, based on spiritual wisdom mixed economic experience and socially engaged awareness, properly shared among citizens, can change reality of day-to-day life of the community. Thanks to this initiative, villagers overcame the debt slavery, raised skills

of collaboration, learned the organic farming practices, and improved their quality of life.

However, the positive impact of community-based improvement in Tha Sawang group is not free from problems. As discovered by an INEB volunteer, this economical model, limited in choice of alternatives, was influenced by capitalist consumerism once villagers created the surplus of wealth; succumbing to the general fascination of the population for the ease of access to products of capitalist economy, some villagers come back to their initial state of debt.

Mr Kittikhun Bhukongkha, Coordinator of “Towards Organic Asia Program”, which has a mission to strengthen the organic network in Asia by promoting the common understanding and cooperation in agro-ecology and social well-being, presented another community problem. A need for organic goods is constantly growing, as awareness on importance of chemical-free products is bigger in the society. A large number of schools or hospitals in Thailand are ready to change their usual ways of supplying, but the organic offer is not sufficient. Mr Bhukongkha understands the problem in the following way: farmers cultivating lands on the basis of chemical products, wishing to change the cultivation into organic one, need at least three years before the soil becomes fertile. During this period, their income decreases significantly. As majority of the rural part of society in Asia is not the wealthy one, this challenge of change of professional activity is simply impossible without adequate state policies, financial resources and socially engaged, well organized help.

Heaving professional experience in collaboration with multiple communities, Mr Bhukongkha underlined a weak exchange between them due to lack of national structure bridging them.

4.2.5. Suan Nguen Mee Ma Co., Ltd.

Suan Nguen Mee Ma Company owes its origin from INEB inspiration and was founded in March 2001. The idea of creation of the company was born in 1997, during the international gathering at the Buddhamonthon Centre near Bangkok, where Professor Sivaraksa organised the meeting untitled “Alternatives to Consumerism”. The main aim of this international meeting was the exchange of experiences on alternative approaches in different fields of activities such as medicine, politics, education, economy, agriculture, etc. Implementing the urgent need of application of “alternative” way of thinking and acting to counterpoint the destructive paradigm of consumerism, the decision to create an alternative business was taken. Owners were also encouraged and inspired by the Gross National Happiness concept from Bhutan.

The company joined the growing movement of “alterative business”, the small-scale enterprise managed with rules and aims different that the mainstream corporations. Without a goal of exacerbate profitability and idea of growth at all price, which characterise capitalist activity, this form of economic engagement is focused on self-sustaining and income generating activities. By emphasising local communities, this approach assures the survival of many families, social recognition, dignity and emancipation.

The working capital of the company was 5 millions THB, spread among stockholders in the following way: 35% owned by NGO’s, 35% owned by business friends, 20% owned by management team and 10% as revolving found for organic cotton production.

The main areas of the activity of Suan Company are:

1. community products, mainly hand-woven, naturally dyed fabrics made from organic cotton
2. Tibetan handicraft made in India
3. publishing house
4. organisation of conferences, events and trainings

The company run in the Old Bangkok the Suksit Siam shop, based on original idea of managing the bookshop, small restaurant and shop together. Its main idea is to bring together the rural producers and urban consumers. The shop offers mainly bio products from local communities (coffee, coconut oil, rice, herbal teas, cosmetics, etc.), handicraft from Tibetan settlements in India (serving the local market in Bangkok, developing export to Japan and Europe), Bhutanese handicraft, etc. The restaurant serves healthy meals, juices, and coffee from local plantations. The shop is also a meeting point for organizing talks, small conferences or discussions.

The philosophy of the company is also expressed through publishing activity. Until 2015, they published 25 books, mostly from English into Thai. Among authors, we can enumerate Vandana Shiva with her book “Stolen Harvest”, David Korten with “The Post-Corporate World”, Helena Norberg-Hodge with “Bringing the Food Economy Home”, John Lane with “Timeless Simplicity”, Stephen Batchelor with “Buddhism without Believes” and others.

Suan Company is also one of pioneering members of Social Venture Network (SVN) in Asia. The network was founded in 1987 in the United States to empower alternative business, using the corporate social responsibility as transformative principle. SVN is an association of business leaders, entrepreneurs, corporate change agents and NGO’s advocating for more just, human and sustainable world. To achieve their

goals, members seek to learn from each other and to combine their resources. SVN European branch was launched in 1993 and Asian SVN started in 1999 in Thailand, from initiative of Professor Sivaraksa. In 2003, at Chulalongkorn University Sasin Institute, Suan Company organised the Annual SVN Asia conference untitled “Living Economies in Asia. Re-Thinking Corporate Social Responsibility”, gathering independent entrepreneurs, managers and NGO-workers from different countries.

During the interview conducted for the research in December 2015 with the management of the company, the questions of strength and weaknesses emerged. Existence of the company for the last 15 years is a proof of its economic resistance and a confirmation of proper business plan, stockholders choice and structure of the capital. However, the profitability ensures the day-to-day operation of the company but is not big enough to develop activity in a desirable way. In order to assure realization of its ambitious plans, Suan Company needs to refer to donors.

Its biggest strength is the achievement of existence as an alternative, socially engaged, serving the right cause business. By creating the proper organization of work, strengthening social relations inside and outside the company, multiplying his engagement in different branches such as commercial activity or publishing, the company maintain its innovative and consequently growing position.

Enumerating weaknesses, being the main challenge in the same time, Hans van Willenswaard, one of owners and member of the management team, underlines difficulties of alternative management of the company on the level of human resources. Comparing with the mainstream structures of management, application of the alternative way differ in motivation and understanding of the purpose of professional activity; the challenge consists on how to convince employees to different way of thinking and how to run the business with a serious involvement of people working in.

4.2.6. Questionnaire on INEB Trainings

For the purpose of this Master thesis, a questionnaire was created with the objective to find the evaluative feedback of INEB training program. The questionnaire was anonymous and confidential. Distributed among 9 participants of INEB trainings, 5 persons shared their experience by answering to 10 questions.

Question 1: In which INEB training program you participated?

Among 5 persons, 2 joined interreligious trainings, 1 climate and ecology training, and 2 Buddhist economics training.

Question 2: Where and when the activity took place?

Among 5 persons, 1 joined the training in Myanmar and 4 in Thailand, between 2009 and 2014.

Question 3: How do you evaluate the quality of the training program?

In the scale going from point 1 (unsatisfactory) to point 5 (excellent), 20% of respondents described the training as good, 60% judged it as very good and 20% as excellent.

Question 4: What was the biggest strength/weakness of this training program?

Describing strengths, all participants underlined efficiency of explanation. By drawing a different understanding of discussed issues, based on spiritual wisdom, lecturers arrived to create a new understanding of the analysed problems, giving as such the new approach of how to solve it.

Three persons underlined a good organisation of the training and professionalism of INEB employees.

In two occasions, the main critique of the training consisted on the lack of the follow-up during the training.

Question 5: What did you learn from the training program?

In the case of all five persons answering to this questionnaire, two ideas were predominant. The first one was the idea of comparison between their knowledge before the training and their awareness born during the training. By giving the alternative, INEB created the counterpoint to their former knowledge, opening as such the possibility to verify their truths. Participants of the questionnaire underlined also their awakening and interest to the wisdom based on spirituality, which was very often absent in their way of thinking.

The second appearing statement was the discovery of the real causes of discussed topics. INEB proceeded by explanation of them from the perspective of such a called “alternative” understanding, very often different that the mainstream explanation. By making references to the old Buddhist wisdom, INEB gave another perspective of how to understand the problem and as such, how to face it.

Persons answering to the questionnaire underlined also the importance of knowledge arising from the possibility to share experiences with others, which they largely apply in their professional activity after the training.

Question 6: How did you apply or use the knowledge gained from INEB training program in your daily work or business or economic activity?

By giving the alternative of thinking, the training was the discovery of the new approach to problem solving issues. By understanding of the vital importance of the community in case of economically motivated issues, or by discovery of the necessity of compassion and rejection of the violence in case of religious misunderstandings, participants found another solution of the problem.

Question 7: What were the difficulties in applying the concepts learned from the INEB training program?

The main difficulty announced by participants of this questionnaire was the communicative strategy they had to apply in order to spread the message through their work. However, as in the majority of cases their work consists on rescue assistance in very complicated and serious human problems such as poverty, religious problems, etc, by proposing the solution they arrive to convince others to act. However, as their solutions are based on alternative issues, they often face suspicion and unwillingness from others.

Question 8: How the concepts learned helped you in transforming your economic activity or work place?

Another perspective in solving problems and different approach to their understanding were the direct impulse for change. In case of three persons answering to this questionnaire, the training was the direct cause of the management, leading to the creation of new forms of activities such as community bank, community rice bank and others.

Question 9: What lessons did you learn from the application of knowledge gained from INEB training program?

The common answer to this question was the hope for positive change. Another, alternative understanding of the reality raised as the second one. Finally,

importance of spiritual wisdom as an important platform of precious knowledge was quoted.

Question 10: What suggestions can you make to improve the INEB training program and curriculum so that future trainee participants can benefit from this knowledge?

Two participants of this questionnaire advocated for more solid follow-up, underlying that even the best ideas need it. One participant suggested an amelioration of the communicative strategy of INEB in order to create the solid digital platform of communication.

4.3. Revisiting of the Conceptual Framework

My research conducted for the Master Thesis leads me to following findings:

1. By making a comparative research between neoliberalism and Buddhist economics, we realise that they operate in extreme opposites. As their bases and fields of activities have roots in radically different understanding of reality, namely materialist and mechanical via Darwinist and Newtonian way in case of neoliberalism versus spiritual and holistic way in case of Buddhist economics, they are incompatible. From this perspective, those who follow the mainstream way of economical thinking, dressed in mathematical dogmatism and vain conviction of its superiority above all available systems, will always undermine and ridicule any proposition that takes into consideration such an immeasurable qualities as happiness, compassion or non- violence. From another side, Buddhist Economics followers argue that the mainstream acts with misconceptions and misunderstanding due to lack of tools for mind's analytic structures; that is why, this autistic and animalistic economic patterns are possible.

2. By facing the neoliberal way of thinking, Buddhist economics constitute in my opinion a learning platform, able through the powerful wisdom of its message, efficiently construct the alternative for right understanding of the present reality. Buddhism understood as a science of the mind, has an extremely efficient and constructive tool of the mind's mechanisms, explaining why mind's constructs arise and, most importantly, what to do with them. This rescue patterns are the result of thousands of years of reflection, creating as such precious wisdom for entire humanity; as a system of incontestable efficiency, ethically and morally reliable, he can offer a solution to the problem crated by the mainstream economy. Any discussion about the effectiveness of this way to act is redundant when compare with a system based on what all mystic traditions describe as negative behaviours or sins, namely selfishness, greed, competition or insatiable growth, so cherished by neoliberalism. By bringing out the spiritual understanding of generosity, collaboration, compassion, non-violence, interconnectivity and interdependence, this Buddhist wisdom can influence the radical, economical change. By realising the madness and irrationality of the destruction done by the present economical system, the spiritual approach is definitely a system to be rediscovered and followed, as heaving ready-to-made solutions.
3. All INEB activities are based on Buddhist spiritual wisdom; as such, this NGO does not risk to fall into the abyss of questionable beliefs, creating morally and ethically weak reference frame, nor the solid truth, as it is a case of neoliberal construct. Advocating for "alternative" approach to face the reality, INEB does not compete with the officially accepted system, but follows its own path. Using spirituality as a tool, the main aim of this organisation is to equip people with reliable knowledge and awareness, helping them to face the complicated reality of the present world. By emphasising the meaning of spirituality as socially engaged duty, INEB

practitioners propose the real solutions to remedy problems of poverty, discrimination, debt, injustice, to name just a few. Strengthening individuals by inner development, the organisation makes the external change possible, as only internally resistant people can change the world.

4. Another lesson of this research is that spiritually based economical activity is feasible. Facing a difficult, starting position as “alternative” movement, the idea to have reference to spirituality does not facilitate their operational implementation. Without having access to the mainstream funding, those organizations have to struggle with financial issues. By being opposed to the official understanding of reality, they have to invest a lot of energy in a proper communicative strategy in order to convince others to their case. Believing in the rightness of their work, they believe in what they do, and this is their biggest strength.

My research leads me to discover an important weakness, namely the lack of strategy of communication. In case of INEB I have to recognize a very weak, sometime inexistent, digital presence of this organization. Living in the era of the digital revolution, the access to the information is vital. This communication between audience and the owner of the information must be professionally organized, facilitating learning process, making the discovery of the new wisdom, knowledge and expertise easily accessible. In the highly professionalized digital content of the Western civilization, the present outlook of digital outlook of INEB is likely to be perceived as lack of professionalism; in order to efficiently face this fact, INEB should, in my opinion, apply a total lifting of its communication tactic, not only to take it to the heights of professionalism, but above all to not to deprive humanity the access to this knowledge.

In the famous quotation, Arthur Schopenhauer states: "All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident". Recognizing an enormous difficulty and risk by facing such a powerful structure as neoliberal economy, Buddhist economics follow step by step their own patterns. By such initiatives as Gross National Happiness or Sufficiency Economy, another understanding of economical approach arises.

This recognition of spirituality among Westerners can be liberating, as the lack of the deep spiritual understanding of the reality is what they are really missing. This statement was beautifully described by literature Nobel Prize winner Herman Hesse, in "Remembrances of Asia", after his return from his Asian journey, in 1914:

"In the end the human impression is the strongest. It is the religious link of all these millions of souls. The whole East breathes religion in a way the West breathes reason and technology. Occidental inner life seems to be primitive and exposed to chance if you compare it to the spirituality of the Asian, which is protected, secure and trustful. This impression is outstanding because here you can see Eastern strength and Occidental misery and weakness and all doubts, troubles and hopes of our soul are confirmed. Everywhere we can see the supremacy of our technology and civilization and everywhere we can see that the religious people of the East enjoy something we are deeply lacking and therefore appreciate more than any superiority. It is quite clear that no import from the East can help us here and no returning to India or China and no escape to any religiousness organized by any church. But it is also quite obvious that salvation and continuance of our culture is only possible if we regain spiritual mastery in the art of living. I don't know whether religion is something that could be done away with, but I have never seen more clearly and relentlessly than among Asian people that religion or its substitute is something we are deeply lacking".

CHAPTER 5 - Conclusion

On November 24th 1803, the Royal Society of London had begun the scene of passionate and interesting speaking. Author, Thomas Young, an English polymath of the 19th century, presented the results of his research named “double-slit experiment”, in which he established the wave theory of light. Young’s experiment was regularly repeated and until today, it’s one of the most interesting experiments in the history of physics.

Young’s discovery was primordial inspiration and cornerstone for the development of Quantum Physics. The experiment proves that the observer, as the author of thinking, changes the trajectory of the object being observed, confirming that solidity of the matter as such does not exist; the entire universe, composed by subatomic particles, is created by expectations of the observer. Conclusions, such as those in double-slit experiment, compelled quantum physics to the denial of Newtonian way to understand our physical reality; scientists indeed confirmed that the substance of the universe is consciousness and has nothing to do with any form of solidity. As father of Quantum Physics, Max Planck said in a 1944 speech in Florence:

“As a man who has devoted his whole life to the most clear headed science, to the study of matter, I can tell you as a result of my research about atoms this much: there is no matter as such. All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force, which brings the particle of an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind. This mind is the matrix of all matter.” (Braden 2008:212)

Quantum revolution in physics is important for two reasons; on one hand, it was an irrefutable proof that our previous, dogmatic assumptions of the nature of reality,

existing for at least 300 years, were false or incomplete. On the other hand, those findings were indeed a confirmation of what all mystic traditions already know for centuries. Whether is the Buddhist concept of emptiness and our desperation to believe in things as real, solid and unchangeable or Vedantic “Tat Tvam Asi” (You are that), proving that ground and origin of all phenomena is not the Self but the Ultimate Reality – the statement about impermanence of all and everything and our incorrect understanding of it, are indeed thought since a long time.

For me, the eternal truth of impermanence leads to the conviction about inadequacy and irrelevance of many of human convictions, and an evidence that we have to come back to our human, mystical knowledge in order to avoid fake assumptions. Indifferently, whether arising from individual, inner ignorance or being part of the conscious misleading from outside, abolition of the conviction that matter has a characteristic of “solidity” could be the way to erased from human consciousness the erroneous behaviours based on egoism and greed, in which people accumulate material goods in order to achieve “solid stability”. Believing on selfishness and egoism, come the perspective of impermanence and irrelevance, and cut us from the idea of connectivity and interdependence, deeply harmful; they are indeed, very dangerous fake assumptions. The same reasoning can be applied to competition, so generously cultivated and cherished by the mainstream. The choice of collaboration over competition is spread both by all mystic traditions and the present science. In Buddhism, competitiveness is considered as hindrance, binding us in suffering while contemporary biology also proves that billions of cells composing our human body never compete to each other, they are in persistent state of collaboration in order to fulfil their task. Talking about fear or greed, our misleading, dogmatic lack of wisdom let us identify ourselves with it.

By starting to understand what universal knowledge and mystic patterns of reality means, our fake assumptions can lose its significance. We are no longer depending

on it. We understand that promoted by the present civilization, greed, fear, selfishness or competition is merely a proof of misunderstanding that we are living in illusory state, differently perceived by eternal philosophy, quantum physics or modern biology. In their vision, compassionate generosity, collaboration, and courage are elements of responsibility not only for ourselves, but also for everyone in our planet.

We should never forget that the questioning and eternal researches for the truth are our human obligations.

Basing its expertise on the spiritual knowledge, INEB took undoubtedly the right path. Choosing the wisdom of the Buddhism and appreciations for others traditions, their founders did not use cleverly composed, crafted amalgam of the propaganda machine sponsored by hundreds of millions of dollars in order to create fake assumptions, but instead, they build the message on worldwide experience of morally, ethically, and spiritually admitted eternal knowledge. Spreading the message of love, peace, compassion, interconnectivity, collaboration, generosity, care, joy, beauty, creativity, and self-awareness, INEB should not consider the questioning if their choice was right, but rather in terms of resistance and power of beliefs in what they do. By being enhanced by such personalities like Professor Sivaraksa whose courage, dedication, and commitment are indisputable, the network acts indeed in the categories of truth and honesty.

The context of the INEB activities has to be underlined. As neoliberal propaganda uses all of possible forces, those legal and illegal, to shape the consciousness of humans in the entire planet, defying the mainstream is an extremely difficult task. Particularly in the reality in which quoting the famous sentence of Professor Chomsky, the general population does not know what is happening and it does not even know that it does not know. From this perspective, each temptation of what is

admitted as a truth is per se difficult and could be dangerous; turbulent life of Professor Sivaraksa is its proof. In that context, the persistence is only possible if accompanied by courage, devotion, belief in the rightness of the case and truth. As INEB is still alive for more than 20 years, its commitment is more than obvious.

Facing the mass brainwashing and human laziness to take responsibility for their own development which is more than evident in the present world, INEB decided to follow their own logic, building step by step “small” initiatives to help populations in order to give the counter point to what is official. By constructing the consciousness of the multidimensional organisation and socially engaged movement fighting for the right cause, INEB participates to help human beings in different layers. All their actions have a spiritual dimension as a consequence of INEB philosophy; all of them respect others’ beliefs or gender dignity; all of them respect differences and multitude of cultural codes; finally, all of them underline the necessity of peace and compassion.

The human race needs urgently the new paradigm. As the complexity of problems that we are facing in the present world is overcoming our individual potential to change it, the only possibility to improve the situation is a personal transformation. The shift of human consciousness requires the undermining of dogmatically accepted truths, questioning and verifying them. By taking an entire responsibility for our development, we need to overcome fear and laziness to rely on other’s opinions. Spiritual heritage of multiple mystical traditions constitute an ineffable useful lifebuoy for those who are ready to change.

Creating a large game of “alternative” activities, INEB takes courage not to follow the mainstream way to think. Understanding importance of awareness based on spiritual wisdom, the network dares to explore unpopular opinions and action plans which are definitely not present in the mainstream way of thinking and acting: by pointing

out the dangers of the capitalist economy – INEB educates people how to face them; by underlying importance of inner experience in the educational path – INEB advocates for the development of the mind with connection with the soul; by putting different religions together – INEB overcomes perpetuation of hatred, human separateness, and discrimination. The present world needs this kind of courage, people, and organizations with ethically and morally clear mission.

Albert Einstein often said that it is impossible to solve problems with the same thinking we used when we created them. Multiple propositions of international organizations to solve today's problems are based on the same ideas that create them. Looking to the structure of the contemporary capitalism, we cannot avoid the impression that its biggest interest is to keep the status quo; it is extremely convenient for big corporations and governments depending from them to sustain the propaganda of greed, fear, justification of violence, and war which are keeping far away from the spiritual knowledge. Without touching the essence of the problem, we cannot solve it; without changing the structures of capitalism, without to find new approaches in order to access new solutions, the constructive shift is simply impossible.



Following the research done for the purpose of this thesis, we need to recognize the inefficiency of the neoliberal economy, its devastating results and danger for the survival of human kind. Nothing surprising, as any action based on highly questionable or even inexistent ethical and moral principles, must lead to negative consequences. In order to reverse this statement, the retour to our common, human wisdom of spiritual traditions can be the issue.

The present civilization needs desperately more INEB like engagement and humans which are not afraid to face the mainstream way of thinking. The present world needs less conformism and more wisdom about love, compassion, interconnectivity

and oneness of all humans, as confirmed by the Lord Buddha in The Four Immeasurable, the meditation on loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity:

“May all sentient beings have happiness and its causes,

May all sentient beings be free of suffering and its causes,

May all sentient beings never be separated from bliss without suffering,

May all sentient beings be in equanimity, free of bias, attachment and anger”
(Buddha)



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