

Call for Sessions - WEHC 2015 [S20083]

Proposed title of the session

Shibusawa Eiichi's gappon capitalism (ethical capitalism) as a model for developing countries in future global perspectives

Abstract

The global crisis of the world economy since the Lehman Shock in 2008 has led social scientists and historians to reconsider so-called Anglo-American capitalism's reliance on the market economy and democracy. Most people interpreted the problem as a fundamental crisis of capitalism which can only be overcome by a change of both the basic thinking about capitalism and its rules and institutions. From those point of view, Shibusawa Eiichi (1840-1931) and his economic philosophy and entrepreneurial activities seems to have many implications for creating a new form global capitalism in the 21st century. Shibusawa was generally referred to as "the father of modern Japanese capitalism and the introducer of the modern Western banking system to modern Japan".

Shibusawa did not use the term capitalism to describe his entrepreneurial economic and business activities. Instead, his thinking about the optimal system for running businesses was described as a gappon system. The Japanese word gappon refers to binding two or more books together to form one. Shibusawa's thinking about this system can be traced to his time in Europe (1867-1868) and closely parallels his study of the joint stock trading system from that time. According to speeches by Shibusawa, the gappon system can be defined as the process of advancing business by gathering human and financial resources that are optimal for attaining its mission and objectives, in concert with pursuit of the public good.

Therefore, the first objective of the panel is to assess Shibusawa Eiichi's conceptualization and practice of gappon as a model for a new form of global capitalism. Furthermore, we intend to advance in the analysis of the future of global capitalism from the following perspectives: 1) market system; 2) relationships between morality and business; 3) the role of financial system; 4) distribution of wealth; and 5) education system for cultivating entrepreneurs. The second purpose of this panel is to discuss whether Shibusawa Eiichi's gappon capitalism based on his concepts of harmony of morality and proper business activities could and will become a model for developing countries such as China, India, Brazil, Russia in the contemporary era and the future global society. As is well known, Japan successfully introduced Western political, economic and social systems, including modern technology during its own modernization process in the late 19th century. Japan also cultivated her own industries and human resources such that Japan could become one of world's most wealthy and stable countries in the late 20th centuries. At the same time, Japan experienced many failures and mistakes such as her invasion of East and South East Asian countries and the country's complete defeat in World War II; Japan also experienced environmental disruption due to rapid economic growth in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Nonetheless, Japan maintained many traditional characteristics of its society throughout the modernization process. In this panel, our secondary objective is to clarify the effects of Shibusawa's gappon capitalism on Japan's development; in addition, we will analyze the possible application of his gappon capitalism to other developing countries.

I. Corresponding Session Organiser

Prof. Geoffrey Jones (Harvard Business School [United States of America])

II. Co-Organiser(s)

1. Corresponding Organiser.
2. Prof. Takeo Kikkawa (Hitotsubashi University [Japan])
3. Prof. Janet Hunter (London School of Economics [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])
4. Prof. Myungsoo Kim (Keimyung University [Republic of Korea])

III. Expected Participant(s)

1. Zisu Liang (Central China Normal University [China])
2. Masakazu Shimada (Bunkyo Gakuin University [Japan])
3. Kazuhiro Tanaka (Hitotsubashi University [Japan])
4. Melissa Williams (University of Toronto [Canada])