

Expert Meeting

How Religion, Culture and Education Influence the Perception of People about Climate Change

19 February 2019 (09:00 to 13:00)

Asia Room (2nd. floor), Imin International Conference Center, East-West Center
University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

Organized by (in alphabetical order):

Department of International Studies, The University of Tokyo
Environmental Law Institute
Faculty of Sustainability Studies, Hosei University
Ocean Policy Research Institute

Background and Objectives

The concept and implication of climate change is widely known among college and university students in the Marshall Islands. According to surveys carried out in 2017 and 2018, more than 80% of the students regarded themselves to be knowledgeable about the cause of the climate change and its effects.

However, how their perception has been formulated is not well known. Mortreux & Barnett (2009)¹ suggests that religion plays a significant role in shaping people's responses to climate change in Tuvalu. In interviews, people consistently referred to the story of Noah as evidence that God would not allow further flooding (Mortreux & Barnett, 2009).

The collaborative research project "Aspirations of Students in the Marshall Islands to Emigrate", which was conducted in 2017 and 2018, proved that perception of climate change and its implications differs significantly between Marshallese staying home and those who emigrated to abroad (in this case, Springdale, Arkansas, USA). This observed gap was presumably due to the differences in education practiced and culture prevailing in home (Marshall Islands) and abroad.

This research project on "How Religion, Culture and Education Influence the Perception of People about Climate Change" aims at proving which element (among religion, culture and education) gives the most significant impact to a person in his/her formulating perception about climate change and its implications. Less significant and least significant elements should also be identified.

Within the framework of this research, a structured survey with questionnaire was conducted for students of USP (University of South Pacific) Marshall Island Campus and CMI (College of the Marshall Islands) in Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands.

The data obtained by the survey were analyzed both by conventional statistics as well as with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to find out which element (i.e. religion, culture and education) gives most significant impact to perception development about climate change and its implications. Less significant and least significant elements were also identified.

This expert meeting aims at reviewing the findings from the research and discuss how further research should be designed and implemented towards better understanding of "How religion, culture and education influence the perception of people about climate change".

¹ Mortreux, C., & Barnett, J. (2009). Climate change, migration and adaptation in Funafuti, Tuvalu. *Global Environmental Change*, 19(1), 105-112.

Provisional Agenda²

Tuesday, 19 February 2019, 09:00 to 13:00

- Introduction by Mikiyasu Nakayama (UTokyo)
- How religion, culture and education influence the perception of people about climate change: Findings from survey at CMI by Jennifer Seru (CMI) and Hermon Lajar (CMI)
- Culture of the Marshall Islands which may affect the perception of people about climate change by Irene Taafaki (USP Majuro) and Yolanda McKay (USP Majuro) and Mikiyasu Nakayama (UTokyo)
- Application of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) by Daisuke Sasaki (Tohoku Univ.)
- Climate Change as a reason for college or university students in RMI and FSM wish to emigrate to abroad and opinion of experts and Japanese people by Kanae Moriya (UTokyo) , Ryo Fujikura (Hosei Univ.) and Mikiyasu Nakatama (UTokyo)
- Discussion

² Titles for presentation are provisional and subject to change.

Provisional List of Participants (in alphabetical order)

Carl Bruch, ESQ., Director, International Programs, Environmental Law Institute, USA.

Mr. Scott Drinkall, Visiting Researcher, Environmental Law Institute, USA.

Mr. Hermon Lajar, Chair, Marshallese Studies Department, College of the Marshall Islands, RMI

Dr. Miko Maekawa, Senior Research Fellow, Ocean Policy Research Institute, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Japan

Dr. Shanna McClain, Visiting Policy Analyst, Environmental Law Institute, USA.

Ms. Yolanda McKay, Academic Program Coordinator, Marshall Islands Campus, University of South Pacific, RMI

Ms. Kanae Moriya, Graduate Student, Graduate School of Frontier Sciences, the University of Tokyo, Japan

Dr. Mikiyasu Nakayama, Professor, Graduate School of Frontier Sciences, the University of Tokyo, Japan

Dr. Daisuke Sasaki, Assistant Professor, International Research Institute of Disaster Science, Tohoku University, Japan

Ms. Jennifer Seru, Chair, Developmental Education, College of the Marshall Islands, RMI

Dr. Irene Taafaki, Campus Director, Marshall Islands Campus, University of South Pacific, RMI

Ms. Nagisa Yoshioka, Research Fellow, Ocean Policy Research Institute, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Japan