



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

Houghton Street
London WC2 2AE

Email: ccpn@lse.ac.uk
Web: www.lse.ac.uk/ccpn

China in Comparative
Perspective Network (CCPN)

Emergence of Homogeneous Social Class? : Commonalities and Differences of New Middle Class in Globalizing East Asia

Time: 14:00-16:00 26 May (Tuesday) 2009

Venue: S211 ([Press Ctrl + click to find the venue](#))

Speaker: Professor Shigeto Sonoda (University of Tokyo)

Chair: Dr Gonalo D. Santos (LSE)

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/LSEPublicLecturesAndEvents/events/2009/20090512t1510z001.htm>

Abstract: Rapid economic growth and social change have produced a new middle class in big metropolis in East Asia. Some scholars claim that this emerging new middle class will be a foundation for a future building of East Asian Community because of their similar life-styles and value orientations. Due to the lack of comparative research on middle class, however, these claims are made without empirical backgrounds. In this paper, the author explores some hypotheses on the characteristics of the new middle class, such as younger generation hypothesis or feminization hypothesis, by using the data of Asia Barometer 2006 which covers seven East Asian societies, namely, Japan, South Korea, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Singapore. Results of data analysis reveal that the new middle class is much better educated, more exposed to globalization, and more fluent speaker of English than working class in every part of East Asia. As to socio-political orientations, however, the new middle classes do not show any clear and distinctive characteristics in every society. They are apt to be more supportive of gender-equality policy and environmental protection and pro-democratic than the working classes, but there is no clear distinction between them in some societies like Singapore. Interestingly, cluster analysis tells us that there are two types of new middle classes in East Asia: one can be called “English-speaking type” and the other can be called “Confucian type”. The latter type is huge in volume, and it is much educated but less exposed to globalization probably due to its lacking in fluency of English. “Confucian type” middle class is secularized and particularistic than “English-speaking type” in nature. Finally, the author explores complex relations between globalization and the formation of new middle classes in East Asia.

Speaker’s Biography: Shigeto Sonoda is a renowned Professor of Sociology at the Institute of Oriental Culture and Graduate School of Interdisciplinary Information Studies, University of Tokyo. His expertise is in the areas of comparative sociology, contemporary China Studies, globalization of cultures in Asia, localization of Japanese companies in Asia. His most recent book - entitled “*Social Inequality in Contemporary China*” (Chuo Koron, 2008) - won the Special Prize of 20th Asia-Pacific Award.