

4. International Conference in Communication and Media Studies

Theme: If you wish peace, care for justice

Our global economy and governance today are marked by exponentially growing local and global inequalities where the growth of affluence simultaneously creates and depends, as a condition of its possibility, on environmental destruction, and human misery and poverty. The “global division of labor,” which enables the corporations to have the goods sold under their brand-name to be produced in the impoverished parts of the globe—precisely because labor and environment can be super-exploited in those places—furnish but one example. Global warming and climate change provides another flagrant example.

The global communication networks that have provided the infrastructure of this “global economy,” also have the unintended consequence of bringing this intertextual, interdependent relationship to our attention regardless of the distances involved. They enable us to see that, in Zygmunt Bauman’s words, “no well-being of one place is innocent of the misery of another.” Yet, these consequences continue to be treated, in many cases, as unrelated or as “economic externalities” in the calculation of the “bottom-line,” and do not affect the measure of affluence and success.

Turning a blind-eye to these consequences by the short-term beneficiaries of this relationship, however, does not make them feel safe regarding the repercussions of their actions. They feel insecure and vulnerable, and live under the real or imagined threat of the multitudes whose lives are adversely affected, seeking to safeguard themselves locally by erecting “walls of protection” to shut the outsiders, the foreigners, the aliens out, and conducting “wars against terrorism” against internal and external threats, which is a stark contradiction in terms and feeds the cycle of violence rather than peace. The problem is, these “outsiders” are internal to the interdependency relationship we are outlining here, and cannot be shut out. Hence, justice, in our day, needs to be global and planetary, calling for “responsibility and respect for justice concerning those who *are not there*,” in Jacques Derrida’s words. We are facing serious global problems and, even while acting locally, we need an international, planetary vision and connections and collaboration.