

Food Sovereignty and Human Security in Southeast Asia

On October 14 to 15, 2010, the University of the Philippines Third World Studies Center (TWSC), together with the University of Montreal's Transnational Dynamics and Collective Action Research Network (REDTAC) and the Southeast Asian Regional Initiatives for Community Empowerment (SEARICE), coorganized a workshop entitled "Southeast Asian Perspectives on Food Sovereignty." The activity, sponsored by the University of Montreal and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), was scheduled to usher in World Food Day on October 16, 2010. The workshop aimed to examine and debate food sovereignty using various perspectives and the experiences of social and farmers' movements on a range of issues. The two-day workshop at TWSC was very informative and led to a number of interesting debates. A second goal of the workshop was to gather papers for a special issue of *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*. Hence, this volume of *Kasarinlan*, a special themed issue on food sovereignty in Southeast Asia. Most of the refereed papers, research notes, perspective pieces, and the proceedings in this volume came from the participants of the workshop or were sourced from other scholars working on issues related to food sovereignty.

TWSC is pleased to be a co-organizer of the workshop as well as to produce this special volume because the topic, issues covered, and the nature of the workshop and the manuscripts herein fit into the mandate of the Center. Since its creation in 1977, TWSC has been known for progressive, multidisciplinary, and pioneering research, publications, public fora, and exchanges. As a university-based research center, TWSC has not only promoted progressive scholarship but also provided a space for bringing together scholars, social movements and civil society representatives, government representatives, and other

sectors representing different perspectives to discuss and debate important policy and social issues. The issue of food sovereignty in Southeast Asia is a very important topic with plenty of stakeholders. This publication gathers the different experiences and perspectives of these actors in one volume that can serve as an indispensable resource for researchers and interested sectors working on the different issues related to food sovereignty. On the part of TWSC, the theme of the volume relates to some of the Center's research themes, namely globalization and political economy, social movements and democratization, and human security.

The theme of globalization and political economy is touched upon in Tran Thi Thu Trang's "Food Security vs. Food Sovereignty: Choice of Concept, Policies, and Classes in Vietnam's Post-Reform Economy." As stated in her article's abstract, she argues that "the choice of food security framework [by the Vietnamese government] has served to justify the promotion of industrial agriculture and international trade." Tran shows how this conscious adoption of food policies that favor productivity over both broad access to and high quality of food "reflects the shifting position of the Vietnamese government away from the peasantry for the benefits of capital accumulation by other classes"—namely, the new bourgeoisie that arose during the *doi moi* (reform) process of the last twenty five years.

As its title suggests, François Fortier's "Viet Nam's Food Security: A Castle of Cards in the Winds of Climate Change" is closely tied to Tran's article. However, while Tran's piece focuses on how class interests influence Vietnam's food policies, Fortier's article examines whether or not industrial agriculture policies, with close attention given to those of Vietnam, can "sustain outputs and food security through the emerging crisis" of climate change. He warns adopters of industrial agriculture that the "the dominant response of the green economy, in Viet Nam as elsewhere, rests on unsubstantiated technological and institutional assumptions." He then argues that an alternative to the dominant food security paradigm exists, one that can ensure food security that can withstand the "winds" of climate change—agroecology informed by the principles of food sovereignty.

Social movements and food sovereignty—particularly the framework's advocacy of the right to grow culturally appropriate and ecologically safe crops on one's land—are touched upon by Denis Côté, with Laura Cliché, in their piece entitled "Indigenous Peoples' Resistance to Oil Palm Plantations in Borneo." The article asks: in the face of large-

scale clearing and conversion of forest areas in Borneo into biofuel plantations, why and how have indigenous rural communities living in these areas resisted such transformations? To answer this query, the author and his collaborator analyzed twenty five cases of resistance in both the Malaysian side and the Indonesian side of Borneo. The study's findings show that issues of land rights and land damage were the main motivators of resistance among the cases analyzed. Commonalities were found in all cases regarding the initial stage of negotiations with the transnationals behind the plantations, but divergences in forms of resistance were found to occur thereafter.

Oscar Gómez's "Introducing the 'Human' into Philippine Security Discourses: Convergence or Dialogue?" traces how human security was introduced into Philippine security discourses. Gómez identifies three discourses of security in the Philippines—the peace movement, the national security framework, and anti-terrorism legislation—and proceeds to describe how and when human security rhetoric has been injected into these discourses and what developments occurred after this infusion. Via Des Gasper's designation of human security as a "boundary object" situated in various spaces within and between discourses, Gómez describes "the boundaries between the intellectual communities represented by the three discourses," subsequently showing the ways that the concept of human security is or may be serving as mediator between those discursive demarcating lines, offering support for human security's value as a means of dialogue rather than convergence among various security discourses. While food security's place in the all-encompassing concept of human security is not shone the spotlight in Gómez's article, the juxtaposition of Gómez's piece with the rest of this issue allows for the contemplation of the theoretical and practical compatibility of food sovereignty and human security frameworks.

Dominique Caouette, Julien Vallée, and Lindsay Long complete this volume's feature articles with their contribution entitled "Canada's Aid Policy and Assistance to Rural Development and Land Policies to the Philippines since the 1980s." Their piece examines how well the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has been following through with its declared prioritization of food security in its role as donor agency in developing countries, with particular focus on Canada's official development assistance for land and rural development in the Philippines. In showing that CIDA programs have failed to significantly contribute to genuine agrarian reform in the Philippines, viewed by the authors as indispensable to ensuring

nationwide food security, the authors believe that CIDA has “talked the pro-poor talk but has failed to walk the redistribution walk.”

Finally, we wish to thank our partners in the workshop and in the publication of this *Kasarinlan* volume. Dr. Dominique Caouette of the University of Montreal and former Visiting Research Fellow of TWSC served as REDTAC coordinator, organizer of the workshop, and guest editor of this volume. He sourced funding for the workshop and solicited additional papers for this volume. He has also been a long-time friend and supporter of TWSC and the University of the Philippines (UP). He recently helped facilitate a Memorandum of Agreement for cooperation between UP and the University of Montreal. SEARICE, the other co-organizer of the workshop, has also been one of the groups that have a long-standing relationship with TWSC. SEARICE staff members have participated in TWSC’s workshops and have been involved as key informants and contacts in our previous research projects on social movements, the World Trade Organization and intellectual property rights, and globalization and local communities. ❁

For this issue, we would like to welcome two new associate editors of *Kasarinlan*, Ma. Mercedes G. Planta, Deputy Director of the Third World Studies Center (until June 2012), and Emerald O. Flaviano, University Research Associate of the Third World Studies Center.