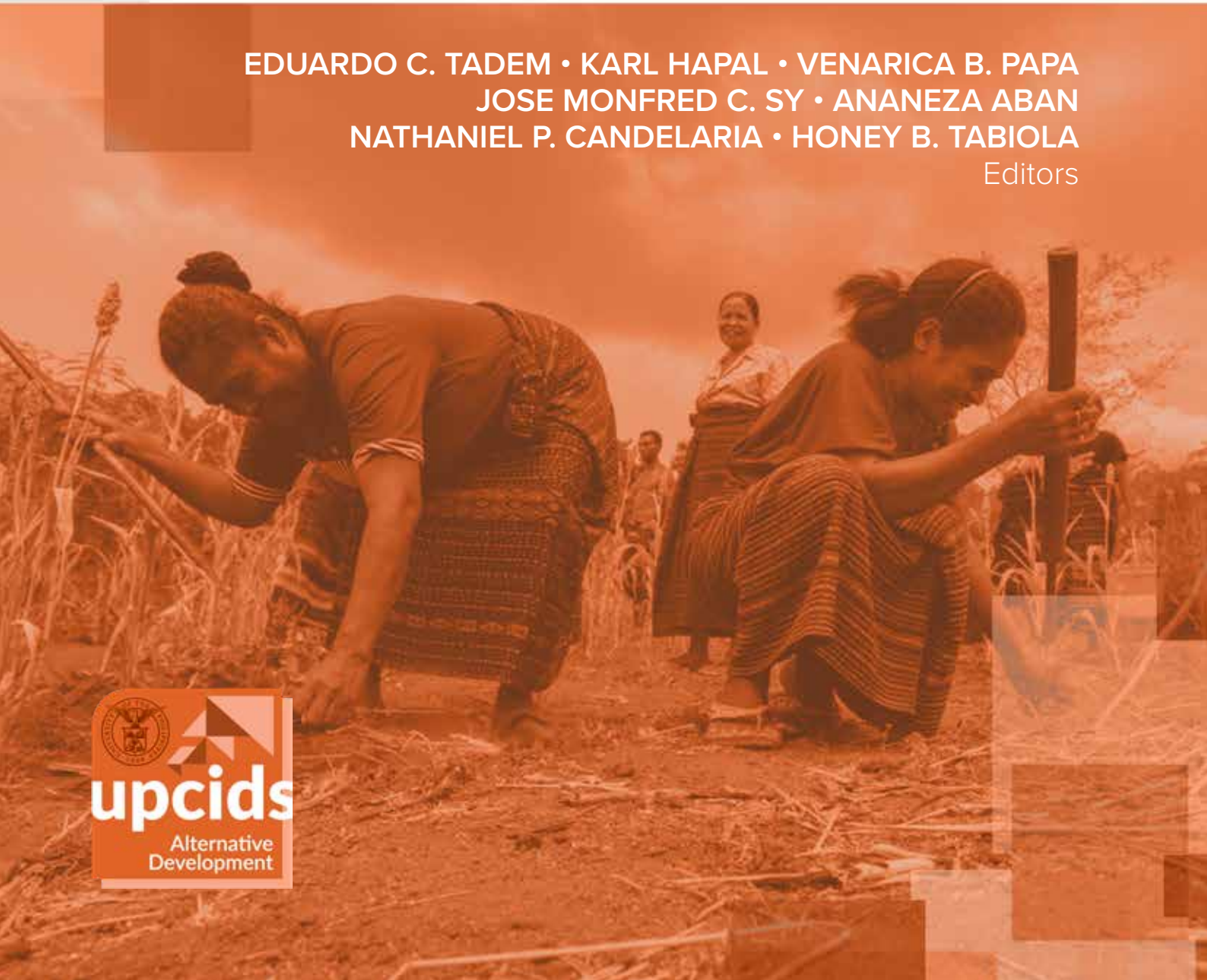
UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
PUBLIC POLICY MONOGRAPH SERIES • 2020-01

Solidarity through Cross-Border Regionalism

Alternative Practices across Southeast Asia

VOLUME 1

EDUARDO C. TADEM • KARL HAPAL • VENARICA B. PAPA
JOSE MONFRED C. SY • ANANEZA ABAN
NATHANIEL P. CANDELARIA • HONEY B. TABIOLA
Editors



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Alternative Development

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Cover image: Indonesian women, garbed in their traditional *Ikat* woven fabrics, plant sorghum in Nusa Tenggara Timur. This endeavor symbolizes the collective struggles of the different grassroots communities and organizations in the present volume.
(Photo courtesy of Maria Loretha)

Contents

Notes on the Editors

EDUARDO C. TADEM, Ph.D. is Convenor of the Program on Alternative Development, University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS AltDev). He was President of the Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) from 2014 to 2018, co-convenor of the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum (ACSC/APF) Philippine National Organizing Committee (2017), and a founding Governing Board Member of the Consortium on Southeast Asian Studies in Asia (SEASIA). He earned his Ph.D. in Southeast Asian Studies from the National University of Singapore, and a Master of Arts in Asian Studies and Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from the University of the Philippines Diliman. He retired as Professor of Asian Studies at the University of the Philippines Diliman in 2015 where he served as Editor-in-chief of *Asian Studies: Journal of Critical Perspectives on Asia*. He has published over 100 articles in books, academic journals, and periodicals.

He is an avid amateur singer, but only at karaoke sessions, and has been doing gym work two to three times a week for the past five years, the results of which still remain inconclusive.

KARL HAPAL is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Community Development of the College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD), University of the Philippines Diliman and concurrently the Co-convenor of the Program on Alternative Development, University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS AltDev). He is an advocate of people-centered development and human rights. He hopes that world peace would become a reality during his lifetime.

VENARICA B. PAPA is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Community Development of the College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD), University of the Philippines Diliman. As a Project Leader at the Program on Alternative Development (AltDev) of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS), she spearheads the Project on Alternative Practices: Indigenous Knowledge that seeks to document the alternative practices of Ayta Mag-Indi community in Porac, Pampanga. She is part of the Board of Directors of the Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau (WLB) and an advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs). Until today, she is still searching for answers to many questions.

JOSE MONFRED C. SY teaches with the Department of Filipino and Philippine Literature of the University of the Philippines Diliman. He obtained his bachelor's degree in Comparative Literature, summa cum laude, from the same university. His research appeared in the books *Literary Cultures across the World* (2018) and *Ecologies in Southeast Asian Literatures: Histories, Myths and Societies* (2019). sectoral literature, Marxism, political ecology, and digital humanities. He is also a children's book writer and a volunteer teacher for displaced Lumad *bakwit* with the Save Our Schools Network. If he weren't in the academe, he'd be beating eight (8) gym leaders to compete for the Pokémon League.

ANANEZA ABAN currently serves as a Senior Research Associate of UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies Program on Alternative Development (UP CIDS AltDev). Prior to that, she headed the Secretariat Team of the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum 2017, the broadest regional platform of civil society groups that engages issues on ASEAN. Her involvement on Southeast Asian issues began in 2002 during the Southeast Asia People's Festival in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

She finished her Master of Community Development degree from the University of the Philippines Diliman. She is also one of the younger generation of fellows of the Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA). She has lived and worked with Metro Manila urban poor communities as well as indigenous peoples in Mindanao, where she practiced participatory development planning, and action research.

As far as she remembers, her passion for peoples' theatre in her younger days, was the key to her unceasing commitment for activism and life-long learning.

NATHANIEL P. CANDELARIA is currently Senior Project Assistant at the Program on Alternative Development (AltDev), University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS). He is also a candidate for the Master of Arts in Political Science degree at the University of the Philippines Diliman, where he also earned his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science degree, cum laude, in 2015.

Prior to joining the AltDev Program, he was Research Assistant at the Institute for Strategic and Development Studies (ISDS Philippines), the Foundation for Integrative and Development Studies (FIDS), and was Senior Project Assistant at the Strategic Studies Program (SSP) of UP CIDS. His research interests are on non-traditional security, international relations, and religion and politics.

He likes to collect Gundam figures, and watches Japanese animated films. He also hopes to learn how to read and speak in Japanese.

HONEY B. TABIOLA is Junior Research Analyst of the Program on Alternative Development (AltDev) of the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) and Ph.D. student at the Department of Political Science, University of the Philippines Diliman. His fields of interest include political theory, comparative politics, and critical theory and theories of contemporary capitalism. In 2013, he was a graduate student research fellow at the Asia Research Institute (ARI) at the National University of Singapore (NUS). He loves to sing and still daydreams about becoming a pop star.

Organizational Profiles

ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURE FOUNDATION

The Alternative Agriculture Foundation is a farmers' group that seeks to "develop sustainable agriculture techniques based on the local ecology and expand their positive impacts by training and educating other members of their communities." It aims to promote the cultivation of organic agricultural products in order to make it an alternative and sustainable source of livelihood for farmers.

ASIAN MUSIC FOR PEOPLES' PEACE AND PROGRESS (aMP3)

aMP3 is a collective of progressive and socially-engaged musicians from Asia, helping build bridges that will unite communities of artists into one village–a village of people's music and art.

BIOTHAI

The organization was established first in 1995 as a network called "Thai Network on Community Rights and Diversity" and was turned into an organization called the "Biodiversity and Community Rights Action Thailand" in 1999. In 2006, the organization was officially registered as a foundation and changed its name to BioThai Foundation. To reflect the current change in terms of their ongoing efforts, it was changed to Biodiversity–Sustainable Agriculture–Food Sovereignty Action Thailand in 2014. The organization deals with contemporary issues on agriculture and food production. It also serves as the coordinator of the network on food sovereignty in Thailand.

CENTER FOR WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT (CWD)

CWD is a national women's organization under the umbrella of the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) that promptly responded to the call to help women during the time when there was no safe space yet for them to take shelter and get comprehensive assistance. The Peace House Shelter was established to respond to a significant gap in providing holistic support for trafficked women. At that time of its inception, there was no similar center or house in the country.

FOCUS ON THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Established in 1995, Focus on the Global South (Focus) is an activist think tank that has consistently presented critical perspectives on globalization, development, and governance, grounded in our commitment to social, ecological and gender justice, peace, peoples' democracy, and plurality. At the same time, Focus has used its resources and skills to support peoples' struggles for rights and justice, and to help create and build spaces where peoples' voices can be heard. Focus conducts both research and advocacy in close coordination with Focus is often active at the global level, its research is based in

Southeast and South Asia, with a focus on the four country offices in India, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Thailand (and the broader Mekong region, including Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam).

GREEN INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (GREENID)

GreenID is a Vietnamese non-profit organization (NPO). It works to promote sustainable development in Vietnam and the larger Mekong region and is now on its way to become a leading and credible civil society actor promoting sustainable energy sector development. GreenID recognizes that to promote sustainability, it must address constraints related to governance, organisational structures, and social and technology integration. GreenID has project-specific experience coupled with cutting edge global knowledge and theory to help integrate sustainable solutions into policy and local communities.

KDADALAK SULIMUTUK INSTITUTE (KSI)

In order to contribute to the process of transformation in favor of the majority of the Timorese people that are farmers after two decades of resistance against colonialism and neo-colonialism, a group of student solidarity members established Kdadalak Sulimutuk Institute in 2000. The name Kdadalak Sulimutuk came from a song, Kdadalak sulimutuk, suli we inan, composed by Francisco Borja da Costa, a poet and a political leader, who was brutally executed by Indonesian armed forces in the first day of the invasion, December 7, 1975. Literally, *"kdadalak Sulimutuk, suli we inan"* means "streams meet, flow great rivers." Ordinary oppressed people, come together they could make great changes. Kdadalak Sulimutuk Institute is built on the fundamental values of humanism, ecological protection, and people's democracy. The basic guiding principles include solidarity social, social and ecological justice, and constant learning.

NETWORK FOR TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION (NTSP)

Founded in 2009, NTSP is a regional network of sectoral and issue-based people's organizations, social movements, NGOs, and individuals (academics, parliamentarians, and advocates) pursuing transformative social protection as a tool towards realization of a life of dignity for all. Most of the members and networks are based in Southeast Asia.

PEMBERDAYAAN PEREMPUAN KEPALA KELUARGA (PEKKA; WOMEN-HEADED FAMILY EMPOWERMENT)

In 2001, PEKKA was established by Nani Zulminarni. PEKKA, as an organization for women-headed families, traced its roots from the project called *komnas perempuan* (widow's project), a project that documented the experiences of widows in Aceh. The organization aims to provide help and intervention on "women-headed households in Indonesia" because of the gender imbalances in Indonesia and the stigma of being *janda* felt by women under Indonesian society. Adhering to the lens of feminism, the organization seeks to empower women in an imbalanced society.

PERHIMPUNAN PETANI SORGUM UNTUK KEDAULATAN PANGAN (P2SKP)

P2SKP is a grassroots organization for women composed of sorghum farmers in Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia. Members of the organization are speedily reviving the cultivation of many local varieties of sorghum in the area.

SOUTHERN PEASANTS' FEDERATION OF THAILAND (SPFT)

Established in 2008, the Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (SPFT) has led landless peasants and workers in Surat Thani province, South of Thailand, to occupy land and establish new community settlements, and to demand equitable land distribution. However, their community members have been subjected to assassination, intimidation, and judicial harassment from opposing private companies and government authorities. In alliance with the People's Movement for a Just Society (P-Move), the SPFT continues to struggle for land rights and advocate redistributing land equitably among landless peasants in Thailand.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE FOUNDATION (SAF)

The Sustainable Agriculture Foundation (SAF) aims to promote sustainable agricultural practices in the context of urbanization. It works to bridge the gap between the traditional and modern agricultural practices, and helps peoples promote the initiative in order for them to have better nutrition.

UNIAUN AGRIKULTORES ERMERA (UNAER)

UNAER is an agricultural organization based in the Ermera municipality of Timor Leste. Founded in 2010, UNAER organizes farmers in the district for mobilizations and dialogues with government officials to defend their rights over the land as mestizo families continue their claims over huge coffee farms in the area.

WOMEN WEAVERS COOPERATIVE OF LEPO LORUN

The Cooperative began as early as 1998 but was officially founded in 2003 by Alfonsa Horeng at Nita Village, Sikka Regency in Flores Island, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), Indonesia. *Lepo Lorun*, which means "weaving house" in Sikka language, is led and composed of women weavers whose primary aim is to preserve Ikat weaving as a tradition. Lepo Lorun is also a homestay accommodation with a workshop and outdoor studio that shares the weavers' weaving culture, and traditional music and instruments. To date, the cooperative has now spread across villages in the Sikka Regency and has engaged over 1,200 women weavers and has been replicated in multiple towns across Flores.

Acknowledgment

The Program on Alternative Development (AltDev) of the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) expresses its utmost gratitude to its international partners, namely the 11.11.11–Coalition of the Flemish North-South Movement, the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD), and the Catholic Committee Against Hunger and for Development (CCFD)–Terre Solidaire, for their support in the realization of the "Alternative Practices in Southeast Asia" project and in the production of this monograph.

INTRODUCTION
Alternative Regionalism from Southeast Asian Solidarity

JOSE MONFRED SY, NATHANIEL CANDELARIA, and HONEY TABIOLA

For its 50th anniversary in 2017, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—comprised of founding member states Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, and later, Brunei, Vietnam, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), Myanmar, and Cambodia—touted that regional peace has led to stable economic growth that substantially curbed poverty across the region. Leaders of the member states even boasted their adoption of the *ASEAN 2025* document, which sets out the direction for a "politically cohesive, economically integrated, socially responsible and a truly rules-based, people-oriented, people-centred ASEAN" (Idris and Kamarrudin 2019, 2–3).

These statements are belied by the lived experiences of grassroots and marginalized communities across the region. ASEAN peoples' realities expose the flaws of the direction ASEAN has taken since its establishment. Practically adapting the mantra of "profits before people," ASEAN leaders bar the meaningful participation of marginalized and disenfranchised peoples in decision-making. Regional policies embrace the narrow vested interests of economic and political elites. This has further widened the gap between rich and poor within and among countries, with the unparalleled debasement of the environment.

Meanwhile, for 14 years (from 2005 to 2019), civil society organizations (CSOs) in Southeast Asia, under the umbrella of the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum (ACSC/APF) have been engaging official ASEAN bodies and annual summits to bring the peoples' issues to the fore. ACSC/APF notes that ASEAN's continued adherence to a neoliberal model of development prioritizes the interests of the monied and powerful elites over its peoples. Through rigorous consultation and intense discussions, the ACSC/APF has continuously called for a more democratic, inclusive, participatory, and ecologically sound ASEAN on behalf of the region's marginalized and excluded populations. Unfortunately, the ASEAN has been largely dismissive, in effect ignoring their people and the alternatives that they pursued to better their lives in a highly skewed regional order.

The locus of this volume entitled *Solidarity through Cross-Border Regionalism: Alternative Practices across Southeast Asia* is the often ignored and, thereby rendered invisible, realities of Southeast Asian peoples. It features a mixture of 12 stories, narratives, or studies of grassroots organizations that have strived for, despite of the constraints brought by the hegemony of neoliberal policies and the shrinking of political spaces due to the rise of authoritarianism, a vision of development that puts people and democratic values first. The presentation of these stories is underscored by the reality that, for many years and on their own, communities and grassroots organizations have engaged in alternative, heterodox,

and non-mainstream practices that encompass economic, political, and socio-cultural dimensions of development. In some instances, people-to-people relations and networks for various purposes have also been established, sometimes with the assistance of CSOs. These grassroots development paradigms, policies, practices, and projects challenge the dominant model of development instituted by the ASEAN which have largely failed in meaningfully addressing the issues of different sectors. The stories collated attempt to illuminate important questions such as: How do actors at the grassroots level address the inadequacies of the ASEAN's vision of development? How do they make sense of their difficult even violent situations? What types of strategies are they employing? And, what lessons can we learn from them?

Crafted through participatory research and action, the 12 cases presented in this volume provide a critical counterpoint to the claims of ASEAN which, as will be discussed, is at best out of touch with the material realities of civil society and grassroots communities. Through each story, narrative, or study, we reinforce our central claim in our earlier volume, *Towards a Peoples' Alternative Regionalism: Cases of Alternative Practices in the Philippines* (2020), that mainstream development policies have largely failed its own people. Yet, the collected articles in this volume are more than critical counterpoints to the dominant ASEAN model. These make up a proposal towards an "alternative development."[1] This vision is "alternative" because concrete practices of grassroots communities must be documented and privileged as they bear the seeds of possibility in figuring out various ways of organizing communities and societies that enable the collective thriving of people and all life on the planet. These practices and voices have been marginalized by, and often emerged out of the ruins of, mainstream developmentalism demonstrating "new configurations of development" (Hapal 2020, 1) which prefigure or even instantiate an alternative model to mainstream developmentalism. The concept of "development" figures in this discourse because, while it is a problematic shape-shifting concept invented out of the post-World War II global order (Escobar 1999), the term remains a powerful placeholder for grassroots communities' collective aspirations for making life better for all (Peet and Hartwick 2015). We maintain a critical posture on development which is to say that development is not a value-free enterprise and an innocent exercise of myth-making and world-building as affirmed by the collective experiences of communities (Hapal 2020).

The anthology also serves to illustrate stories of success and inspiration, albeit with some pressing and enduring challenges, to organizations, groups, and individual stance towards ASEAN development models are not unfounded and reinforce this claim through the lived experiences of the peoples of ASEAN. For the rest of this introduction, we try to locate both our empirical and political claims through a brief interrogation of ASEAN's history, highlighting critiques to its apparent (dis)engagement with its peoples. The criticisms we highlight draw upon a wider discourse on what development ought to be and for whom; a strand of theoretical and political discussion which we refer to as "alternative development." We dedicate a section on elaborating the various discussions on alternative development. We then outline our political and epistemological positions and explain our position in the discussions

[1] Alternative Development also builds on the project called "Integrating Alternative Development Efforts in Asia" (IADEA) which was a workshop jointly organized by Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA), PP21 Rural Urban Alternatives (PP21 RUA), and Japan Committee for Negros Campaign (JCNC) at Palakkad, Kerala, India on March 1–4, 1996. An encounter between South, Southeast, and Northeast Asian practitioners, the workshop aimed at an "actual constructive work" to integrate and link diverse forms of alternative practices across Asia after the realization that mere "critical analysis of and reaction to the dominant path of development are insufficient" (Raina 1997, 14). The constructive work had two objectives. The first was the task of *conceptual integration* which aimed at integrating the fragmented and disjointed alternative practices of various organizations to determine common features and characteristics. The second objective was on *emotional integration* among the practitioners which entailed the creation of "working and emotional alliances at the grassroots level" (Raina 1997, 14) to establish channels of communication and ultimately forge a network for alternative systems. IADEA was not just a moment; it morphed into a movement whose continuing task has been to challenge the dominant model of development by imagining development and concretely building communities otherwise.

on alternative development. Finally, this chapter shall end with brief descriptions of the cases, narratives, and studies collected in this anthology.

ASEAN and Civil Society Engagement: A Cursory History

Since its inception, the ASEAN has kept a veneer of people-centeredness despite its exclusion of its peoples in its affairs. This is notwithstanding attempts, from various fronts, for ASEAN to promote a genuine people-centered agenda. While ASEAN member-states recognize the need to empower ASEAN peoples, this idea remains elusive. ASEAN's participation to CSO-organized events has been selective, and citizen's participation to ASEAN-sanctioned events are very limited (Gerad 2014). In return, ASEAN civil society has recognized that the space to engage ASEAN states remains tokenistic.

ASEAN's lip-service on its "people-centered" agenda is apparent in some of its proclamations and programs. For example in 2003, the Bali Concord II of the ASEAN (2003) reaffirmed the commitment of the regional organization "to uphold cultural diversity and social harmony." With this in mind, the Bali Concord II signaled the adoption of the idea of an ASEAN Community under three pillars: political-security, economic, and socio-cultural. Moreover, the same declaration mentioned that under the ASEAN Socio-cultural Community, the region "shall seek the active involvement for all sectors of society, in particular women, youth, and local communities." As an effect, the Bali Concord II made "people-centered ASEAN" as a buzzword (Howe and Park 2017). Corollary to the Bali Concord II, the Vientiane Action Program for 2004–2010 sought to bring "broader integration of the ten member countries into one cohesive ASEAN community, and the second, the identification of new strategies for narrowing the development gap to quicken the pace of integration." In 2007, the ASEAN charter was signed, which recognized the need "to promote a people-oriented ASEAN in which all sectors of society are encouraged to participate in, and benefit from, the process of ASEAN integration and community building." And in 2015, the ASEAN adopted the ASEAN Community Vision 2025. ASEAN's vision did not delineate or even recognize the participation of civil society organizations, who have been engaging the regional organization on important issues affecting its people. Despite these attempts on the part of the ASEAN to integrate civil society in its governance, issues remain. For instance, structures were created that prevent CSOs to contest ASEAN policy by controlling participants from the events permitted by the regional organization (Gerard 2014).

Suffice to say, despite ASEAN's people-centered proclamations, its ways of doing have been rather exclusionary for the longest time. Meanwhile, civil society organizations have consistently and continually attempted to get the attention of and engage the ASEAN leadership and its constituent mechanisms. Gerard (2015) notes that since 1997, there are attempts within the regional bloc to increase participation among civil society organizations. This led eventually to the foundation of the ASEAN People's Assembly (APA). In 2000, The ASEAN People's Assembly (APA) was established, and was organized by the ASEAN-Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS) (Gerard 2013).[2] Gerard (2013, 416) pointed out that the ASEAN-ISIS played a role of bridging the gap between diplomacy tracks 1 and 3.[3]

However, this expectation of the APA was seen by civil society organizations differently. As mentioned by Gerard (2013, 416),

[2] The ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies is a group of think tanks from ASEAN member-states recognized in Annex 2 of the ASEAN Charter as an entity associated with ASEAN.

[3] Track 1 diplomacy generally refers to governments; track 2 diplomacy generally refers to academic think tanks; and track 3 diplomacy generally refers to civil society.

> ASEAN-ISIS' regulation of CSO participation curbed CSOs' enthusiasm for the event, seen in their questioning ASEAN-ISIS on its mandate to represent Southeast Asian CSOs (APA 2007, p. 29). CSO concerns regarding the limitations of the APA also reflected the close relationship between the branches of ASEAN-ISIS and their governments.

Due to this nature of the APA, this led to the establishment of the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ ASEAN People's Forum in 2005. Gerard (2014) pointed out that in this manner, CSOs have developed 'created spaces' (borrowing from Jayasuriya and Rodan 2007). He added that these spaces allow CSOs to pursue activities that "bypass regional and state actors." In this regard, one stark difference between the ACSC/APF and APA is that

> the structure of participation for CSOs in the ACSC is markedly different to the APA. The ACSC is highly inclusive with minimal restrictions over the types of participants that can attend. Attendance is open to any individual that pays the registration fee, and if they are not part of a CSO that is operating in Southeast Asia they can attend as an observer. Participation in the management and organisation of the ACSC is open to all CSOs that are based in the host country. (Gerard 2013, 421)

Even if the ASEAN-ISIS took charge of the APA, it eventually died down in 2009 as ASEAN governments did not support this particular initiative (Gerard 2013), thus limiting ASEAN's engagement with CSOs officially. This development made the ACSC/APF as the sole representative of civil society engaging with ASEAN states. Despite civil society's enthusiasm in engaging ASEAN governments on issues affecting ASEAN peoples, the continuing reluctance of ASEAN governments made the idea of a "people-centered ASEAN" problematic, if not null (Rother 2014). Moreover, Gerard (2014) pointed out that CSO engagement with the ASEAN did not yield results that CSOs wanted.

Due to the tone-deafness of the ASEAN on the issues raised by civil society, the ACSC/APF, there are some realizations from CSOs on the direction of the forum. For instance, it was reported that ASEAN governments do not care about CSOs. In the statement of the ACSC in 2016, it mentioned that

> ASEAN civil society remain extremely concerned about ASEAN's prevailing silence and lack of attention and response to the observations and recommendations raised in all previous ACSC/APF Statements, particularly on issues related to development justice; democratic processes, good governance, human rights and fundamental freedoms; peace and security; and discrimination and inequality. This continues to connote disregard of the need to engage substantively with civil society in ASEAN and is cemented in the lack of open and safe space that promotes meaningful and substantive participation, inclusion and representation of all peoples of ASEAN, including indigenous peoples, women and children, amongst others, in the various processes of ASEAN structures and mechanisms. (ACSC/APF 2016, 4, quoted in Tadem et al. 2020, 6–7)

Moreover, ASEAN is seen to be focused more on promoting neoliberal economic policies. In the 2015 statement of ACSC,

> Our engagement with the ASEAN process is…anchored on a critique and rejection of deregulation, privatisation, government and corporate-led trade and investment policies that breed greater inequalities, accelerate marginalization and exploitation, and inhibit peace, democracy, development, and social progress in the region. (ACSC/APF 2015, 1, quoted in Tadem et al. 2020, 6)

Because of these realizations from CSOs participating regularly in the ACSC/APF,

> The case for a radical transformation of ASEAN is irrefutable. Participants to the ACSC/APF 2017 firmly believe that such transformation will require taking decisive steps to ensure equitable distribution and sustainable use of natural resources, realize the full gamut of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights for all peoples, and to reestablish itself along the principles of solidarity, cooperation, complementarity, and friendship among nations. To this end, the ACSC/APF shall develop and adopt a new vision for engagement by civil society with ASEAN based on greater people to people interactions that will establish, expand and strengthen a new peoples' regional integration process based on the alternative practices of peoples, networks, and organizations across the region's societies. (ACSC/APF 2017, 2, quoted in Tadem et al. 2020, 15)

In the recently concluded ACSC/APF in Thailand, the 2019 statement recognized the need for the whole organization to undertake a process for an alternative peoples' regional integration based on the alternative practices of communities, sectors, and networks. Accordingly, ACSC/APF will adopt the appropriate resolution related to the proposed process (ACSC/APF 2019, quoted in Tadem et al. 2020, 15).

Civil society's engagement with ASEAN has been mixed at best. Despite attempts on ASEAN to open up to CSOs, ASEAN's participation remained tokenistic. At the same time, limited avenues for CSO participation in these spaces did not successfully influence ASEAN to take its "people-centered and people-oriented" goals seriously. Due to the nature of ASEAN-CSO relations, Gerard (2014) suggested that given the flexibility of CSO spaces, it can change its approach on how to deal with ASEAN as an example. Some sectors of the ACSC/APF are pushed to rethink its engagement with ASEAN process, based on people-to-people interactions "to overcome the frustration and vexation felt by CSOs at the lack of response and action by ASEAN governments towards ACSC/APF concerns" (Tadem 2017).

The Global Conversation on Alternatives

Utopian thought and radical political projects have always captured the imagination of social movement activists and engaged intellectuals. They are products of the sufferings, yearnings, and wishes of communities struggling to transform and break free from the grip and trauma of living in capitalist societies. Our project zeroes in on Southeast Asia's contribution to the global conversation about reimagining and building an alternative world. Thinkers and scholar-activists around the world have contemplated on and forwarded the alternative against the ongoing system.

Serrano and Xhafa (2018) define *alternatives* as ongoing, non-deterministic processes of popular struggle that break away with the capitalist logic, be it at the macro-, meso-, or micro-level, and serve as spaces for the development of critical consciousness and of transformative capacities of participants in pursuit of the full development of human potential. Their collection gathers ten case studies in six countries that pursue projects beyond the social, economic, and political structures of domination. These cases include worker-run factories in Brazil and Colombia, the promotion of solidarity economy in Brazil, community-based food production in Canada, social protection programs for informal workers in the Philippines, struggles for housing in Brazil, women-led struggles against big oil multinationals in Nigeria, and alternative organizing practices against poverty in Canada.

In *Alternatives in a World of Crisis* (2018), Lang, Konig, and Regelmann amply documented alternative practices exhibited by various communities in various continents, all animated by common

themes such as decolonization, anti-capitalism, plurality, anti-racism, weakening of patriarchy, and advancing ecological sustainability. In Africa, a community in Nigeria pioneered a resistance movement against oil extractivism of transnational corporations while, in Asia, a village in Mendha, India, has its forest rights legally recognized through a prolonged tribal resistance inspiring a larger regional movement. In Latin America, ancestral organizational forms of indigenous groups have been recognized in gradually overcoming patriarchy through active women participation in decision-making. In Europe, "real" direct democracy took a concrete shape in the 15M movement in Spain while "solidarity from below" through the establishment of the City Plaza and SSMC in Greece is exhibited in response to austerity measures and xenophobia.

In *Envisioning Real Utopias* (2010), Erik Olin Wright uses the tools of what he calls "emancipatory social science" to identify unjust social institutions and social structures, to theorize coherent and credible alternatives to these unjust social arrangements, and to elaborate theories of transformation which would facilitate making these ideal alternatives achievable. Wright examines social innovations, namely the participatory city budgeting system in Porto Alegre, Brazil, Mondragon cooperatives in Spain, the Universal Basic Income, and Wikipedia to start imagining foundational organizing principles of alternatives to existing capitalist institutions.

Central to many of these radical projects is the powerful role of language and naming practices for world-making. Firstly, this can take the form of contesting familiar terms and understandings already saturated by capitalist sensibility in order to reclaim their emancipatory potentials or dimensions. For example, believing that "there is more than one economy," Goodwin (2018) argues in an article of that title that there are *three human economies* with different characteristics, namely the core economy (taking place in households and communities which responds to the needs of the members through volunteerism and barter), the public purpose economy (taking place in large scale institutions which provide public goods through taxes and fees), and the private business economy (assuming a perfectly competitive market which generates profit and, in some cases, the enhancement of social well-being of others using the currency of money). For Goodwin, the third type of economy has been dominating the first two in pursuit of short-term profits resulting in great harm to society and to the natural environment, thus calling for the need to equalize the three. In a similar effort, Sekera (2018) offers *new public economics* as an alternative concept to market-centered economics, one which does not focus on the defense of the market and of the profit but sees the government as a producer of goods and services to meet collective needs.

Secondly, some of these projects have also introduced entirely new vocabulary to inaugurate new horizons of possibility for world-building. For example, D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis offered *degrowth* as a resource towards bringing about a "green, caring and communal economy" (D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2015, 6). As a term first used in 1972, degrowth has evolved and come to signify the abolishment of the tyranny of economic growth as a social objective and an orientation towards a desirable society which will use few natural resources, organized by "'sharing', 'simplicity', 'conviviality', 'care', and the 'commons'" (ibid., 5). In the field of ecological economics, degrowth is defined as "an equitable downscaling of production and consumption that will reduce societies' throughput of energy and raw materials" (Schneider et al. 2010, quoted in D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2015, 5). Degrowth will not only lead to the reduction of the demand for industrial goods in the Global North, it will also liberate the Global South to pursue "alternative cosmovisions" and political projects that have long animated various conceptions of the good life such as Buen Vivir in Latin America, Ubuntu in South Africa, or Gandhian Economy of Permanence in India, just to name a few (D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2015, 7).

More recently, Demaria and Kothari (2017) previewed their then upcoming work called *The Post-Development Dictionary* which presents not only critical essays on a number of false solutions to global poverty, social decay, and environmental degradation but also features "a rich variety of worldviews and

practices relating to the collective search for an ecologically wise and socially just world" (p. 8) such as eco-feminism, eco-socialism, *kyosei, minobimaatisiiwin,* and *Nayakrishi*, among others, making possible "a world where many worlds fit"—a pluriverse (Escobar, as cited Demaria and Kothari 2017, 9). For the editors of that work, the multiplicity of worldviews, notions, and vocabulary being featured in the dictionary are either based on ancient philosophies or recently modified alternative ways of living in the modern world.

Post-development, degrowth, real utopias—these are only some of the concepts that stem from and bloom forth from the desire to replace the ongoing system. Alternatives, as impressed by these theoretical proposals, dialectically evolve and take on more vivid and concrete forms as social movements surge on and champion the peoples' vision of a better life.

Initiatives towards the Idea of an Alternative Regionalism

Concepts of post-development, degrowth, and real utopias, among others, inform our growing and evolving understanding of alternative development in the context of the ASEAN region. Here, development, growth, and potential utopias must emerge from the peoples. This has led us to believe that the establishment, strengthening, and maintenance of ASEAN peoples' association is based on a common heritage, experience, and aspirations, and not on mere engagement with states and state-led regional bodies. Based on this, we envisioned an alternative model of regional integration that we call "Peoples' Alternative Regional Integration." It shall be a new mode of peoples' regional integration based on alternative economic, political, and socio-cultural practices carried out by Southeast Asian civil society, social movements, peoples' organization, and grassroots communities which mount a challenge to the top-down ASEAN model of integration and development. The new Southeast Asian peoples' regional body will be a decentralized regional network based on people-to-people interactions rather than state-to-state or purely market-oriented transactions.

We understand that realizing this alternative model of regional integration is a difficult endeavor. Nonetheless, we believe that the foundations for this vision are already present. We believe that there are four key steps that must be taken in order to achieve a degree of criticality, and thus catalyze the establishment of an alternative model of regional integration.

Firstly, there is a palpable gap in forging and sustaining networks among stakeholders. There is a need to facilitate regional solidarity by linking largely disparate and disconnected practitioners and enabling them to exchange information, knowledge, and expertise, making collaboration and scaling up more possible. Aiming at organizational corporeality, the strengthening of the emergent regional network and structure will ensure that the vision of an alternative peoples' regionalism will be fully achieved in mobilizing people, ideas, and resources. Second, there are also gaps in terms of knowledge generation and its distribution. Very few alternative practices have been documented, let alone disseminated to other practitioners. Due to this gap, there is a need to document and monitor alternative practices. This may provide an invaluable source of knowledge and information which, in turn, may provide a basis for realizations that alternative practices are not necessarily an aberration, but rather collectively pursued by peoples that are otherwise relatively disjointed.

Thirdly, alternative practices remain at the fringes of popular imagination and practice. There is a need to mainstream alternative practices through regional and national level information and advocacy campaigns. Mainstreaming these alternative practices has taken the form of regional conferences and people-to-people exchanges and shall be expanded to the use of alternative and social media and digital platforms. Finally, there are also gaps in terms of concept development and theory building. While stories, narratives, and experiences are important, it must serve as the foundation for reflexive theory-building in order to formulate novel development theories that are genuinely attuned to the ASEAN

peoples' hopes and aspirations. Attempts at theory building to make sense of all these practices might be too messy and inchoate initially. But with each case study and new analysis being added to the growing database, we continue to embrace indeterminacy, relying only on the conviction that these practices tend to gravitate to a common set of governing principles and values: "solidarity, collectivism, social equality, cooperation, mutual benefit, and the commons" (Tadem et al. 2020, 45–46) which may serve as constitutive elements of an evolving alternative development model.

Given how constricted and constricting the path of mainstream developmentalism is, our platform seeks to expand the scope of possibilities for re-imagining development. This means aiming at painting a large canvas of cases to help enrich our vision. We draw on the local and the regional, on nature and culture, on the traditional and the modern. While we have cases on communities which for some are enclave because they are often situated at the margins of society experiencing organized abandonment by the state (e.g., sorghum farmers of Perhimpunan Petani Sorgum Untuk Kedaulatan Pangan NTT, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia), we also have cases which are situated inside the belly of the beast (e.g., landless farmers of Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (SPFT) countering state-centric land management). While we have cases that draw on the capacious cosmovisions and knowledge systems of indigenous and cultural communities (e.g., customary practice of *tara bandu* by Uniaun Agrikultores Munisipiu Ermera (UNAER), Ermera District, Timor Leste), we also have cases that champion science and technology innovation (e.g. local energy planning in Vietnam). What matters is not the diversity in location or in the scientific and cultural lexicon used to name these practices but the similar principles and values that hold them together.

Since 2017, we have laid a stake and moved towards the realization of the vision of a Peoples' Alternative Regional Integration. Included in our initiatives is the deliberate attempt to gain support and allies to adopt and champion the vision. In the future, we hope that a loose network of organizations, groups, and individuals would coalesce into national and regional formations that we call National Organizing Committees (NOCs) and a Regional Coordinating Committee (RCC). NOCs shall take charge of the decentralized functions of the regional network while the RCC brings together all of the activities and tasks of NOCs and member organizations. Through regular and consultative meetings, we hope to establish parallel mechanisms to engage and represent ASEAN peoples. This is not to discount the importance of existing regional civil society networks such as ACSC/APF, whose engagement with ASEAN can serve as a vehicle for gaining certain concessions, for pushing for campaigns to shape policy formulations, and for maintaining contact with reform-minded government personnel. However, the conventional forms of engaging ASEAN should no longer be its sole *raison d'être*.

In a way, the project of Peoples' Alternative Regional Integration is a way to revitalize and reclaim the historically pivotal role of grassroots communities and peoples' organizations in facilitating social change by welding the member organizations together into a regional structure that further amplifies the voices and maximizes spaces of resistance and transformation. We have been focused on addressing the four key steps outlined above, together with our growing number of partners. We outline our initiatives and preliminary outcomes in the next section.

About the Program on Alternative Development (AltDev)

This volume is the product of the Program on Alternative Development (AltDev)'s efforts in forwarding alternative development. Established in 2017, AltDev is one of twelve (12) programs under the Center for Integrative and Development Studies (CIDS), the main policy research unit of the University of the Philippines (UP). The AltDev's main goal is to document paradigms, policies, grassroots practices, and projects that pose a critical challenge to mainstream or dominant models of development. Its scope

expands to various actors within the Southeast Asian region who are undertaking various types of alternative practices. The Program envisions that through its documentation efforts, it can contribute to the linking of peoples and communities in the Philippines and in the rest of the Southeast Asia to form the building blocks of a peoples' alternative regional integration—a form of integration that puts people first, rather than profits, politicking, or vested interests. Since its establishment, the AltDev has pursued its aims along three contiguous albeit distinct thrusts: documentation of alternative practices; building linkages, partnerships and solidarity; and strengthening exchanges between grassroots organizations.

In the field of documentation, the AltDev has conducted documentation work in the Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Timor-Leste, Thailand, and the Thai-Burma border. A total of fifty-six (56) case studies featuring various alternative practices have been produced. The AltDev's documentation work served as the backbone for the Program's subsequent activities. The participants in the AltDev's documentation work also served as the delegates for regional conferences, as well as for people-to-people exchanges.

Building linkages, partnerships, and solidarity was initially pursued through AltDev's documentation work. This was then further reinforced through the conduct of the annual Regional Conference on Alternative Practices in Southeast Asia. Now in its second installment, a total of 107 participants from various parts of the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam, and the Thai-Burma border participated in the conference. The first regional conference had a similar representation of Southeast Asian peoples, with 111 participants from Southeast Asian nations. The goal of the conference is for grassroots organizations to showcase their alternative practices and draw parallelisms from the models, issues, successes, and challenges of other organizations. By sharing their experiences and learning from others, AltDev intends to reinforce the solidarity between different grassroots organizations who, in many ways, share similar issues and challenges. Through the conference, three major thrusts were identified/reinforced: the continued need for surfacing alternative practices through documentation; the need for exchanges beyond a conference venue, a real-life and practice-based exchange; and the need to strengthen the network using digital communication technologies.

Finally, drawing from an action plan developed in the 1st Regional Conference on Alternative Practices in Southeast Asia, the people-to-people (P2P) exchange between select participants from Laos, Thailand, Philippines, Timor Leste, and Indonesia was pursued. The P2P serves as an out-of-conference type of platform where grassroots organizations may learn based on real-life and practice-based experiences. For 2019, the exchange was hosted by the Konfederasi Pergerakan Rakyat Indonesia (KPRI; Confederation of Indonesian Peoples' Movement) and its peasant union counterpart, Serikat Petani Pasundan (SPP; Pasundan Peasant Union) in Jakarta and West Java, Indonesia. During the P2P, KPRI and SPP shared and demonstrated various forms of resistance against capitalist and state incursion into rural land and union busting. These forms of resistance were complemented by an integrative production system, tying local produce into the mainstream market—a model which they call solidarity economy.

The Present Volume

The first volume of *Solidarity through Cross-Border Regionalism: Alternative Practices across Southeast Asia* showcases 12 case studies that cut across various themes and contribute to an alternative vision of Southeast Asia. These experiences and practices are clustered into four strands. The first is "Empowering towards Social Justice," which involves practices that address social injustice by equipping and strengthening different marginalized sectors.

The first chapter, "Vietnam's Peace House Shelter as a Safe Space for Women to Reclaim Their Rights," highlights the efforts of the Peace House Shelter in providing holistic support for trafficked women and women victim-survivors of domestic violence. The Shelter was established by the Center for Women and Development, a national women's organization under the umbrella alliance Vietnam Women's Union (CWD), to respond to the calls of Vietnamese women for a safe space that can dispense comprehensive assistance. Under the leadership of women and the women's movement in Vietnam, the Shelter has asserted its space in the battle against human trafficking and domestic violence.

The second chapter in the strand is "Advancing Transformative Social Protection: Towards Social, Economic and Political Transformation of People and Society," which details the vision, mission, and objectives of the Network for Transformative Social Protection. The Network regards social protection as a transformative tool. It is universal for each citizen, including migrants and refugees; and comprehensive or fulfills every human's indivisible rights altogether and not just provided for piece by piece. It covers the rights to: work (decent work, living wage, and sustainable livelihood), food, essential services (guaranteed healthcare, housing, education, water, and electricity), and social security (living pension for older people and people with disability, adequate income support for children, the unemployed and calamity victims).

The third chapter, "Women Household Heads in Indonesia and their Role in Addressing Gender Inequality," also attempts to champion the rights of marginalized sectors, particularly that of Indonesian women who continue to be vulnerable despite laws and policies purportedly protecting them. The Pemberdayaan Perempuan Kepala Keluarga (PEKKA), as an organization, adheres to feminist thoughts on how the organization does things. For PEKKA, feminism helps in empowering women in an imbalanced society. These three cases in this cluster lob a critique of power imbalance in Southeast Asia, and in pointing out such gaps, they champion practices where power can be struggled and reverted back to the people.

The second cluster of cases in this monograph is entitled "Carving Spaces for Alternative Learning." These experiences and practices demonstrate how basic sectors can foster sites where alternative knowledges and traditional but sustainable and pro-people cultures can be cultivated despite threats of intellectual and cultural hegemonization by state entities. The fourth chapter in this volume, written by Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA) fellow Andrew Aeria, shows the possibility of inserting progressive pedagogical spaces in mainstreamized education. "The Rural Internship Training Program in Sarawak, Malaysia" discusses how the RITP asserts for a dynamic, socially conscious environment for learning, one that is anchored on social realities.

The next two cases in this cluster demonstrate the possibility of cultivating and conserving cultural practices through continued practice. Chapter 5 in this volume, entitled "Building a Village: the aMP3's Music for Change," discusses how the Asian Music for Peoples' Peace and Progress builds bridges and unites communities through music. A novel proposal in this case is a rights-based approach to the crafting of music, which harks back to decades-old traditions of progressive art that radical social movements utilized to bolster their ranks and critique the dominant forces of oppression.

The volume's sixth chapter turns to a women's group in Indonesia. "Women's Empowerment through Weaving: The Case of the Women Weavers Cooperative of Lepo Lorun" gives a peek to the activities of a weavers' cooperative. The term *lepo lorun*, which means "weaving house" in Sikka language, is also a name of a homestay accommodation and workshop/outdoor studio that shares the weavers' weaving culture with guests. Here, the women master weavers demonstrate by hand the tedious work starting from the yarn spinning process out of natural cotton fiber, the dyeing of threads, preparation of the warp and frame, until the backstrap weaving phase. This alternative practice not only preserves the craft but also empowers women weavers to face complexly gendered economic challenges as a collective.

The third cluster in this volume prides over three cases that champion the successes of grassroots communities in agriculture. "Agrarian Practices from the Grassroots" begins with the chapter "Agroecology Trends and Initiatives on Seed Saving/Banking in the Southeast Asia Region: The La Via Campesina Experience." The seventh chapter critiques how corporations across Asia have aggravated the economic and political marginalization of peasants, fishers, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, and other people working in rural areas against the backdrop of neoliberal globalization. In this context, rural communities remain mired in poverty and vulnerable to a myriad of threats, from displacement due to land grabbing, armed conflict, and climate change, to indebtedness, loss of livelihoods, and hunger. With growing frustrations against corporate and trade-driven agriculture that threatens local food systems, food sovereignty is gaining currency as a paradigm that outlines the people's right to define their agriculture and food production methods, systems, and policies. The chapter delineates this holistic campaign that includes redistributive agrarian reform; the defense of land and natural resources against privatization and financialization; the promotion of agroecology, saving and exchange of native seeds, cooperative marketing; and the protection of the rights of peasants and small-scale food producers.

The succeeding chapter in the cluster magnifies the experiences of a farmers' union. "Rediscovering the Sacred among Agrarian Societies: The *Tara Bandu* Case in Timor Leste," Chapter 8 in this volume, shows a panorama of experiences from the peasantry of Ermera in the West of Timor Leste. There, an oral tradition locally known as *tara bandu* continues to be practiced on a district level amid a backdrop of widespread poverty and contentious landholdings that remain concentrated to the *mestizo* families in Timorese society. By highlighting the collective wisdom of the community, this chapter demonstrates the continuing relevance of the commons principle in exposing the fundamental problems of privatized ownership accompanying land distribution, that in the process, extensively rejects the foundations of the collective life of humanity.

The ninth chapter in this volume, entitled "Power from the Grain: Bringing Back the Lost Heritage of Sorghum in Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia," revolves around sorghum, the almost forgotten food staple in the Southeast of Indonesia. Farmers belonging to the Perhimpunan Petani Sorgum untuk Kedaulatan Pangan are engaged in reviving the cultivation of many local varieties of sorghum across NTT, particularly in the regencies of East Flores (including Larantuka and the islands of Solor and Adonara), Ende, Lambata, Manggarai, Rote, and Sikka. The collective aspires to contribute to ensuring food security in the region by selling sorghum to Southeast Asian countries as a statement to the world that among the people in NTT, sorghum stands as their sustainable and culturally embedded staple on the dinner table.

The fourth and final cluster of articles in this monograph captures endeavors of "Reclaiming the Commons." Three cases from around the Southeast Asian region depict alternative strategies of sharing, distributing, and de-capitalizing resources for the benefit of the mass population. Chapter 10 is "Promoting Food Sovereignty in Thailand and the Task of Civil Society." Here, the cases of three institutions, namely Alternative Agriculture Foundation, BioThai, and Sustainable Agriculture Foundation, serve as blueprints to how civil society can participate in the campaign of food sovereignty. As a framework of reclaiming food production and distribution, food sovereignty champions the independence of farmers and agricultural workers in securing food for the nation.

Chapter 11, "Local Energy Planning in Vietnam and "the Local" in Building Alternatives in Energy and Environmental Policy," shares how the Green Innovation and Development Centre serves a Vietnamese community by innovating technologies that help conserve both energy and community. Addressing the weaknesses of top-down approaches to energy planning, the local energy planning framework puts a premium on "participation" of the local community and local authority to design energy plans that customized their energy needs and resources. The chapter's analysis of LEP also presents an occasion to assess the transformative role of "the local" in energy and environmental

policy. Nevertheless, the essay considers the power and limitations of localism for a potent politics of constructing alternatives.

The final entry in the cluster casts the movement for resource access as a "revolution for democracy." Chapter 12, "Alternative Land Practice in Thailand: A Study on the Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand," explores alternative economic, political, social, and cultural practices in relation to land management led by local communities in Thailand. Land contestation in the country is rooted in a land management system unilaterally centralized by the state and the dominant development discourse which aims at economic growth underpinned by neo-liberal capitalism. The case premiums the concept of community rights as a shape of alternative development underpinning land rights movements in Thailand, which includes the Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand. Ultimately, this chapter, along with the other two in the same cluster, illustrates how local communities employ alternative practices as strategic tools to countervail state-centric and marginalizing practices imposed on resources, illuminating blueprints of what could be ways of reclaiming the commons.

With these twelve cases at its core, *Solidarity through Cross-Border Regionalism: Alternative Practices across Southeast Asia* hopes to demonstrate the possibilities of challenging ASEAN's vision for the economies, cultures, polities, and societies in the region. In the process, solidarity among communities, organizations, and peoples must reach beyond borders to envision and assert an alternative Southeast Asia. In putting together this monograph, we believe that the task of surfacing and privileging grassroots practices is embedded in the emergence of alternative models of development, founded on cooperation, solidarity, mutual benefit, the commons principle, and joint development, not cutthroat competition, the insatiable thirst for profits, and narrow patriotism and chauvinism. Now that we are facing a global resurgence of strongman leadership and a bolstering of global neoliberal economics, we must propel our social movements and stake our claim to what are rightfully ours: The full enjoyment of human rights, social protection, and access to the commons.

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Empowering towards Social Justice

1

Vietnam's Peace House Shelter as a Safe Space for Women to Reclaim Their Rights

CENTER FOR WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT[1]

On the rise across Vietnam, cases of gender-based violence (GBV) that traverse national boundaries have propelled the women's movement in the country to create their own initiative that actively responds to the needs of women amid the critical situation. Here, gender-based violence (GBV) refers to "forms of violence that are directed at individuals because of their gender and which are predicated on gender inequalities. It also maintains inequalities between men and women and reinforces traditional gender roles" (United Nations Viet Nam 2014).

The Center for Women and Development (CWD) as a national women's organization under the umbrella of the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) promptly responded to the call to help these women during the time when there was no safe space yet to shelter them and get comprehensive assistance. That was in 2007. The Peace House Shelter was established when there was also a significant gap for providing holistic support for the trafficked women. At that time of its inception, there was no similar center or house in the country.

Vietnam has a state obligation to promote and protect the rights of women as signatory to the following international human rights treaties and conventions: the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 57th Commission on the Status of Women in 2013, the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplement, the Palermo Protocol (United Nations Viet Nam 2014).[2] The raison d'être of the Shelter is to contribute to the realization of these international commitments.

At the national policy level, the social protection instruments in Vietnam have included the gender component within the social equity measures (Jones and Tran 2012). Within this frame, Vietnam has the following national laws as legal reference in protecting women from violence: the 2006 Gender

[1] This chapter was written by Ananeza Aban. The Program extends its thanks to Dong Huy Cuong of the Vietnam Peace and Development Foundation, who had been very helpful in facilitating the field visits and interviews for this chapter.

[2] The Palermo Protocol is otherwise known as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime.

Equality Law; the 2007 Domestic Violence Prevention and Control Law, which demonstrates another perspective among Vietnamese society that recognizes the concept of domestic violence as a violation of women's rights and therefore a human rights violation (Kwiatkowski 2011); and later, the Law on Human Trafficking Prevention and Combat 2012 (Jones and Tran 2012; Kwiatkowski 2011). Particularly, Vietnam has a National Plan of Action on Anti-Human Trafficking and the Plan of Action on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control that aims to strengthen the implementation of these laws (Jones and Tran 2012).

The Shelter's activities are in accordance with these government policies and programs, specifically addressing issues of human trafficking, domestic violence, and other forms of abuse, and to support the victims. CWD is mindful of institutionalizing international standards in responding to GBV, as well as implementing CEDAW which the Vietnam State Council ratified in 1982.

FIGURE 1.1 • Residents can engage different productive activities (Source: Peace House Shelter)

Building a Peace Shelter for women

The Shelter provides comprehensive and long-term support for the rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children who were victims of gender-based violence (GBV), mainly domestic violence and human trafficking.

Led primarily by women, the Shelter is under the supervision of a Shelter Manager. An average of one (1) social worker is assigned per five (5) cases. These social workers are assigned to handle the domestic violence cases separately from those of human trafficking cases, given that the plight of these women is context specific. Weekly updating among social workers on the cases are done in the Shelter. There are also housekeepers and security personnel as support workforce in the Shelter. All of them are salaried staff. The staff coordinates with the VWU, hospital, police, and legal aid practitioners. Researchers of the UP CIDS Alternative Development Program were able to visit this undisclosed Shelter in Hanoi and

met some of its women residents with permission from CWD and VWU. Interviews were done with CWD and the Shelter manager and staff.[3]

The Shelter provides safe accommodation for six (6) months for women who experienced domestic violence and 18 months for trafficked women and girls. The longest stay recorded was 22 months and the shortest was one (1) month. Since counselling and intervention differ among these women, the Shelter clusters those who fled from domestic violence to one floor and to another those who escaped human trafficking.

While these women are in the Shelter's custody, they receive medical treatment, psychological care and counselling, and are engaged in indoor and outdoor activities. Social workers responsible in the counselling use diverse and creative approaches in order to raise awareness about gender equality, reproductive health, and human rights.

There are instances when the Shelter staff needs to inform the local VWU and visit the family members in the community because they are unaware of the violence that has happened. In some cases, perpetrators of violence such as the husbands are also given separate counselling. However, CWD also recognizes the cycle of violence as a reality, and therefore stressed that it is not an assurance that husbands will cease to abuse their wives after undergoing counselling.

Capacity building through education is provided both for the women and their young children who live with them in the Shelter. CWD sees the need for literacy and numeracy sessions since most of the women in the Shelter have very limited education and are even incapable of speaking and comprehending the Vietnamese language, as some of them come from ethnic minorities (such as the H'Mong and Kho Mu peoples). CWD gets volunteer educators to teach these women. In fact, some of them speak the ethnic languages to break the language barrier. Thereafter, these women are referred to vocational centers to improve their development capacity, personal skills, and practical capabilities. Primary education (kindergarten) is provided to their accompanying kids. Job placements and career orientation are provided to prepare them to start their new lives. Otherwise, livelihood development is provided to help them establish their own business.

After the women decide to return to their communities, reintegration support and monitoring until two (2) years is also provided in collaboration with VWU and its local organization to ensure local community support. As a part of this, the women are also asked to participate in poverty alleviation activities of the VWU and the local government.

One important component of the Shelter is providing legal support to their women residents in coordination with legal aid centers and local authorities. As divorce is legal in Vietnam, victims of domestic violence can file a divorce against their husbands. On the other hand, a different case is filed against the perpetrators of human trafficking. The legal processes will have to follow the law that penalizes perpetrators of human trafficking.

For the domestic violence cases, after a woman has registered to the Shelter, her case is brought to her community, and CWD contacts the local authorities to make sure they receive the information. The woman, on the other hand, is informed of the necessary steps in filing her case. A health test is administered to her, and if the results are below the acceptable rate of 11 percent, CWD calls police attention. An agreement is made between the woman and her perpetrator in the presence of local

[3] Researchers Ananeza Aban and Angeli Fleur Nuque of the Program on Alternative Development (AltDev) of the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) conducted the field visit in Hanoi, Vietnam.

authorities. If the woman decides to file a divorce, CWD will coordinate with the legal authorities for the processing of the court case. The policy department of VWU will also coordinate with the court.

Another service includes temporary residence registration in coordination with the police. Some of these trafficked women lost their legal identification documents such as birth certificates during the traumatic situation they went through. In order to strengthen the chain-of-referral system, both border guards (Vietnam-China border) and police receive training courses from CWD on how to relate and work with the victims.

CWD maintains its communication with these women after leaving the Shelter. Meetings are held with the local women's union and community. Sometimes, the CWD staff performs field visits. Nevertheless, there is a handful who return to the Shelter as it provides them a safer space than their community.

Understanding domestic violence and human trafficking in Vietnam

Scrutinizing a broader landscape of Vietnam's domestic violence and human trafficking problems is of utmost importance to be able to locate the value and emerging challenges of the Shelter.

Domestic violence

In a 2006 findings of the National Study on the Family, it was discovered that 21 percent of the couples had experienced at least one type of GBV. That same year, the Vietnam Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey found out that 64 percent of women aged 15 to 49 years old accepted violence of husbands as 'normal.' And in a 2010 study of the General Statistics Office, 31.5 percent of women have experienced physical violence, while more than 50 percent admitted to have undergone emotional violence (Jones and Tran 2012). This 2010 National Study on Domestic Violence against Women significantly cited that incidents of physical, sexual, and psychological violence were higher in the countryside and among the less educated people (United Nations Viet Nam 2014).

Domestic violence is acknowledged as a serious public health and widespread social problem in Vietnam (Vu et al. 2014) as it also haunts many ethnic groups in the country with diverse socio-cultural and environmental context (Kwiatkowski 2013). It is deeply rooted in the dominant mindset in Vietnamese society that perceives women as the bearer of family harmony and protector of the 'happy family' ideology (Vu et al. 2014). This notion can be traced back from its ancient Confucian values of authority, familial loyalty, and community (Le 1996; Kwiatkowski 2013) where the male possesses dominant gender roles over the female and therefore, the husband has the authority or control over his household (Vu et al. 2014). The culture, the local political system including the power relations within, and the legal system support play key roles in advancing (or not) the rights of women and empowering women to seek justice for the violation of their rights.

The prevalence of gender stereotyping, however, has discouraged many abused women from seeking support who often opt to endure the life of suffering within an abusive marriage, in the name of the family (Vu et al. 2014). The UN Viet Nam (2014) also identified this dilemma when stating that this 'happy family' ideology reflected in social attitudes and norms hinders the enforcement of the Domestic Violence Law because it perpetuates gender power inequalities and stigmatizes women for reporting violence in the family.

Kwiatkowski (2011) noted the rise of divorce rates in years, most likely due to changing public opinion or increasing social acceptability of divorce. It doubled from 1991 to 1998, from 22,000 to

44,000 and further surged to 59,551 in 2004 (Phi 2007 cited in Kwiatkowski 2011). The Shelter, on the other hand, has facilitated around 80 percent of court cases of divorce in response to domestic violence, as a result of their counselling and processing with the women residents.

However, the data do not say that divorce is becoming a viable option to confront domestic violence, unless a comprehensive state policy formation and law enforcement will be strongly centered on protecting women from violence and inequality. Kwiatkowski (2011) noted that this does not necessarily translate to a decreasing trend of abuse of husband to wife citing that the pervasive culture of reconciliation within the family through the state-mandated reconciliation processes is well in place. She argued that this demonstrates the power of social institutions to prolong the agony of abused women by advocating this mediation scheme. The state rather perpetuates domestic violence as, in practice, it tolerates a husband's violent actions toward his wife and reconciliation committees composed of community leaders, who include women, prioritize the preservation of the family over women's rights to freedom from violent marital relations, thereby pushing women to a cycle of abuse (Kwiatkowski 2011).

The cycle of violence can be better understood in this manner: unequal gender norms and attitudes of masculinity and femininity bring about the depreciating human value of women and girls while imperially appraising hegemonic masculinity. This results in disempowerment of the female gender in both public and private spheres that increases their vulnerability to violence and the violation of their human rights. In this chain reaction, the normalization of violence against women and girls becomes commonplace in society that enables non-action of duty bearers and authorities. And to finally complete the cycle, this normalization fortifies the structural context which is the unequal gender norms and attitudes (United Nations Viet Nam 2014).

Vu et al. (2014) explained that the principle behind this reconciliation process focuses more on the violation of the 'harmony' within the family that can affect the community, instead of the emphasis on the safety of women from a violent relationship in the home and community. It has been observed that these groups that deal with domestic violence before it is brought to court work more on preventing divorce rather than protecting women from violence (Schuler et al. 2011; UNFPA 2007 cited in Vu et al. 2014).

Whereas women already feel reluctant to file a divorce in the initial stage, even in cases of extreme violence, the court will also attempt to entertain reconciliation. The divorce process is so complicated, which includes several reconciliations that somehow discourage women to proceed with this legal procedure (Vu et al. 2014).

In their continuing intervention, CWD recognizes the culture of silence that remains ingrained among women victims of domestic violence. There are cases when the victims understandably refuse to share their story because of the trauma or mental stress they have been through, aside from social pressures to maintain 'family harmony.' Unfortunately, this, in serious cases, led to extending their unsafe condition. Economic dependency on their abusive male partners (or husbands) remains an issue. With no sources of income as fallback, having solely devoted to unpaid domestic work, women find it difficult to escape this abusive relationship.

CWD also noted that while the divorce process is extended, and pending court decisions, the husband or his family seeks every measure to legitimize property division in favor of the husband in order to disenfranchise the woman of her right over these properties. Divorce is perceived to bring sorrow and embarrassment thereby reflecting lack of support from many Vietnamese families, or nothing. Eventually, this access to property issue stands in the way of abused women from seeking child custody (Vu et al. 2014).

On the other hand, the existing quandary can be interpreted through a political economic lens. While the state seriously champions women's rights and human rights in line with the global goals to achieve gender equality, the steps toward a socialist-oriented market economy have repositioned the household to serve as the foundation for the market economy and integration into the global capitalist economy. Bound by the 'happy family' ideals, the family should therefore not be disintegrated as it is important in the pursuit of the development of both domestic and national economic systems (Kwiatkowski 2011). Vietnam's transition to commodity economy has been acknowledged to achieve some 'remarkable successes.' However, along with this system change produces many 'social evils,' including the escalation of domestic violence (Le 1996).

Vu et al. (2014) enumerated the following recommendations to help address the problem of GBV: the government should adopt rights-based policies that strengthen women's property rights; provide legal support for domestic violence survivors; educate lawyers about the issue of domestic violence; strengthen law enforcement and build the capacity of people involved in the process of 'reconciliation' and divorce; and though this is challenging but essential, there is a need to engage men in gender equality and issues of violence against women.

Human trafficking

The globally accepted definition of human trafficking will be that of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime: "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation." The term exploitation shall include the prostitution of other and other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery, or similar practices as stated in the Palermo Protocol. Article 6 of the Palermo Protocol enumerates the assistance the State Party should provide for the protection of victims of human trafficking, such as measures to provide for the physical, psychological, and social recovery of victims of trafficking (United Nations 2004).

Vietnam is a source and destination country for trafficking. Between 2004-2012, as many as 6,184 Vietnamese women and children were reported to have been trafficked across the Vietnam borders. This trend also reflects the proliferation of traffickers. The low education and social economic status of these women, some coming from broken and violent homes, are the common factors why human traffickers prey on these women for exploitation, according to CWD.

Based on CWD's records of victims supported by the Shelter, more than 80 percent of these trafficked young girls are within the age range of 18 to 25 years old, while 37 percent are in their adolescence. In their juvenile age, some of these girls have already been pregnant or bore a child during the trafficking period.

They are trafficked to Cambodia, China, Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan, Korea, and as far as England and Czech Republic for purposes of sexual exploitation, forced marriage, and labor exploitation. The Northern provinces of Ha Giang, Lao Cai, Lang Son, Quang Ninh are the hotspots where 60 percent of the deals are located. The increasing trend in the number of human trafficking cases are located mostly in remote and rural poor areas. Kidnap cases were also recorded, which include those from isolated residents and children travelling on deserted roads.

China is the most common destination for Vietnamese women trafficked for forced marriage or sex work, using deception as a common recruitment tactic among traffickers, although there were some cases of abduction (Stöckl et al. 2017). The cross-border bride trade has been an increasingly alarming phenomenon as a result of a social norm that treats women as commodities, that mirrors

China's patriarchal structures as manifested in its one-child policy with preference for sons and that later created demographic imbalances (United Nations Viet Nam 2014; Stöckl et al. 2017). This is also due to the uneven socio-economic condition between China and Vietnam that makes crossing state boundaries and migration to China lucrative, given that the passage will only require a border pass than any other legal travel documents such as a passport (Stöckl et al. 2017).

While in the trafficking situation, the study of Stöckl et al. (2017) reveals that these women experienced extremely high levels of violence (90%) including sexual violence, mainly by their husbands and traffickers. On top of their physical pain and illnesses, their mental health has been gravely at stake as they experience strong symptoms of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and anxiety. Complementing these particular results of this study, CWD also confirmed that these women, including the girl children who returned from the border countries are often traumatized. Many of them have been referred by the border guards and provincial organizations.

CWD said that there is a proportion of women from ethnic minority groups who are unable to communicate in the Vietnamese language and thus it becomes difficult for supporters to extend immediate help. These women also have difficulties in approaching vocational training, loan programs for livelihood development, or finding a sustainable job once they return home. Albeit the Shelter addresses these needs, CWD recognizes its limited capacity to only cater to those who are residents. There remain countless trafficked women out there badly needing support.

A challenging factor that CWD also identified is the police, many of whom still do not recognize GBV as a serious social problem. Another troubling fact is the change of transport route of the

FIGURE 1.2 • Residents collectively engage in artmaking activities (Source: Peace House Shelter)

perpetrators for trafficked women. In order to evade border guards, perpetrators have explored the province-to-province route before finally reaching the border. The sea border has also been utilized.

Confronted with this alarming and complex trend, Giang Pham Huong, the director of CWD explained that they have intensified their collaboration with the border guards, especially in the China border, and the police ministry, in order to curb the trend and find the perpetrators.

The Shelter, through CWD and VWU, has also broadened its policy advocacy on anti-trafficking and other forms of GVB through policy dialogue, public awareness raising, and by maximizing the mainstream media. This policy dialogue with the government aims to strengthen national policy to protect women and children, and the chain-of-referral system that is a necessary component of the Shelter.

Sustaining and Strengthening the Shelter

During the early years of the Shelter, funds were sourced from AECID/Spanish Embassy, Australia Aid, and UNICEF (Burchill and Le 2015). Looking into the need for sustainability of the Shelter and the necessity to call government accountability on the plight of women, the leadership of VWU and CWD lobbied to the Vietnam government to recognize state responsibility over this program. They submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Finance to be able to access state funding that can sustain the Shelter. As of this writing, the Shelter gets funds from the Vietnam government budget, as a 'secular' support. Government subsidy is for the period 2013 to 2027.

As of latest count, there are 1,300 women plus their children, who have been provided support by the Shelter (70 percent are those who experienced domestic violence, while about 30 percent were rescued from human trafficking). The CWD records showed that they come from 50 provinces and cities across Vietnam and from 16 ethnic minorities. The youngest girl recorded is between 12 to 13 years old. Around 80 percent of those who have been referred by the local Women's Union to the Shelter are related to domestic violence.

CWD admitted that there are still provinces where local authorities are unwilling to cooperate with the Shelter to support the victims. This is highly needed for the prompt response in dealing with GBV cases right after being detected and reported. The referral system which concerns coordination and information sharing between multi-agencies of government and support services providers remains inadequate. There is still a need to widely disseminate the information about the Shelter's support services for the victims. In addition, CWD also advocates to change the gender inequality mindset.

Jones and Tran (2012) emphasized that social protection and gender equality are cross-cutting policy issues, thus, the importance of inter-sectoral coordination. Example of such is capacitating the local level or the communes to integrate gender in their poverty reduction plans. Highlighting inclusive accountability, they stressed that women's issues are not just a concern of the Women's Union but a professional responsibility of government agencies.

Outcomes of the Shelter

The culture of patriarchy that cements male dominance over women and thereafter creates this violent attitude and behavior over women is heavily entrenched on a global scale where Vietnam is not spared. Victim blaming and discrimination exist not only in Vietnam but elsewhere in the world.

FIGURE 1.3 • Campaign and advocacy work are crucial to spreading awareness about domestic violence (Source: Peace House Shelter)

But for the women of CWD, the Shelter that is being operated by the women themselves is already a big step forward in order to advance the interest of women, particularly from the marginalized sector, and their long term agenda for social change with a gender equality lens.

Despite the compelling externalities earlier mentioned, CWD and VWU continue the campaign for women's rights at the community level and in training the media on how to handle these women stories that must be anchored on human rights, on women's rights. As it has been and continues to be so, CWD has effectively contributed to Vietnam's GBV policy development and engagement in GBV related networks at the national, regional, and global level. This direct engagement with the government got favorable results when they observed the changes in the policy ministry system. With their constant prodding, one department has been established to deal with GBV. This department has requested CWD and VWU to teach and orient them of their current work through the Shelter and the pressing need of protecting women's rights.

Upon further reflection, CWD and VWU gauge the relevance and responsiveness of their comprehensive intervention when they already see the women residents in their empowering situation, in such a way that they finally recognize their rights and assert them, and have thought of or planned how to rebuild their lives thereafter.

The Shelter, under the leadership of women and the women's movement in Vietnam, although still facing complex issues in trying to implement policies that benefit the women survivors of violence, has asserted its space in the fight against human trafficking and domestic violence.

This multi-level coordination involving various stakeholders from government agencies to the grassroots, being managed by women yet independent from that of a government agency responsible for social welfare, or charity, becomes a strong point of the Shelter. The funding support both from

government and external donors has significantly contributed to institutionalize and even improve this comprehensive approach to GBV.

These stages, from the moment a woman registers to the Shelter until the time of her reintegration (including the underpinning legal interventions), reinforce the capacity of the women sector as a collective to fight for women's rights and work toward women empowerment. The experience of establishing this kind of shelter or rather safe space for women in Vietnam has also proven women's efficiency as a collective to reach, not only the policy makers and implementers, but also the basic social structures—the commune and family unit which are responsible in ensuring the safe reintegration of these women survivors.

While the Shelter still strives to become more efficient and to expand its services, its resilient identity among the police, border guards, provincial authorities as the core in the chain-of-referral system, manifests the big responsibility of the women's movement in Vietnam and their huge potential to promote and protect women and children's rights, and even substantially contribute to the fulfilment and improvement of international laws on women's rights and the overall status of women.

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2

Advancing Transformative Social Protection

Towards Social, Economic, and Political Transformation of People and Society

NETWORK FOR TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION[1]

Background

Already 52 years in existence, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has evolved from a cooperation among five countries in Southeast Asia to promote peace and stability in the region into what is now considered by many as a successful intergovernmental cooperation in Asia. With ten member states and a population of 662 million (UNESCAP 2019), the regional bloc has tried to strengthen its integration by launching the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. However, this regional integration continues to lack a social dimension.

The social dimension of regional integration is about people—their quality of life, needs and rights, and participation in decisions and processes affecting their lives. Any development initiative needs to integrate the social dimension. Poverty reduction, social investment, and building of sharing and caring communities are the three substantive social dimensions of sustainable development—being able to meet "present-day needs without compromising the needs of future generation" (Torjman 2000, 6). Even globalization requires a social dimension. The World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization describes that the social dimension goes far beyond jobs, health, and education. It is the dimension people experience in their daily life and work: the totality of their aspirations for democratic participation and material prosperity. It is "based on universally shared values, and respect for human rights and individual dignity; one that is fair, inclusive, democratically governed and provides opportunities and tangible benefits for all countries and people" (World Commission 2004).

Despite a so-called robust economy in the ASEAN region, poverty and inequality in the region have persisted through the years. The 2019 ASEAN Integration Report indicates that the ASEAN economy

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has consistently outperformed the global economy. The region's gross domestic product (GDP) growth has remained close to 5.0% since 2011 (until 2018), while global GDP stayed below 4.0% over the same period (ASEAN Secretariat 2019). Inequality has remained high as shown in the Gini coefficients in countries in the region. The average Gini coefficient in ASEAN, excluding Brunei and Myanmar, was 40% in 2017 (Singapore at 46%, Thailand 45%, Vietnam 44%, Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines 40%, Lao PDR 38%, and Cambodia 31%). The Gini index or Gini coefficient is "a statistical measure of distribution often used as a gauge of economic inequality, measuring income distribution or, less commonly, wealth distribution among a population. The coefficient ranges from 0 (or 0%), representing perfect equality, to 1 (or 100%) representing perfect inequality. A higher Gini index indicates greater inequality, with high income individuals receiving much larger percentages of the total income of the population" (Chappelow n.d.).

Also, the percentage of the extremely poor population (living below USD 1.51 a day) stays high—it is above 30 per cent in Laos, above 25 per cent in Indonesia and the Philippines, and above 20 per cent in Cambodia and Vietnam (Hartley 2017). By 2018, the ASEAN already ranked 5th largest economy in the world and it has the third largest labor force in the world (Wood 2017), though more than half of this workforce are in precarious jobs with wages insufficient to guarantee a decent life. The ASEAN's disadvantaged population suffers the most—in health, education, gender disparities in labor markets, and access to services such as water, sanitation, and electricity. Marginalization, deprivation, and social exclusion of millions in the region have continued while governments embrace neoliberalism that has historically espoused poverty and inequality. Complicit to corporations, governments are implementing free market policies like trade liberalization, privatization and deregulation of services and resources, and other measures to reduce if not remove government subsidies for public services. The market or big capitalists dictate prices and rules to their benefit.

Sadly, social protection that should have prevented people from falling into poverty or have addressed inequalities has remained inadequate. The social protection expenditures of most countries in Southeast Asia do not even reach half of the 6% of gross domestic product (GDP) recommended for the social protection floor by the United Nations International Labor Organization. Data from the World Social Protection Report 2017–2019 show that seven countries—Myanmar, Indonesia, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, and Brunei—spend less than 3 percent of their GDP on social protection. Only four countries in the region have social protection expenditures higher than 3 percent—Timor Leste (3.3%), Thailand (3.7%), Singapore (4.2%), and Vietnam (6.3%) (International Labor Organization 2017, 401). Thailand remains the only country in the region with a comprehensive social protection system that meets ILO's minimum social security standards. While people desire broader social protection programs to meet their needs and rights, their interventions are made difficult by the shrinking of democratic or civic spaces. People's participation in realizing adequate social protection is threatened in the face of increasing authoritarianism in the region. Moreover, poverty is further aggravated by climate change as Southeast Asia is most vulnerable to the worst effects of global warming—affecting people's livelihoods, food, and shelter—according to a study in 2015 by Global Risk Insights (Southgate 2015).

People's movements in Southeast Asia have thus struggled not only for jobs, social services, and social protection, but also to expose the negative effects of neoliberalism that is an ideology and a policy model at the root of economic, social, and ecological tragedies. Neoliberalism is described as a political project for the capitalist class in order to recover what they felt was rightfully theirs—power and influence of wealth. "It is about concentrating and accumulating more wealth and power within a very small faction of the capitalist class and corporate world" (Left Out 2018). The movements are calling for system change towards a more people-centered, just, and ecologically sustainable development and a life of dignity for all.

Transforming Lives and Societies

The Network for Transformative Social Protection (NTSP) is composed of multi-sectoral and issue-based social movements, grassroots organizations, and non-government organizations of urban poor, peasants, workers/trade unions, women, children and youth, older people and persons with disability as well as campaign networks, progressive researchers, and parliamentarians in Asia especially in Southeast Asia. The NTSP likewise works with non-Asia based partners and advisers.

Formally organized in 2009, NTSP is a result of the discussions in the Asia-Europe People's Forum (AEPF), particularly the AEPF 7 in Beijing, China in 2008. In view of the global financial, economic, and climate crises, lack of democratic spaces, and the ill effects of neoliberal policies on the lives of the people, human rights groups and those from poor people's networks saw the need to conduct campaigns aimed at asserting the people's right to a life of dignity. Thus, NTSP was launched and has since pursued various initiatives at the country and regional levels. It has engaged stakeholders and decision-makers, particularly on a universal, comprehensive, and transformative social protection system as a tool towards achieving a life of dignity for all.

The NTSP is one with other social movements in aspiring for a transformative change. It advances a campaign for a life of dignity for all that promotes the fulfilment of economic and social rights and the realization of social justice—with redistribution of income, wealth, and resources of the country, as well as equitable access to services and equal opportunities in life. The campaign is a platform that can mobilize diverse people's movements and address inequalities and injustice, transform people's lives and societies, and advance people-centered and sustainable transformative development alternatives.

Conventionally, social protection is treated as charity composed of needs-based programs or social safety nets for vulnerable people. It targets groups affected by economic and other shocks brought about by globalization and acts of nature. But social protection is more than charity or safety nets. "Social protection is not only a protective measure guaranteeing relief from deprivation; a preventive measure averting deprivation in various ways; nor a promotional measure enhancing real incomes and capabilities; It is also transformative as it addresses equity, empowerment, and social and economic rights … Transformative refers to the need to pursue policies that relate to power imbalances in society that encourage, create and sustain vulnerabilities" (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler 2004, 4–10).

The NTSP regards social protection as a transformative tool. "Transformative Social Protection goes beyond the traditional or limited concept of social protection. Social protection is an entitlement throughout a person's life cycle. It is a human right that must be guaranteed and fulfilled by States for an adequate life of dignity for all in a just, equitable, and ecologically sustainable society" (NTSP 2017, 1).

Transformative social protection is universal or for each and every citizen, including migrants and refugees; and comprehensive or fulfills every human's indivisible rights altogether and not just provided for piece by piece. It covers the rights to: work (decent work, living wage, and sustainable livelihood), food, essential services (guaranteed healthcare, housing, education, water, and electricity), and social security (living pension for older people and people with disability, adequate income support for children, the unemployed and calamity victims). It is seen to correct power imbalance, addresses the causes of poverty and inequalities, and brings about social justice. In transformative social protection, people are not passive recipients but are central and active actors in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of programs that affect them. It requires mechanisms for public control and accountability (NTSP 2017, 2).

In the communique issued by NTSP upon its formation on October 14, 2009, the Network manifested "transformative social protection demands that the state fulfills its role both as duty bearer and facilitator to ensure that every human being will live with dignity. People will be the driving force in

making sure accountable, transparent, participatory, and transformative programs are directed towards this goal. The poor and vulnerable shall be empowered to act for a better future" (NTSP 2009, 1).

Through the years, international institutions and intergovernmental/inter-State meetings have increasingly acknowledged the importance of social protection in addressing poverty and in attaining sustainable development. In its 2015 study, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) highlights the role of social protection in tackling inequality in Asia and the Pacific. The approaches now are moving away from fragmented, which consider social protection as short-term safety nets, toward a more comprehensive, transformative, and integrated approach wherein social protection is viewed as a pillar of sustainable development by improving equity, opportunity and resilience. "Social protection not only helps people meet their basic needs, but also contributes to their long-term well-being and broader societal goals of equity, social justice and empowerment. Within this broader developmental or transformative framework, social protection has proven to be an effective measure to tackle disparities in income and unequal access to health care and education as well as empowering vulnerable populations" (UNESCAP 2015, 34–35).

The NTSP believes that a universal, comprehensive, and transformative social protection system is a tool towards a life of dignity, and it can affect political, social, economic, and ecological transformation of an individual and the society in general. It consists of work and livelihood, public essential services, food, and adequate income support which meet the rights and needs of workers, women, older people, children, persons with disability, and calamity victims among others.

FIGURE 2.1 • AEPF12 social justice cluster session on strategies—including how the global social protection rights charter can be promoted and become useful in local campaigning. NTSP was represented in this session (Source: NTSP)

The campaign is transformative as it addresses the structural causes of poverty including the unequal power relations between and among social classes—it calls for industrial, economic, fiscal, political, agrarian, and industrial policy reforms; asserts people's involvement in the decision-making processes; and exacts accountability from the State. Further, recognizing that the earth is in critical condition with its resources rapidly dwindling, the campaign integrates climate resilience/adaptation and mitigation in programs it pursues such as green or climate jobs as part of a work guarantee program. Examples of green jobs are cleaning up air and water sources; waste reduction, reuse and recycling; protection and rehabilitation of forests and coastal resources; generation of energy from renewable sources; and construction of energy efficient and climate-resilient socialized housing.

Strategies

Towards institutionalizing universal, comprehensive, and transformative social protection, the NTSP's campaign has two tracks.

First, it focuses on movement building at the country-level in order to build a strong constituency that would push for concrete policy changes. It also engages the national government and other stakeholders in adopting the agenda for universal, comprehensive, and transformative social protection.

Second, it centers on involving and winning allies at the regional-level on sectoral and issue-based agenda and engages regional (the Association for Southeast Asian Nations ASEAN) as well as interregional (the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)) towards integrating a social dimension in governmental processes and policies in ASEAN/Asia. It also links up with international campaigns and actions directed at multilateral or international intergovernmental institutions such as the United Nations, the International Labor Organization, G8/G20, and the international financial institutions.

Generally, the campaign aims to contribute in strengthening social movements and in helping the poor realize their collective economic and political strength. It seeks to transform the poor into active agents of social change, and build their confidence from incremental changes and solidarity actions (NTSP 2017, 2).

Key Activities of NTSP

- ***Capacity-building, awareness-raising, and public information.*** Conferences, forums, workshops, seminars, learning exchanges are conducted in Asia, especially in Southeast Asia to equip campaigners and advocates in engaging the government, ASEAN, and other bodies and stakeholders. Information and other campaign materials produced and disseminated.
- ***Media work and social media engagement.*** Press conferences are held, press statements released, and the public is engaged through social media (e.g., website, Facebook, Twitter).
- ***Networking and constituency-building.*** Meetings, focus group discussions, and community assemblies are conducted in Southeast Asia to expand the network of campaigners and advocates. Strategizing meetings are also conducted with networks at the regional and inter-regional levels to learn from experiences within and outside Asia and build coordinated strategies and actions on advancing universal, comprehensive, and transformative social protection.
- ***Lobby and dialogues at the national and regional levels.*** Engagements in the formulation, adoption, and implementation of social protection policies both at the regional and national levels are undertaken.

- ***Petition-signing or getting wide support for the agenda for Universal, Comprehensive, and Transformative Social Protection.***
    - **Agenda for a Social ASEAN** (www.socialasean.org). This initiative involves civil society, migrant workers and their families, trade unions and workers organizations, and parliamentarians. The NTSP serves as a contact point for the Working Group on Social ASEAN. Other members include ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, ASEAN Employees Services Trade Union Council, Migrant Forum in Asia, Monitoring Sustainability of Globalization, Malaysian Trade Union Council, and Trade Union Rights Council.
    - **Global Charter on Social Protection Rights** (www.globalsocialprotectioncharter.eu). Developing a Global Charter on Social Protection is a recommendation from the workshop on social justice co-organized by NTSP with other networks at the 11th Asia-Europe People's Forum in Ulaanbaatar in July 2016. This proposed initiative was part of the Final Declaration adopted by 750 participants of AEPF 11. The Charter was formally launched at the 12th AEPF in Ghent in 2018, and continues to be shared by various networks under AEPF to date.
- ***Linking campaign with other related struggles.*** Transformative social protection is linked with these campaign struggles: on the social protection floor, tax justice, trade justice, climate justice, anti-privatization campaigns, sustainable development goals (SDGs), and the fight against inequality towards creating a socially just and ecologically sustainable community of empowered people. The NTSP is part of the Asia-Europe People's Forum, the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People's Forum 2017, the Fight Inequality Alliance, and the Global Coalition on Social Protection Floor.
- ***Researches and studies.*** Researches are undertaken to further substantiate key demands for transformative social protection at the national and regional levels.

Some cases for political, social, economic, and ecological transformation initiatives

Winning some struggles or specific campaigns could contribute in broadening and strengthening the movement as incremental gains could sustain struggle with strategic objectives such as system change that involves overhauling not only the social and political order, but also policies and values towards an ecologically sustainable society.

The "90 Days for Mums—1 Million Signature Campaign" in Malaysia

This campaign aimed to increase the number of days of paid maternity leave from 60 to 90 days, amending the Employment Act of 1995 in Malaysia. Surprisingly, while Malaysia is the third richest country in Southeast Asia, social protection is still very much a concern of its workers. The 90 Days for Mums campaign, started as a workers' initiative to realize their social and economic entitlements, later proved to have ecological transformation impact as well. Inspired by the NTSP founding meeting in Manila in 2009 that highlighted the limited social protection framework and gaps in the region, the National Union of Bank Employees (NUBE) initiated this campaign from March to December 2010. The bank employees union argued that the entitlement for paid maternity leave is not a benefit, rather a right of all female workers. Moreover, the maternity protection does not only benefit the woman and the child, but also the family as well as the health and wealth of the nation. It is an economic investment in the long run (Ceeu 2010).

FIGURE 2.2 • NTSP has engaged with LGUs to bring to the table discussions on education, livelihood, employment, and sustainable environment (Source: NTSP)

The leadership of NUBE united the bank union's entire membership in Malaysia first, and then reached out to other trade unions, especially the Malaysian Trade Union Council that readily supported the initiative. Later, it gathered support of stakeholders like women, health organizations, doctors, opinion makers, and legislators. In arguing for this policy change, NUBE invoked the international instrument ILO Convention 183 on Maternity Protection stating a 14-week paid maternity leave and cited other ASEAN countries with smaller economies that have 90 days paid maternity leave. By August 2010, all Malaysian Banks had agreed to its female employees' 90 days paid maternity leave during the 15th NUBE/MCBA Collective Agreement 2009–2011 signing ceremony. Two Malaysian states, Selangor and Kelantan, have also agreed to implement the 90 day maternity leave for their public employees (Ceeu, NUBE 2010). Some private companies also offered this benefit to attract workers. Among the big banks that implement the 90-day paid maternity leave are HSBC, Citibank, Malaysia Berhad, and Commerce International Merchant Bankers Berhad. It was noted in one news report that political parties later jumped in when they found out others joining. Another positive outcome of the initiative is the further expansion of benefit 7 years after the campaign was undertaken. In 2017, Maybank, the State-owned bank of Malaysia, further "expanded this maternity protection from 90 days to 365 days, in total from the start of their leave, with variable pay. In addition to the existing 90-day maternity leave with full pay, the new policy allows an employee to apply for an additional maternity leave period of three months with half-pay, and a further six months with no pay" (NST Online 2017).

The initiative has contributed in making women become secure in their jobs while they look after themselves and the child's health and well-being during pregnancy and after birth; they gained

confidence in their workplace and in taking actions to improve their lives. In addition, it also has unintended ecological benefits, not highlighted so much as claimed gains focused more on the rights and health of mother and child. For example, with longer paid maternity leave a mother can breastfeed more, thus avoiding wasting unnecessary resources nor causing pollution from consumption of formula milk that needs packaging and disposal.

The campaign for a life of dignity for all in the Philippines by Kampanya para sa Makataong Pamumuhay (KAMP)

This was a comprehensive campaign aimed to address economic, social, and ecological crises as well as uneven power relationships in the country. When launched in 2010, the campaign envisaged bringing together democratic left groups for system change under a movement envisioned as a convergence of groups and struggles on social, economic, and ecological justice challenging neoliberalism and enabling people to gain or increase political power in the process.

Through universal, comprehensive, and transformative social protection programs, the campaign for a life of dignity for all also aspired to expose the neoliberal policies particularly the privatization and deregulation of public services, and to present alternatives. It strived to promote an alternative model that builds on the collaboration of public and social enterprise; fiscal and budget reforms to guarantee people's entitlement to social services, food, and social security; and industrial and labor policies to guarantee decent work for all (Nemenzo 2010).

Through awareness-raising activities, public actions (KAMP 2013), and lobbying, KAMP pursued key demands particularly universal healthcare, as well as in-city and on-site humane housing and decent work or employment guarantee program (including climate jobs) which could also contribute to socio-ecological transformation (KAMP 2011). Led by member urban poor coalition Kilos Maralita (Movement of the Poor), KAMP began engaging government institutions in 2010 on People's Proposal for in-city and on-site humane housing for the poor. The People's Proposal did not only include land identification, design, and financing, but also tapping human resources among informal settler beneficiaries for the construction. Integrated in the design were energy efficiency, fostering greater solidarity through community employment, livelihood programs, and efficient resource consumption and management by promoting waste reduction, reuse, and recycling. The struggle saw concrete results in June 2015 when more than 3,000 housing units were built following the government's approval of People's Proposal or People's Plan in 2012 (Villanueva 2017). Since 2015, the urban poor organizations have called on the government to adopt the people's proposal approach throughout the country. They demanded to include informal settler families (ISFs) located in danger zones in private and public lands (including those owned by national government agencies, government corporations, and local government units); families in post-disaster homelessness; and any group of homeless citizens that are able to present their housing plans. By 2018, about 10,477 families from Kilos Maralita federation—affiliated associations in 14 communities in five cities in Metro Manila and one city in Bulacan—have benefitted from these socialized housing projects *(Interaksyon* 2018). Technical and business development support to Kilos Maralita was provided by another KAMP member, the Institute for Popular Democracy, and another partner—the Institute for Philippine Cooperatives and Social Enterprise Development (IPCSED) (Villanueva 2017).

As the urban poor network broadened with more housing cooperatives formed, they have also gained greater political capital that proved beneficial in pursuing other demands like employment, healthcare, water, electricity, and pension for older persons.

In February 2016, KAMP expanded and transformed into a national campaign movement called Buhay na may Dignidad para sa Lahat (Life of Dignity for All) or DIGNIDAD. A "coalition of

coalitions," DIGNIDAD, with at least 32 movement-based organizations, is a lone broad multi-sectoral network spearheading a campaign on universal, comprehensive, and transformative social protection in the Philippines that has a potential to widely mobilize people and consolidate more groups on a social protection agenda that is legislated, institutionalized, and universalized (Dignidad 2016). During its public launching, the campaign network announced its eight urgent social protection demands. These are "decent work and livelihood; free and quality health care; safe and affordable housing; free education up to the tertiary level; adequate, safe, and affordable food; guaranteed access to safe water and electricity; safe and reliable public transport; living pensions for all senior citizens and income support to persons with disabilities, unemployed, and calamity victims" ("New Group Vows" 2016).

The DIGNIDAD's comprehensive social protection program does not only enhance human potential and enable everyone to have greater access and increased opportunities in realizing a better life, it also addresses economic, ecological, and governance issues to realize the rights of people and make this quality of life sustainable. The comprehensive campaign pushes for structural reforms such as reversal of privatization of essential services; progressive taxation; participatory budgeting; repeal of law on automatic debt servicing; rechanneling public funds for social services, pension, and climate and disaster risk reduction and mitigation measures; and genuine land reform among others (DIGNIDAD 2016).

An alternative framework for transformative social protection in Indonesia

This was an awareness-raising initiative by NTSP networks in Indonesia to infuse a more strategic perspective in the discourse on social protection in their country. Indonesia, Southeast Asia's largest economy, is home to 267.6 million people (World Bank 2018). It has the largest population, and most number of workers in the informal economy in Southeast Asia. In 2011 to 2013, more Indonesians increasingly became aware of social security at the height of people's struggle for reforms in the social security system in the country. During this period, a tactical unity among 66 labor unions, non-government organizations, and student associations was formed under the umbrella of the Action Committee for Social Security (KAJS) to put pressure on the government to implement social security reforms, particularly in realizing universal health protection. Millions of workers throughout the country participated in pressure activities like rallies and lobbying that eventually compelled the government to recognize such strong force when it gave labor unions a significant part in the social security's tripartite supervisory body (Silaban 2015).

Amid the growing discourse on social protection in Indonesia, the NTSP through the Indonesian Working Group on Transformative Social Protection attempted to articulate a more progressive standpoint on the importance of the campaign on social protection. The Working Group, whose formation was facilitated by NTSP with the intention of building a movement for transformative social protection in Indonesia, initially consisted of the Working People's Party, research institute Inkrispena, and trade and peasant unions. These groups engaged trade unions, peasants, other informal workers, and faculty members in public fora and discussions, as well as government officials in dialogues. Such activities, aimed to deepen the discourse on social protection in 2011 to 2012, deemed timely interventions in the debate over the enactment and implementation of national healthcare and social security insurance scheme at that time.[7]

The alternative framework for transformative social protection that the Working Group is promoting asserts the state role in guaranteeing social protection to all Indonesians to prevent them

[7] Verbal updates and notes shared by NTSP contact points in Indonesia (Tommy Pratama of Inkrispena and Jemi Irwansyah of Working People's Party) from the Working Group on Transformative Social Protection in 2011 and 2012.

from falling into poverty, and rehabilitate those who have already fallen because of the economic crisis and the impact of neoliberal policies that exploit human and natural resources. It brought to the debate a notion that social protection schemes must be according to the needs of the working people and has a life-cycle approach. At the same time, it criticized the government's social security system formulated in a "top-down" approach putting more premium on economic and political interests of the elites and authorities—that is economic growth that benefits the owners of capital—and not for social justice for working people. It offers instead an understanding that is oriented towards transforming the lives of working people-to realize their full human potential, and free them from the political oppression and economic-political control of the elites. For the Indonesian Working Group, this transformative social protection aims to: (1) serve as political tool to dismantle economic and political structures that oppress the working people, (2) ensure economic and political struggle of working masses for equality in economic and political power, (3) achieve prosperous life and true justice for working masses (Ma'ruf 2016).

Asserting the Agenda for a Social ASEAN in the context of ASEAN economic integration

A number of progressive groups in Southeast Asia have seemingly regarded social protection as a minor issue until probably when social protection has taken a more prominent space in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that was adopted by the United Nations in 2015, and in the discussions addressing inequality and increasing vulnerabilities caused by climatic and economic shocks. The seeming lack of attention given to social protection, may be attributed to the more popular notion of social protection that it is a temporary social safety net or charity program, and that it targets primarily marginalized groups of older people, children, persons with disability, and the poorest of the poor. Aware of this limited perception, NTSP proactively promoted since 2009 the framework of universal, comprehensive, and transformative social protection in broader civil society fora, in cooperation with members and other networks, especially at the regional level especially the ASEAN People's Forum, and in other discussions and statements of regional and interregional civil society addressed to the governments.

It was during the APF in Thailand in 2009 when NTSP first raised the campaign framework and demands. The Network highlighted social protection as a human right, thus should be universal–for all, and that it should be transformative. At that time, its member Forum Asia explained to the media that "transformative social protection is the mechanism by which basic human rights embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in many constitutions of Asean countries can become real to the majority of Asean's half-a-billion people." Another member, Thai Labor Campaign added that "transformative social protection would make for a healthy and productive ASEAN people; and is a great investment for economic growth and stability in the future" (News Desk 2009).

As an economic and social right, social protection is an entitlement to jobs and livelihoods, social services especially healthcare, food, and social security particularly social pension. In 2013 came an opportunity to put this progressive framework on social protection in the first ASEAN document on this issue. Members of NTSP engaged ASEAN officials in the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection before its adoption that year. Network members sent comments on the draft Declaration through their country's official representative to the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare

[8] The position paper contained comments from members of the Network for Transformative Social Protection on the zero draft ASEAN declaration on strengthening social protection. It was sent to SOMSWD officials, mostly by email in September 2015. The document was unpublished.

[9] Author's account as NTSP co-facilitator.

[10] Based on accounts by NTSP members and networks from the labor groups in Philippines and Indonesia.

and Development (SOMSWD) that was in-charge of finalizing the Declaration. NTSP highlighted human rights, social justice, solidarity, and life of dignity in the context of multiple crises including climate disasters in the region. Involved in drafting and disseminating the position paper were KAMP and Philippine Alliance for Human Rights Advocates from Philippines; HelpAge, Disabled Peoples International, and People Empowerment Foundation from Thailand; Inkrispena in Indonesia; Action Aid in Vietnam; and Monitoring Sustainability of Globalization in Malaysia. NTSP members shared its position paper[8] with the Secretary of Social Welfare of the Philippines, the Assistant Minister of Social Welfare Ministry in Thailand, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department of the ASEAN Secretariat, and at the SOMSWD preparatory meeting through Disabled People's International Asia-Pacific and HelpAge International-Asia.[9]

Generally, trade unions and civil society have been advancing respective social protection demands separately. But as the number of workers in informal economy and of other marginalized groups demanding decent jobs with living wage or adequate income and social security increase, both civil society and trade unions have realized the urgency to link up campaigns. Trade unions have recognized their declining membership as members were laid off or became contractual (temporary employment) due to economic crisis or labor flexibilization. A number of former trade union members who lost their jobs became workers in the informal economy and joined civil society formations or networks such as urban poor organizations, water or housing cooperatives, or home-based workers associations.[10] Both civil society and trade unions, as well as other sectors like migrants, recognize that problems or challenges they face have some common causes such as the neoliberal programs widely implemented regionally and globally.

In 2014, trade union networks, civil society groups, and a network of parliamentarians in Southeast Asia started discussing the convergence of campaigns in ASEAN, later called as the Working Group on Social ASEAN, as they worked towards drafting the Agenda for a Social ASEAN. The Agenda that was finalized in 2015 brought together the regional formations (trade unions, civil society including disadvantaged groups, parliamentarians, migrants) and demands or recommendations of their respective constituencies. The Agenda for a Social ASEAN is a consolidation of peoples' aspiration in the region, adopted in various regional forums and inter-regional forums in recent years. The Working Group on Social ASEAN includes the NTSP, the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, ASEAN Services Employees Trade Union Council (ASETUC), ASEAN Trade Union Council, Migrant Forum in Asia, Monitoring Sustainability of Globalization, Malaysian Trade Union Congress, and Trade Union Rights Centre, in cooperation with the Asia-Europe People's Forum (Social ASEAN 2017).

Joblessness, poverty-level income, precarious working conditions, hunger, and lack of access to basic services like health care, education, water, electricity, housing, and social security are among the oppressive conditions in the region that the Agenda for a Social ASEAN aims to address. The people's networks recognize that the ASEAN Economic Community is not likely to address such woes. Poverty and inequalities could even worsen because the regional economic integration institutionalized further the neoliberal policies privatizing public services, and liberalizing trade and investments in the region. The AEC envisions a single production base and market characterized by free flow of capital, goods, services, and skills or human resources–which pose increased threats to peoples' survival and quality of life.

The Agenda for a Social ASEAN asserts that the needs and rights of people be prioritized in the regional integration. It obliges governments in ASEAN to become more inclusive and accountable and to work for the fulfilment of rights of the people. The Agenda promotes social justice, sustainable development, gender equality, and participatory democracy. It pushes for the ratification and implementation of International Labor Organization's core labor standards that are necessary in creating conditions to achieve decent work. Finally, it enables a life of dignity for all through guaranteed access

to essential services, food and social protection (Working Group 2016). The Agenda presents the need for an alternative development paradigm that addresses the structural causes of poverty and inequality; emphasizes the pursuit of full development of human potential based on equality, solidarity and sustainability; and observes democratic and participatory processes.

The transformative aspect of the campaign is increasing the political base and power of the people as they advance the agenda together. The people or stakeholders also realize the interlinkages of their issues and the need to challenge together common enemies such as neoliberalism and authoritarianism that cause their suffering, including environmental destruction. Under a campaign for a Social ASEAN, sectoral issues and formations converge to advance a common Agenda that asserts a social dimension in regional integration and challenges processes and policies that further erode people's rights, widens inequality, and wrecks the environment. For instance, the trade union formations in the region such as ASETUC and ASEAN Trade Union Council have long been raising the decent work agenda at the national level as well as at the regional level until they adopted in 2005 an ASEAN Charter that promotes the Decent Work Agenda. Similarly, migrant networks such as the Migrants Forum in Asia have consistently raised the issues of migrant workers in the region, especially of domestic workers, such as human trafficking and social protection needs. Other formations representing vulnerable groups that have been actively engaging the ASEAN bodies separately are HelpAge International, the Disabled People's International, the women's and children's rights networks.

The Agenda for a Social ASEAN is a lobby document for engaging ASEAN leaders and the policymakers, civil society networks, and opinion-makers in the ASEAN countries. It calls on all ASEAN governments, socially responsible employers, trade unions, NGOs, and grassroots organizations to respect, promote, and realize the five core demands of the Agenda. These are to institute democratic, participatory processes at national and regional levels; ensure gender equality and protect vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; realize access to essential social services, especially universal health care, and social protection for all; fulfill the right to food and productive resources; and adopt all ILO core labor standards.[11] Under these demands, various groups work together and they become politically stronger in addressing inequality, challenging free trade agreements (FTAs) and neoliberalism, and advancing a just and ecologically sustainable society with people-centered processes, social, and economic empowerment of women and other vulnerable groups, people's access to productive resources, and guaranteed essential services and social protection for all.

Linking up with regional and international sectoral and issue-based networks and campaigns

Asia-Europe civil society discourse on social protection has developed in various biennial Asia-Europe People's Forums: from social protection as response to the crisis, tackling ILO's decent work agenda and social security particularly pension for the elderly, to social protection as a transformative project tackling unequal power relations, and integrating the commons framework. The notion of universal and comprehensive social protection also introduced work, essential services (not only healthcare), social security, and adequate income guarantee not only pension for the elderly (but also for persons with disability, the unemployed, and calamity survivors). Further, it highlighted the need to go beyond the social protection floor, and take up the commons framework in the social protection campaign. "The commons paradigm is central to an alternative system the campaigners are pushing for: a system that

[11] The Agenda for a Social ASEAN was adopted by members of the Working Group on Social ASEAN, and hard copies of this document were printed in 2016 and first distributed during the ASEAN People's Forum in Timor Leste in 2016 and posted at www.socialasean.org. Key demands contained in the Agenda for a Social ASEAN were also contained in the Statement of Civil Society, Trade Unions, Migrants, and Parliamentarians in Southeast Asia To the 22nd Senior Officials Meeting of the ASCC and the 17th ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Council Meeting posted at https://aseansogiecaucus.org/statements/asc-statements/97-address-the-missing-link-in-asean-integration-realize-people-s-agenda-for-a-social-asean.

FIGURE 2.3 • The callouts in the background reflect the common calls and actions of CSOs and trade unions in Southeast Asia vv realization of a life of dignity for all, social justice, and social dimension in ASEAN regional integration (Source: NTSP)

provides for the needs of individuals and society, taking into account the regenerative capacities of the environment" (NTSP 2015).

Global phenomena free trade agreements and climate change create greater imperative for convergence of people's campaign movements in order to address their threats to earth and humanity more strategically. Contrary to avowed claims by governments and corporations that these FTAs will result in economic gains for the country and its people, these agreements including the Trans Pacific Partnership and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (under negotiation among ASEAN member states and six countries) will only negatively affect people's income, access to essential services, and social protection.

The potential harms of FTAs are greater than the benefits perceived by governments: people are pushed to greater vulnerabilities to impacts of climate change as natural resources are further depleted and increased commercial or business activities further change the landscape and contribute to global warming. For instance, with increased production of goods, there will also be increased demand for electricity to manufacture these goods. Believed to be cheaper and quicker, yet environmentally harmful, sources of energy such as coal are often the easier solution by governments. Another case, a number of infrastructure and realty projects in the Philippines were among the causes of blocked waterways that led to devastating flooding in Metro Manila in 2009. Lastly, with lands and housing being commercialized, the poor without social protection are pushed to settle or live in danger zones (such as in riverbanks, lakeshores, under the bridge, near seashores, or in breakwaters) where they can

put temporary or improvised shelters made of scrap cartons, plyboards, sacks, or plastics.

The FTAs will lead to further commercialization of lands including agricultural lands and services such as housing, energy, and water linked to the environment. These FTAs could also legitimize exploitative labor practices in order to increase profits such as labor contractualization wherein they can avoid paying social security and other benefits enjoyed by regular workers including living wage, thus many workers are poor and vulnerable to economic and climate shocks. The impacts of climate change such as loss of livelihood, shelter, and food insecurity are worse without social protection programs that address or anticipate these. As many countries in Southeast Asia like the Philippines, Vietnam, and Cambodia are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, NTSP endeavors to link the social protection campaign with programs towards achieving ecologically sustainable communities. Examples include developing climate resilient projects tackling jobs (climate jobs), housing (climate-resilient housing), food (addressing food waste and subsidies for small farmers towards securing safe food especially for children), and energy (using renewable energy for island communities' access to energy).

Aside from trade and climate issues, other issues or campaign networks that NTSP has tried to link up with to broaden support for universal and comprehensive social protection are on tax, international financial institutions, commons, and sustainable development goals.

Conclusion

Even as social protection has been in the agenda of governments, civil society, private sector, and development institutions, the discourse on framework, financing, and coverage continues to evolve. Governments promoting free market and greater private sector participation are concerned with high cost and burden to the businesses, while some left or progressive groups remain skeptical in campaigning for social protection and prefer a direct social justice campaign instead. On the other hand, grassroots organizations are winning some specific social protection programs. Interestingly, broader social movements recognize the importance of having concrete gains or presenting best practices, as well as having dynamic national campaigns. These are important elements in increasing political capital for greater struggles like system change addressing governance, neoliberal capitalism, and climate crisis.

The value added of NTSP in the national and regional campaigns is its proactive promotion of framework, agenda, and political aim of movement building and attempting to converge not only movements, but issues/demands as well. However, there are many challenges that the NTSP campaign has to address. For instance, the skepticism of some progressive forces, strong adherence of governments to neoliberalism, and the shrinking democratic spaces in this era of increasing authoritarianism in the region. The other challenge is developing studies to better articulate the concrete proposed programs and alternatives, and the linkages with bigger issues like free trade agreements, climate change, and sources of financing to name a few. A better, more in depth, and wider articulation of links of climate change with social protection are essential, thus the network has to reach out to more environmental groups and those addressing disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM).

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3

Women Household Heads in Indonesia and their Role in Addressing Gender Inequality

PEMBERDAYAAN PEREMPUAN KEPALA KELUARGA (PEKKA)[1]

Introduction

Attempts to promote the rights of women are covered through the conventions, declarations, and agreements signed at the international and regional levels. For instance, the United Nations spearheaded the efforts to have an international convention on the rights of women ratified. And at the level of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), declarations were signed and institutions were created at the regional level as far as its promotion is concerned.

Despite these noble intentions and goals, the reality is that gender inequalities remain. As mentioned by Ortiz-Ospina and Roser (2018), women earn less than men, are underrepresented in managerial positions, are overrepresented in low-paying jobs, have less control over their income, and have limited decision-making capabilities in households. Figure 3.1 (on the next page) shows the women's economic opportunity index.

The economic opportunity index was measured based on a score of 1 to 100, where a higher score means more opportunities for women in the economy. In Figure 3.1 (on the next page), the data signify that the darker the color, the more women are incorporated in the global economy. Despite the lack of opportunities for women in other states with lighter colors, Ortiz-Ospina and Roser (2018) have nevertheless pointed out that women's situation is improving than their situation in the past.

Even if improvements were noticed as far as women's rights are concerned, challenges still remain. In Southeast Asia, for instance, women's role in agriculture and food security are not recognized despite their big role (Devasahayam 2018). As Indonesia is one of the largest states in the region, issues on women and gender are significant. In terms of the World Economic Forum index on gender equality, Indonesia ranks 85th out of 149 countries surveyed (World Economic Forum 2018). In other rubrics,

[1] This chapter was written by Nathaniel Candelaria. We would like to thank Jelen Paclarin and the Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau for linking the UP CIDS Program on Alternative Development (AltDev) to PEKKA.

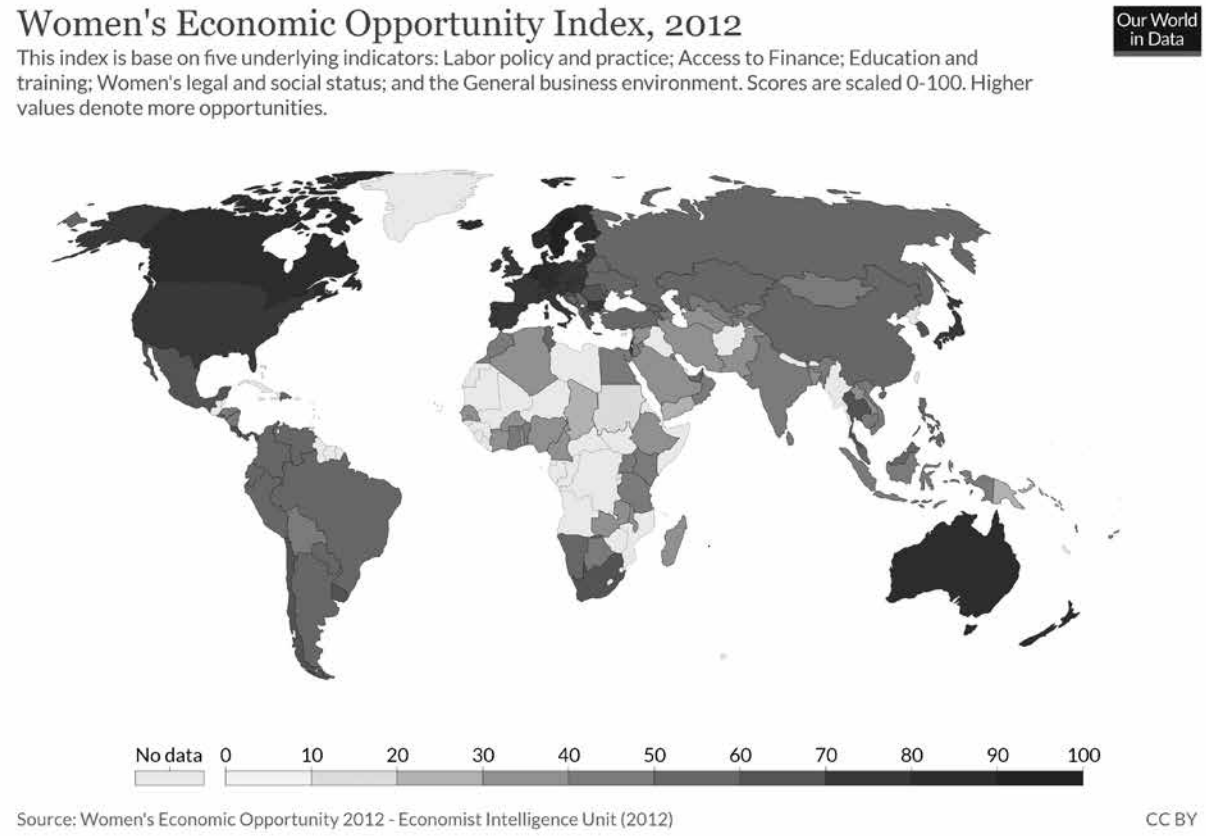

FIGURE 3.1 • Women's economic opportunity index in 2012 (Source: Ortiz-Ospina and Roser 2018)

Indonesia is also located in the lower half of the strata.[2] These issues and concerns have implications for future generations—especially regarding women and their children's access to services (PEKKA Secretariat 2018; Duff et al. 2016; Sunmer 2015).

In Indonesia, there are attempts from different civil society organizations to bridge the gap and address this concern. One of these organizations is PEKKA. This paper will attempt to document the experiences of PEKKA and what they have already achieved as far as the fight towards the promotion of women's rights is concerned.

For this reason, the paper will employ a feminist lens in looking at the issues of gender inequality and the actions of PEKKA. As pointed out by Randall (in Marsh and Stoker 2010), feminist approaches can help probe the private-public divide, which is prominent in Indonesian society and the advocacy of PEKKA. Aside from this paper's being a feminist analysis of PEKKA, it is also a contribution to documenting cases of alternative practices in the Southeast Asian region. Documenting these endeavors is one of the projects of the UP CIDS Program on Alternative Development. Based on the *Integrating Alternative Development Efforts in Asia* Report, alternative means that it is a reaction against the dominant trend of development; however, it does not mean that even if there are aspects of the dominant being practiced by different organizations, it automatically adheres to the dominant idea (Raina in IADEA 1997). Moreover, for an idea to be considered alternative, the processes undertaken must be implemented and integrated for it to challenge the dominant paradigm (Raina in IADEA 1997).

[2] Based on the data of the World Economic Forum, Indonesia ranks 96th out of 149 countries in terms of economic participation; 107th in terms of educational attainment; 79th in terms of health; and 60th in terms of political participation.

Women and Gender Issues at the State Level: The Situation in Indonesia

As one of the founding members of ASEAN and as the country with the largest population in the region, Indonesia is significant. While it has no official state religion, with the exception of the belief in one God in Pancasila, Indonesia has the largest Islamic population. And while Indonesia was heavily influenced by the military after the New Order, Megawati Sukarnoputri rose to power as Indonesia's president, even when women heads of state or government are rare even within the ASEAN region itself (Blackburn 2004).[3] However, even though Indonesia already has a woman head of state, the stark reality of women remains. This part of the paper will therefore look into the development of the Indonesian state and connect the discussion with the issues of women across different timeframes.

Women and Gender Issues vis-à-vis the Development of the Indonesian State

Before gaining its independence in 1947, Indonesia was a colony of the Dutch; however, it was briefly controlled by the Japanese forces during the Second World War (Blackburn 2004). Since gaining its independence from its colonizers, Sukarno's Guided Democracy focused primarily on the identity-building of the Indonesian state, where women issues are treated secondarily to national interests (Blackburn 2004). Under the Guided Democracy era, Blackburn (2004) noticed that women found themselves having difficulty to air their opinions and concerns; nevertheless, women's groups in Indonesia such as the *Gerwani* were allowed to exist by the Sukarno government. Moreover, women's organizations and politicians flourished under the Sukarno government (Firdaus 2019).

When Sukarno's administration fell under the coup of Suharto, the administration also changed from Guided Democracy to the New Order. As part of the changes made in the Indonesian society, women's role has also changed substantively. The New Order era was geared towards the promotion of the family such as birth control and taking care of the household (Rinaldo 2011). From being active in Indonesian politics during the Sukarno government, women were renegades back to their respective household duties (Firdaus 2019). This change has been reflected heavily in the Indonesian Marriage Law of 1974, where men were recognized as heads of households and women as managers, with the aim of making marriages harmonious (Parker, Riyani, and Nolan 2016). This is known as *kodrat* (natural destiny), where the role of women as *ibus* (mothers) are emphasized vis-à-vis the role of men as *bapak* (fathers) (Blackburn 2004). Aside from these structural changes, a Ministry for Women's Roles under the Suharto's regime was established; however, it also disallowed the existence of women's organization with the example of *Gerwani* as a group included in the Communist purge in Indonesia (Blackburn 2004).

The *reformasi* period followed after the fall of Suharto's government in 1998. Under the *reformasi* period, women in Indonesia are divided as to how they will deal with issues on women; some of them are liberal, and some want to promote more conservative values on women (Blackburn 2004). In terms of policies, the state under the *reformasi* period implemented Presidential Decree No. 9/2000, which proposes to include gendered perspectives on different government policies (Blackburn 2004). However, conservative policies restricting women's rights have also been implemented under this period. For instance, policies on women clothing is incorporated in Indonesia's Anti-Pornography Act of 2008, thereby restricting how women should act in public (Parker, Riyani, and Nolan 2016).

In the Indonesian society, there seems to be a divide between global values and local values. As discussed by Kusujiarti et al. (2015), there are differences on how objectification of women is perceived

[3] Megawati Sukarnoputri is the daughter of Indonesia's first president, Sukarno. She became the President of Indonesia after the resignation of her predecessor, Abdurrahman Wahid, in 2001.

in terms of western values vis-à-vis the teachings of Islam. While western values see the case of Indonesia as restriction to women's rights, for the locals, adherence to the teachings of their religion meant freedom from point of view as well (Kusujiarti et al. 2015). In a case study of Acehnese women, it was observed that local norms help with the mobility of women in Aceh, which is different from how western scholars usually depict women mobility in the context of global norms (ibid.). The apparent clash between the universalizability of human rights values v. Indonesia's local culture and traditions affects how legal services are accessed by women (Curnow 2015).

Contemporary Issues of Women in Indonesia

As pointed out in the discussion of Indonesia's history, a division between conservative and liberal forces were identified under the reformasi period. The debated points of contention between these forces cover issues affecting women such as, but not limited to polygamy, pornography, divorce, and relations of women within the family. This is important to be discussed since despite the existence of global norms to protect the rights of women, issues at the national and local levels remain. In fact, the global-local divide on women's rights remains in Indonesia as argued by both Rinaldo (2011) and Curnow (2015).

In contemporary Indonesian society, it was documented that women are disadvantaged in terms of their marital status. It is especially difficult for women to be divorced and/or to be widowed, since the society will categorize these women as *janda* (Parker, Riyani, and Nolan 2016; Zulminarni et al. 2018). This is because when a person is being referred to as *janda*, that person is accused of sexual promiscuity; and therefore, women are viewed to be immoral (ibid.). In order for women to de-stigmatize this situation, they remarry to avoid society's ostracism; thus, contributing to higher remarriage rates in Indonesia (Van Bruinessen in Parker, Riyani, and Nolan 2016). And in terms of pornography and sexual promiscuity, Indonesia made pornography illegal; however, the formulation of the law negatively affects women as it dictates the proper attire for women in Indonesia (Parker, Riyani, and Nolan 2016).

Aside from sexual promiscuity, polygamy is also a big issue for women in Indonesia. Despite the presence of a law regulating marriages in Indonesia, people tend to follow the traditional way; thus, making the process not valid under Indonesian laws (Nurmila 2016). This also happens when a man seeks to marry another woman (ibid.). Since some of the women are married illegally, there are also implications for the children. Because of the lack of legal basis of the marriage, children are not registered when born (Zulminarni et al. 2018; Sunmer 2015; Duff et al. 2016). Moreover, the poor are much more vulnerable because they are more likely not to be able to register due to accessibility issues; the lack of registration also leads to the stigmatization of both the mother and child (ibid.).

Women issues do not spare even single women. This is usually reflected in terms of their goals to migrate in order to find better opportunities elsewhere (Silvey 2000). When women migrate, they adjust their familiar roles and encounter challenges both at the local and international contexts, thus changing their conceptions of space and home (Williams 2005). There are many reasons as to why women chose to leave their homes in search of opportunities elsewhere. In a study conducted by Williams (2005), women shared the reasons why they migrate, i.e., to experience a different community and escape from constraints and at the same time to help their household and fulfill their role as "dutiful daughters." However, women are hindered by the views of the state on women vis-à-vis men (Silvey 2000). Because of these negative views, they do not help women escape the cycle of violence and disadvantages against women in the society in general (ibid.).

While women are autonomous and have their own goals and ideas in the first place (Williams 2005), the abovementioned issues make women vulnerable in Indonesian society. Nevertheless, women themselves are finding ways on how to change the system. One of the ways to deal with issues of women in Indonesia is through participatory action of women youth in Indonesia (Fergulio et al. 2017). The

paper pointed out how Indonesian women find it difficult to deal with issues and how the group helped these women to empower themselves (ibid.).

The Case Study Method

In spite of the international and regional norms promoted for the advancement of women's rights, Indonesia still has a long way to go to promote them. One of the active women groups in Indonesia is PEKKA, a group organized in 2001. While there are many women organizations in Indonesia, one of their members stressed that PEKKA was the first to organize women in the society. Given these reasons, the research will document the case of PEKKA as a women's organization in Indonesia. Thus, a case study research design was adopted for this particular research. As discussed in political methodology books, case studies are important in dealing with the intricacies of different cases and how their experiences lead to another one (Flick 2009; Babbie 2013).

To conduct this research, a team of researchers from the UP CIDS visited the PEKKA Office in Jakarta, Indonesia, and conducted interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with the members of PEKKA Union.[4] As discussed by Zulminarni et al. (2018), the PEKKA as an organization became federated in 2014, thus decentralizing the operations of the organizations within a national secretariat and a local group as well. This is the reason why the team was able to conduct a data gathering process from both sectors of PEKKA. In this regard, interviews with the members of the PEKKA Secretariat and FGDs from the PEKKA Union members are used in order to gather the viewpoints and to expound these ideas better. Aside from these interviews, desktop review of materials and other information provided by PEKKA were also used in the research.

PEKKA amidst Gender Issues in Indonesia

As explained in the methodology section of the chapter, the discussion will focus on the experiences of PEKKA towards the advancement of women's rights in Indonesia. For this section of the paper, a discussion on the historical roots of PEKKA will be highlighted. This will be followed by the discussion of the interventions they implemented to promote the welfare of women in Indonesian society.

PEKKA's Origins as a Women and Women-headed Organization

In 2001, PEKKA was established by Nani Zulminarni. PEKKA, as an organization for women-headed families, traced its roots from the project called *komnas perempuan* (widow's project), a project that documented the experiences of widows in Aceh (Zulminarni et al. 2018). The organization aims to provide help and intervention on "women-headed households in Indonesia" because of the gender imbalances in Indonesia and the stigma of being *janda* felt by women under Indonesian society (Zulminarni et al. 2018). *Janda* are regarded to be a disgrace in the society because they are treated to be sexually promiscuous (Parker, Riyani, and Nolan 2016; Zulminarni et al. 2018). Because of this stark reality, women find it difficult to access basic social services such as subsidies, health insurance, and cash transfer programs (Sumner 2011 in Zulminarni et al. 2018).

Advocacies for Women in Indonesia

PEKKA, as an organization, adheres to feminist thoughts on how the organization does things (PEKKA Secretariat 2018; Zulminarni et al. 2018). For PEKKA, feminism helps in empowering women in an

[4] The UP CIDS research team is composed of Asst. Prof. Karl Hapal, Asst. Prof. Venarica Papa, and Mr. Nathaniel Candelaria.

imbalanced society. Moreover, as pointed out by Randall (in Marsh and Stoker 2010), feminism as a lens helps discuss the intricacies of the private-public discourse. That is also reflected in the gendered analysis of food security in Southeast Asia by Devasahayam (2018). Under the logic of feminist analysis, the experiences of PEKKA will be discussed thoroughly, especially with regard to their interventions, as well as challenges that this women organization has faced as far as the promotion of their rights is concerned.

PEKKA promotes the welfare of the women-headed households in Indonesia, which the organization defines as the "widows, divorced, abandoned, disability husband, under polygamous married, single, unmarried but have a child, having irresponsible husband" (PEKKA Secretariat 2018). As of 2018, PEKKA has membership of 31,447 members across 2,559 villages in Indonesia (Zulminarni et al. 2018). As discussed during the interview of the members of the PEKKA Secretariat (2018) in Jakarta, they mentioned that PEKKA is present nationally, except in Guinea primarily due to cost-related concerns. Figure 2 shows the map of operations of PEKKA.

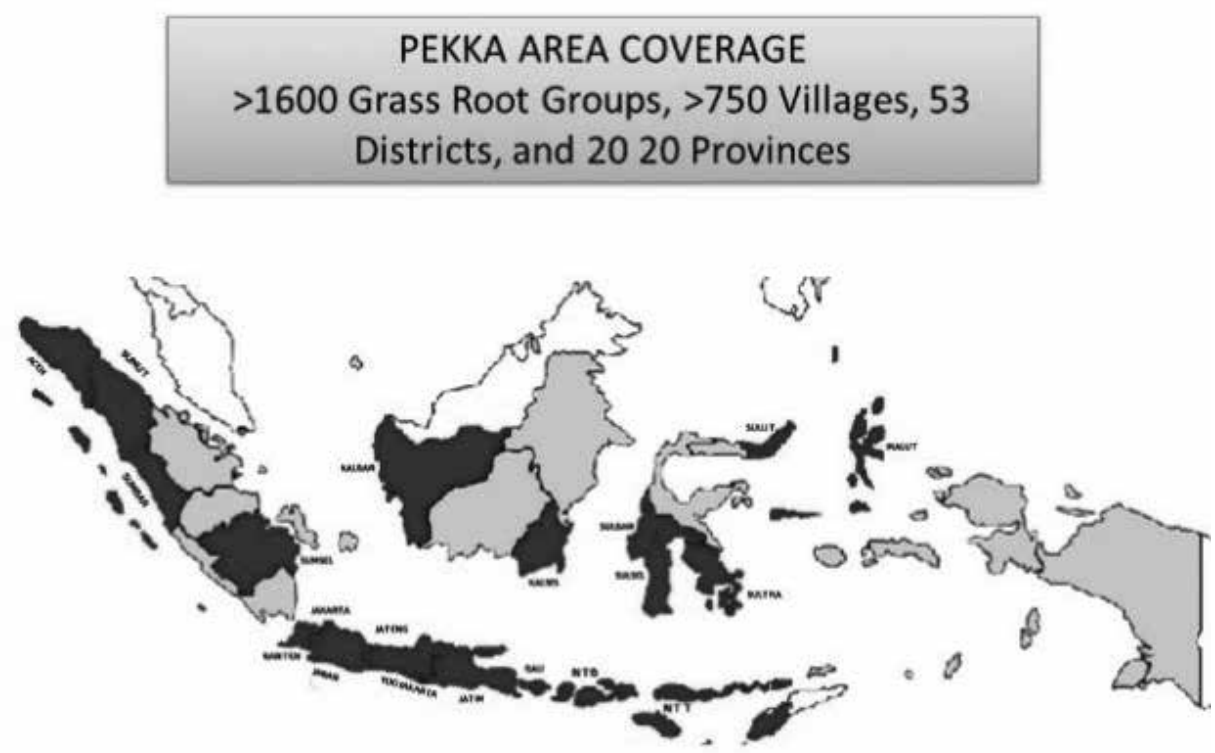

FIGURE 3.2 • Map of operations of PEKKA in Indonesia (Sources: PEKKA; Zulminarni et al. 2018, 8)

In a nutshell, PEKKA intervenes in order to promote the welfare of women, particularly women abandoned by their respective husbands, in Indonesian society. In order for PEKKA to promote women's welfare in the society, the members have organized women by establishing cooperatives; and the organized women were taught and trained by PEKKA members extensively (Zulminarni et al. 2018). PEKKA has been training women in order to promote change in their society. Figure 3.3 shows how the organization envisions change for Indonesian women and the society in general.

As explained during the interview by members of the PEKKA Secretariat, the process starts from women themselves. Through the community, PEKKA was able to intervene and help them train. However, the members of PEKKA in the interview nevertheless recognize how powerful institutions are. That is the reason why whatever interventions they envision for women, society has to change also to

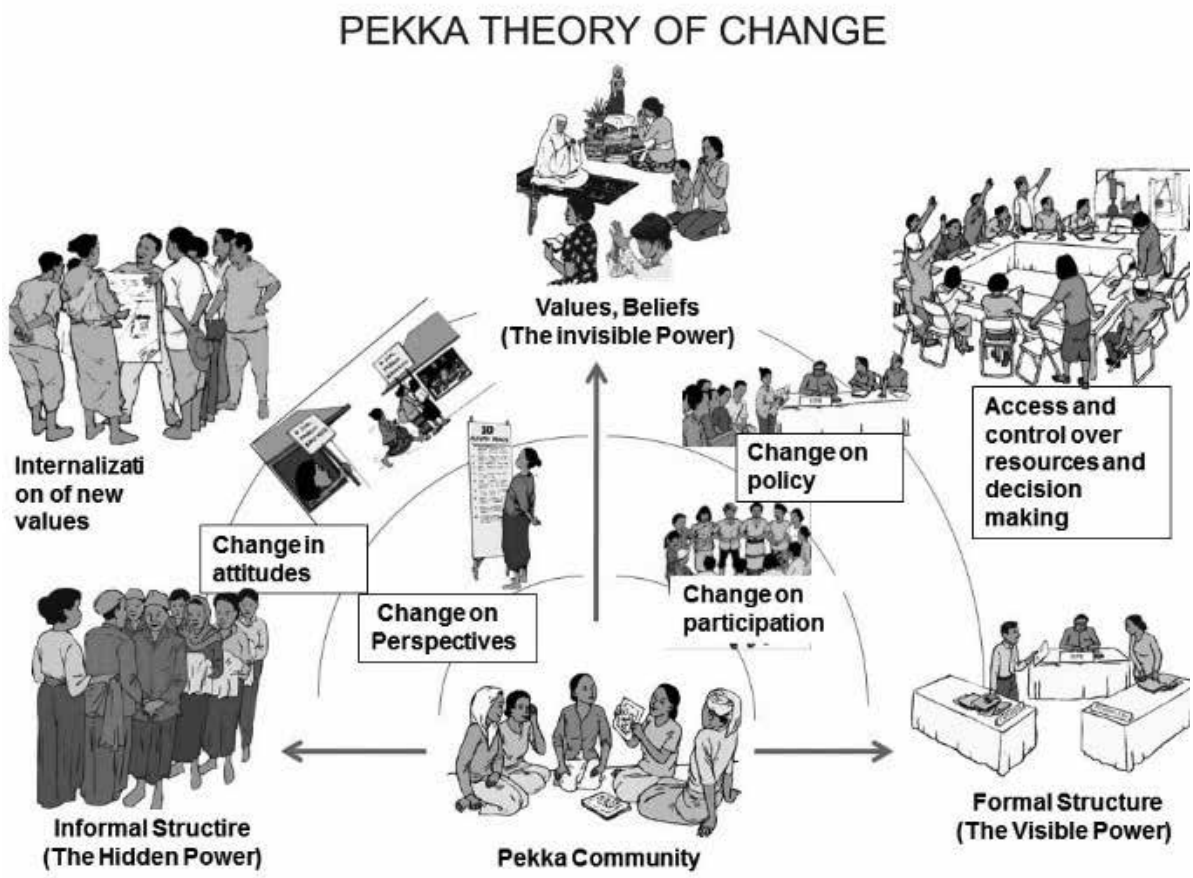

FIGURE 3.3 • PEKKA's theory of change (Sources: PEKKA; Zulminarni et al. 2018, 11)

fully promote women's rights. Even if international norms exist as far as women's rights are concerned, the member of the secretariat discussed that PEKKA operates more on changing Indonesian society from the below.

Interventions for Women's Rights in Indonesia

To concretize these objectives and goals, PEKKA has several interventions to promote women's welfare in Indonesian society. One of the interventions promoted by PEKKA to improve the state of women's rights in Indonesia was the mobilization of women through the establishment of cooperatives, where they must go and introduce the program to women one-by-one (Zulminarni et al. 2018; PEKKA Secretariat 2018). These cooperatives provided alternative sources of funds for women through the movement (Zulminarni et al. 2018). However, the initiative received backlash from loan sharks and local elites running women programs before the existence of PEKKA (Zulminarni et al. 2018). And based on the inputs of the members of the PEKKA union, they primarily joined PEKKA because of their services and their help (PEKKA Union Members 2018).

As part of promoting women's rights in Indonesia, PEKKA provides leadership training for women in the communities. Called *Paradigta* Academy, the program seeks to capacitate women "for community engagement, public deliberation, and decision-making" (Zulminarni et al. 2018, 20).[5] The program's

[5] According to Zulminarni et al. (2018, 20), "Paradigta comes from an ancient Javanese word meaning 'a woman who stands tall and strong.' "

modules help women from basic skills such as reading and writing to managing one's village (Zulminarni et al 2018). The training school spearheaded by PEKKA was first established in Nusa Tenggara Timur (East Nusa Tenggara) and spread across different areas of Indonesia such as Sulawesi, Aceh, and Jakarta in Java Island; other schools were also created in Nusa Tenggara Barat (West Nusa Tenggara), Moluccas, Central Java, and West Kalimantan (PEKKA Secretariat 2018). Based on the views of the PEKKA Union members, the leadership training gave them confidence to pursue the needs of women in their society.

Furthermore, PEKKA's documentation of the socioeconomic conditions of their members shows that it is also impossible for these women to afford the education their children need. For instance, the cost to PEKKA members of sending their children to school ranges from 51% to 178% of a family's income (ibid.).[6] Poverty therefore does not help women-headed households to send their children to schools. Because of this, PEKKA provides education for the children of these parents, as discussed by members of the PEKKA Secretariat in the interview.

But leadership training and education is not sufficient to address the situation of women in Indonesia. As one of their initiatives to promote women's rights, the organization has gathered pertinent data to highlight how widespread women's issues are (Zulminarni et al. 2018). As explained during the interview, government data are not enough to highlight the reality of the situation of women in Indonesia, thus PEKKA gathered their own data to help the government or to show to the government the implications of their inaction on the issues (PEKKA Secretariat 2018). Moreover, PEKKA has also been advocating for the government to recognize and to update definitions of heads of household to be gender-neutral to reflect the reality on the ground (Zulminarni et al. 2018). Based on what PEKKA gathered on the ground and shared by PEKKA to the research team, 49% of PEKKA members are considered to be poorest of the poor, and 57% of women heads of household are illiterate (PEKKA Secretariat 2018). In this regard, PEKKA was able to objectively assess what interventions are needed to promote women's welfare in the society.

Another reality that PEKKA faced in the course of their service is that women lack pertinent legal services, which are crucial for the actualization of their rights both as women and as citizens of Indonesia. Many of their members, as discussed during the interview, lack pertinent documents such as divorce papers, since many of the marriages are religious in nature (PEKKA Union Members 2018). As discussed in the literature earlier and as pointed out by PEKKA Secretariat members, religious marriages and divorce processes, unless registered under the processes of the state, are not recognized to begin with. These have implications for the wellbeing of women and their family, including the lack of a birth certificate for their children. Legal services are highly needed as the lack of children's documents such as birth certificates enables young children to get married young (PEKKA Secretariat 2018).

Providing legal services for women and their family was made possible as PEKKA was able to successfully argue their point at the Indonesian Supreme Court; thus, it paved the way for the government to allot funding for women to access their pertinent documents (Curnow 2015; PEKKA Secretariat 2018). Aside from the Supreme Court, PEKKA was also able to establish linkages with religious courts to provide legal services for women (Zulminarni et al. 2018). Mobile clinics for legal processes were initiated by PEKKA to make legal access for women much easier (ibid.). As shared by one of the members of the PEKKA Union, while it was difficult for them to secure the certificate of their children, PEKKA made their access towards these services easier through their mobile clinics (PEKKA Union Members 2018).

[6] Based on PEKKA's data, 51% of a family's income is needed to finish elementary school, 140% for junior high school, and 178% for high school.

On PEKKA and the Promotion of Women's Rights and Welfare

Since PEKKA's formation in 2001, it has now been able to reach almost all of the areas of Indonesia. Many activities have been implemented by PEKKA to promote women's welfare across different areas of the state, especially education and legal services—which are vital for Indonesian women to be able to minimize the gap, as reported in the World Economic Forum data. The discussion below will tackle the viewpoints of women in terms of their issues, as well as their viewpoints with regard to the services rendered by PEKKA towards them, and how their lives have changed due to PEKKA. Lastly, a discussion will be devoted to why this particular endeavor is a feminist and an alternative practice.

PEKKA and the Promotion of Women's Rights in the Society

Given the activities mentioned by PEKKA, the participants of the study have mentioned that the presence of PEKKA in their lives is very positive. One of the members, for instance, has pointed out that through PEKKA, they were able to gain confidence. In spite of the positive impact of PEKKA to their lives, they were able to realize that the concerns are actually structural in nature. The second table below will summarize the responses of both the members of the PEKKA Secretariat and the members of their union.

TABLE 3.1 • Thematic coding of the issues and impact of PEKKA as mentioned by the women of PEKKA across different levels[7]

	How women are viewed by society?	Specific problems affecting Women	Actions	Changes
PEKKA Secretariat[8]	Women's issues are structural as policies are codified defining the roles of women in the society. Because of this legal process, women-headed households are actually a taboo under Indonesian society.	Women and gender imbalances are felt at the societal level. Women lack the opportunities to support their families. They also lack access to basic social services such as education and access to pertinent documents.	PEKKA intervened in terms of organizing women, providing leadership training, gathering data, and providing legal services for women and their families.	Members of the PEKKA Secretariat are happy as they help women. They also felt improvement in terms of their skills in community organizing.
PEKKA Union members[9]	Women-headed households are viewed negatively, and are judged by the Indonesian society, as experienced by some of the members of the PEKKA Union.	There are immediate issues and concerns for women at the village level such as lack of access for services and education. They also lack access to financial services.	Members of the PEKKA Union joined the organization and mobilized themselves. They also gather data from the community and help address issues at the community-level.	The impact of PEKKA is positive as they were able to participate in the political practices at the village level. Trust between the local government and PEKKA Union members was established.

[7] Thematic coding summarized by the author based on the interviews and focus group discussions conducted by the research team in Jakarta, Indonesia on October 12, 2018.

[8] The Deputy Director of PEKKA and two staff members of the secretariat were interviewed by the team on October 12, 2018 at PEKKA office in Jakarta, Indonesia.

[9] Two PEKKA Union leaders from Kalimantan and Nusa Tenggara Barat (West Nusa Tenggara) were interviewed by the team on October 12, 2018 at the PEKKA Union Office in Jakarta, Indonesia. The interview was assisted by Romlawati Kamad, Deputy Director of PEKKA.

Views on Women and their Situation. Based on the discussion, PEKKA was able to characterize the imbalances in terms of gender in Indonesia, and they were able to support it by providing data. At the local level, PEKKA Union members discussed that being head of a household is perceived as a negative situation. They further pointed out that members of the society judged women for heading households. Moreover, they shared that they were called out by the members of their community for joining PEKKA and for pursuing activities for the improvement of women's status in their society (PEKKA Union Members 2018). For PEKKA, this is basically caused by structural problems in Indonesia as Indonesia still has restrictive laws (PEKKA Secretariat 2018). This translates to economic problems and problems in accessing basic social services from the Indonesian government, based on the interviews conducted by the team (ibid.).

While PEKKA gathers data both at the national and local levels, one participant from PEKKA Union discussed that in her experience, the local government authorities questioned the validity of the data they gathered (PEKKA Union Members 2018). Nevertheless, the participant from West Kalimantan mentioned that the local government keeps working with them. In this regard, both the secretariat and the members of the union recognized the cross-sectionality of issues felt at the societal and individual levels in Indonesia.

Interventions. Given this, PEKKA was able to promote the welfare of women and was able to intervene in the problems. PEKKA has acted for the welfare of women in terms of education and leadership training, as well as gathering and using data to promote the welfare of Indonesian women (Zulminarni et al. 2018). Aside from these activities, PEKKA was also able to successfully lobby for women inclusion in the Indonesian Supreme Court and religious courts, which reacted in their favor (PEKKA Secretariat 2018; Zulminarni et al. 2018). Because of the change of this policy, the secretariat intervened in order to democratize access to pertinent social and legal services, thereby making them more available to women.

And for the PEKKA Union, one member from West Kalimantan shared that the data they gathered helped the local government promote further inclusion of women through the provision of health insurance covering women-headed households in the area (PEKKA Union Members 2018). The member from West Kalimantan further elaborated that the inclusion to the local government's health insurance was the result of PEKKA Union members filing a petition to the local government regarding the non-inclusion of women-headed households in the insurance scheme by a medical practitioner overseeing the project (ibid.). And from the experience of the member of the PEKKA Union from Nusa Tenggara Barat (West Nusa Tenggara), she was able to get the certificate of her children, which were very difficult to secure because of red tape in the bureaucracy before PEKKA's intervention (ibid.).

Impact. One of the positive impacts PEKKA has brought to the lives of these women is that the organization was able to change the worldviews of these women. For instance, one of the participants from PEKKA Union has mentioned that she views single-parenthood as a curse and thinks of their faults as reasons why their husbands left them in the first place. She further shared that through PEKKA's intervention, she was able to realize that it was not her fault that her husband left her; it's her husband's problem why he chose to be disloyal in the first place (ibid.). Moreover, PEKKA was able to help them achieve more in the society, as they were trained to be leaders from their respective communities (ibid.).

Because of PEKKA's intervention, one of the members of the PEKKA Union remarked that they were able now to help other women in the society and are now running for village positions to help them advance the cause of PEKKA further (ibid.). In fact, one of the members of PEKKA ran in the local elections and won despite opposition from more conservative people in their community (Zulminarni et al. 2018). These women were able to rise again despite the horrible experience that occurred. For instance, one member from West Nusa Tenggara shared that she was abandoned by her husband in

a foreign land, which led to her incarceration before being sent back to Indonesia (PEKKA Union Members 2018).

And for the PEKKA Secretariat (2018), one of their members shared that it makes her happy that she was able to promote women's welfare. She also shared that through her experience with PEKKA, she was able to feel empowerment as she was able to go to the field and interact with members of the PEKKA Union during field activities (ibid.). Aside from this, the deputy director of PEKKA mentioned that the secretariat team was also able to help members of the PEKKA Union to share these negative experiences by helping them publish their stories (ibid.). By documenting these cases, this will help people further understand how prevalent these cases are.

In spite of these successes and the positive impact that PEKKA has brought for these women, the secretariat has recognized that they still have a long way to go in order to mainstream women's rights in Indonesia. They were able to provide these services, but nevertheless recognize that the system has to change in order to fully emancipate women from their respective issues (ibid.). And for PEKKA Union members (2018), they shared that they were still judged by conservative women for the services they rendered for women's welfare. And for the organization itself, it was mentioned that conservative forces are calling out PEKKA for their initiatives (PEKKA Secretariat 2018). To secure the gains that PEKKA had through the years, the key takeaways from their experience discussed that there is a need to address social inclusion, help build foundation for participation, document evidence to highlight cases of inequality, and establish linkages with allies to help promote these advocacies (Zulminarni et al. 2018).

PEKKA as Both a Feminist and as an Alternative Practice

As stated explicitly, PEKKA adheres to feminist values in the promotion of women's welfare (Zulminarni et al. 2018). And because of the following framework, it was able to uncover that the problem of women is structural, and gender inequality permeates at the level of individuals and private spheres. As pointed out by Devasahayam (2018), feminist analysis helps break the dichotomy between public and private spheres, which are normally left out when it comes to political analysis. Since these issues are felt by women, PEKKA organized women in order to uplift their conditions in the society and promoted activities and initiatives that cater to the needs of women (Zulminarni et al. 2018).

Aside from PEKKA's case being feminist, it is also an example of a case of alternative development. Based on the criteria set by Raina (1997), PEKKA's actions were able to promote women empowerment by building its base through cooperatives. Moreover, PEKKA's actions were able to provide services such as education and legal integration, despite their being part of the mainstream processes. However, what made PEKKA's case compelling as an alternative practice is the reality of Indonesian society where women are recognized to be managers of the household under the law, which created the inequality Indonesia is facing today as far as gender issues are concerned. Furthermore, while political analysis pointed out the unilateral role of the state in terms of decision making, PEKKA's case was able to challenge this.[10] As pointed out by Blackburn (2004), the state should not be considered as an all-powerful actor, and that women groups are important to help shape the discourse of women in the society.

Overall, the experience of PEKKA was able to point out how the organization was successful in promoting the welfare of women in Indonesian society despite the challenges they faced. PEKKA's case was able to exemplify how their experience is a feminist endeavor, as enshrined in their principles. It

[10] Katznelson and Milner (2002), in an attempt to discuss the parameters of political science as a field of study, had focused on the discussion of the state as the primary locus of the field.

FIGURE 3.4 • A PEKKA member weaving together with the PEKKA Team and the UP CIDS AltDev researchers (Photo courtesy of the author)

was also able to exemplify how their experience can be considered as an alternative practice as it seeks to challenge the dominant paradigm on gender inequality in Indonesian society in the present.

Concluding Remarks

While international agreements promote women's rights across the globe, its implementation at the local level varies. In Indonesia, for instance, the literature has pointed out that global and local forces are still contradicting each other as far as women's rights are concerned. Given this, Indonesian women themselves are mobilizing in order to ensure their rights. PEKKA, as a national and women-led organization, seeks to uphold women's rights across different levels.

PEKKA has been instrumental in providing necessary services towards the actualization of women's rights through leadership training, education, and legal services. As pointed in the discussion earlier, these issues do not only affect women but also their children. Moreover, poor women in Indonesia are in a much more vulnerable situation as they have less resources to access essential services to promote the welfare of the household.

With emphasis on the experiences of women both at the public and private levels, the case of PEKKA was able to highlight that it is a feminist study. While normal discussions of power focus on the role of the state as discussed in Katznelson and Milner (2002), PEKKA's case helps to locate politics across different levels, including the private sphere. Thus, feminism as an analytical tool helps demystify the dichotomy between private and public affairs, as argued by scholars such as Devasahayam (2018).

Aside from PEKKA's case's being feminist, it is also an example of an alternative practice. As pointed out by Raina (1997), it should be able to integrate itself against the dominant paradigm, for it to be recognized as an alternative, which PEKKA was successfully able to do so.

Indonesia still has a long way to go in promoting the wellbeing of women in its society. However, it does not mean that these will not improve over time. The case of PEKKA should make society realize that it is important to discuss women's rights. And given that alternative practices are usually located at the marginal levels of society, states and other organizations can learn from PEKKA's experience, especially with respect to women's mobilization towards the actualization of women's rights. Moreover, PEKKA's case should also help states realize that they should not be complacent with their current objectives and should do more to fully incorporate women's rights in the society.

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Carving Spaces for Alternative Learning

4

The Rural Internship Training Program in Sarawak, Malaysia

ANDREW AERIA[1]

Introduction

The Rural Internship Training Program (RITP) originated from a growing concern at the overall direction of university training in Malaysia.[2] Over the last 30 years, not unlike other universities around the world and very much in line with the rise of neoliberalism globally since the Thatcher-Reagan years, the social ethos and values of Malaysian universities have undergone a major transformation.

Once dynamic, socially conscious institutions filled with intellectual ferment and student activism, Malaysian universities have transitioned today into academically laidback institutions that prize and promote individualism, corporate identification, and wealth accumulation. The revolution in digital technologies has not helped either. While access to information and knowledge has exploded, digital technology has generally also promoted intellectual laziness, academic shortcuts, plagiarism, and self-centered narcissism instead of promoting a reading culture, academic rigor, critical awareness, and social responsibility. Mediocrity is pervasive among academic staff and students in Malaysian universities. Intellectual curiosity and personal initiative are rare. Social analysis is rarer still and a desire to "remake and transform the world into something better" nigh absent. Indeed, the rise of our digital society has also seen the focus of much social science research move from the real world into doing virtual research in the digital realm.

This dumbing down of universities and graduates has led to a serious mismatch of graduate skills with the needs of industry and that of our larger society. Students today generally are apathetic, timid, and eschew asserting themselves let alone championing any social cause. The influx of Saudi Arabian funding into supporting the development of conservative Islam has also spawned a very narrow (read:

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[2] I am deeply grateful to all the students from the Faculty of Social Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, who had the courage and tenacity to join this RITP. It was they who made the RITP. But arguably, the RITP also made them. This article therefore is their article. I write it on their behalf and in dedication to them all.

Wahhabi) form of Islam in the country which prioritizes form over substance, rhetoric over thoughtful speech (Ahmad Fauzi 2009).

Complicating matters, the present emphasis of university training in Malaysia has focused on meeting the needs of the corporate world with little effort spent on meeting society's needs. Consequently, internship training in Malaysian universities has largely concentrated on preparing graduates for corporate careers; the internship being a period to be spent in an air-conditioned office (preferably!) to expose and introduce students to the world of work. Given the way universities support and are supine to the corporate agenda, one could almost be made to believe that no work occurred outside the corporate office!

The tragedy of such an approach within the social sciences has led students to being more inclined to seek well-paying jobs in a cushy, temperature-controlled environment instead of them being attuned to complex social issues (like poverty, discrimination, marginalization, crime, social neglect, etc.) or made aware of interesting social phenomena that give communities their specific identity (like social histories, language, belief systems, gender relations, land, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, etc.) or even equipping students with the rudiments of good social science training (like theoretical perspective, research methods, questionnaire preparation, observation skills, people handling, data collection and interpretation, report writing, etc.).

It was within this context that after having been an academic in university for 20 years, I came to conclude in 2014 that the present-day system of university education and internship training was failing our social science students from becoming competent and analytically-sound social researchers.

FIGURE 4.1 • Writing in student journals under solar light (Photo courtesy of the author)

I realized that we were not graduating students with the necessary skill sets, policy perspectives, training, and ethics needed to ensure the continuation of good social science thinking and analysis that would complement physical and other socio-economic developments. Instead of developing theoretically-grounded, analytical, perceptive, and socially-aware students, we were graduating students with a sense of bland acceptance of society and even a listless anomie about their own life paths and roles in society.

This forced me to stop and question myself. We are training social science students. But what are we training our social science students *for?* Was university social science training designed to expose students to the uniformity of the market or to life in all its multiple diversities? Was university social science training designed to mould students into unquestioning narcissistic robots filled with a hunger for wealth accumulation or to push them into realizing their own compassionate humanity with a love for society, our environment, and hunger for knowledge? Was it to form social science students who fear and kowtow to the authoritarian state OR to courageously challenge the authoritarian state to realize a more democratic and compassionate society respectful of human rights? I felt that there must be a better way to nurture competent and thoughtful social science students.

Consequently, with support from a few equally concerned faculty members, an alternative internship training Program was developed that aimed at reviving the whole range of traditional social science training presently not emphasized in campus. As well, I hoped that the alternative internship experience would expose students to and also generate a sense of empathy among them for other (marginalized) communities, which they would not otherwise come into contact with in their university training, let alone their lifetimes. The RITP was thus mooted in 2015.

The Rural Internship Training Program

In designing the RITP, I was inspired by my own experiences as an undergraduate who underwent social exposure-immersion programs and social analysis training when I was an active member of the Malaysian Catholic student movement and the International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS). As well, I was inspired by the 1961 Cuban Literacy Program (Supko 1998; Lakhani 2010) except that this time I wanted the rural folk to teach the students their indigenous language and share their indigenous knowledge, not vice-versa. After all, did not the Cuban literacy Program "raise the social consciousness of Cuba's youth?" And did not the Cuban students sent to the "most remote corners of Cuba to teach literacy" also end up being "educated by the experience?" (DuRand 2005).

I thus decided that the RITP must focus on language training and be research-based to occupy the student-intern's time in the village (for 8 to 10 weeks). It would involve copious note-taking in the traditional manner of pen and notebook. And the tougher the internship conditions in the remote villages, the better for student-interns. Indeed, the RITP was promoted among students as "The Internship of Doom!" with catchphrases like "Do you like to read novels? Do you consider yourself to be a modern Indiana Jones? Are you seeking adventure? Do you like to watch the stars at night?" It was my panacea to present-day university students who are often addicted and glued to their handphones instead of being focused on the colourful diversity of society, the environment and their relationship to it.

The RITP had the following four key objectives. Firstly, it aimed to expose and immerse social science students into the diversity of non-market livelihoods, rural cultures, value systems, and living environments; secondly to train students to be good social science researchers in the real world, having a sense of empathy, understanding, solidarity, and belonging with marginalized communities; thirdly to channel students towards non-corporate careers working with and amongst marginalized peoples; and lastly to help students get in touch with themselves and to realize different "alternative" values.

From 2015 to 2019 inclusive, we ran five cohorts of the RITP for 25 student-interns in ten different rural communities.[3] All these villages were rural, remote, and marginalized communities on account of various factors like geographic distance, vindictive politics, lack of public amenities and infrastructure, poverty, neglect, deforestation, dam inundation, etc. Of these interns, 19 were women and only six were men. This dearth of men was due to most male applicants declining the internship offer as it did not pay any monthly stipend! Of the 10 villages, three were Penan; three were Kenyah; two Iban; and two Bidayuh.

The RITP Research 'Tools'

Being research-based, the RITP is designed around a set of focus areas and research tools. Interns are required to undertake a comprehensive village survey (covering areas like demography, occupation/employment, household income and expenditure, educational levels, physical household assets, health status and illnesses, food intake, voter registration status, public amenities, social issues, environmental resources, work tools and ancestral artifacts, etc.). The interns also are required to be attentive to intangible cultural heritage like oral history, traditional music and dance, weaving and painting arts, culture, and religious beliefs. They also are required to document genealogies of various families within the village. As well, they were required to produce a hand-drawn physical and environmental resource map of the village which they would share with the villagers so as to allow the villagers a good visual representation of their village as well as their common economic and environmental resources.

The interns spent a week to 10 days preparing to collect data prior to entering their village. During this week or so, they were briefed about the key objectives of their internship. They also learned about their host's ethnic/cultural background, their community's historical migratory movements, how to draw genealogical charts, how to draw rivers via fishbone representations, how to operate and take Global Positioning System (GPS) readings, basic first aid, behavior in the village and how to relate to villagers, how to take notes, sex and relationships, etc. Appendix 1 is a general program schedule for the interns in their first week of the RITP. They were also introduced to four key tools/skills for their internship experience, namely language, paper notebook, personal journal, and databook to help them succeed in their work in the village. The fifth tool/skill of report-writing they learned after they returned from their village internships. These tools have proved invaluable to the RITP.[4] Additionally, to ensure that these tools really worked, the interns were barred from using their mobile phones to access WhatsApp messaging, Facebook, Instagram, or other digital platforms.[5] This was to ensure minimal distraction by social media during the internship training. At the end of the first week of RITP, the interns would be paired into teams of two individuals. Each intern team was then placed in a remote rural village.

The RITP required the interns to immerse themselves socially into their respective communities. To do so, they had to learn the local village language as the primary research tool to help them communicate with villagers. Villagers were thus requested to speak to the interns in their local language as much as possible. Although difficult at first, the results of all previous internships indicate that the interns ended

[3] The first four cohorts comprised 19 interns. In 2019, as this paper was being written, six more interns were placed in three more villages.

[4] For the purpose of this paper, I use the words "tools" and "skills" interchangeably since the skill is also the tool of investigation and vice versa.

[5] In many cases, the villages the interns were placed in had no telephone or internet connectivity on account of being very isolated. Where available, mobile phones were for emergency use only. In all other cases, handwritten notes and letters were the norm and strongly encouraged.

FIGURE 4.2 • A visit from the Flying Doctor service (Photo courtesy of the author)

up crash learning the local language, often with their own homemade language phrasebook that ran into hundreds of words. They were able to speak and hold basic conversations with villagers within a month. Via the local language, the interns were able to research comfortably and to communicate with all as adopted members of the village community. As well, basic command of the local language by the interns allowed villagers to communicate reasonably well with the interns on their own terms without having to use any English or Malay, which many villagers (especially women) were uncomfortable with. Such a perspective on language as a tool of research is not unheard of to anthropologists and social science scholars of yesteryears. Unfortunately, the present widespread use of English and Malay as the sole language of teaching, learning, and research in many market-oriented university faculties underemphasize the importance of local languages. This has not adequately prepared social science students to mature as serious independent researchers and scholars who speak from an immersed perspective and with an ability to see through the eyes of their host-communities. Additionally, present-day social science practitioners often resort to the ubiquitous lengthy questionnaire or the hit-and-run focus group discussion method to gather data (and often superficial data at best) which does not adequately reflect the depth and complexity of social reality.

The second core training tool of the RITP was that interns were required to jot down onto a paper notebook "everything" they encountered in the village throughout their research. This was insisted upon since old-fashioned paper notebooks filled with pencil and ink-scribbled notes, doodles, and sketches are far more practical tools for research in rural areas that have little access to any reliable electricity supply. Paper notebooks are also more versatile with interns able to stuff them into their pockets and go anywhere throughout farms, forests, and rivers. As well, handwritten notes allow for better mental recall

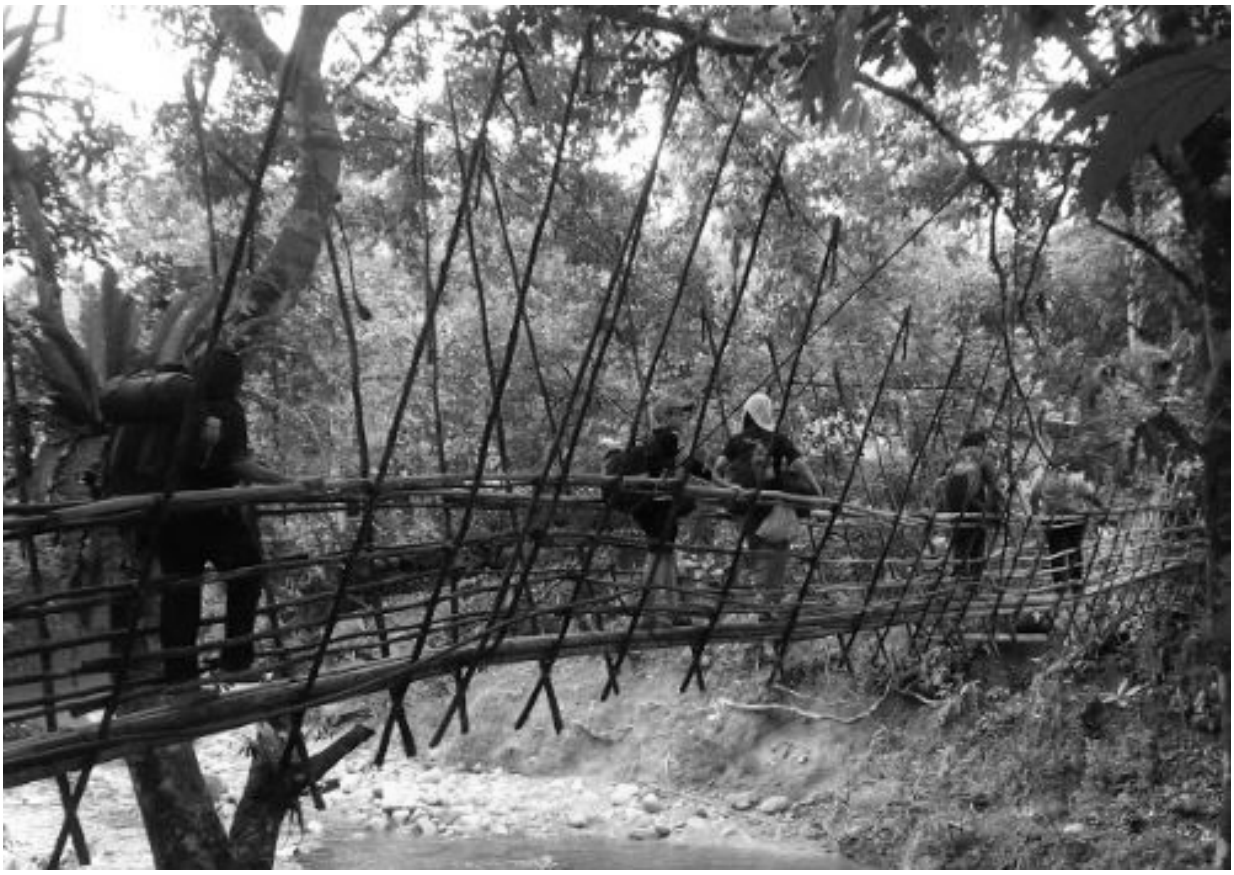

FIGURE 4.3 • Interns walking a bamboo bridge (Photo courtesy of the author)

of details of activities, meetings, discussions, travel, observations, thoughts, ideas, samples, etc. especially when interns are drawing up their data sheets and/or writing up their reports. And to villagers, the paper notebook is less intimidating than a flashy mobile phone, a voice recorder, or computer. Indeed, if at all used, the mobile phone was utilized as a handy camera or video recorder in the village, one with a replay button that entertained villagers. All the notes, doodles, and sketches in the paper notebook then formed the first "raw, messy, unfiltered, and unvarnished" account of their research. It was these notes, doodles, and sketches that the interns would rely upon as the factual basis for substantiating their academic research and which they used to fill their databook and their personal journals.

The third core training tool imparted to the interns was writing their personal journal. Although similar in that it had to be handwritten, the personal journal was different from the paper notebook since it encapsulated in detail the daily activities, thoughts, reflections, and feelings of the interns from the beginning right until the end of their internship. In this personal journal, interns were free to pour out their hearts and souls, thoughts, ideas, reflections, suggestions, their feelings of joy, and their frustrations. Here in their journals they sketched the forest, trees, houses, animals, people, etc. that they encountered during the period of their research internship. Here too in their journals they pasted strange leaves, sticks, seeds and plants, insects, and even tiny soil samples that they had collected to remind them of their research endeavors. Being a daily task, the interns soon compiled a very personalized account of their time in the village as a research intern—a personalized diary that complemented their research data and which would always be available to them (and to the world) in hard copy as a lifelong testament and memory to their intrepid adventure among rural communities.

The fourth core training tool of this RITP was the intern team's databook. In this, all the data collected by the intern teams were systematically logged and stored in two general sections. Firstly,

all statistical data collected over two months on individual households were compiled comprising detailed information about the population and number of households in the village, the household's gender breakdown, age, occupation, income, health status and problems, voter registration status, household utensil and amenities, daily food intake, births and deaths, farmland size, agricultural crops and handicrafts produced within each household. Secondly, the intern team's databook would have detailed information about the village in general, namely its forests and environmental resources, its oral history, traditions, folklore, belief systems, musical instruments and dances, and the genealogy of various families or even the origin story of the whole community. All these tangible and intangible cultural resources were collected either by regular observation or via interviews with key elders within the community, as they were the ones who were the repositories of individual and community memory. As well, a list of various issues/problems faced by the village as a whole would be documented. A central component of this databook would be the village map that the intern teams would draw by hand with input from the villagers. This map would show the physical location of each house, workshop, school/clinic (if any), farmland, river/stream, fish pond, animal husbandry hut, forest, and other environmental resources of the village.

The last core training tool of the RITP, but one that the interns only learned after they exited the village on completion of their rural stay, would be their report writing skills. Here, interns were briefed about how to organize all their data thematically so as to produce a final report over a period of one to two weeks. All the respective intern team final reports would contain an Executive Summary, while the full report would be organized into subtopics (complete with relevant photos). A concluding section would detail suggestions for further research. Copies of all their photos, their language phrasebook, notebooks, databook, and personal journals would also be submitted to CIVICA as an essential component of and complement to their final report. Although copies of all materials were lodged with CIVICA for future reference, ownership of all materials nonetheless remained with the interns. There are ongoing discussions presently to publish some of the better work or to compile all the reports into a monograph of field notes.

RITP Views: In the Interns' Own Words

A short questionnaire was circulated in mid-2018 to 12 RITP interns to gather their feedback about their experience of the RITP for this paper.[6] There were ten replies. When asked why the interns signed up for the RITP, most replied that they were curious and wanted an adventurous internship that would challenge them. Some had heard from earlier interns about how interesting and experientially diverse it was, something different from just sitting in an office and photocopying newspapers or answering front office queries of customers. Others were taken in by the RITP marketing slogans of "*Do you like to read novels? Do you consider yourself to be an Indiana Jones?*" One artistically inclined student joined the RITP because she was "attracted to the 'fear of the unknown' and the 'thrills of the uncommon.' She had heard rumours about the RITP and how it would be 'dangerous' for students to be left alone in an unknown rural village." And for most, the RITP did not disappoint although it did challenge.

All the interns responded that they learned new research skills in unfamiliar circumstances that radically challenged their bookish view of research. They also learned about very different rural realities from that of their urban lifestyles and from what they were told on campus. They learned

[6] Only 12 interns from Cohort 1 to Cohort 3 were canvassed for their views. There were seven interns from Cohort 4 in 2018 in the villages at the time this questionnaire was circulated. They were therefore not canvassed. Cohort 5 only began their RITP in late June 2019, which ended in early September 2019.

about hardship, poverty, physical risks, isolation, boredom, fear, and painful decision-making. Many also learned that they often took their lives for granted. Being urbanites, they often emphasized on the importance of money. But in the village, they discovered that individuals' having money was no solution to more urgent issues like the lack of access to proper roads, regular electricity supply, clean water, and mobile phone signals. They realized how difficult it was for villagers to access schools and clinics, many of which were miles away on logging roads or via dangerous river journeys. They also discovered that many of their assumptions were misconceived. They never realized how important forests and rivers were to rural villagers. They discovered that wherever there was a forest, there would always be food like meat, vegetables, fruits, and even clean water from bamboo. They discovered that villagers did not worry so much about money. Instead, villagers worried more about the ongoing loss of their forests (to logging and oil palm plantations) and their rivers (to pollution) and whether their children could have a good life once their forests, rivers, and lands were gone.

They also realized the importance of rural development and the contribution of smallholder agriculture to the local and regional economics. They discovered that many villages only had old people and young children staying in them. The working adults mainly worked in distant towns and only returned to the village during weekends and long holidays. They realized that village life was quiet, humdrum, and boring.

Although many felt daunted at first, all learned a new language. And they were certainly proud of this especially when fluent native speakers expressed their admiration of their new-found language skills. All learned about native customary land issues and the problems that arise due to oil palm plantation expansion that results in conflicts and extensive loss of native lands. As one intern noted, "How many peoples' homes and livelihoods were sacrificed for this plantation? I just find that greed is really very, very scary."

Others appreciated the simple lifestyle of villagers. As urbanites who never understood why people in the village seemed to enjoy their boring routines, they emerged more appreciative of village life as "not that there is not much to do, it's just that you need to find your own activity." For one intern, the RITP was a "unique life experience journey that really opened my eyes regarding the hardship yet simple lifestyle of the villagers. It made me appreciate life itself."

Some learned how to take GPS readings and map key locations in and around the village.[7] Others learned how to catch fish and birds like villagers do. Others discovered beauty and meaning behind cultural and religious rituals. Farmlands, rivers, and waterfalls once only given a cursory glance or passing thought in tutorial classes were now interesting places for them to explore. Each location had its own story.

Others learned "what true vulnerability looks like… When fear struck me at my most vulnerable time, I learnt to accept it and leaned on my partner's shoulders. From that too, I learnt that I was able to work together professionally to a common goal despite personal issues and differences." Working in a partnership was a lesson many took to heart; helping, caring, and supporting each other through thick and thin during the weeks in isolation from their usual support systems. Many thus learned about themselves and improved their interpersonal skills. Some learned how to talk and significantly, how to be curious. "Yes people laughed at me, and I felt embarrassed for constantly asking 'stupid' questions. But only through asking, I got to know what I wanted to know!" Others realized that the villagers genuinely cared for them, showered them with love and kindness that made them feel valued—something seldom experienced by them in an urban setting. As another intern noted, "I've learnt that I actually have value,

[7] In some years, this was not possible when we lost some GPS sets while others were spoiled, and we did not have the funds to buy new sets. So, two cohorts lost out.

and have the ability to do something for someone, as long as I am willing to learn. I am also a human, tempted by materials and entertainment. Yet, I've learnt to not put those as priorities in life after this internship. Using the best phone and laptop or being 'pretty' doesn't really interest me anymore. I feel okay with my dark skin and scarred legs after I came out from my village. Totally worth it!" The RITP changed many of the interns. "It changed me to be my better self, to be aware of what's happening around me, and to cherish what I have at all times. I began to explore more about the indigenous culture of Sarawak and to learn their languages (if possible), as their knowledge can never be learnt from a book."

Many interns also were shocked at the deeply patriarchal way of living in rural villages. Many of the women interns got really annoyed. They realized that in the village, men often were the decision makers and who gave out information to others. Women (especially the younger ones) played more domestic roles of serving tea and cooking. They also discovered that villagers tended to engage in serious ethnic stereotyping of certain urban ethnic communities as "rich" and "greedy." Drunken behavior, the scourge of alcohol, and sexual harassment in villages also made deeply intrusive and stressful impressions on some interns.

In other words, many emerged more mature, independent, and alive after their RITP experience. Many were emotionally tougher. They formed an ability to look at different perspectives for most issues, especially about development. They had learned about doing research and had discovered friendships and surrogate families in their villages. But most importantly, they had also learned a lot about themselves, about their own resilience and courage in the face of rural adversity and daily humdrum boredom.

FIGURE 4.4 • Into the forest with study materials (Photo courtesy of the author)

Conclusion

What the RITP suggests is that what present-day social science students learn in university is but a shadow of social reality. It remains too theoretical and impractical. They do not know enough of what is happening in real life. They certainly need to get out and dirty their hands and feet. And it does bear fruit.

Of the 19 interns who have participated in the RITP since 2015, one works with her mother in the family business. Four work in the commercial sector. Three have just graduated and are working as part-time researchers while they seek permanent work. One just completed his Master's degree and is also seeking university work. But ten are now working with various issue-based civil society organizations, mainly in Kuala Lumpur and in various towns in Sarawak. The numbers speak for themselves. And it can be attributed to the interns becoming self-aware of their identity and role in society.

Indeed, for many interns, two months in the RITP was not enough. It was a bittersweet experience which was too short. Still, it made them realize that as "privileged persons, they should do something more to help the villagers. Or at least to bring their voices out of the woods, to let others know who they are, acknowledge their rights to land, to the forests, and above all, to the basic amenities that we all have in towns."

As one intern noted, "What is development to us if what we take is less than what we give?"

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Appendix

Schedule of Activities

<table>
<tr><th>Time</th><th>June 17
(Monday)</th><th>June 18
(Tuesday)</th><th>June 19
(Wednesday)</th><th>June 20
(Thursday)</th><th>June 21
(Friday)</th></tr>
<tr><td>9.00 a.m.–
10.30 a.m.</td><td>• Introductions and Expectations
• RITP Overview
• Photos and Social Media Addresses</td><td rowspan="3">Health Clinic Check-up</td><td>• Ethnic Groups of Sarawak
• Culture and Rituals</td><td>Briefing on Personal Accident (PA) Insurance and Safety; Family/ Emergency Contact; RITP Agreement; Rabies; Medicines; Any Other Business</td><td>Field Methods in a Rural Community</td></tr>
<tr><td>10.30 a.m.–
11.00 a.m.</td><td>Tea Break</td><td>Tea Break</td><td>Tea Break</td><td>Tea Break</td></tr>
<tr><td>11.00 a.m.–
12.30 p.m.</td><td>Researching the Village I: Your Research Focus and Tools</td><td>• Penan Resources
• Drawing Rivers and Maps</td><td>• Former Intern’s Sharing
• Challenges You Will Face!</td><td>Field Methods (continuation)</td></tr>
<tr><td>12.30 p.m.–
2.00 p.m.</td><td>Lunch</td><td>Lunch</td><td>Lunch</td><td>Lunch</td><td>Lunch</td></tr>
<tr><td>2.00 p.m.–
3.15 p.m.</td><td>Researching the Village II: Your Research Focus and Tools</td><td rowspan="3">Researching the Village III: Spider Network Analysis; Samples of Notebook, Personal Journal, Databook, Maps; Handphone as Camera only</td><td>Doing Genealogy</td><td rowspan="3">Shopping for Stuff</td><td>Rivers, Forests, and Communities</td></tr>
<tr><td>3.15 p.m.–
3.45 p.m.</td><td>Tea Break</td><td>Tea Break/ Malaria Pills</td><td>Tea Break</td></tr>
<tr><td>3.45 p.m.–
5.00 p.m.</td><td>Medicines Needed (First Aid Kit and Vitamins, Mosquito Repellent, Tiger Balm, etc.)</td><td>• Introduction to Villages
• Personal Stuff Needed
• Sex and Relationships
• Dealing with Boredom
• Planting Native Trees</td><td>GPS Basics</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><th>Time</th><th>June 22
(Saturday)</th><th>June 23
(Sunday)</th><th>June 24
(Monday)</th><th>June 25
(Tuesday)</th></tr>
<tr><td>9.00 a.m.–
12.30 p.m.</td><td>Overnight Field Trip</td><td>• Forming the Teams!
• Travel Back to CIVICA</td><td rowspan="6">Rest Day/Final Preparations/Last-Minute Shopping</td><td rowspan="6">Depart for Villages</td></tr>
<tr><td>12.30 p.m.–
2.00 p.m.</td><td>Lunch</td><td>Lunch</td></tr>
<tr><td>2.00 p.m.–
5.00 p.m.</td><td>GPS Field Practicum</td><td rowspan="3">Inputting GPS Data into Google Earth Pro</td></tr>
<tr><td>5.00 p.m.–
7.00 p.m.</td><td>Rest and Swim in River</td></tr>
<tr><td>7.00 p.m.–
onwards</td><td>BBQ</td></tr>
</table>

Students' Research Focus

Village demographics, socio-economic situation, environmental resource, health and social issues, census:

- Demography: Full census of village population
- Educational achievement
- Occupation and income
- Housing and village amenities
- Health issues
- Daily food and nutrition intake (all individuals within families)
- Village natural resource inventory (via GPS mapping)
- Work (agriculture and animal husbandry; daily work log of men and women)
- Traditions, cultural practices, and taboos
- Genealogy and oral history of the village (interview with knowledgeable elders)
- Folklore, origin myths, and legends (interview with shaman)
- Handicrafts and traditional foods
- Music, art, and religion
- Social issues and environmental challenges facing children and adults (men and women)
- Hand drawing of village map
- Gender roles and social status (men vs. women)
- Hopes and dreams for the future

Students' Research Tools

- Your brain!
- Five senses
- Pen
- Notebook
- Databook
- Personal journal
- Camera
- GPS set
- Basic questions (the five Ws: *who, what, when, where, why*)

5

Building a Village
The aMP3's Music for Change

ASIAN MUSIC FOR PEOPLES' PEACE AND PROGRESS[1]

Context: Building Bridges, Uniting Communities

Culture and music have an important role to play in light of dominant development frameworks operating regionally and even globally. The thrust of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the region, for example, envisions an economic integration framework that is underpinned by the global neoliberal model, which puts economic growth above all other considerations, including sustainable development and human rights. The rise of fascism in the region and elsewhere has also seen democratic spaces becoming smaller and smaller and dissent and resistance are often met with violence and suppression. Thus, culture—and music in particular—has the critical function of serving as a platform for clamor and resistance and of reclaiming democratic/public space.

The Asian Music for Peoples' Peace and Progress (AMP3), a collective of progressive and socially-engaged musicians from Asia, hopes to build such a platform, to "help build bridges that will unite communities of artists into one village—a village of people's music and art." This case study aims to give an overview of aMP3's vision for development through the eyes of its members.

The Rights-based Approach to Music

One of the guiding principles of the collective is the belief that the arts, including music, is a right. Australia-based singer songwriter Bong Ramilo talks about artistic expression as a basic human right.

> *'Yung isang posibleng* approach *'yung* rights-based approach*, kaya lagi ko binabanggit 'yung* Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Sinasabi lahat ng tao may karapatang lumahok at makinabang, at matuwa sa* art and culture*, at makinabang rin sa gawain nila sa* art and culture or *sa* cultural work.
>
> (One approach is the rights-based approach, that is why I always mention Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It says that everyone has the

[1] This chapter was written by writer and documentary producer Leonard Reyes. He is an independent advocacy film producer and photographer. He has done advocacy, research and development communications work for local and regional NGOs. He also plays, sings and writes songs for the Village Idiots. He is currently based in Nueva Ecija, dabbling with organic farming and bamboo craft.

> right to participate in, benefit from, and be entertained by art and culture or cultural work.)

We are more human because we are exercising our right to participate and enjoy culture and the arts, in the same way that we have rights in economic rights, right to health, right to education, right to democracy. It is an equal right.

Chi Suwichan, a musician from the Karen indigenous community in Northern Thailand, describes how music is crucial in preserving identity and asserting cultural space:

> When we talk about music and culture, we have to preserve what we still have. The music is like a glue to make it relevant to each other and to make it relevant to outside and inside. In our community, in the education system in Thailand. The thing that they give us to learn is not relevant to our community. Our children, our young generation, they learn about the Thai society, but they don't learn anything about their own culture. We lose our identity. We lose our confidence. We lose our knowledge. And we lose our rights. So the first, we cannot go to school and say that, "Oh, we have to change the curriculum. We have to change the content. We have to reform" or something like that. We start from music.

The Messenger Band from Cambodia writes about workers' struggles behind the country's garment factory boom.

> Messenger Band was originally born from women garment workers. We could see that there were lots of problems happening particularly for women garment workers in the factory. We saw it as our problem. In the past, there was little encouragement for women garment workers to participate in civic work or other activities. So we couldn't express our voice and concern.
>
> The Messenger Band was initiated by the Women's Agenda for Change. We started to understand that, even though we were workers, we were meant to be protected by the laws. We shouldn't be forced to work like a cow or buffalo. We were meant to be paid a decent wage.
>
> As part of MB, for me, I have changed myself. I become stronger and more courageous. I can speak out my problem, and I also encourage other workers to speak out their problem too.

Bali-based Sandrayati Fay offers a different take on people's music as both a personal and political struggle.

> I grew up with very politically active parents and they still do a lot of work on Indigenous people's rights and environmental issues and, growing up, I always … had this feeling of understanding that I'm here in this world to fight for certain things.
>
> And in a way, it hindered my creative process because I always felt like I had to sing about something that's outside of myself.
>
> And so, my approach is that it's more so about understanding that I actually have personal relationships with all of these issues. I can see that there are people there who are suffering and that, as humanity, as I am a part of that, and understanding that, and I think people can talk about that in a spiritual way, like compassion, understanding compassion, and empathy.

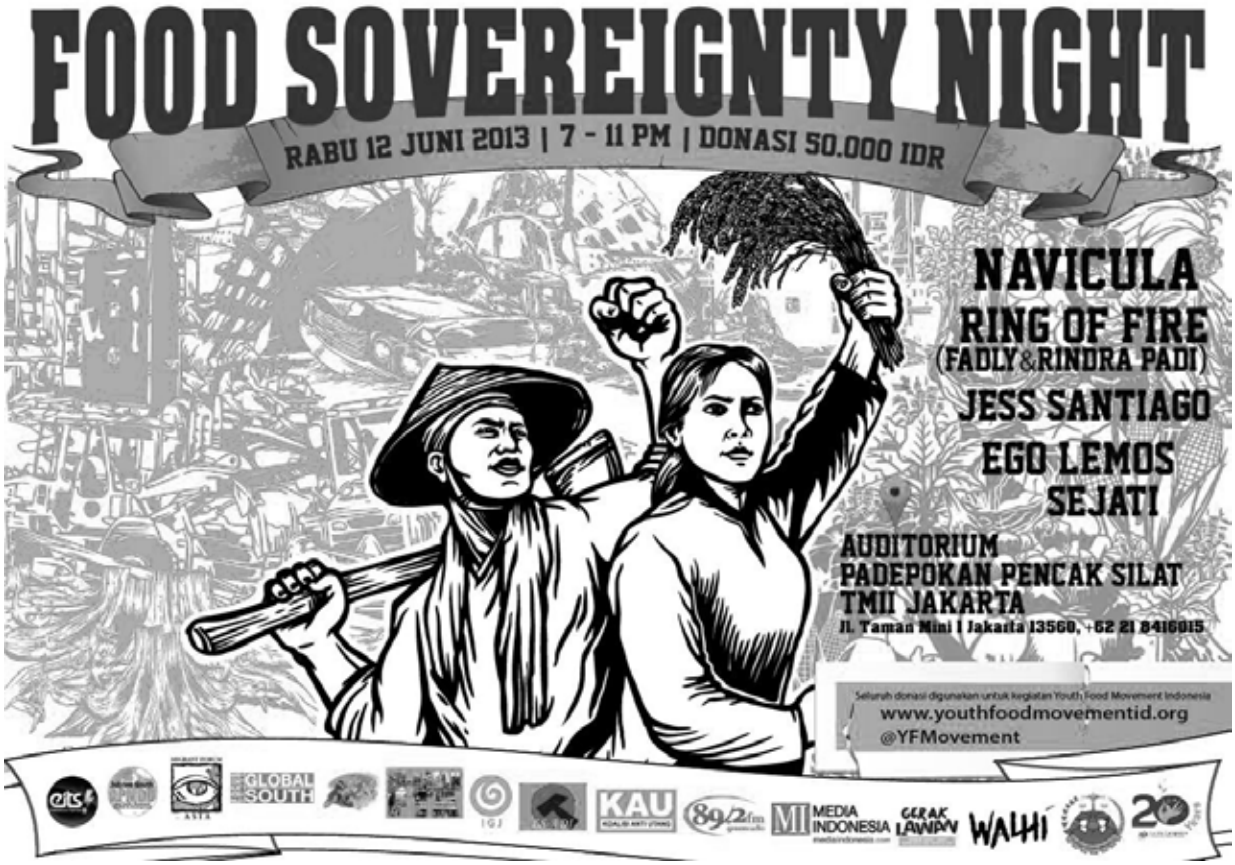

FIGURE 5.1 • Filipino musician Jess Santiago of aMP3 performed with Ego Lemos of Timor Leste and Indonesian bands at the Food Sovereignty Night Concert held on June 12, 2013 in Jakarta, Indonesia (Photo courtesy of aMP3)

AMP3 is also a response and a challenge to the efforts of ASEAN to build regional communities—to likewise build bridges that will unite these communities of artists into one village—a village of people's music and art.

Poet and singer-songwriter Jess Santiago, whose study on music as a venue for development education and advocacy in Southeast Asia became the cornerstone of the aMP3, shares his vision of "The Village."

> *Dito halimbawa sa Pilipinas, 'di tayo nakakarinig ng* Thai music *o ng* Malaysian music or Indonesian*, gayong sila ay kapit-bansa lang natin. Samantalang masigla rin naman ang paglikha ng mga kanta tungkol sa mga nagaganap sa lipunan; halimbawa sa usapin ng ekonomiya, politika. Maganda rin na mapagsama-sama ang mga ito. Maging pamilyar din tayo, halimbawa, sa mga* topical or songs of struggles *sa* Thailand*, sa* Indonesia*, sa mga kalapit nating bansa dito sa* Asia*. Kaya isa ito sa mga nais sanang makamit o magawa ng* aMP3*—makatulong sa pagpapasigla ng musikang may kinalaman sa lipunan. Kasi gusto rin nating makatulong, ika nga, sa paglikha ng, pwede nating sabihing,* Asian consciousness *sa hanay ng mga lumilikha ng musika nang sa gayon, makalikha rin ng* Asian consciousness *sa kani-kanilang mga* audiences*. Kaya ang naging tunguhin nung organisasyon ay gawing pagsama-sama itong mga* like-minded musician *sa* region*, makabuo ng kahit isang maliit lang munang komunidad, nakapagbabahaginan ng mga karanasan, nakapagpapatalakay sa mga isyung may kaugnayan ang sining at ang mga kilusang bayan.*

> (Here in the Philippines, for example, we almost never hear Thai, Malaysian, Indonesian music, even though they are our neighbors. While there is an active community of songwriters there which also talk about what's happening in economics and politics. It would be good if these communities come together. So that we all become familiar with topical songs of struggles in Thailand, in Indonesia, our neighbor countries in Asia. This is one of aMP3's vision and mission, to help in promoting music that speaks about society. We also want to create an Asian consciousness among musicians. So that they, in turn, can also help create an Asian consciousness in their audiences. So our group wants to bring together like-minded musicians in the region, create a community, however small, be able to share experiences and struggles in the arts and peoples' movements in each country.)

AMP3, in its goals of uniting musicians across the region, creating a collective awareness of social issues, and developing an Asian consciousness espouses an alternative form of movement building at the regional level anchored on cultural forms of resistance and solidarity. But much needs to be done.

> Bong Ramilo: *Kaya siguro ang hamon sa ating mga artista saka sa iba pa ay palargahin 'yang paglahok ng lahat sa gawaing pangkultura at sining at makipagtrabaho tayo sa lahat para lahat tayo ay makagawa at makalinang ng sining at kultura.* (The challenge to artists as well as all others is to actively take part in cultural and arts work—collaborate so that we can all create and promote the arts and culture.)

FIGURE 5.1 • The aMP3 launched the album "A Village in the Making: Peoples' Music from Southeast Asia" on June 18, 2019 at the Thai Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) Mini Theater in Bangkok, Thailand (Photo courtesy of aMP3)

Chi Suwichan: The process we do is more important than the product. We also need the process, so music and art is a very powerful tool to do this kind of thing, to do a movement for social change.

Sandrayati Fay: I think there's so much strength and understanding that everything is interconnected, and expressing that in the music is really something that inspires me.

Messenger Band: Because, as citizens, everyone wants a chance to speak. But we see that in reality, not everyone has a chance to send a message to the public. Thus, we as artists, we can bring all the stories and share it to the public so that they can hear all the concerns and issues which are happening in Cambodia.

Jess Santiago: *Makipag-ugnay, makipagtulungan sa mga kapwa, tawag natin mga* socially-engaged musicians *higit na pag-uugnay ng musika sa pakikibaka ng taumbayan*. (Promote linkages, support other socially-engaged musicians, and strengthen the connection between the music and peoples' struggles.)

Reference

Reyes, Leonard. 2018. *Building a Village: The aMP3's Music for Change*. YouTube video, December 9, 2018, 13:41. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbWdqNkIjlw&t=1s.

6

Women's Empowerment through Weaving
The Case of the Women Weavers Cooperative of Lepo Lorun

LEPO LORUN WOMEN WEAVERS COOPERATIVE[1]

The Lepo Lorun Women Weavers Cooperative was founded in 2003 (but has begun in as early as 1998) by Alfonsa Horeng at Nita Village, Sikka Regency in Flores Island, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), Indonesia. What began with small households is now a cooperative spread across villages in the Sikka Regency which engages over 1,200 women weavers and replicated in multiple towns across Flores (Potter & Wijanarko 2015). The term *lepo lorun*, which means "weaving house" in Sikka language, is also a name of a homestay accommodation and workshop/outdoor studio that shares the weavers' weaving culture with guests. We, the researchers of UP CIDS Program on Alternative Development, were able to stay in Lepo Lorun and had an exceptional opportunity to watch the women master weavers demonstrate by hand the tedious work starting from the yarn spinning process out of natural cotton fiber, the dyeing of threads, preparation of the warp and frame, until the backstrap weaving phase. The most important part was the series of conversation with these women master weavers—specifically *Du'a* (nickname for a woman who came from Sikka Regency) Siska, *Du'a* Kompiana, *Du'a* Antonia, *Du'a* Beth, and *Du'a* Gout—and the founder of the collective, Alfonsa Horeng.

Alfonsa Horeng was driven to set up a weaving cooperative to preserve the heritage and tradition of *ikat* weaving and traditional agricultural technology, provide additional income for women weavers, and most importantly, "raise the social, cultural and economic value of the magnificent *Tenun Ikat*—the traditional weavings—that embody the stories of Flores" (Weaving Community and Culture Together, n.d.).

Textiles in general hold both practical and symbolic or religious meanings (Allerton 2007; Livingston 1994). While most literature and anthropological studies on textiles place emphasis on the ritualistic

[1] This chapter was written by Angeli Fleur Nuque. She was a Junior Research Associate of the Program on Alternative Development during the conduct of the case study with the Women Weavers Cooperative of Lepo Lorun. She is currently a Women and Development graduate student at the UP College of Social Work and Community Development writing her thesis on aging and sexuality. This study is undertaken in cooperation with the Women Weavers Cooperative of Lepo Lorun. The Program extends its thanks to Shantoy Hades, who had been very helpful in facilitating the field visits and interviews for this chapter. The Program researchers Angeli Fleur Nuque and Ananeza Aban conducted the field visits in NTT.

and ceremonial meaning of textiles, Allerton (2007) focused on the utilitarian function or materiality of textiles—which she called the "everyday life"—that straddle the sensual and intimate life of everyday garments. She gave *sarong* as an example and its numerous purposes as a wrap worn in various locations and events in life (in the house; outside while working or out in the fields; while bathing or sleeping; at birth, marriage, or death for protection; and for hiding objects or bodily conditions; for accentuating properties of the skin; for carrying babies or more menial items like beans or small amounts of coffee; or for concealment of money, pregnancy, and secret medicines) (ibid., 23). Allerton further added that focusing on the everyday meaning of textiles has re-oriented discussions of textiles as two-dimensional panels "displayed in museums or printed in the pages of glossy art books" to three-dimensional objects to be worn, "animated by the shape and movements of human bodies" instead (ibid., 24). Looking at the everyday, private, and utilitarian purpose of textiles is an important assertion in looking at the longevity of (material) culture such as textile simply because of its everyday function—it is used every day and therefore will continue to exist because of its everyday function. During our stay in Lepo Lorun, the women weavers exhibited the so-called "everyday life" of their sarongs where they separate the ones they wore to church or for special occasions, from those for their everyday activities like farming, doing household activities, or weaving. Alfonsa had even let us borrow sarongs to wear for the duration of our stay and had explained the meaning of each *motif* (which refers to the designs and patterns), the distinctive character of every hand-woven fabric, and from which regency it belonged to or represented. We were also lucky to have touched a piece of heirloom which Alfonsa got from another regency for preservation and historical reference. She and the women weavers plan to build an *ikat* museum in Lepo Lorun, as a legacy for the next generation.

Other scholars focus on the symbolic and religious meanings of textiles and argue that textiles are never simply worn as clothing but are deeply emblematic. Motifs locate the textile owners' complex social and cultural matrix. The motifs "on the cloth tell stories and hold symbolic and archival significance for Flores people" (Simanjuntak 2015).

Allerton (2007, 24) also noted that textiles have a public life as an "exchange (sic) valuable" or "commodities for sale in the market." In an interview with Alfonsa, she had mentioned that woven textiles were presented as *belis* (dowry) to the woman's future family while men present ivory; textiles were also seen as heirlooms with significant exchange value (ibid.).

Ikat woven fabric holds a "special place because of the intricacy of the tying, dyeing and weaving techniques essential to their production" (Livingston 1994, 155). The practice of *Tenun Ikat*, or the traditional practice of weaving, is not simply a craft but an art and an archive of ritual, stories, and traditions (Potter and Wijanarko, 2015). *Ikat* comes from the word *mengikat* which means "to tie or bind" (Livingstone 1994).

Ikat weaving is almost an exclusively female function in Indonesia (Livingston 1994) and even signifies the entry from girlhood to womanhood. In fact, some cultures in Indonesia prescribe a certain level of skill in weaving and to weave a certain number of textiles before they are considered to be marriageable. A girl or a woman's weaving capability, especially if highly skilled, may also mean that she is more sought after as a wife and is then seen as an opportunity for economic mobility (because of possible marriage to a husband with a higher social class). Scholars who look at the more gendered aspect of weaving see it as within the female realm that is "parallel to men's ritual speech" (Allerton 2007, 24) and a "highly gendered craft" associated strongly with women and "demonstrates readiness for marriage on the part of a young woman" (O'Brian 1999, 31). Weavers of Lepo Lorun explained that they learned the art of weaving traditional textiles and clothes from their mothers. The labor-intensive weaving process has taught them to be more patient, strong, and independent. Because of the intricacy of the technique, it takes months for a weaver to complete her work, depending on her other reproductive roles (such as house chores and child rearing) that she needs to comply with. During our stay in Lepo

FIGURE 6.1 • Showcase of various textiles woven by members of the Cooperative (Photo courtesy of the author)

Lorun, we met young daughters of weavers being taught to weave using a backstrap loom, a weaving technique where a strap is worn around a weaver's waist. Alfonsa herself shared that she learned the weaving process at an early age and that prior to formally taking on the loom, she was already helping and watching her mother, aunt, grandmother, and sometimes women neighbors who weave in her home. Although weaving is not entirely a female function or occupation in some societies (e.g., in India where *ikat* weavers are mostly men [Livingston 1994]), it was observed that weavers in Lepo Lorun were mostly women and they serve a significant role in the preservation of the weaving tradition. Striking a different perspective from the common notion of weaving for trade and other commercial production purposes, Alfonsa is resolute in calling the women weavers of Lepo Lorun "profesoras" or professors of their pieces, and that ikat-woven cloth is more than a commodity for sale. In an interview with *Jakarta Post* (2015), she said: "[We, weavers] are not craftspeople; we are not menial workers. We are [maestros, *profesoras*]. We don't weave for money; we do it because of our belief in tradition. The cloth is our heritage." This is a reason why weavers in Flores society are considered a source and preservers of traditional knowledge, further proving that they also "function equally as visual reminders of the past" (Duggan n.d., 77, as cited in Heringa 2003, 629). Although the women of Lepo Lorun get extra income from selling their hand-woven fabrics at a fair price, their main purpose is to enliven a tradition that has been an integral part of their domestic and social life.

Alfonsa cited the preservation of tradition, knowledge, and culture as one of the primary movers for forming the weaving cooperative in Lepo Lorun. There is an unwritten science behind weaving that is passed down from one generation to another: from how dye is processed, to making patterns, to body positionality. Livingston (1994, 155), for example, noted the "mathematical certainty required to know

in where to tie or bind unwoven threads together in order to achieve the desired pattern after dyeing is complete." Body tension also affects the weaving process. In making textiles using a backstrap loom, one's body tension affects how correctly the handle is used (Andon 2014).

Minturn (1996, as cited in O'Brian 1999) in an earlier work looked into women and the role of technological complexity in weaving. She argued against Murdock and Provost's (1973, 212, as cited in O'Brian 1999, 33) suggestion that the invention of a new artifact or process supplants an older and simpler one where both the activity of which it is a part and other "closely related activities tend [to be] more strongly to be assigned to males." Further adding that women are exposed to such complex techniques: "spinning and weaving technologies are in themselves complex and constitute a case in which a technologically complex activity remains strictly within the control of women" (Minturn 1996, as cited in O'Brian 1999, 33).

The weaving process observed in Lepo Lorun was a confluence of traditional knowledge and practices with science. During our stay, we were able to see the ingredients being used to make natural dye, especially the indigo color. Before seeing it, however, we were asked whether or not we were menstruating. Part of their traditional belief, we were told that women who are menstruating cannot process or observe the dyeing of textiles. But more than that, women possess the indigenous wisdom of successfully selecting the best time to pick materials for dyes (for example, bright colors are usually processed when the weather is cooler). As mentioned previously, each woven cloth follows a motif. There is a philosophy behind each pattern that explains various themes like the harmonization of families, a regency's origin story, and male and female relationships. Each motif also has a distinctive style and color scheme that represents their region or regency it belongs to.

FIGURE 6.2 • Gathering raw materials from immediate environments (Photo courtesy of the author)

Weaving as an occupation provided an excellent opportunity to examine the cultural attributes of an occupation. Weaving is a commonly occurring occupation across cultures and has been described as "an ancient human activity that is related to some of the touchstone concerns of modern art" (Perl 2000, 32, as cited in Bonder 2001, 311). According to Perl, this occupation can be described as an art, a craft, or can be a pragmatic and practical task leading to production of a needed product (ibid.).

One of the challenges being faced by weavers not only in Indonesia is the commercialization of textiles and the shift to using synthetic colors, primarily because of commercial production. It also followed that textiles using synthetic or artificial colors have become cheaper and readily available to the market that textiles using natural dyes appear to be considerably more expensive than the synthetic ones. O'Brian (1999, 32) cited Maya women as examples where while they maintained small, home-based knitting and weaving businesses, the "increased availability of cheap, mass-produced goods has driven prices up and has, for example, made traditional clothing prohibitively expensive." It cannot be denied however that while more expensive, *ikat* woven cloth boasts of high-quality production because of the long and laborious process of weaving it entails. Erb (in Hamilton 1994) reported that in southern Manggarai, cloths woven for sale in the market are almost always of an inferior quality, bought by town-dwellers or by those from areas of Manggarai with historical taboos against weaving.

This presents two problems to the women weaver's cooperative both culturally and economically: how do they tread the fine line between weaving as a way to preserve tradition and heritage and make it a sustainable occupation for the women weavers who have financial responsibilities to themselves and their families? The response to this dilemma was setting up and strengthening a weaver's cooperative that would address both issues.

A similar effort was done by the *matmee* weavers in the Laotian border of Thailand (also known as the "'forgotten North East' of Thailand") where young women from the slums who were drawn into prostitution in the capital were organized by the Good Shepherd Sisters (Wilshaw 1991). The "Village Weavers" focused on economic poverty alleviation and offered support to women through vocational training programs in hairdressing, secretarial and business skills, and sewing; maternity units and day-care centers were also available for their children (ibid.). The "Village Weavers" was also a response to the lack of infrastructure and development projects in Northeast Thailand as it was generally untouched by the growing economic and developmental progress in the rest of Thailand. Through the "Village Weavers" initiative, "wells have been sunk, irrigation schemes started, and rice and buffalo banks set up. [Above] all, they have looked for ways to keep women and girls in the villages" (Wilshaw 1991, 204). More than the economic success and security of the young women in the "Village Weavers" in successfully providing income to more than 300 weaving families, the tradition of *matmee* has been sustained and passed on to young girls in the village.

Wilshaw (1991, 205) also reported a previous attempt in Indonesia during the 1990s to make *ikat* (which she described as a traditionally made cloth "using simple equipment in an extremely labor-intensive way") for an income-generating project. A foundation motivated weavers to form thirty self-help groups with over a thousand members and they set up a company to buy and market the textile and cloth products. She further added that the company paid twice "the exploitative rates normally paid by the traders and guaranteed to buy all the weavers' products, as long as they met set standards of quality control, irrespective of whether any orders have been received from them" (ibid.). When we asked why weavers would sell their textiles at a cheaper price, their answer was practical: the money is instant, most especially when there are school fees or household needs to pay. Although the weavers of Lepo Lorun understand the cultural value and appraised market value of their textiles, immediate and practical needs force them to sell cloths at a cheaper price to compete with the prices of commercial textiles available in the market. The Women Weavers Cooperative of Lepo Lorun tries to carefully straddle

the fine line between maintaining that textiles are not just a commodity and giving opportunities for economic empowerment to the weavers.

Alfonsa noted that prior to joining the collective, the women weavers themselves initially expressed reservations in pursuing weaving as an occupation when more lucrative jobs were available. Eventually, the weavers realized that the textiles they wove could be a source of income and, in our interviews, they took note of the positive economic impact Lepo Lorun had to their families and how they were able to fulfill their role as providers for their families during times of difficulties. *Du'a* Elizabeth shared that Lepo Lorun not only gave her a steady income from her work in the homestay, she also found a sense of belongingness in the collective and work that makes her feel happy. She was also able to discover activities she enjoyed doing in Lepo Lorun. Other weavers shared that because of more opportunities in Lepo Lorun—weaving and weaving workshops, homestay, venue and clothes rental, singing, and dancing—they were able to save up to build houses, send their kids to school, and start small businesses. The impact of Lepo Lorun should not only be measured by how it has helped the women weavers economically. Lepo Lorun was able to help the weavers explore new avenues to hone their talents and skills. This was echoed by the women weavers we had interviewed, saying they felt a sense of fulfillment in weaving and being able to provide for their families when they previously could not. They also felt a sense of dignity, an increased self-esteem, and a new found community to belong to because of weaving.

Initially, some of the weavers' husbands did not support their activities in Lepo Lorun. But through the persistence of the women weavers to continue working at Lepo Lorun and showing the positive economic impacts of their work, they began having a better impression of the collective. Lepo Lorun was able to extend the economic opportunity of families where husbands were hired to build the traditional houses in the homestay.

Women Weavers Cooperative of Lepo Lorun also place a strong emphasis on *sama-sama* or *socialisasi* (socialization), coming together as a group to do a certain activity together. The weavers we have talked to said that weaving is also a social activity—they talk together while they weave and they teach their daughters how to weave—which is why they are able to form stronger relationships with each other. During one afternoon in Lepo Lorun, we were able to sit with the weavers and saw how they stayed in one area of the homestay where some continued to weave their unfinished textiles; some observed their daughters' progress in weaving; and some were singing and practicing playing traditional instruments. They made sure to make us feel welcome in their *social* circle and told us stories about their past and, at one point, encouraged their best singers to sing a traditional song for us. *Socialisasi* is also done while sharing and sourcing raw materials—wherein information and technical knowledge is shared. We were fortunate to experience this practice when we were invited to go to a nearby farm to pick the vegetables we would eat for lunch and dinner. Through *socialisasi*, women weavers consciously try to avoid gossiping as it strains their relationship with one another and rather learn how to deal with conflict by constructive conversation. They said that while there are times when they get angry or frustrated with each other, weaving has been an instrument to learn how to resolve it and laugh together afterwards.

Dodi Wijanarko filmed a documentary on the case study of the Lepo Lorun Weavers Collective in 2015 informed by the concepts of participatory media and positive deviance—using such approaches highlight the capacity of individuals to participate in a "variety of activities of self-empowerment" (Au Lorun: I Am Weaving n.d.). The specific focus on the weaver's collective model was to showcase how the women weavers have become economic providers for their families and re-focus the existing scholarship on *tenun ikat* from technology, motifs, or trade to how women weaving collectives have been a key mechanism to reinvigorating the art of *tenun ikat* and its emergence (Au Lorun: I Am Weaving n.d.). Moreover, Wijanarko said that he decided to focus on the collective and the stories of the weavers

FIGURE 6.3 • Women of Lepo Lorun weaving and working together (Photo courtesy of the author)

because he was impressed by the important role women held in both their families and in upholding the traditional rituals of the community (Au Lorun: I Am Weaving n.d.).

Alfonsa mentioned that there is a lack of support for weavers from the local government of farther islands in Indonesia, especially in the case of Flores, and how their government supports artists from bigger and more popular cities like Bali. She added that national government officials from other countries have been more welcoming of her and the weavers of rural islands. Despite this, the Women Weavers Cooperative of Lepo Lorun remains steadfast in its mission to preserve traditional *ikat* weaving techniques against the rampant commercialization of textiles and the preference of younger generations to pursue other professions and wearing western clothing; promote economic and social empowerment for women weavers; and share the traditional weaving heritage and culture to the Indonesian and global community.

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Agrarian Practices from the Grassroots

7

Agroecology Trends and Initiatives on Seed Saving/Banking in the Southeast Asia Region

The La Via Campesina Experience

FOCUS ON THE GLOBAL SOUTH–PHILIPPINES PROGRAMME[1]

Introduction

The dominance of corporations across Asia has aggravated the economic and political marginalization of peasants, fishers, indigenous peoples, pastoralists and other people working in rural areas against the backdrop of neoliberal globalization. As land, water and forests are transformed into profitable assets, the countryside has become an arena where elite interests clash with those of communities over territories and natural resources. In the name of development, the struggle for rights, recognition, and social justice by small food providers are sidelined by governments to create better business environments and ease the flow of capital.

In a context where global food demands have increased dramatically along with mounting social pressures to attain food security, protecting local food systems have become critical when majority of the world's food supply still comes from small-scale food providers.[2] Governments however, have continuously shifted policies and programs away from addressing obstacles to rural development towards broadening investments for corporate/industrial agriculture, expansion of free trade regimes under the World Trade Organization (WTO) or mega free trade agreements (FTAs), and integration to regional/subregional value chains to meet national food supply needs. Rural communities remain mired in poverty and vulnerable to a myriad of threats, from displacement due to land grabbing, armed conflict, and climate change, to indebtedness, loss of livelihoods, and hunger.

[1] This chapter was written by Raphael Baladad. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Santo Tomas in 2008 and has since worked with various civil society and people's organizations on issues in agriculture and agrarian reform, urban poor development and housing, armed conflicts and the peace process, and electoral reform. The author is also a member of Paragos Pilipinas and has represented the organization in several international meetings held by La Via Campesina before joining Focus on the Global South as a Program Officer in 2015, where he currently works under the People's Alternatives Thematic of the Philippines Programme. During his free time, the author tends to a small organic pineapple farm in Rodriguez, Rizal.

[2] The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that smallholder farms produce over 80% of the world's food supply.

FIGURE 7.1 • The peasant movement struggles for food sovereignty (Source: Focus on the Global South)

The World Food Programme estimated in 2018 that about 821 million of the world's population are hungry, with approximately half situated in the Asia-Pacific region.[3] Around 75% of the world's hungry live in rural areas and depend almost completely on agriculture for food, employment and income. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has also estimated that half of the world's hungry are from small-holder farming communities; another 20% are from landless farming communities; about 10% depend on fishing, herding and forest resources, and 20% live in slums in and around cities, many of whom are migrants from rural areas. Though telling, these numbers do not account for small-scale food providers affected by mega infrastructure projects, extractive industries and other forms of development aggression. Beyond hunger and poverty, small-scale food providers also face the loss of traditional and culture-based methods for food production, as well as traditional seeds varieties and plant genetics, as they fall into the traps set by corporations who promise better yields and incomes.

Addressing systemic problems requires equally systemic and radical reforms. Where threats against small food providers remain unabated, the need to challenge economic, political and social structures that disempower, erode or capture local food systems become an essential for human survival. Equally important is the need to surface viable alternatives that reclaim the development discourse away from profiteering and commodification of food and natural resources.

Food Sovereignty as an Alternative

Various social movements in the region have been pushing for Food Sovereignty as an alternative to market-oriented and neoliberal models of food production (La Via Campesina 2003). With growing protests against corporate and trade-driven agriculture that threatens local food systems, Food Sovereignty is gaining traction as a paradigm that outlines the people's right to define their agriculture

[3] The WFP estimates the figure at 486 million in 2019.

and food production methods, systems and policies. Since its introduction at the World Food Summit in 1996 by La Via Campesina (LVC),[4] Food Sovereignty has evolved into a holistic campaign that includes redistributive agrarian reform; the defense of land and natural resources against privatization and financialization; the promotion of agroecology, saving and exchange of native seeds, cooperative marketing; and the protection of the rights of peasants and small-scale food producers. In 2007, more than 500 representatives from key land-based social movements around the world adopted the "Nyeleni Declaration" to promote Food Sovereignty as the "right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods."[5]

While the food security framework adopted by many governments focuses on the provision of food for all by whatever means necessary, Food Sovereignty offers an alternative framework and presents an opportunity for small food providers to resist the corporate capture of food and agriculture, bring autonomy and dignity back to small-scale sustainable food producers, and build food systems that are resilient to the challenges of climate change. Aside from opposing free trade regimes, initiatives under Food Sovereignty aim to promote smallholder farming, to transform conventional farming systems back to its traditional roots, and to counter the impacts of Green Revolution technologies.[6] Hence, social movements across the world have been promoting agroecology and seed saving/banking as expressions of Food Sovereignty.

Peasant Agroecology and Community Seed Banking/Saving as Resistance[7]

While Food Sovereignty is seen as a critical alternative to the concept of food security, advocates prefer not to present agroecology as an alternative at all. In their view, despite the corporate capture of various food systems—as evidenced by the cooptation of organic agriculture and fair trade systems—as well as the prevalence of conventional farming, agroecology remains a dominant model of food production (Coulibaly 2015). The glaring failure of agricultural industrialization and Green Revolution technologies to eradicate global hunger and malnutrition however, have led rural social movements to reclaim losses in traditional modes of agriculture. Moreover, various movements see agroecology as a mode of resistance, not only against prevailing neoliberal models of food production, but against violations of political, social, economic and cultural rights perpetuated by elites, corporations and governments. Beyond training and knowledge-rebuilding on traditional farming methods, the practice of agroecology is also pushed by movements as an approach to reclaim community rights on land, water and forest resources; influence government policies and programs on agriculture; establish autonomy and self-determination in food production; and to broaden solidarities among rural communities.

In a context where access to traditional seeds and plant genetic varieties are threatened by intellectual property regimes imposed by corporations that seek to control seed diversity and supply, as well as to attract investments on biotechnology, Seed Sovereignty and community seed saving or banking have become centers of struggles for food sovereignty. The Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) chapter in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)—the most prominent mega free trade

[4] La Via Campesina (LVC) is an International Movement which coordinates peasant organizations of small and middle-scale producers, agricultural workers, rural women, and indigenous communities from Asia, Africa, America, and Europe. Currently, LVC has a membership of 182 local and national organizations across the globe.

[5] The Declaration was adopted at the LVC Forum for Food Sovereignty held in Febraury 2007 at Sélingué, Mali.

[6] The Green Revolution was a set of research technology and transfer initiatives on food production in the 1950s to the 1970s to increase agricultural output. It was also associated with the adoption of chemical fertilizer, pesticides and other production inputs as well as new technologies for hybridized seeds.

[7] Peasant agroecology is the type of agroecology practiced by peasants and small food providers, where agroecology, similar to organic agriculture, is now being co-opted by corporations and large agro-industries.

agreement being negotiated by the ten ASEAN member states as well as Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea—will force countries to comply with UPOV 91, an international convention that has been highly criticized by farmers and peasant movements for restricting usage rights and encouraging privatization of traditional seed varieties. The strong push towards corporate agriculture and agribusiness, and a concerted effort to undermine or criminalize the rights of farmers/peasants to seeds have resulted in various campaigns for community-based seed saving/banking, exchanges and dispersal as a form of resistance.

The La Via Campesina Southeast Asia Experience

Through campaigns and initiatives by social movements, Food Sovereignty is slowly building momentum at the level of practice. While its underlying principles have yet to win the societal support needed to overturn the food policy discourse, rural social movements have worked towards fleshing out policy frameworks and social-economic structures needed for mainstreaming. On the other hand, contextual realities faced by stakeholders to Food Sovereignty create difficulties on scaling gaps in knowledge, practice and movement building needed to generate pressure for legislative reforms or to effectuate systemic changes.

In promoting agroecology and seed banking/saving in the South East Asia Region, this section looks into campaigns and initiatives by LVC member organizations from Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand as lenses to highlight key strategies and emblematic cases, as well as challenges.

Serikat Petani Indonesia (SPI), Indonesia[8]

Formed in 1998 from the convergence of several leaders under the Federation of Indonesian Peasant Unions, Serikat Petani Indonesia (SPI) is one of the largest peasant organizations in Indonesia that also served as the International Operating Secretariat of La Via Campesina from 2008 to 2013. SPI has led and supported various campaigns and struggles for land rights and has worked towards strengthening the solidarities between Indonesian farmers organizations and other rural stakeholders towards the realization of genuine agrarian reform and food sovereignty.

Indonesia saw a rapid decline in smallholder agriculture and engagement in family farming, from 31 million in 2003 to 22 million in 2013. The country also witnessed a steady decline in the number of farmlands as the implementation of agrarian reform has lagged in rural areas, where 56% of farming families own only half a hectare of land. With no clear government policies that protect peasant's land rights, corporations have moved towards capturing a majority of Indonesia's countrysides, with more than two decades of aggressive land grabbing, land use conversions as well as displacement of communities by mega infrastructure projects and the establishment of industrial plantations. In 2014, as an outcome of various policy engagements with the government, Indonesian President Jokowi Widodo pronounced that Food Sovereignty will be adopted to redefine agricultural policy towards self-sufficiency (Lassa and Priamarizki 2015). Conversely in 2018, Widodo also started operationalizing the National Agrarian Reform Program (NARP) which created policy spaces for peasant movements to assert greater claims over farmlands and their utilization. However, these programs remain unable to scale policy gaps in addressing specific land-use issues, realigning national priorities for agricultural production, and in strengthening social and tenurial rights protection for farming communities have resulted in a disjointed and slow implementation.

[8] This section contains excerpts from Focus on the Global South's documentation of La Via Campesina's Asia Continental Agroecology and Climate Justice Encounter in June 2017 and interviews from Agus Ruli Ardiansyah, General Secretary of Serikat Petani Indonesia in February 2020.

Hence, rural movements such as the SPI have struggled to overturn policy debates on agrarian reform and food sovereignty that have been captured by corporate.industrial narratives on rural development. Specifically, SPI worked towards influencing local and national levels policies, particularly on (1) Law of Protection and Empowerment of Peasants, otherwise known as Law No. 19 2013; (2) policies that protect the sustainable use of agriculture land; (3) various food laws that govern or regulate agricultural production systems; and (4) the Presidential Instruction on Agrarian Reform that aims for an effective implementation of the NARP. SPI has also contributed Judicial Reviews for the Constitutional Court against policies that threaten the rights of peasants and other small food providers, particularly on state investment laws, free trade agreements and other policies that aim to deregulate corporate interests in agriculture.

In the practice of promoting food sovereignty, SPI has worked towards harnessing the energies of communities towards the practice of agroecology, with a vision to overcome threats to land tenure and livelihoods by making lands productive. As an expressions of resistance, SPI campaigned for Agroecology towards: (a) strengthening ownership claims in the struggle of agrarian reform through land occupations; (b) challenging prevailing models of industrial monocropping by enhancing yields through traditional and natural methods of farming; (c) decreasing farmer/peasant vulnerabilities to climate change and demanding greater programmatic support from the government for adaptation efforts; and (d) encouraging farmer/peasants to resist conventional modes of production that has tied rural communities to debt and poverty.

Food sovereignty and the practice of agroecology for SPI is also rooted in the movement's ideologies and its struggles towards dismantling the neoliberal economy that has captured the markets and production discourse on food, by increasing the productivity of family farms,promoting national food self-sufficiency, and addressing rural poverty whilst ensuring environmental sustainability. In this regard, the organization's key activities include (a) cooperative building and linking communities across provinces and regions; (b) The establishment of community agroecology schools and demo farms; and, (c) the strengthening of youth participation through political education and encouraging their broader involvement in local and national campaigns.

For seed saving initiatives, SPI has established seed centers at the national and community levels which are built based on the capacities and needs of its member organizations—with each one having its own system of preserving and cultivating indigenous seed varieties. Situated in a rice-producing region, seed centers in East Java house and disperse varieties of rice. West Java and Yogyakarta seed centers on the other hand houses vegetable varieties, while hard crops are kept in Sumatra. Such seed centers according to SPI are crucial for the success of agroecology as it addresses challenges on seed availability faced by family farms at the onset of cropping seasons However, with the constant pressure by the WTOto junk protectionist policies on agriculture and given the threats of trade liberalization to local food systems, the challenge for SPI's seed centers is to provide evidence that incomes can be raised while production costs can be cut in half by using indigenous seeds. SPI's key strategies in this regard include: (a) establishment of community seed banks for indigenous varieties; (b) promoting traditional methods of cross breeding of seeds; and (c) promoting community seed development. In addition, SPI has developed new rice varieties through indigenous methods of hybridization (i.e. the SPI-120, which is now being tested in several locations with a potential to yield 7 to 9 tonnes per hectare) and is also in the process of breeding new seed varieties for high value crops such as spinach, papaya, and *kangkong* (water spinach) to help communities resist biotech seeds.

Apart from raising productivity through agroecology, SPI's seed centers also support the struggle against criminalization of peasants who are accused of infringing the proprietary rights of corporations in the reproduction and distribution of indigenous seed varieties. Policies such as Indonesia's Plant Variety Protection Act allows farmers to be imprisoned or fined up to USD 70,000 for reproducing

indigenous seeds already captured by intellectual property regimes Though no farmer/peasant has been prosecuted by the said law, it constrains the free movement of seeds between various communities/ districts.

In sum, SPI's agroecology and seed saving initiatives complement their campaigns for genuine agrarian reform. To them, ensuring productivity is an equally important struggle after land rights have already been claimed. Towards this end, SPI has formed *Kampung Repormang Agraria* (Agrarian Reform Villages) where the practice of agroecology, seed saving has led to success stories, management of water resources, crops, agricultural land, and housing.

Paragos Pilipinas, Philippines[9]

Paragos is a national farmer's organization in the Philippines advocating for social justice in the countryside through agrarian reform and rural development and has been active in supporting land struggles and pushing for the effective implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). Established in 1992, Paragos became a member of LVC in the same year and has campaigned for sustainable agriculture and agroecology.

Similar to other members of LVC, Paragos' campaign for agroecology is situated at the heart of land struggles and the pursuit of social justice through land redistribution. With the Philippines' agrarian reform program hounded by inefficiencies—in particular, on support services extended to peasant beneficiaries—agroecology becomes crucial to sustain agrarian victories and prevent reversals caused by the lack of farm productivity and indebtedness In a setting where incidences of corporate land grabbing and agricultural land-use conversions have been a common sight in rural areas, the practice of agroecology in the experience of Paragos strengthened community solidarities and morale in the struggle for land rights as well as reinforced peasant ownership claims in disputed lands.

In 2010, Paragos was part of a coalition of movements that supported the passage of the Organic Agriculture Act, which sought to promote a more sustainable, ecological and cost effective means in land cultivation amid the rising costs of conventional farming due to oil price hikes in the global market While this law created the needed spaces to promote agroecology, lobbies by large-scale organic producers however facilitated the inclusion of stiff regulations and protocols for certification. In terms of marketing, the law banked on expanding niche middle to upper class markets on organic food. Small food providers however, faced challenges in competing with established and certified growers. Paragos was then part of a government initiative to conduct capacity building on organic production with local governments, before it decided to disengage and focus on promoting agroecology as a way of life in smaller communities.

For Paragos, agroecology is about safeguarding the health not only of consumers but also of producers who are exposed to the negative effects of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Paragos also sees agroecology as vital in restoring natural soil nutrients lost due to decades of conventional agriculture, which largely contributed to the lowering of farm productivity and incomes that led to the decline of the Philippines' agriculture sector in the last two decades Further, Paragos believes that agroecology is an effective approach in encouraging the broader participation of rural youth in agriculture, by stressing the importance of securing healthy food for families and communities first beyond potentials for better income.

[9] This section contains excerpts from Focus on the Global South's documentation of La Via Campesina's Asia Continental Agroecology and Climate Justice Encounter in June 2017 and interviews with Jaime S.L. Tadeo, Chairman of Paragos Pilipinas in February 2020.

FIGURE 7.2 • The La Via Campesina International Peasant Movement joins a protest for food sovereignty (Source: Focus on the Global South)

Paragos sees the importance of agroecology in sustaining long-drawn struggles for land. The experience of the village of Sumalo in the province of Bataan highlights how the practice of agroecology bound the community together despite threats of harassment, criminalization, and forced evictions from a corporate entity that seeks to capture farmlands. In their struggle for land rights that has lasted more than two decades, community members of Sumalo practiced agroecology to mobilize people towards occupying lands enclosed by the corporation, and in utilizing other free spaces to grow crops in support of families who lost livelihoods due to the enclosures. The production of natural fertilizers from vermicast sold to neighboring farming communities have supported, at some level, the financial needs to sustain legal struggles and casework. Agroecology has also highlighted the role of rural women in Sumalo who are at the forefront of defending the community against human rights violations, as well as in surfacing alternative livelihoods and other income opportunities for affected families. Lastly, the agroecology initiative in Sumalo has gained support from local and provincial governments that have extended production subsidies and crafted local policies to strengthen agricultural activities in the area, which in turn reinforced community claims over the land.

While agroecology, in terms of adoption, has seen victories in communities embroiled in land struggles, Paragos experienced some challenges in promotion within communities post-land struggles and in areas absent of any external pressure that could bind people together. In the village of Macabud in the province of Rizal, despite community training exercises and the establishment of learning centers and demo farms,[10] some farmers still preferred to retain conventional practices due to concerns brought by significantly lower yields in the initial years upon shifting to agroecology. In addition, because agroecology requires more farmwork particularly in the production of natural inputs, growers would opt to sell at higher prices which created difficulties in marketing. In this light, Paragos gears toward establishing community markets (i.e., mobile vendors) and other informal hubs where producers can be linked directly to consumers. Through its training programs and other knowledge building activities, Paragos rebuilds traditional customs in farming that stress community cohesion and food self-sufficiency, thereby mainstreaming practices on agroecology and effectively countering perspectives on agriculture as solely a profit-generating enterprise.

[10] Supported by WhyHunger, an allied civil society organization with LVC, in 2012.

While Paragos has yet to undertake a broader campaign for seed saving/banking, seed exchange activities and training for indigenous seed preservation have already been integrated in various initiatives to promote Food Sovereignty and agroecology in communities. The passage of the Rice Trade Liberalization Law (RTL) in 2019, however, has compelled its members to undertake measures to protect local producers, such as buying *palay* (unhusked rice) from affected communities and extending support for milling and storage. As cheap imported rice flood local markets through corporate distribution networks, local rice varieties are now under a greater threat of being eased out and lost In this context, along with its participation in broader campaigns to repeal the RTL at the national level, Paragos looks into establishing community rice seed centers and conducting training programs for household level storage as well as exploring options for seed dispersal in partnership with local governments, civil society and other rural social movements.

Assembly of the Poor (AOP), Thailand[11]

The Assembly of the Poor (AOP) is a social movement in Thailand that represents the political voice of communities and marginalized members of society. Present in 36 provinces, AOP works towards empowering small food providers while supporting struggles for land, water and forest resources. Established in 1995, AOP became a member of LVC in the same year and has since worked towards dismantling the influence of neoliberal economic systems in agriculture as well as defending communities from abuses and other rights violations perpetuated by transnational corporations. AOP has also campaigned against the government's unjust land management policies that have discriminated against and displaced thousands of small food providers.

AOP's campaign for Food Sovereignty is connected to sustaining victories in the struggle for land rights and preventing reversals caused by the overdependence to conventional farming. Prevalent in almost all food producing provinces in Thailand, conventional farming led small food providers into debt. With limited options to sustain livelihoods, increasing costs of production, higher vulnerabilities to crop failure due to extreme weather events, lack of production support from the government and lower incomes in rural areas, communities are forced to resort to contract farming and other exploitative means of production.

Food Sovereignty has also guided AOP's campaigns against free trade agreements, including the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and other policies that endanger small food providers, such as the establishment of special economic zones or large plantation estates. AOP has also struggled to defend local food systems against protectionist policies such as forest, fisher forest and wildlife sanctuary laws which corporations and the government itself exploit to modify tenurial arrangements and push communities out of territories.

In terms of promoting agroecology, AOP has two main thrusts: campaigns for program and policy reforms at the national level in the short term, and campaigns for community empowerment and strengthening solidarities in the long term. With regard to the former, AOP is continuously in the process of holding dialogues to pressure the Thai government and its ministries in supporting local initiatives for agroecology—essentially through reforming land policies, allocating budgets, and institutionalizing programs to expand such initiatives. At the same time, with respect to the latter thrust, AOP is facilitating the formation of cooperative estates where communities are encouraged to integrate and broaden agroecological modes of food production.

[11] This section contains excerpts Focus on the Global South's documentation of La Via Campesina's Asia Continental Agroecology and Climate Justice Encounter in June 2017 and interviews with Baramee Chaiyarat, Chairman of Alliance of the Poor–Thailand in February 2020.

AOP's key strategies in promoting agroecology include: (a) the integration of trainings and workshops in communities entrenched in land struggles, where the practice of agroecology is used to build stronger land rights claims; (b) strengthening indigenous and traditional modes of production within forest dwelling communities under threat of displacement; and (c) support for disaster-stricken communities, particularly those hit by droughts, where agroecology can provide options in rebuilding livelihoods. AOP is also actively promoting integrated farming systems such as the cultivation of alternative crops or fruits, sustainable fishing, and organic fertilizer production in sites of land struggles. Within forest communities, AOP promotes (a) multiplication of indigenous forest seedlings; (b) forest food calendars; and (c) training for backyard gardening and livestock raising. In disaster-stricken communities, AOP encourages the breeding and planting of traditional disaster resilient crops varieties and training for alternative livelihoods.

AOP has also worked towards surfacing community perspectives on food sovereignty and agroecology. In the small forest dwelling village of Chong Tuko, the community strongly followed indigenous and traditional means of food production and has rejected practices that harm the forest's biodiversity (Quinn-Thibodeau 2016). Despite this, the entire village was displaced by the military under the guise of upholding forest protection policies in the area. After years of struggle, the provincial government was pressured by AOP into allocating around 100 hectares of land within the forest reserve. Now renamed the village of Kokedoi, the community thrives in its practice of agroecology and is able to market products to visitors, tourists, as well as nearby urban communities. In its campaigns, AOP has highlighted community perspectives in agroecology to counter prevailing government narratives that forest dwellers destroy forest areas and should be driven out. In this case, we see how agroecology was vital in reclaiming rights and spaces for small food providers in the discourse of environmental protection and sustainable development

AOP has also pushed for agroecology in four villages in the Ta Sae district in the Chumphon province, and three villages in the Ban Tad mountain range in Southern Thailand. Communities have successfully adopted and sustained agroecology initiatives in these areas, similar to Kokedoi, to respond to threats of displacement from forest protection policies. However, in other provinces where communities face few threats to their lands, living conditions and livelihoods, AOP faced difficulties in encouraging or convincing people to adopt agroecology or veer away from conventional modes of food production

Although AOP is yet to gear towards the promotion of seed saving/banking, regular seed exchanges integrated into agroecology training and workshops have widened the appreciation of communities on seed sovereignty and the need to protect indigenous seeds. At the national level, AOP supports campaigns to resist policies that impose greater intellectual property regimes on seeds, and to lessen the restrictions to small food providers in utilizing seeds already subjected under IPs. AOP, along with several farmers organizations in Thailand have staged massive protests in 2006 and 2013 to derail FTA negotiations with the United States and the European Union.

Conclusion

The success of Food Sovereignty in challenging neoliberal food regimes in the foregoing cases have depended largely on the resistance of social movements to conventional and industrial agriculture, the push for policy reforms that protect and promote the rights of small-scale food providers, and the practice of food sovereignty expressions such as agroecology and seed banking/saving. While agroecology and seed banking/saving helped communities to respond to threats on local food systems (such as cheap agriculture imports, land grabbing, displacement and indebtedness), they have also become vital in challenging dominant narratives on agriculture and food, amplifying community voices and demands, and in building solidarities to confront systemic problems faced by small-scale food providers.

The experiences of SPI, Paragos and AOP illuminate the relevance of an age-old strategy in advancing campaigns by generating pressure from below to effect changes and reforms from above. Deepening the practice of agroecology and seed saving in the contexts of struggles have helped in redefining community perspectives on development and emerged new campaign directions for rural social movements in reclaiming political and economic rights as well as in pursuing social justice in the access to land, water and forest resources. Through negotiations, protests and other social actions that engage governments complemented by community actions that reinforce solidarity movements are able to influence policies and programs that protect local food systems from corporate interests, defend community rights, and uplift living conditions in the countryside.

Another pressure, however, comes internally from the need to validate the effectiveness of campaigns, strategies and initiatives when the need to surface alternatives become critical to the survival of communities. While the need to scale gaps in building awareness and broadening societal support have hounded campaigns on Food Sovereignty in the region,great strides have already been taken by movements in reclaiming the right to have rights (Arendt 1967, cited in Patel 2009) over food systems and in grasping the reins towards developing of vibrant and peasant-based rural economies.

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8

Rediscovering the Sacred among Agrarian Societies
The *Tara Bandu* Case in Timor Leste

KDADALAK SULIMUTUK INSTITUTE and UNIAUN AGRIKULTORES ERMERA[1]

Introduction

The study is focused on the peasantry in Ermera, located in the West of Timor Leste. Ermera is the country's largest coffee farming community, home to one of the world's finest *Arabica* coffee beans. In this rural village, an oral tradition locally known as *tara bandu* is impressively practiced on a district level, amidst a backdrop of widespread poverty and contentious landholdings that remain concentrated to the *mestizo* families in Timorese society who have dubiously acquired lands during colonial times.

This UP CIDS Program on Alternative Development case study will try to provide a deeper understanding on why putting primacy on the symbolic in trying to respond to community concerns elicits a stronger compliance among the peasant class of Timor Leste as juxtaposed to the imposition of government laws or regulation.

This case also seeks to demonstrate the continuing relevance of the commons principle in exposing the fundamental problems of privatized ownership accompanying land distribution, that in the process, extensively rejects the foundations of the collective life of humanity (Houtart 2011). As opposed to the prevailing mainstream market-oriented development model that features cutthroat competition, corporate take-over of human and natural resources, and the destruction of ecosystems, Houtart (2011) presented the four foundations of humanity's collective life: (1) balanced relationship with nature; (2) economy or production of the material basis of life; (3) social and political collective organization; and (4) the importance of culture in interpreting reality. Particularly for Timor Leste, the interdependence or mutual reinforcement of the social, ecological, and the sacred has become invisible in land law formation in order to prioritize market-oriented production.

Moreover, this study highlights the collective wisdom of the community, the role of the peasant union, the village leadership under the *xefe de suco* (village chief), and the *lia nain* (cultural elder) in the pursuit for a just agrarian society.

[1] This chapter was written by Ananeza Aban. The Program extends its thanks to Fernando 'Ato Lekinawa' Costa, Antonio Miguel da Costa, Nelia Menezes, Valentin da Costa Pinto, and Gaudencio Souza for the conduct of the field visits. AltDev researchers Ananeza Aban and Angeli Fleur Nuque visited Dili and Ermera, Timor Leste for this field research.

How *tara bandu* helped build community-based regulation on social relations and natural resource management has already been described by other literatures such as the book *Tara Bandu: Its Role and Use in Community Conflict Prevention in Timor-Leste*, published by Belun and The Asia Foundation (2013). But this study would rather rearticulate *tara bandu*'s contribution to the peasant movement to solve the quandary of landlessness, to correct the historical injustice the Timorese have experienced, and to bravely challenge the threat of dispossession pending land policies that protect their interest as food producers. In the language of the Ermera peasant union, *tara bandu* plays an important role in reinforcing their foundation towards agrarian reform.

Brief historical background of Timor Leste

The dynamic political past of the people of Timor Leste has significantly contributed to the shaping of their cultural values and practices in relation to their struggle for survival and self-determination. Theirs is about an endless history of an inevitable migration process, displacement and return to their ancestral places. McWilliam and Traube (2011, 2) tried to interrogate the complexities among Timorese rural population's way of "making and remaking their ties to the land." The diversity of people in Timor is a product of multiple histories of mobility, the venture to new territories, and the series of resistance underlying these periods. The earliest inhabitants were the Papuan-language speakers, who later interacted with Austronesian speakers who likewise migrated to this island. They traded with the Chinese and Javanese, and later with the European traders, which paved the way to the colonization by the Portuguese (ibid.). In 1701, the first Portuguese governor of then East Timor was appointed. By 1901, the Portuguese Parliament passed the colonial law that "vested all land not used for permanent residence or cultivation in the Portuguese state," powerfully marking their colonial territorialization in East Timor (Fitzpatrick 2002a, 146–47, quoted in Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010, 209).

At the break of the Second World War, Japanese wartime occupation has also contributed to periods of upheaval, widespread displacement, and coercive resettlement which were also accompanied by numerous accounts of Timorese resistance (McWilliam and Traube 2011; Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010) where as many as 100,000 Timorese became casualties from the period 1942–1945 (Gunn 1999, 236, quoted in Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010).

Right after the Portuguese ended its colonial control over East Timor[48] in 1975, Indonesian military forces invaded this island and subjugated the population for more than two decades (Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010). Notably, the dark legacy of the Indonesian occupation (1975–1999) is gauged based on the intensity to which the local people were displaced and resettled as a strategy for control and surveillance. This is not to discount the gruesome statistics showing those who suffered human rights abuses, starvation, and extensive damage to property, aside from those killed by the Indonesian militia (Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010; McWilliam and Traube 2011; Nevins 2005, quoted in Batterbury et al. 2015). Those sufferings were confronted through the guerrilla movement formation that found its refuge in the jungles of Timor, complemented by a continued support from the masses.

In 1999, the Indonesian troops left Timor Leste, which marked the end of their rule after the Timorese voted for their independence from Indonesia in a referendum (Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010). Because of this deep sense of culture among the Timorese that is closely attached to the land, together with a strong belief of the sacred powers or guardians (*lulik*) behind it, they have even attributed in part the victory of their resistance movement from Indonesian invasion to this "alliance between the human and non-human realms" (McWilliam and Traube 2011, 11). On May 20, 2002, the independent state of

[2] Former name of Timor Leste

Timor Leste was established (Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010). However, after more than a decade, Timor Leste still faces challenges in its nation-state building, particularly with the absence of a comprehensive policy on land distribution for its largely peasant population.

Land claims and land grabs in Timor Leste under foreign rule

Land, cultural values, and community structures connote interdependency in Timorese rural society. In a broader context, Shinichi (2014) explained that in both urban and rural settings in developing countries, land is of cardinal importance to the survival of the populace. This is because peoples' livelihoods are heavily entwined to the land, which is also their foundation for identity formation and is thus a critical resource for politics. However, the changing political regimes of colonization to military occupation have contributed significantly to the compounding problems of land ownership in post-independence Timor Leste. First, it was an era of providing the right to use (*aforamento*) vast tracts of land to a few who were allies or had business agenda with the Portuguese colonial rulers. The second wave under Indonesian power, is the massive displacement and dispossession of the people. This is also to note that land policies under the Indonesian rule have accepted titles issued during the Portuguese era (da Silva and Furusawa 2014). Dovetailing Shinichi's (2014) position, this particular exodus from their places of origin has disrupted to a great extent their connection to the land, which is their source of identity and survival. These sprawling ancestral territories articulate the connectivity of Timorese rural livelihood strategies that are characterized by mobility through the hunting and gathering approach which represents the diversity and flexibility of subsistence farming practice. But Indonesian law enforcers dramatically prevented these occupied populations from their natural movement within their accustomed spatial territories. As a result, this rather abnormal condition has triggered resistance to Indonesian occupation (Pannell in McWilliam and Traube 2011).

FIGURE 8.1 • The strategy of the Union involves defending and fighting for a genuine agrarian reform policy and promoting sustainable agriculture (Source: Alberto Martins Guterres)

Affirming Timor Leste's historical background, there are two sources of land claims that are contradictory to each other: (1) titles issued by the two previous regimes and (2) customary rights. Critically, these titles issued from the past political regimes are not always acceptable for many Timorese (da Silva and Furusawa 2014), because they are the actual victims and survivors of these historical injustices.

Land rights, agrarian reform in the post-independence period

Timor Leste remains largely of rural population and land is central to livelihoods. Around one-third rely on subsistence agriculture (Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010). Land creates a connection between the social, the ecological, and the spiritual. The interdependence of these factors is vital and mutually reinforcing that any government policy passed can impact its entirety (Batterbury et al. 2015; Harson 2015). Until today, the concept of social order that withstood foreign invasion for the longest time is based on customary systems embedded in Timor Leste's social landscape, derived from narratives of origin and first possession (Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010). These overarching principles of ancestral first possession, albeit socially constructed arrangements, remain resilient because of their viability to maintain social order and authority (ibid.). Communities always derive from their ancestral origin in terms of identifying the original settlers or landowners. People assert their relationship to the origin groups, or clans, or their membership to the sacred house, or possession of a sacred object in reference to their rights and access to land (Fox 1996, 132, cited in Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010) or for communal land tenure arrangements. As a reinforcement of this custom, "this property relations are constituted around ritualized norms of original authority" (Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010, 206). In the words of the peasant union members, their collective participation in community rituals has molded them to understand better what belongs to them. People in the village know who collectively owns which.

Given this, land and social connection deserve a critical lens to carefully observe, investigate, and understand contemporary Timorese society within a fabric of a changing, politically transformed cultural landscape (McWilliam and Traube 2011, 635).

The point however is that this distinctive understanding of cultural solidarity as applied to land contradicts the "neoliberal spirit of privatized ownership" that is being pushed in Timor Leste. Formal land titling has become a contested space which in the process has been associated with putting market value to land, a concept that is foreign and "unthinkable" for the local farming communities (Peñaflor 2011, quoted in Batterbury et al. 2015). In the course of drafting the land law, there was opposition from the ruling class and foreign advisors to fully recognize the communal and customary land management narrative (Batterbury et al. 2015).

Meanwhile, in the absence of a clear-cut framework and a strong people-oriented land reform policy, land disputes and land grabs have been uncovered. Da Silva and Furusawa (2014) cited multiple land disputes and land grab cases across the country; some involved business. Another chronic land dispute case was identified in a coastal plain within the Viqueque District because of entangling claims among individuals who based their hereditary claims on 'histories of actual possessory acts' that are rather affiliated with the state and regime change rather than customary authority (Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010). And worth mentioning again is Ermera District, where Timorese descendants of elites granted *aforamento* still claim ownership of large coffee farms in the area. Notwithstanding, this district is a witness to a 'popular land reform' movement under the leadership of the peasantry in the post-Independence era (da Silva and Furusawa 2014).

This persisting social disorder caused by perennial land disputes and land grabs reflects a deficit of a clear focal point for cooperative land allocations founded on customary principles of origins (Fitzpatrick and Barnes 2010). On a macro scale, Shepherd (2013) argued that this is also because of

the dilemma within contemporary agriculture policies where self-reliance principles in agriculture (as reflected in subsistence farming) is less visible in order to prioritize market-oriented production (Batterbury et al. 2015). Other scholars also argued that the global phenomenon of tenure formalization did not even show positive results as it rather facilitated the potential for land grabs by foreign and corporate interest (Anderson 2008; Sikor and Lund 2009, quoted in Batterbury et al. 2015). Emphasizing historical contextualization, McWilliam and Traube (2011, 14) observed that "the impact of Indonesian resettlement policies and political prescriptions based on idealized agrarian citizens continues to frame much government policy and planning." This, Pannell (2011, cited in McWilliam and Traube 2011, 14) added, "threatens to erase the multiple social interests and ancestral connections to forests and other non-cultivated spaces."

Therefore, da Silva and Furusawa (2014) stressed that in developing land policies in Timor Leste, utmost recognition of the significance of the cultural should be done since land claims are related to families, clans, and the *uma lisan* (origin groups). Without in-depth anthropological studies, the notion of land registration will rouse further conflicts, more complicated as discussed earlier. Moreover, Batterbury et al. (2015) stressed that the formulation of an agrarian policy should not bypass viable solutions and initiatives of Timorese communities from the ground that obviously portray their capacities for effective governance.

In 2012, the parliament passed the land law package namely: the Law on Special Regime for the Determination of Ownership of Immovable Property, the Law of Expropriation, and the Law on Real Estate Financial Fund (da Silva and Furusawa 2014).

However, former President Jose Ramos-Horta vetoed these laws after observing that the rights of the people, particularly their communal property and traditional tenure, were not sufficiently protected and recognized (ibid.). These proposed land laws reflect the leaning towards a Western influenced land management principle in expense of the customary land (Batterbury and Longbottom 2007, quoted in Batterbury et al. 2015; da Silva and Furusawa 2014).

In June 5, 2017, the Special Regime Law[3] came into force. But for the Uniaun Agrikultores Munisipiu Ermera (UNAER) and their institutional partner Kdadalak Sulimutuk Institutu (KSI), the majority agrarian population in the country still awaits a strong political solution to the land problem. Unsatisfied by the passage of this law, they asked the Timor Leste government to instead prepare a comprehensive national agrarian reform policy and program to express the state's accountability in upholding the farmers' collective and customary rights over the land. Land for the Timorese, according to KSI director Jenito Jewata Santana, mirrors the political position of the government. This implies that whatever the government agenda on land is, reflects its fundamental bias for whom development should be.

In their observation, the supposed land distribution for farmers is unclear in this new land law. Further, its emphasis is on land use, instead of a definitive discussion about land ownership that can serve as a benchmark in establishing who will benefit and who will protect. What sparks intrigue is the recognition of land ownership during the colonial times that is historically understood as unjust and runs contrary to the Timorese Constitution that acknowledges collective ownership, local knowledge, laws and practices, all implicit in their tradition and cultural values.

They strongly argued that in contrast to individualized or privatized land titling, collective land ownership that exudes the power and effectiveness of collective decision-making among Timorese societies remains the core solution to the country's problem over land dispute. This is parallel to what

[3] The title of the law is *Rejime Espesiál Ba Definisaun Titularidade Bein Imovel*.

FIGURE 8.2 • The Union envisions a just agricultural society and food sovereignty based on the spirit of collectivism, social solidarity, and sustainability (Source: Alberto Martins Guterres)

scholars earlier discussed about social cohesion rooted in the locals' customary practices about land and resource management.

With this new land law, they also felt apprehensive as it likewise opens the floodgate for corruption because it welcomes market access to land as a profitable property, referring to what Houtart (2011) explained about the capitalist logic of commodities. They warned that land certification under this law should be seen with caution as it can be simply acquired when there is no dispute.

Importance of *tara bandu* in the struggle for agrarian reform

Ethnographic studies (Fox 1980, quoted in McWilliam and Traube 2011, 4) revealed that from the period when Timor Leste was under Portuguese colonization, Timor rural society "to a significant degree, remained organized around predominantly ancestral principles and protocols, where the influence of the colonial state had a significant but limited impact on practices of social reproduction."

Akin to this historical fact is that ritual life may have been disrupted but not completely destroyed during the Indonesian occupation (Belun and The Asia Foundation 2013; McWilliam and Traube 2011; Palmer 2017) that somehow illustrates the resilience of the occupied population to recreate their other forms of resistance in defence of their land and strong cultural identity as peoples. Despite the challenge of forced migration, their "attribution to origin places encouraged symbolic strategies for adapting to displacement" (McWilliam and Traube 2011, 12).

The synergy of the customary rights over land and the Timorese' self-expression of their identity as managers of their resources and society has found consolidation in the *tara bandu*, an ancient communal practice that survived this historically volatile political landscape of Timor Leste.

Tara bandu is a traditional Timorese mechanism of community-led governance to enforce peace and reconciliation, regulate social exchange practices, and facilitate environmental management, through the power of public agreement. Having stronger resurgence after Timor Leste's independence, it illustrates the reinforced link between the community and their natural, cultural, and economic resources (Belun and The Asia Foundation 2013; da Silva and Furusawa 2014; Palmer 2017).

Part of the *tara bandu* process is the holding of the community-wide ritual which is a multi-day event that is followed by the hanging of culturally significant items (e.g., head of a sacrificed animal, leaves of a tree species) from a wooden shaft in a specific area indicating prohibition or ban of a certain practice (Belun and The Asia Foundation 2013; da Silva and Furusawa 2014; Palmer 2017). The ceremony is usually coordinated by the *xefe de suco* (village chief). These days, this village leader coordinates with the district head, concerned government officials, NGOs, as well as the Catholic Church. The ceremonial activities are: ritual speech, dancing, drumming, singing, betel nut exchange, and animal sacrifice (Palmer 2017).

The policies within it have been categorized as: (1) regulating people-to-people relations; (2) regulating people-to-animal relations; and (3) regulating people-to-environment relations (Belun and The Asia Foundation 2013).

Among the examples of cases are the banning of tree cutting and burning, protecting water or forest resources, and stopping a social practice that has a negative impact on the community such as stealing from another's farm and lavish parties (Belun and The Asia Foundation 2013; da Silva and Furusawa 2014; Palmer 2017).

Because *tara bandu* has become well entrenched in the socio-cultural structures of the locals, there is a higher level of compliance with the agreed prohibitions than as may be expected in the imposition of government laws and regulation. The sanctity of the ritual and belief of the presence of the *lulik* (sacred) are also factors for this community-wide compliance (Palmer 2017). In Ermera District, departing from maintaining tara bandu as an oral tradition, but rather paying attention to the process towards community transformation, the practice has been elevated into a *Tara Bandu* Code that signifies formalization by the Ministry of Law and underscores a long consultation process with stakeholders. These written regulations are the basis for enforcement and evaluation as well as the establishment of a formal monitoring committee. All these are coordinated by the *xefe de suco.*

Transforming Ermera District under the peasant union and the *tara bandu*

Following the end of the Indonesian occupation, farmers in Ermera District occupied and distributed lands, also known as the 'popular land reform' (da Silva and Furusawa 2014), as a unilateral expression of their capacity to implement agrarian reform on their own terms.

During those years of fighting for land acquisition, UNAER together with KSI organized farmers in the district for mobilizations and dialogues with government officials to defend their rights over the land as *mestizo* families continue their claims over huge coffee farms in the area. UNAER has led the distribution of the 28 huge coffee plantations in Ermera to the farmers since 2000. UNAER currently has a stronghold of around 24,000 members only in Ermera, making them a big and expanding peasant movement in the country.

For UNAER, this is their version of agrarian reform through equal land distribution that aims to secure farmers' ownership of the lands that were grabbed from them during the past regimes and to implement agroecology. This radical effort is to reclaim these lands that for them are prerequisites to their continuing political struggle that traces back to their fight against Portuguese colonialism until the Indonesian occupation.

The introduction of coffee cultivation finds its roots under the reign of Portuguese Governor Affonso de Castro in the late 19th century, which was a transition from the "tributary" economy towards the development of an export plantation economy, an era depicted to "solidify, extend, and rationalize colonial control" (McWilliam and Traube 2011, 7).

The road towards equitable land distribution and development entails a long journey for these farmers as widespread poverty continues to hound their households. Similar to other rural areas in the country, there are still large land holdings in Ermera claimed by the *mestizo* families, and some are actually absentee landowners because they are either based in Portugal, Australia or elsewhere overseas, or just in the capital, Dili. These *mestizo* elites have claimed over these lands since the time of the Portuguese colonization. Batterbury et al. (2015) wrote that these *mestizo* families in the country have acquired these lands from the Portuguese rulers on condition of their non-involvement in anti-colonial activities.

While a strong peasant union endeavors its political space in the district, KSI confirmed that Ermera remains a land dispute area thus, marking a challenge for UNAER to advance their land struggle. Only 25% of the people own land while 75% of the land is still controlled by these *mestizos*. This reality however, provided more reason for the peasant union to assert their presence in the area and get the best out of what they have so far achieved, while waiting for the passage of a land law that will uphold their interest and agenda.

Coffee has not really solved the problem of poverty given the following reasons: the presence of middle buyers that purchase coffee at a very low price due to poor coffee harvest quality and transport cost; the farmers' lack of security over the land has become an impediment to improve existing coffee farms, as they fear land grabbing might happen to them; the state's sluggish phase in prioritizing agriculture development vis-à-vis agrarian reform (Harson 2015).

To ease the rural population's economic dependence on coffee farming and realize their full potential in land management, UNAER President Alberto Martins Guterres explained that, with the help of KSI, they began to introduce horticulture: tree nursery and planting of endemic tree species to intercrop with coffee trees and maintain forest diversity; poultry raising; and planting of staple food such as maize and root crops (cassava and sweet potato) to ensure food supply and supplement the seasonal income from coffee production. Vanilla planting was also introduced to integrate with coffee trees. Vanilla, a tropical vine commonly used as a flavouring agent, is considered a high-value crop in Timor Leste that is sold to the local market and for export through better trade arrangement. Sustainable farming approaches such as the soil trap technique and land terracing are also practiced.

In Ermera, land distribution, sustainable land management, and *tara bandu* complement one another to reach the goal for a more just and sustainable community (da Silva and Furusawa 2014). Guterres in an interview said that UNAER's mission is "to obtain a just agricultural society and sovereignty, live in the spirit of collectivism, social solidarity, and sustainability from generation to generation." As a strategy to realize this mission, the peasant union's practice of *tara bandu* in Ermera widely covers the entire district of 52 villages. To signify the importance of this tradition, its initial ritual ceremony was attended by no other than former Timor Leste President and 1996 Nobel Laureate Jose Ramos-Horta.[4]

During AltDev's field visit in Ermera and meeting with UNAER officials, Guterres discussed that there are two (2) things that make *tara bandu* important for them: (1) to secure the political agenda of the union which is agrarian reform; and (2) to promote sustainable agriculture.

[4] Jose Ramos-Horta received the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize along with Catholic Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo. Both worked for Timor Leste independence from Indonesia.

Tara bandu also demonstrates tradition/cultural evidence to secure the community's right to land. It is the *lia nain* (community cultural expert) who holds both indigenous and historical wisdom to identify which part is owned by a certain clan, *uma lisan*, or family. Given that, the *lia nain* will fortify the union's fight for the land that belongs to the community and not to someone else.

Tara bandu, for the peasant union, is about sustainable agriculture that highlights the relations of people to ecology or natural resources.

Aside from the land problem, Ermera locals used to be stereotyped for their extravagant festivities that last for days or weeks. Alarmingly, this practice drains their one-time-big-time income from coffee production that should have been allocated for family essentials such as children's education. Their meager income from coffee and insecure tenure over the land only made them more vulnerable to poverty. Ermera also used to have a reputation of being a notorious district where conflicts breed among the young people as an effect of being school drop-outs.

On how *tara bandu* started in Ermera, Santana explained that KSI conducted consultation with the peasant union in light of the recurring and complicated socio-economic problems in the community. The locals identified *tara bandu* as an alternative strategy in addressing these problems of mismanagement of household income, disintegration of families as a result of this financial imbalance, and low rate of education. They later lobbied to the district and village political leaders and the Catholic Church for the possibility of initiating the *tara bandu* process, despite cynical reactions from some people.

Tara bandu in Ermera is seen as a 'cultural revolution' that somehow changed the mentality of people to think about a better future. This paradigm shift eventually reaped comprehensive outcomes. Given their poor economic condition and other vulnerabilities, the *tara bandu* becomes a tool to educate the people that they hold solutions to their own problems.

FIGURE 8.2 • *Tara bandu* seeks to raise community awareness and consciousness to care and protect the environment (Source: Alberto Martins Guterres)

Social benefits have been identified as the following: reduction of conflicts within the community, mutual respect and solidarity among people, especially those who practice horticulture. With the reduction of social conflict that incorporates the roles of the *kableha* (popular police), political stability in the community has been experienced with gratitude which is perceived to have strengthened grassroots leadership and democracy. Financial savings from not overspending on traditional ceremonies stand out as a major economic benefit. Communities began to redirect their spending to important family expenditures. This has been collectively appreciated as a strengthening of local culture for a positive communal life that preserves natural resources and continuously protects the *lulik*.

To describe the transformation in their village, Guterres said that many young people are now in school until the university level. Some studied at the universities in Dili and abroad. A sample proof of its success in ensuring the youth's education is UNAER's Secretary who has finished his course in the university and is currently managing the pre-school program of the peasant union.

The youth, who spend more time in school and who are conscious of the hefty penalty for violating *tara bandu* on overspending, have been observed to have diverted their spending on liquors and parties to personal needs. Youth conflicts have also subsided as they become preoccupied with more productive activities such as horticulture and studying. The increased presence of motorbikes and the retrofitting of houses using permanent building materials have been identified as indicators of the improved financial management of the locals and their compliance to the *tara bandu*.

Now, Ermera, according to Guterres, is a model. First, because UNAER is the leading peasant organization at the district level in the context of Timor Leste's history after independence. Second, because of the implementation of *tara bandu*. The peasant union is in the process of expanding to neighbouring districts of Aileu, Manufahi, and Suai towards building a movement for popular agrarian reform, especially in light of a pending agrarian reform policy. The target is to establish the peasant union in all the districts of Timor Leste. UNAER aspires to expand to a national federation, while currently maintaining its linkage with the international peasant movement La Via Campesina.

Ermera's peasantry also reflects how the locals have understood and internalized the principle of inclusivity towards the achievement of communal reconciliation and sustainable peace. Da Silva and Furusawa (2014) explained that farmers are prepared to embrace the rights of others who were displaced and relocated by the foreign rulers, as they are likewise victims of conflict and injustice.

The implementation of Ermera's *tara bandu* runs for eight (8) years. In the 8th year, the community will hold a district-wide evaluation process before they will ever decide whether to renew the *Tara Bandu* Code or not.

In order to maintain the relevance of the *tara bandu*, Guterres said that the challenge is to continue educating the community about the benefits of this practice. The *xefe de suco* has a critical role. Guterres explained that in order to ensure that the interest of the farmers are protected, political governance at the village level should therefore be coming from the peasant union who ably comprehends the value of this customary practice in relation to the land struggle. The current *xefe de suco* in Ermera is an active member of UNAER and was already elected twice.

Ways forward

Ermera's t*ara bandu* and the leadership of the peasantry strikes a logic about the limits or failures of the Western or market-oriented concepts of land titling that cannot just serve as a blueprint for land policy formation, especially in the South where collectivism is strong. This study would like to present that the government has the social responsibility to urgently prioritize agrarian reform (as this is central in any development agenda) that incorporates strong participation of grassroots communities in the

policy formulation and implementation, along with high recognition on the viability of collective land ownership that reflects customary values, social justice, and, sustainable peace. As emphasized by KSI and UNAER in this study, the *tara bandu*, together with the maintenance of other cultural practices that benefit communities, should have a vital space in the formal governance system of the country.

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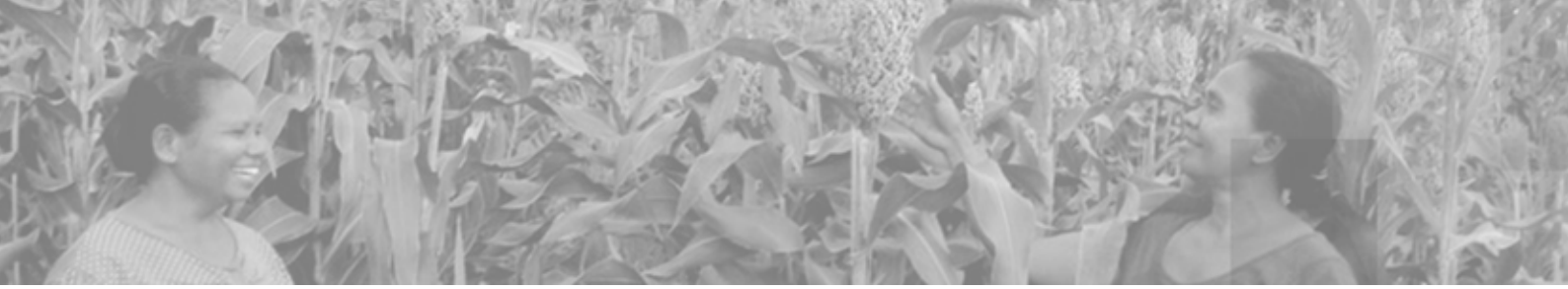

9

Power from the Grain
Bringing Back the Lost Heritage of Sorghum in Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia

PERHIMPUNAN PETANI SORGUM UNTUK KEDAULATAN PANGAN[1]

Sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor [L.] Moench*), the forgotten staple food crop in the southeastern part of the Indonesian archipelago found its rebirth through the efforts of a local peoples' food movement that is grounded in their determination to combat food insecurity and malnutrition in the province. Local food producers in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) also made this effort to reclaim their lost cultural identity, an agricultural heritage that was eroded for decades in order to accommodate a government program embellished as a national strategy to achieve food self-sufficiency.

Farmers belonging to the Perhimpunan Petani Sorgum untuk Kedaulatan Pangan are speedily reviving the cultivation of many local varieties of sorghum across NTT, particularly in the regencies of East Flores (including Larantuka and the islands of Solor and Adonara), Ende, Lambata, Manggarai, Rote, and Sikka. The physical geography of NTT provides an optimum environment for this food crop that is tolerant to hot and arid agroecologies. Throughout the province, rainfall is a major factor to crop production (Pellokila, Field, and Momuat 1991), while soil moisture can limit yield (Fitzpatrick and Chapman 1988, quoted in Pellokila, Field, and Momuat 1991). NTT is characterized by low rainfall having only around three to four months of rainy season and prolonged drought, with 92.32 percent or about 1.5 million hectares of total land area identified as dry land (Mukkun et al. 2018). It is situated in the volcanic region of the Lesser Sunda Islands of Indonesia where land is fertile but water is scarce.

Climate change now becomes a huge threat to food security due to greater loss of soil moisture, reduced groundwater, and increasing reduction of rainfall. NTT has a majority population reliant on small-scale subsistence farming, thus minor shocks including climate change will significantly impact the population's livelihoods (World Food Programme 2013). The contributing factors include lack of access to safe drinking water, indigents' limited access to food, poor sanitation, and limited access to health care (World Food Programme 2013).

Sorghum, upland rice, and millet were the main cereals throughout NTT before maize took center stage as the principal staple of the province. These food crops go well in areas where rainfall is below

[1] This chapter was written by Ananeza Aban. The Program would like to thank Shantoy Hades, RD Benyamin Daud, director of the Yaspensel Keuskupan Larantuka, and the Diocese of Larantuka for the conduct of the interviews and community visits. Program researchers Ananeza Aban and Angeli Fleur Nuque conducted this field research.

900 millimeters (mm). Later on, sorghum, tubers, legumes, and other crops have become supplemental crops especially in periods when maize harvest fails (Pellokila, Field, and Momuat 1991).

Local sorghum varieties that are adaptable to the agro-climatic conditions of NTT are seen to have high diversity, coming from inherited varieties from parents and those new genotypes that are products of cross breeding (Mukkun et al. 2018). Since their reintroduction of sorghum, local farmers in the province now possess seven local varieties of sorghum, commendable for human consumption. Meanwhile, Mukkun et al. (2018) discovered more than 30 species of sorghum, with almost all species having great potential as high-yielding varieties suitable for human food consumption and diversification.

Sorghum: The world's important grain, an agricultural heritage

To begin with, Ethiopia is the heartland of sorghum that is grown by entirely almost all subsistence farmers (GRAIN 2007, Teshome et al. 1999). Although, some scholars mentioned that its early domestication may have occurred in northeastern Africa or the Egyptian-Sudanese border (Mann et al. 1983, quoted in Hariprassana and Patil 2015). Africa is also home to the largest diversity of sorghum. For over 5,000 years, it has been nurtured and spread out along trade routes across the continents (GRAIN 2007), making it an important food crop of people in the semi-arid tropics of the African and Asian continents (Hariprasanna and Patil 2015). It is actually the fourth most important world cereal, which is only surpassed by wheat, rice, and maize in terms of production area (Teshome et al. 1999).

In India, this is the third most important grain, a cornerstone of poor peasants' strategies to assert their food sovereignty in the Medak District of Andhra Pradesh by controlling over their seeds and food after their painful saga with the Green Revolution of the 1960s, when government strongly pushed production of new high-yielding rice and wheat varieties, consequently devaluing traditional crops (GRAIN 2007).

In Flores[2] society, sorghum is likewise a key traditional food in local cultural identity, as it is broadly adaptable to its land and climate (Loretha 2018). As a staple food of the locals, it has become a vital ingredient to their socio-economic struggle. In decades past, it was an indicator of becoming resilient in the midst of limited resources, their answer to food insufficiency when rice was scarce or rather unaffordable.

The impulse to replant sorghum began from the spontaneous enthusiasm of one woman—Maria Loretha. It all started when she relocated to NTT with her family to avoid the detrimental effects of the Asian financial crisis affecting Indonesia under Suharto in the late 90s and to live an alternative rural life. One day, she ate a plate of steamed sorghum garnished with coconut flakes offered by her neighbour. Immediately, she 'fell in love' with it. Thereafter, she hunted for seeds in the far-flung villages and recovered them from the elders. Without any hesitation, she propagated the seeds and distributed them to farmers who were willing to grow them (Loretha 2018; McKinley 2012). The beginnings were a bit tough for her. Farmers, mostly dependent on maize and cashew for their livelihood, are not keen on reviving sorghum. The motivation sharply started only during a prolonged drought in NTT. The Catholic Church in Larantuka was also instrumental in calling all its laity to plant sorghum as a measure to ensure food in times of calamity (Loretha 2018).

This preliminary experience of Maria Loretha reflected that rural culture of seeds conservation and exchange still thrives among farmers of NTT, despite the odds they confronted in the face of agricultural

[2] NTT is a province in the eastern part of Indonesia and consists of more than 500 islands. Flores is one of the largest and dominant islands in NTT.

modernization and development. UP CIDS Program on Alternative Development's (AltDev) field visits to the villages of Tanjung Bunga and Kawalelo, both in the capital town of Larantuka in East Flores Regency, revealed that the culture of farmer-to-farmer seed exchange still thrives as depicted in the diversity of sorghum varieties that has been conserved and protected by communities throughout the years. The current agricultural practice among the communities articulate the multi-functionality of seed exchange by surfacing the interdependency among the neighbourhood of farmers and the value of social relationships where every farmer is associated with one another through this bond of culture, knowledge, and diversity (GRAIN 2007).

This whole experience of bringing back sorghum has been a journey of NTT farmers to achieve 'biodiversity-based farming' which agricultural biodiversity expert Teshome (2006) described as the stage when farmers are doing their own seed selection, especially since seed is the linchpin of farming; they manage their own cropping and are free to cultivate a mixed variety to encourage the continuous exchange of genes and maintain a dynamic system (GRAIN 2007).

Understanding Indonesian agriculture and food policy under Suharto's New Order

Given the vast dry zones and scarcity of rain, the natural landscape of the province of NTT is therefore not compatible for wet paddy cultivation that requires continuous water flooding. The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), which was instrumental in the lowland rice propagation in Indonesia and elsewhere in Asia, explained that good water management for lowland rice means continuous flooding of the fields for seven up to ten days before harvest. This is to help ensure sufficient water and to control

FIGURE 9.1 • Women farmers of Perhimpunan Petani Sorgum untuk Kedaulatan Pangan (Source: Maria Loretha)

weeds from growing as these rice varieties are extremely sensitive to water shortage, owing to its semi-aquatic ancestry. On average, in order to produce 1 kilogram of lowland rice, 1,432 liters of water is needed. However, the amount of water needed depends on the soil type. Total seasonal water input to paddy fields varies from as little as 400 mm in heavy clay soil with shallow groundwater tables to more than 2,000 mm in sandy or loamy soils with deep groundwater tables (IRRI n.d.). The data suggests that lowland rice varieties are water-intensive, compared to sorghum and the other traditional root crops of local farmers.

The loss and revival of sorghum in Flores underscores an era in the country that witnessed the abandonment of traditional crops and eventual neglect of farmers' welfare along with their agricultural knowledge and capacity. It is therefore imperative to review the history of agricultural development in Indonesia that shaped the fate of sorghum and its farmers. This devastating episode of Indonesian rural life eroded local seed varieties of traditional crops and resulted in the enduring marginalization of non-rice producing peasantry, whose majority remain impoverished in this eastern part of the country. Poverty level in NTT is 23.35% in 2011 (World Food Programme 2013).

The New Order of the Suharto Regime, which started in the late 60s until the Asian financial crisis in the late 90s that triggered the call for his ouster and his eventual resignation, has many things to do with the situation of Indonesian farmers in general. His regime constituted an important juncture in Indonesia's agriculture that indicated a pivot in the formulation of policies on rice production (Hansen 1972). A productivist approach on food policy was in place that stressed food security and food self-sufficiency as the foundation for economic development through the state's investment on agri-science, inputs, and farm infrastructure (Vel, McCarthy, and Zen 2016). Rice self-sufficiency and rice price stabilization were crucial drivers of Suharto's political stability.

Rice farming concentration, together with the outpour of much needed resources, was in Java, geographically located in the western part and where wet paddy cultivation is most adaptable (Hansen 1972). But this meant devaluation of other traditional crops and therefore neglect to the outer islands including the Lesser Sundas where NTT belongs. Intensifying rice productivity was somehow perceived by the state power as a paramount solution to food insecurity. On the contrary, for dry land farmers in the eastern part who saw the disappearance of their other nutritious crops such as sorghum, dry paddy varieties, *jewawut* (millet), *jelai* (barley), and maize, it was a disaster. Instead of harnessing the productivity of these varieties, Suharto's government urged and supported farmers to only grow one kind: rice, which also dramatically intensified malnutrition issues in these communities (Ashoka 2013).

The strategy for rice intensification under Suharto was done by incentivizing rice farmers through provision of high-yielding lowland seed varieties, fertilizer, pesticides, credit programs for farmers, and domestic procurement through its state-owned enterprise, the Bureau of Logistics or BULOG (Hansen 1972; Timmer 1975; Vel, McCarthy, and Zen 2016). The role of BULOG then was to stabilize rice prices and, in the early part of its inception, included rice ration for those in the civil service and the military (Hansen 1972; Timmer 1975). Until the late 1970s, the public campaign for rice consumption was widespread (McKinley 2012).

Deliberately altering their way of life, including food intake habits, sorghum consumption was rather misconstrued as a symbol of poverty. Sorghum cultivation has not been as intensive as before and eventually reduced for the purpose of animal fodder (Mukkun et al. 2018; Susetyo 2017). Flores people who ate sorghum were consequently identified as those belonging to the poor and marginalized class who cannot afford to buy rice. Whereas on the other side of the spectrum, it was their traditional approach to food security and primary health care and a calculated response to rice insufficiency in the province. Maria Loretha explained that one of the challenges that the Flores rural society faced is a changing mindset (Susetyo 2017) cast in the mold of government food policies that favour rice and

perpetuate the cultural shaming of eaters of the "inferior crop" as poor (ibid.). She added that over time, only the elders in the village have memory of sorghum. For the younger generation below 40, it is foreign to them (McKinley 2012).

Pitfalls of the Green Revolution in Indonesia

Rice cultivation is millennia-old and a longstanding tradition way before the Dutch colonial times in Indonesia, when chemical fertilizer and pesticides were non-existent in agricultural production (Timmer 1975). While rice holds an important place in Indonesian cuisine and everyday diet, as it is increasingly preferred for consumption during this stage of agricultural modernization, it also has its share of drawbacks. The Indonesian rural community witnessed the intensive use of food crop fertilizer during the period of the Green Revolution which rose from nearly zero in 1959 to almost 200,000 tons in 1970 (ibid.). But during this transition period, many farmers also felt animosity over this government-imposed program and expressed this by refusing to plant the IRRI-developed high- yielding rice varieties, and to utilize fertilizer and pesticides, mainly because several of these early high-yielding varieties were unsatisfactory to peasant productivity in Indonesia (Hansen 1972; Timmer 1975). Factors such as plant disease, insect infestation, consumer rejection, and the cost of the needed agro-chemical inputs have discouraged farmers from using these rice varieties (Timmer 1975). However, this is not to discount administrative deficiency on the part of government and its top-down or coercive institutional intervention (Hansen 1972).

Hansen (1972) expounded that the bureaucratic distribution of pre-packed agrochemical input[3] reflected the government's lack of confidence on the peasants' capacity to perform their role as rational decision-makers. It reduced the peasants' freedom of choice in the selection of fertilizer and pesticides compatible with their respective rice fields. This was even made worse by the introduction of aerial spraying of pesticides that was operated by foreign agrochemical corporations contracted by the government. The reliance on this external support seemed an answer to the administrative shortcomings. But in reality, it further deprived the peasantry the opportunity to make guided decisions by transferring decision-making to the public bureaucracy and corporations that added an element of coercion. Peasants with contiguous plots are compelled to enrol in the spraying program.

Hansen (1972) argued that while yield surged by late 1969, it was achieved through enormous political, economic, and environmental costs as there were subsequent complaints of the harmful effects of aerial spraying to humans and natural resources. Fiscal problems became a heavy burden as the rice repayment rate among farmers was abysmal, giving the government the difficulty to balance its ledgers. The following year, 1970, was the ultimate demise of this rice campaign. In the end, a weak rural bureaucracy was unable to compel peasants to follow government directives which are a rigid enforcement of an unpopular program.

Continuing dilemma of the food program

Rice price volatility that started to build up in the 70s did not substantially provide positive gains to the rice farmers for the long term who remain lurching on compounding economic hardship. There was a failure of providing a true incentive for farmers to actively participate in the rice intensification

[3] The author also termed this the 'packet formula' in which the government prescribed the kind and quantity of fertilizer and pesticides and distributed these to farmers in the form of a packet. It was intended that each farmer would receive a standard quantity of the agrochemicals.

program. This is because government top-down food policies stagnated rice productivity as reflected in its reliance on imports and global trade policies, depicting an era in Indonesia lacking rural-oriented policy (Timmer 1975). In particular, the 1973 procurement policy which was an attempt to improve rice procurement, instructed the village units or *Badan Unit Usaha Desa* (BUUD) to purchase rice harvest from the farmers, process in BUUD's own facilities, and sell them to BULOG. But purchase was at a lower price resulting in widespread reluctance of farmers to sell here. With a scenario of soldiers deployed to enforce the order, such procurement was rather done at gunpoint, quickly replacing the supposed farmers' incentives (ibid.).

By the early 1990s, national rice production could not anymore keep up with the increasing consumption of the country's growing population (Mc Carthy, Vel, and Afiff 2012).

This became prominent after an agreement with the International Monetary Fund to liberalize rice policy that led to the imposition of seasonal import restrictions that surged rice prices by almost 80 percent (McCulloch 2008, quoted in Vel, McCarthy, and Zen 2016), to the disadvantage of rice farmers who receive lower farm gate price and the consumers who buy rice at higher rates.

There are three main reasons that unceasingly beset rice production: low productivity, conversion of paddy fields to urbanization or more rewarding land use, and harvest failure as a result of climate change and bad irrigation infrastructure (Vel, McCarthy, and Zen 2016). Within this landscape of erratic rice production, the idea of reviving traditional crop cultivation was still not under the radar of Suharto's government. Instead, it developed a grand plan to establish a one million-hectare rice project in Central Kalimantan dubbed as the 'mega-rice project.' The project was seen as a failure and unsustainable, and thus it was later terminated (McCarthy, Vel, and Afiff 2012).

Food policies passed by state leaders who succeeded Suharto were seen to have competing and mutually incompatible frameworks resulting to contradictory legislations where Indonesians witness the proliferation of large-scale agribusiness plantations[4] such as those of oil palm and sugar that rather serve the demand of the market and do not reflect an analysis of structural political-economic causes of food insecurity in the country (Vel, McCarthy, and Zen 2016).

In 2012, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) dubbed Indonesia as the third largest rice producer, but also the world's seventh rice importer (ibid.).

Cross-cutting benefits of sorghum towards strengthening the local food movement

Giving up expectations from the government to detour and reconsider the propagation of traditional food crops, sorghum farmers decided to take the lead. The following are the positive outcomes of their initiative.

Ecological gains

Taking pride in their contribution to biodiversity conservation, farmers explained that planting sorghum has cross-cutting effects. It is their approach to restoring the ecological system by transforming dry and barren lands into productive fields which benefit both themselves and the ecosystem. Across NTT, Perhempunan members are producing organically grown crops because, by default, their sorghum does not require chemical fertilizer. As a reciprocity of nature, sorghum productivity is by far profitable for them.

[4] Authors cited the problems with the conversion of ricelands into oil palm plantations in North Sumatra and the replacement of subsistence agriculture to sugar cane plantations in Sumba, NTT.

FIGURE 9.1 • Sorghum fields in NTT, Indonesia (Source: Maria Loretha)

Health benefits

Stunted growth among children under five in most eastern provinces is above the World Health Organization's critical threshold of 40 percent (Ministry of Health Survey 2010, quoted in World Food Programme 2013). Alarmingly, the highest rate in Indonesia is in NTT that reached 58.4 percent. Moreover, the percentage of children under five who are underweight among children under five is 29.4 percent. These figures indicate that high micronutrient deficiencies are prevalent in NTT (World Food Programme 2013).

For farmer Bonifacius Kolah, the president of the local farmers group in Likotuden, sorghum has addressed the malnutrition of their children, as a result of daily consumption within the household. Sorghum, especially those of darker colors (red and black) have higher nutritional value. The phytochemicals found in sorghum show high antioxidants beneficial for human health. It also has anti-carcinogenic properties when consumed regularly in diet (Mukkun et al. 2018).

Creation of an empowering space for peasant women

Women farmers mostly composed the local organization Perhempunan. In a visit of UP CIDS AltDev to Tanjung Bunga and Kawalelo, both in East Flores Regency, sorghum farmers are predominantly women. Sorghum cultivation has given them opportunities to provide enough food for the family and additional income. It has also provided them space to meet other women for mutual support, share knowledge and resources such as seeds, talk about their lives, and more importantly, plan and decide about the sustainability of their farms, harvest, their future. It is a chance for them to break the barriers to social participation that is usually the domain of men in traditional peasant societies. With sorghum, these women hold the key to their self-determination and economic independence allowing themselves to end the dependence on agrochemicals and from the devastating impact of drought and a cycle of poverty (Global Greengrants Fund 2018).

Kolah said that while he is at the top of the leadership, majority of the leaders are the mothers. The reason is that they are the most assertive in the community and are more committed to run their local organization. Decision-making has been collective. There are many times when the women's voices prevail since they are the majority. The influence of Maria Loretha, the pioneer in the sorghum movement, a woman, is also very strong

Economic benefits

Describing their hard work, farmers expressed that it takes almost forever, basking under a blazing sun during harvest season. But for them, a good harvest always compensates for the labor-intensive character of sorghum farming. They harvest sorghum three (3) times a year (Ashoka 2013) compared to wet paddy rice that can only be grown and reaped once during the rainy season. So far, there was no case of crop failure among the communities. With the support of the Catholic Diocese of Larantuka,[5] these farmers manage an average of one hectare sorghum farm. Each hectare produces an average of three (3) tons of grain. Their yield is primarily for household consumption while the excess is sold to the local market (Baran 2016).

Monocropping is not a practice of these small-scale farmers. Aside from sorghum, they also intercrop their plots with traditional crops earlier mentioned in order to diversify their produce, complement their diet, and ensure buffer stocks for domestic consumption and income.

In the rock-strewn, semi-arid hilly landscape of Kawalelo in Larantuka that reaches out to the sea and the twin volcanoes of Lewotobi in a short distance, farmers have expanded their farm project with a target of transforming their village into a sorghum pilot area. Post-harvest facilities for sorghum have gradually been set up.

With a significant sorghum surplus from the community's daily consumption, Maria Loretha said that they have started selling in small-scale and at a fair price to the neighbouring islands such as Bali. But for the long term, Maria Loretha said they aspire to contribute to ensuring food security in the region by selling sorghum to Southeast Asian countries as a statement to the world that among the people in NTT, it is their basic food.

Along with Maria Loretha and Kolah is the collective leadership of farmers Yosep Mukin of Adobera in Tanjung Bunga in East Flores, Vibronia Peni of Wuakerong in Lembata, Lamanepa Elo of Sikka, Benediktus Panbur of West Manggarai, Alfin of Rote, and Ahmad Boro of Pledo in Adonara Island. With their commitment to take the lead in sorghum propagation, the mission to ensure safe and healthy food for their local communities through sorghum has been achieved.

[5] The diocese's support was through the Yaspensel Foundation, its social development arm.

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Reclaiming the Commons

10

Promoting Food Sovereignty in Thailand and the Task of Civil Society

ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURE FOUNDATION, BIOTHAI, and SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE FOUNDATION[1]

Introduction

Thailand is known to be one of the largest rice exporters in the global economy in the current times. As of 2015/2016, Thailand's rice production accounts for 24.5% of the total number of exported rice in the global market (Krungsri 2018). Rice occupies the largest share of Thailand's exported agricultural products, as it accounts for almost 20% (USD 4,378 million) of its total agricultural exports (WTO 2018). The agricultural sector employs 32.80% of its working population (World Bank 2018). However, the share of the agriculture sector in terms of Thailand's gross domestic product (GDP) is only 8% (Indexmundi 2018).

Thailand's inclination towards rice production is a gambit in food availability. The focus of this particular model of production is on the increase of rice supply in the market. But this pattern on food production, as argued by scholars and practitioners, is not sustainable in the long run. It was argued that the use of chemicals in agricultural production exacerbates the problems on food production, as the use of chemicals made food production more expensive (Thanukid 2014), since farmers are not financially-capable in terms of purchasing the technology needed to sustain the production of rice (Barichello and Widanage 2018). Thai farmers, in particular, are finding it difficult to maintain the current agricultural system; this contributes to their insecurity in terms of food (Isvilanonda and Bunyasuri 2009). However, the impact of this technology does not only affect farmers as it also affects the quality of soil. The use of green revolution technologies has also contributed to the degradation of soil (Thanukid 2014).

Given this trend, Thai civil society organizations are at the forefront of the advocacy for an alternative system of agriculture. This paper attempts to document the experiences of organizations such as the Sustainable Agriculture Foundation (SAF), the Alternative Agriculture Foundation (AAF), and BioThai, for their advocacy towards an alternative model on agriculture and food. The paper also explores how these organizations promote the idea of food sovereignty in Thailand. Lastly, it also investigates the nuances and similarities in their campaigns towards the promotion of food sovereignty. To fulfil the objectives set by this paper, a case study research design is used as such is apt in finding out the

[1] This chapter was written by Nathaniel Candelaria. The Program extends its thanks to Naruemon Thabchumpon, Ph.D., who had been very helpful in facilitating the field visit and interviews for this chapter.

experiences of these groups, in more detail (Flick 2009). And to generate data, a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted by the members of the research team,[2] together with some of the members of the abovementioned organizations.

Food Security as the Dominant Paradigm on Food

The current thrust of Thailand on food production falls under the purview of food security. Food security, as a framework, discusses the idea of being food-secure as a condition when "all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO 2006, 1). This entails that people should have increased access not only in terms of availability, but also in terms of their economic means to access food (Barichello and Widanage 2018). The current definition of food security, according to them, is defined during the 1996 World Food Summit (WFS). The definition considers a plethora of factors, which is contrary to its previous thrust that solely focuses on the issue of food availability during the 1950s (Shaw 2007).

Food security, as a framework, is currently operationalized based on the lens of food self-sufficiency and through the increase in access at the domestic level (Barichello and Widanage 2018). Most of the actions undertaken by different governments are actually geared towards these interventions in order to secure food under the food security paradigm. In the Philippines for instance, its Congress is considering enacting a policy on rice tariffication, which lessens the restrictions on import quota for rice (Gonzales 2018). And at the regional level, particularly for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), trade has been a recognized avenue for food security to be ensured (Candelaria 2019).

However, self-sufficiency and the budget a family spends on food in measuring food security has limitations (Barichello and Widanage 2018). Barichello and Widanage have argued that most state interventions on food insecurity are implemented at the national level, despite the fact that food security is noted to be occurring mostly at the local level. This is seen as a problem on how food security is actually discussed as a policy.

Aside from its operational definition, there are also issues about food security as a framework with respect to culture on food production. One of the concerns on food security is that it is not cognizant of the role of culture and identity in food production (Cote 2016). Another concern is the loss of traditional knowledge on agriculture. The case of the indigenous peoples in North Vietnam is an example of this. Because of the policy of the Vietnam government, indigenous peoples in Northern Vietnam are forced to adapt certain measures in support of the current rice policy, even if it is disadvantageous on their part (Turner and Bonnin 2018).

Based on a closer reading of the definition, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations' definition of the concept of food security fails to acknowledge the role of culture and tradition on food production. As a way of promoting an alternative viewpoint on food, international non-government organizations such as the *La Via Campesina* movement promote the idea of food sovereignty as an alternative framework on food.

[2] The research team for the Thailand fieldwork is composed of Asst. Prof. Karl Arvin Hapal and Nathaniel Candelaria.

FIGURE 10.1 • A sustainable farm in Thailand (Photo courtesy of Nathaniel Candelaria)

Food Sovereignty as an Alternative Framework

In 2008, the world experienced a food crisis where the price of basic commodities have increased as an effect of the global financial crisis. Cases of food insecurity were reported in different areas of Mexico, the Philippines, China, and Africa due to the changing dynamics in the global market (Bello 2010). The impact of the food crisis in 2008 made the poor, composed mostly of farmers, vulnerable (Holt-Gimenez and Altieri 2013). Nevertheless, the call towards an alternative framework on food did not start recently. In fact, food sovereignty as an alternative framework was already discussed in 1996.

In the second congress of the *La Via Campesina* movement in Tlaxcala, Mexico, the movement called for "changing the existing, inequitable, social, political and economy structures and policies … (which) are the very causes of the social and environmental destruction in the countryside in both the North and the South" (Wittman, Desmarais and Wiebe 2010, 3). The concept of food sovereignty further evolved in succeeding congresses such as during the World Forum on Food Sovereignty (2002) and the NGO/CSO Forum on Food Sovereignty (2002) (Wittman, Desmarais, and Wiebe 2010). Food sovereignty is currently defined as:

> The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the

> current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers and users. Food sovereignty prioritizes local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just incomes to all peoples as well as the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social and economic classes and generations. (Nyeleni Forum for Food Sovereignty 2007, cited in Wittman 2011, 88)

Food sovereignty encompasses the following tenets: (1) it entails the rights of a country to define its own food policies; (2) it focuses on the priority of the state to feed the people; (3) it recognizes the rights of farmers to produce their own products, and the right to be protected against cheap agricultural products; and lastly, (4) it recognizes the roles of the community and women in promoting food for the population (La Via Campesina 2003). The concept of food sovereignty also entails the need to rediscover the cultural practices that people have with respect to the cultivation of their own food (Cote 2016). Particularly for the last point, the respect on cultural practices on food is not visible under the dominant paradigm on food.

Food, as a basic human need, should not be considered as a commodity in a fluctuating global market.[3] Because of the treatment of agricultural products more as commodity than food supply, it led to the conversion of agricultural lands into the production of high-value crops such as palm oil, in order to increase income under the agriculture sector (Bello 2010). In the case of Malaysia, for instance, communities have been forced to migrate to urban centers to earn a living while their ancestral lands were occupied by agricultural companies cultivating high-value crops such as palm oil (Lee 2018).

The production of high-value crops contributes to food problems precisely because it does not see the need for food to be produced solely for consumption (Bello 2010). Alternative practices on agriculture promote a better chance of having a harvest than subscribing to monocropping (Altieri and Nicholls 2008). This is also observed in Vietnam where indigenous peoples have also utilized their indigenous knowledge on agriculture in order for them to be safe from the problems related to climate change (Turner and Bonnin 2018).

Both food security and its counterpart food sovereignty share similarities and differences. Both ideas aim to secure food for the survival of mankind. For food security, this is covered by its second pillar, i.e., food accessibility. However, they differ on the manner of achieving these goals. Food security, as discussed earlier, has pillars intended for people to be food-secure not only in terms of its availability, but also in terms of people's economic accessibility towards food. Discussion on food security also includes the idea on how people will receive proper nutrients needed by the human body and how all of these will be stable. Food sovereignty, on the other hand, aims to promote the production of food, independent from the forces of the market. Based on the proponents of the framework such as the La Via Campesina, food is considered as a basic right that everyone should be able to enjoy. In this regard,

[3] In his book *Food Wars*, Walden Bello discussed how the current economic paradigm, together with the programs implemented by international financial institutions, contributed to how food was made as a commodity under the international market. He cited several cases such as Mexico, the Philippines, China, and Africa to narrate their experiences on food under the current economic system.

food sovereignty is geared towards democratizing food access throughout the population (Salzer and Fehlinger 2017).

Alternatives in Action: The Case of the Sustainable Agriculture Foundation, the Alternative Agriculture Foundation, and BioThai

The growth of the agricultural sector in Thailand was a product of the so-called green revolution in agriculture. Due to the issue of food insecurity during the 1960s, leading donor agencies such as the Rockefeller Foundation and Ford Foundation funded initiatives and research projects on how to increase food production using modern technologies such as artificial fertilizers, chemical products, and the use of irrigation systems for water sources (Hazell 2009). During the 1970s, the Thai government integrated the technologies from the green revolution by building irrigation and road systems and adopted technologies, which contributed to the current status of Thailand as one of the top exporters of rice in the world (Isvilanonda and Bunyasiri 2009).

While the use of green revolution technologies remains in the Thai agriculture system, there are organizations advocating for alternatives. For this paper, the discussion will focus on three organizations, i.e., the Sustainable Agriculture Foundation (SAF), the Alternative Agriculture Foundation (AAF), and the BioThai, on their role in promoting food sovereignty in Thailand. These organizations form a larger consortium seeking to promote alternative practices on food production in Thailand. The research team from the Program on Alternative Development of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) visited the members of the consortium in Nonthaburi, Thailand, and a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted at the BioThai Office in order to find out the experiences of these organizations on their advocacy for food sovereignty.

During the FGD, the participants were asked to discuss the activities that their organizations have undertaken, their objectives, the challenges they faced, and their future goals. Based on the discussion, these organizations have different sets of goals and objectives, but they are united in the goal of promoting an alternative way of agriculture, which is in contrast with the current mode of agriculture production in Thailand.

Profiles

These are the following organizations, represented by their members, that the research team were able to have a fruitful discussion with on food sovereignty:

(1) ***The Sustainable Agriculture Foundation.*** As one of the organizations comprising the consortium, the Sustainable Agriculture Foundation (SAF) aims to promote sustainable agriculture practices in the context of urbanization (Ashoka 2018). Based on their profile as winner of the Ashoka award, the SAF aims to bridge the gap between the traditional and modern agricultural practices and help others to promote the initiative in order for them to have better nutrition. As discussed by one of the members of the SAF, the organization collaborates with other organizations such as the Alternative Agriculture Foundation and BioThai in terms of research and network building.

(2) ***The Alternative Agriculture Foundation.*** The Alternative Agriculture Foundation (AAF) is a farmers' group that seeks to "develop sustainable agriculture techniques based on the local ecology and expand their positive impacts by training and educating other members of their communities" (Alternative Agriculture Foundation n.d.). Based on further information available from their official website, they also aim to promote the cultivation of organic agricultural products in order to make it an alternative and sustainable source of livelihood

for farmers. During the FGD, one of their members mentioned that the goal of the AAF is to promote an alternative model against the government-sponsored way of agriculture, i.e., the use of fertilizers and chemicals on rice production. The member from AAF further elaborated that this is because they observed that those who do not subscribe to chemical farming have better quality of life and produce better agricultural products.

(3) ***BioThai.*** The organization was established first in 1995 as a network called "Thai Network on Community Rights and Diversity," and was turned into an organization, called as the "Biodiversity and Community Rights Action Thailand" in 1999 (BioThai n.d.). As elaborated further in their website, the organization was officially registered as a foundation, and changed its name to BioThai Foundation in 2006. The website also highlighted the change of their name to Biodiversity–Sustainable Agriculture–Food Sovereignty Action Thailand in 2014. One of the members of BioThai mentioned that the organization helps the other member-organizations of their consortium by conducting research. As mentioned in their website, the organization deals with contemporary issues on agriculture and food production such as genetic engineering, seed freedom, etc. And as highlighted in their website, BioThai also serves as the coordinator of the network.

The Perceived Issues and Problems in the Current Agricultural Practices of Thailand

As discussed during the FGD, one of the reasons why the SAF, AAF, and BioThai mobilized as a consortium is because of the problems of the current agricultural practices in Thailand. As discussed

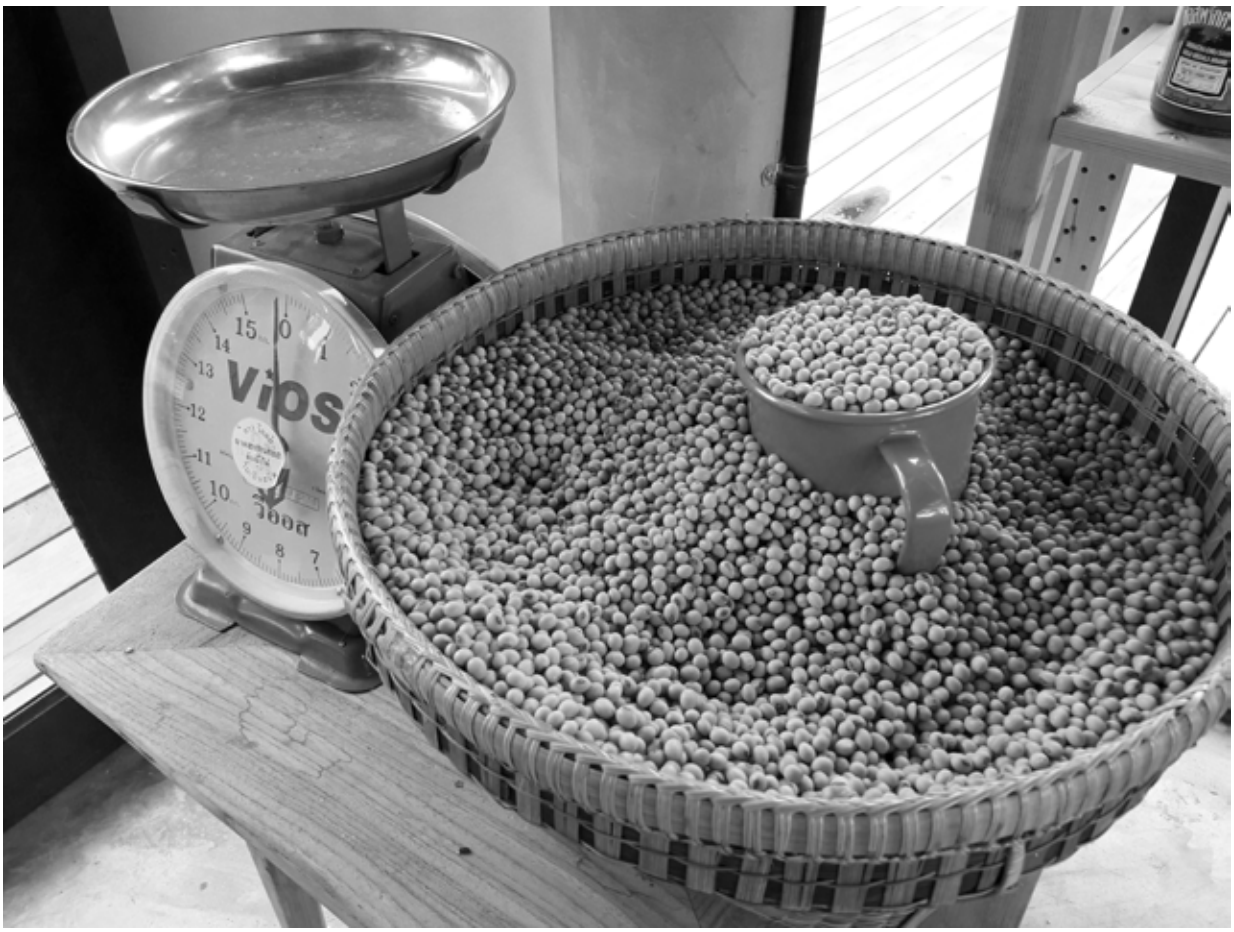

FIGURE 10.2 • A basket of soy harvest, fresh from the farm (Photo courtesy of Nathaniel Candelaria)

in the context of the paper, the Thai government continues to prioritize rice production with the use of chemicals. One of the participants of the FGD from the AAF mentioned how the promotion of the green revolution in Thailand led to the loss of forest lands. The same member also pointed out how it contributed to the worsening situation of farmers in Thailand and how the use of these technologies affected community relations.

While the government prioritizes green revolution technologies, the FGD participants acknowledged the existence of a policy on alternative agriculture. However, they lamented that there is little government support as far as the implementation of the policy is concerned. The FDG participants have also recognized the role of the Assembly of the Poor in terms of mobilization, as the social movement was able to make the Thai government listen to their demands, in terms of reforms in government policies. As much as they campaign for the promotion of alternative practices in agriculture, given the little support that they receive from the government, a participant from the AAF mentioned that only around 3% of the total areas for agriculture are using organic farming techniques at present.

Another concern for the SAF, AAF, and BioThai, as a consortium of alternative practitioners, is the issue of organic certification. The FGD participants were able to share that the process of certifying their products as organic is problematic, since some of the factors needed for organic agriculture have already been contaminated with the use of technologies from the green revolution. One of the representatives of BioThai during the FGD shared their organization's experience on the problem. The member from BioThai mentioned that the results of the examinations conducted both by the government and the private sector differ from each other, thus making the certification of organic products an issue for their organization. Moreover, the same member also lamented the fact that people do not really understand the difference between organic and non-organic agriculture.

The Push towards Food Sovereignty and Alternative Agricultural Practices in Thailand

To promote food sovereignty in Thailand, it was brought up during the FGD that they built networks among the farmers and built plans before mobilizing. One of the members of the SAF emphasized the role of network building and mobilization at the grassroots level. The same participant recalled that it was in 1997 when they mobilized the network, which then contributed to the change in policy. In the case of the AAF, one of its members has recognized the need to build solidarity on other issues such as trade, collective land management and collective bargaining, bolstered by mobilizations.

Aside from network building, the FGD participants also recognized the need for collaboration in terms of research and policy analysis on different agriculture models and other issues affecting agriculture such as land, price, access to credit, and issues of empowerment. The FGD participants pointed out the division of roles within the consortium. For instance, the representative from BioThai mentioned that their organization deals with research and the dissemination of its results. The BioThai representative also mentioned that SAF is responsible for the managing of the research undertaken for the network. The AAF is in charge of establishing networks among farmers. For the purpose of disseminating information, the representative from AAF mentioned the critical role of the media as an important avenue for sharing knowledge on agriculture.

The FGD participants have recognized the importance of engaging their respective governments. The members of their respective organizations meet with government offices and lobby for pro-alternative agriculture policies. One example of this is the sustainable agriculture policy, as discussed both by the members of the SAF and AAF. Particularly for the SAF member, engaging the government is needed to ensure that policies promoting these initiatives will be enacted; they will continue to do so until these initiatives are enacted.

Another agenda that the FGD participants mentioned is to engage the public and to educate them about organic agriculture. The BioThai member in the FGD lamented that consumers do not really have an idea on how their food is produced to begin with. Moreover, the consumers are also not knowledgeable in distinguishing organic/inorganic agricultural products. The bottom line of this is that they want everyone to benefit from alternative agriculture practices. The FGD participant from BioThai highlighted the desire for farmers to benefit from agriculture, without sacrificing the environment. The same member envisioned a social market where people are free to access goods that they want to purchase, as an idea on how to operationalize this.

In this particular debate on food, the civil society groups discussed in this paper subscribe to the idea of food sovereignty. According to the FGD member from the AAF, there is a need for people to acknowledge the impact of the current system of agriculture in terms of its devastating effects on land. There is also a need to recover their forgotten culture on agriculture, as it was nearly wiped out by the government's insistence on the promotion of food security through the green revolution. The ideas mentioned in the FGD resonate with the arguments raised by food sovereignty organizations such as the La Via Campesina on the impact of the green revolution on indigenous agricultural knowledge and why there is a need to rediscover these practices once again (Cote 2016).

Building Solidarity for Food Sovereignty

Based on the experience of the Alternative Agriculture Foundation, the Sustainable Agriculture Foundation, and BioThai, there are several points that we can learn: the role of collective action, cooperation, the importance of research, and engagement with other actors in the society. These factors are important for these organizations to plan, to mobilize, and to build solidarity with others sharing the same ideas with respect to food sovereignty.

Collective Action and Defined Roles

While they are united towards a specific goal, i.e., the promotion of alternative practices on agriculture, their respective roles within the consortium are well-defined. Based on the discussion of the FGD participants, the Sustainable Agriculture Foundation oversees promoting ideas about agricultural sustainability such as urban agriculture techniques. The Alternative Agriculture Foundation, on the other hand, is in charge of promoting alternative agricultural practices, such as organic farming. And as for BioThai, it is involved with issues concerning contemporary technologies on agriculture.

It is noteworthy for these groups to coalesce and advocate change in terms of Thai agriculture as a collective, despite their different roles. Based on their experience, we can infer how important defining their roles are in avoiding a significant overlap of functions. The cases of these three organizations also highlighted how their advocacies are centered on the promotion of an alternative agriculture and food sovereignty. Moreover, the result of the FGD highlights that they have a united front in their advocacy against green revolution and its negative effects over organic agriculture. These organizations are united despite having different functions within the consortium.

Cooperation

The importance of cooperation among different organizations is manifested in the idea behind different social movements such as the degrowth movement, and how these organizations behind the movement can learn to recognize each other's strengths and weaknesses (Muller 2016; Kathari 2016). In the case of the SAF, AAF, and BioThai, it is noteworthy that these organizations value the importance of camaraderie and cooperation.

As mentioned by the FGD participants, they have established linkages with other organizations and farmers. Particularly for the AAF, they also deal with issues on agriculture and food trade and collective agriculture. The organization has recognized the role of cooperation with instrumentalities, such as the government as an arena for exchanging ideas. In this regard, we can infer that these organizations are cooperating with other organizations and stakeholders in order to promote the idea of alternatives in the Thai society. And as a way of promoting cooperation, the FGD participants pointed out the importance of building networks, since it helps people mobilize towards a goal shared by everyone.

The Importance of Research and Development in the Promotion of Advocacies

While there is a need to have a unifying lens on how to view agriculture and issues on food, the FGD participants have also underscored the importance of research in their advocacy. Based on their experience, research is important in order for them to be able to share accurate information about the state of Thai agriculture. Research is also important for them in developing new ways and/or mechanisms on how to promote alternative agriculture without sacrificing nature. Whatever the outcome of their research is, they realized the need for their organizations to disseminate the findings towards a larger audience.

While they recognize its importance, these organizations also differ on what their researches are primarily focused on. For example, the SAF deals with concerns pertaining to sustainability and urban agriculture, as discussed by their representative in the FGD. BioThai deals with issues on contemporary agricultural techniques and their implications for Thai Agriculture, as mentioned in their website. And

FIGURE 10.3 • Aligned on the shelves are different eco-friendly products made from fresh materials from the farm (Photo courtesy of Nathaniel Candelaria)

for the AAF, the organizations deal with issues pertaining to alternative agricultural practices and their impacts on the communities.

Engagement with Other Actors

As discussed during the FGD, the participants have stressed the importance of engaging other actors in the society regarding their advocacy on alternative agricultural systems. Based on the comments of the participant from the SAF, one of the key actors that needs to be engaged is the government. The consortium keeps engaging the government, until the government sees the merit of setting policies supporting these kinds of alternative practices. Aside from the government, engagement with the public is also emphasized. As pointed out by the participant from BioThai, the consortium needs to engage the public in order to raise awareness about existing alternative agricultural practices and their benefits vis-à-vis mainstream practices. And for the AAF, a participant mentioned that their organization engages with other farmers by convincing them to abandon costly agricultural practices and to shift to alternative ones. While the AAF oversees the networking, as discussed during the FGD, other members of the consortium such as the SAF and BioThai also play a significant role in engaging other stakeholders of the society.

The abovementioned points are important as these groups can learn from each other's experiences and strengthen the solidarity among them. This realization is important given the differences in their respective tasks. For instance, each member-organization of the degrowth movement has its own objectives and priorities, but their experience has highlighted how they can build a much more integrated network of alternative practitioners, despite being different from each other in terms of goals (Muller 2016; Kathari 2016). The example shown by this movement demonstrates that, in spite of their differences, they can still work as long as they share the same advocacies. And this has been the case of the consortium on food and agriculture joined by the three distinct organizations.

Conclusion

While Thailand was able to maintain its status as one of the top exporters of rice in the global economy, a portion of its population, especially farmers, are food insecure as costs of food production increases with the use of modern technologies on agricultural production. And while the price of inputs is high, the green revolution made the price of rice low due to the increase in supply. Moreover, the green revolution technology had an impact on the long-term agricultural production as it contributed to the decrease of nutrients in the soil, and it also developed the resistance of pests to these chemicals. These factors contributed to the difficulty experienced by farmers, which resulted in hunger and poverty, as explained by the participants of the study.

In the case of the farmers, the prioritization of the Thai Government to pursue the green revolution to promote rice production, paved the way for the SAF, AAF, and BioThai to coalesce and promote the idea of food sovereignty as an alternative framework, with regard to food and economic issues felt by Thai farmers in general.

The case of the Sustainable Agriculture Foundation, the Alternative Agriculture Foundation, and BioThai is noteworthy in the sense that they are trying to address the gap in terms of food and livelihood concerns among the farmers brought about by the green revolution policy of the Thai Government. As mentioned during the FGD, these groups are trying to promote food sovereignty by providing information to farmers on how to cultivate land for organic and sustainable agriculture. These groups are also at the forefront of challenging existing policies on organic certification and promoting alternative practices on agriculture. This is due to the concern that these groups have regarding the differences on how the government and the private sector evaluate organic products. Given how difficult

the challenges are, these groups have also recognized the importance of network building, cooperation, and pursuing research to support their respective advocacies.

Despite their position vis-à-vis the current agriculture policy of the government, they are still engaging with the government in order to change these policies. While they are still far from attaining their goal, their attempts on promoting food sovereignty among their farmers have nevertheless contributed to the improvement of their lives. As mentioned earlier, organic agriculture helped people earn more income than conventional agricultural practices. These practices are sensible efforts that can be investigated both by policymakers and other non-governmental organizations as well, as an alternative to the current system of food production.

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11

Local Energy Planning in Vietnam and "the Local" in Building Alternatives in Energy and Environmental Policy

GREEN INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE[1]

Introduction

Over the past two decades, Vietnam has undergone rapid economic growth, transforming it to one of the strongest and fastest growing economies in Southeast Asia (Urban et al. 2018). This has brought increasing industrialization as well as environmental pressures. CO2 emissions have steeply increased, energy demand has been growing, and environmental pressures have been mounting in relation to the pollution of air, water, and soil; deforestation; and natural habitat destruction (World Bank 2017). As in most countries, Vietnam has been figuring out how to reconcile economic development with ecological sustainability.

Energy issues are top priorities on the agenda of Vietnam due to the need to address energy supplies, solving large pockets of energy poverty, and the heavy reliance on fossil fuels, particularly coal (Urban et al. 2018). Over the years, the government implemented a number of energy-related policies which aim at energy efficiency, diversified and effective use of domestic natural resources in combination with a reasonable import-export balance, reducing GHG emissions for environmental protection, and increasing the share of renewable energy in the total commercial primary energy supply (APEC 2013).

One key site where these national policies meet the sticky realities of the local community and of the efforts of civil society is the Local Energy Planning (LEP). It is a bottom-up approach to energy planning which entails data collection by and joint planning with the local community members and local authorities, in consultation with professionals, with the aim of achieving consensus on the contents of the energy plan. Addressing the weaknesses of top-down approaches to energy planning, LEP puts a premium on "participation" of the local community and local authority to design energy plans that customized their energy needs and resources. Participation here means (1) voluntary involvement of people; (2) the ability of the people to influence and control over the initiative, decisions, and resources; (3) involvement of people at different stages of the initiative; and (4) having the ultimate aim to improve

[1] This chapter was written by Honey "Hans" Tabiola. The Program would like to thank Dong Huy Cuong of the Vietnam Peace and Development Foundation for arranging the interview with GreenID. The interview was conducted by researchers Ananeza Aban and Angeli Fleur Nuque in Hanoi, Vietnam.

the well-being of the people who are participating (Narayanasamy 2009, 3). As a bottom-up local initiative, it is cognizant of the insight that "the effectiveness, success, and sustainability of development initiatives largely depend on wholehearted participation of the stakeholders, particularly the primary ones" (Narayanasamy 2009, xvii). This essay documents LEP as conceived and implemented by Green Innovation and Development Centre (GreenID), a non-government organization (NGO) in Vietnam.

More generally, as LEP champions "the local" as a site where alternatives might emerge and flourish, an analysis of LEP also presents an occasion to assess the transformative role of "the local" in energy and environmental policy. In particular, the essay considers the power and limitations of localism for a potent politics of constructing alternatives.

In a work entitled *The Limits of Eco-Localism: Scale, Strategy, Socialism*, Gregory Albo (2007) articulates the promise and pitfalls of localism as a virtue and venue for political action and social change. Localism has been a project for both the right and the left. Especially prominent on the left, the local is seen as the space and scale for "tangible solidarities" for "alternate ways of life." As such, for Albo, it is important to interrogate "the local" and confront the "systematic obstacles" for progressive projects that count on "the local" to prosper (ibid., 339).

On the conservative right, the neoliberal case for localism has been widely supported. Albo offers the example of the World Bank which advocates for the idea that "the political objectives to increase political responsiveness and participation at the local level can coincide with the economic objectives of better decisions about the use of public resources and increased willingness to pay for local services" (World Bank 2001). From this perspective, local government units are seen as better positioned to respond to the needs of the populace and to make more informed decisions about the use of public funds. This devolution of powers to the local level is often knotted with the move to defund the local governments and leave them to manage single handedly the basic social services of the populace.

On the left, embracing the local is read as either "skepticism about universal projects and collective struggles for societal transformation" (Albo 2007, 337) or as the celebration of "local resistance and community alternatives" to the overwhelming imperatives of neoliberal globalization (ibid., 338). This view holds that the territorial scale of the local is decidedly the site for political action and transformation. This entails a shift from centralized and concentrated forms of wealth and power (often wielded by a privileged few) to emphasis on democratic, less bureaucratic systems of decision-making on the local and individual level. Albo points out that one area where this attraction of the local is seductive is in the ecological movement.

The first section of the paper discusses the energy situation in Vietnam, particularly its challenges and the national programs and policies addressing these challenges. The second section provides an overview of the Local Energy Planning (LEP)—its purpose, features, mechanisms, benefits, and its vision of transformation of the energy situation in Vietnam. Finally, given the controversy about the status and role of "the local" in anti-neoliberal politics, the paper highlights the necessarily "double-sidedness" of the local; that is, the local is both a product of large social structures and a *potential* for structural transformation. Further, the case of LEP shows that this double-sidedness may be overcome by continuing engagement and contestation with the large social structures or the "extra-local" institutions such as the national government and its agencies.

Energy Situation in Vietnam

LEP should be located within the energy situation in Vietnam. In 1986, Vietnam began a transition from an economy that is centrally planned to one that is market-oriented (Minh Do and Sharma 2011, 5770). This transition led to a series of developments, namely Vietnam's obtaining access to

concessional international finance in 1993, the lifting of US embargo in 1994, membership into the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), and WTO (World Trade Organization) in the years 1995, 1998, and 2007, respectively. Arguably, these developments have been attributed as the stimulus for more than 7% growth of the economy over the past fifteen years (IEA 2008, cited in Minh Do and Sharma 2011). In its desire to maintain high rates of economic growth, the energy sector is bound to face several challenges which prompted the Vietnamese government to carry out a set of energy policies to shape the evolution of the country's energy policy formulation.

The energy sector in Vietnam is beset with various challenges (Minh Do and Sharma 2011, 5770–72). First is on energy import dependency. Given the increasing demand of the country driven by high economic growth and growing population, there has been an emerging consensus among Vietnamese policymakers and the planners that the indigenous energy resources are unlikely to meet the energy demand. As such, dependency on imported energy is a growing concern. It is projected that by 2025, Vietnam will have to import energy as the reserve of oil and gas will not be sufficient beyond a 25-year time horizon. Data on energy demand from 1995 to 2014 reveal that the GDP and the energy demand of Vietnam have increased consistently in the last years (IEA 2017) while projections also show that total final energy demand will be 2.5 times higher in 2035 than in 2015 (Danish Energy Agency 2017).

The primary energy supply of Vietnam comes from fossil fuels, mainly coal and oil (over 70%), as well as natural gas (IEA 2017). In terms of electricity generation, between 1995 and 2014, hydropower has been the major source, followed by gas and coal (IEA 2017), although hydropower is projected to decrease from 29.5% to 15.5% (GGGI 2017; GIZ 2017; Urban, Sicilliano, and Nordensvard 2017). It is also noted that the share of both renewable (particularly hydropower, wind, and solar energy) and non-renewable sources has steadily grown. "Vietnam has a good potential for the development of renewable energy, such as wind, solar, biomass, and hydropower (geothermal under consideration)" (Urban et al. 2018, 10), and the government is actively promoting the use and generation of renewable energy as enshrined in its National Energy Development Strategy (2007).

The second challenge is the low energy efficiency due to old technologies (e.g., for most existing coal and oil-fired plants) and poor energy management practices (from conversion to processing and end use levels). Third and related is the mobilization of funds for developing the energy sector which is preliminarily estimated at nearly USD 137 billion of investment over the period from 2008 to 2025 (JICA 2008). Fourth is on environmental consequences of energy policies. While Vietnam is one of the lowest per capita emitters of carbon emissions in 2007, its CO2 emissions per unit of GDP are about 2 times the world average (IEA 2009, cited in Minh Do and Sharma 2011). In the year 2025, it is projected that nearly 93% of the total commercial, primary energy consumption of the country will be driven by fossil fuel, with coal occupying 47% share.

By way of addressing these challenges, the Vietnamese government developed a "unified energy market, both domestically and internationally" to "promote investment and secure financial resources for sustainable development of the energy system" (Minh Do and Sharma 2011, 5772). Essentially, this entails a shift from direct market control via the state-owned firms to a system decided by the markets. Minh Do and Sharma (2011) argued that a unified energy market or a "market-based energy system" would enhance security of energy supply by encouraging the participation of the private sector and improving flexibility and transparency of the energy system. In effect, they believe that this arrangement would reduce financial pressures on the government and increase effective allocation of resources through market competition.

The shift to a "market-based energy system" is accompanied by a suite of policy measures (ibid., 5774) concerning energy resource development (strengthening exploration and development of

indigenous resources), domestic energy supply security (strengthening domestic energy supply capacity and expanding energy infrastructure), capital resources for energy development (raising investment capital), development of renewable energy resources (increasing the share of renewable energy in power generation), and international cooperation and energy trade (diversifying energy supply sources by exploring opportunities overseas). In particular, to reduce its GHG emissions and increase energy efficiency, the Vietnamese government issued a number of policies such as National Target Programme on Energy Efficiency, on carbon trading, and the Law on the Economical and Efficient Use of Energy (Urban et al. 2018, 9).

The Vietnamese government has played an active role in shifting the country's approach from climate change adaptation to mitigation (Urban et al. 2018); the government has been seen as working closely together with the private sector (both national and foreign) toward economic development (Schmitz, Dau Pham, and McCulloch 2015). For example, import tax exemptions and land fee exemptions are granted by the government for those investing in renewable energy.

In their interviews with policymakers and representatives from firms, entrepreneurs, civil society, academia, and multilateral organizations, Urban et al. (2018, 14) found that the Vietnamese government has been successful in integrating top-down and bottom-up approaches to planning. An example given was the draft of GGGI Vietnam Country Planning Framework (CPF) for the period from 2016 to 2020 as the result of intensive consultations held over the course of 2015, including bilateral meetings, donor roundtable, and workshops among ministries, civil society, agencies, donors, and development partners. Interviewees also revealed that project consultants were held responsible by the local government which, in turn, was held responsible by the national government. This "high control" by the socialist government over all levels of the state is also manifested in "strong boundaries" and "tough stances on freedom of speech, freedom of press, and freedom to assemble" (ibid.).

Energy Justice Framework

The paper analyzes LEP from the perspective of "energy justice." It situates LEP within four key elements, namely "recognition" which is putting a premium on those who are affected by plans and policies concerning energy, a fair "distribution" of the costs and benefits that might be derived from energy services, a fair "procedure" in any forms of decision-making, and "restorative justice" which refers to efforts to compensate for possible risks as a result of energy decisions (Heffron and McCauley 2017). From the standpoint of energy justice, all energy decisions and policies do not take place in a vacuum (Sovacool et al. 2016); they have important material and moral consequences.

Analytical Approaches to Energy Planning

Energy planning is defined as a "program based on a rigorous research on issues related to energy supply and demand, energy prices, technology supply and demand, population growth, environmental, social, technological success in harnessing the energy and influence the political situation of the country" (Ravita et al. 2014, cited in Mougouei and Mortazavi 2017, 128).

Energy planning may be categorized according to purpose, model structure, analytical approach, underlying methodology, mathematical approach, geographical and sectoral coverage, time horizon, and data requirements (van Beeck 1999). For this essay, what is most useful for analyzing LEP is the two analytical approaches, namely top-down approach and bottom-up approach. Top-down energy planning is "based on macroeconomic modelling principles and techniques and is intended to include all important economic interactions of the society" (Jacobsen 1998, 445). Top-down models are "characterized by behavioral relations at an aggregated level with parameters estimated based on historical relationships" (ibid., 446).

If top-down planning deals with concepts in macroeconomics, bottom-up energy planning is based on "disaggregation and the inclusion of a large number of technical parameters" (ibid., 443). Bottom-up models are usually detailed and include a description of energy technologies with technical and economic parameters (ibid., 445). For example, they might include an analysis of an energy technology which could be used as fuel substitution. Further, bottom-up models also include "energy demand" (ibid.) categorized into different uses such as heating, lighting, and ventilation rather than categorized according to energy types.

Each model has different properties which yield different results despite analyzing the same issues on energy. This is due to the fact that the two approaches have been conceptualized from different theoretical backgrounds with different purposes in mind (ibid.). In the contrast provided by van Beeck (1999), top-down approaches use an "economic" approach while bottom-up uses "engineering approach." The former tends to be pessimistic in its estimates on "best" performance while the latter gives optimistic estimates. The former cannot explicitly represent technologies while the latter allows for detailed description of energy technologies. It is in their differing theoretical underpinnings and operations that the complementarity of the two approaches may be considered. This probably explains why GreenID does not abandon top-down approaches to energy planning but simply complements them with bottom-up approaches through LEP.

Localism

Greg Albo (2007) expresses his anxieties about localism as a project. Specifically, he shows the virtues and the vices of "the local" as a form of action towards social transformation. First, he describes the three major strands of thinking about localism within the context of ecological movement and critiques these localisms (especially the first two strands) for their implicit assumption that the ecology and economic growth are compatible. Most importantly, he shows that exclusively depending on "the local" is fraught with complications and dangers.

As classified by Albo, there are three strands of thinking under eco-localism. The first is market ecology which is heavily influenced by "green economy" and "market solutions." Inspired by neoliberals such as Friedrich Hayek to Milton Friedman, this holds the view that the prices set by the market are the real, effective mechanism to compel individuals (construed as buyers and sellers) and firms to behave in an ecologically responsible way through green taxes and other kinds of incentives. Prices, it is argued, are "transmitted across space to equilibrate all markets" (ibid., 342) aggregating and incorporating all information markets. Often, market ecology means that local markets or smaller locally-based capitals tend to be seen as more sustainable or more inclined to ecological conservation than big corporations and big governments. Under this view, the answer is decentralizing environmental regulation to the markets through pricing which makes possible the abolition of extensive enforcement authorities of the state and its agencies. This promotes the view that the markets are essentially decentralized and place-based (that is, local) regulators of the conduct of individuals and corporations.

The second form of eco-localism is called *ecological modernization* which champions technological and organizational transformations. Essentially, this involves the replacement of "resource-using and pollution-generating techniques" with "resource-saving and pollution-reducing" technology toward an "eco-efficient transformation of the whole built environment" (ibid., 343). This also entails the implementation of policies towards developing community-based green industry, often through corporatist sustainability partnerships. Projects under this also include urban density and urban green-space through "green city" projects for extending public transit and "green-belting" urban sprawl (ibid.).

The third strand is called *social ecology* which has strong traditional anarchist roots. In this thinking, "ecological balance is restrained with decentralized communities by the need to find local solutions, eliminating at once both externalities and resource overuse, as well as the disastrous effects of mass production industrialism" (ibid., 344). This means that the idea of extensively self-sufficient communities with little or less intervention from externalities is feasible and that the downscaling of production and exchange to the level of the community would counter internationalization of commodities and long-distance trade and supply chains which would prevent overuse of energy resources. This approach embraces local self-governance and self-sufficiency through "direct action aimed at establishing artisanal and other appropriate technologies, alternate markets, the redefinition of needs, the preservation of peasant economies, seed diversity, local currency systems, 'getting off the grid'" (ibid., 346), among others.

Local initiatives such as LEP are easily discredited and dismissed as conforming to these three strands of eco-localism. But Albo's thought is useful here because it becomes a rubric through which this essay delineates the distinct contribution of LEP, departing from the three strands.

Local Energy Planning: An Overview

Definition

Local Energy Planning (LEP) is a local initiative implemented by Green Innovation and Development Centre (GreenID) in cooperation with Vietnam Sustainable Energy Alliance (VSEA). LEP is a bottom-up energy planning in which the local community and local state authorities, in consultation with a team of experts, work together to craft a common energy plan on the consumption, future demand, and potential energy sources of the locality (i.e., village, commune, or district) (GreenID 2014a, 3). The LEP approach takes into account the availability, efficient use, and environmental impacts of local renewable resources and the use of renewable energy and sustainable solutions.

When it was just starting as an NGO, GreenID saw gaps in NGO work believing that no one is working on the energy sector yet, specifically on the policy and community level. At the time of the interview (2018), Ngụy Thị Khanh, Executive Director and founder of GreenID, claims that there are many NGOs who are already working on the energy sector, but "they are more in line with the government, not critic or provid[ing] any alternative." For Khanh, the work of GreenID on LEP is an attempt at a "win-win solution" between economic development and the environment:

> We stand for the sustainable development in Vietnam, but we identify our mission to focus on energy sector and improve environmental governance and public participation in this sector… We do not want to see that development kill the environment… We believe that the only way we are able to achieve this win-win solution is based on the green development and the full stakeholder participation in the decision making process.

LEP is a collaboration of various key players. First, a local energy team (LET) composed of eight to ten people from the local community will be selected by GreenID and VSEA in consultation with the local authorities. They are usually those who have great influence and interest in participating in the LEP. In the interview, Khanh stressed that members of the LET are "really from the commune. They are villagers. They may be the head of the village and [or] they are women representatives [who] all work together." The second key player is the local partner who could be a local non-government organization (NGO) who works closely with GreenID and meets with the local people and with the authority at the province or district level. Khanh pointed out that GreenID tries to involve different types of agencies and institutions as local partners:

FIGURE 11.1 • LED bulb model for a kindergarten in Nam Dinh province, Vietnam (Photo courtesy of GreenID)

> We do not stick on one local partner on each location. We try to diversify our partner. We try with the Province Technology and Science Association in another province. We tried with the Department of Industry and Trade. That is a stage agency. But in another province, we worked with the Department of Agriculture. And in another province, we worked with women union. So, we see how it worked.

The third key player is the local community. For the pilot testing of LEP, some criteria for choosing the local community were considered such as the presence of an environmental problem, some possibilities for renewable energy, active participation of the local mass organization, and support from the local authority.

Fourth, the private sector also has a role to play. During a solution demonstration or exhibition organized by GreenID (which is a key stage in the LEP approach), companies go to the community and show to the people the available sustainable energy solutions to their needs such as household biogas, solar water heater, solar storm light, microbial fertilizer, water supply system Reverse Osmosis, LED lights, among others. For its part, GreenID bridges the energy needs of the community and the solutions offered by the companies. As Khanh puts it, "We negotiate with them [companies/suppliers] to 'lower the price for this community.' So, we have to create the demand and also inspire them to do the [corporate] social responsibility."

Fifth, the Vietnam State and Party is engaged through its local authority. When asked about the reception of LEP in the communes, Khanh thinks that the start was not easy. The local officials "do not pay attention to anything." But GreenID started to explain the process and the intentions of the program. Then, the local authority started to help GreenID set up the LET. The local authority is also invited to workshops where the results of the survey conducted by the LET are presented and discussions among

the stakeholders can take place. Khanh explained the complexities when navigating the tight political system in Vietnam and the different responses by the local authorities:

> For some commune, we got one member in the local energy team [who] is the vice chair of the People Committee. We ask him to sit in the room … information come[s] to him, and then, we can also propose [to] him to do something with the local authority. For some commune, they bring the plan to mainstream it to their official plan, but some they look at this [plan] and they support for the team and the project and implement in parallel with their energy economic development plan. For some, the local authorities see that 'Oh, it is a good plan for some activity' they also bring their budgets from their local budget to support for the plan.

Despite the constraints of the political landscape of Vietnam, GreenID succeeded in securing the cooperation and support of some of the local authorities. So far, the responses have ranged from passivity to active participation, from parallel implementation of the local energy plan to mainstreaming it within the official energy plan.

Sixth, experts are also involved to train the LET to use the methods and tools to collect relevant data from the community. With regular exchanges with the LET, the experts conduct data analysis, formulate energy options, and suggest appropriate technology suitable to the community. GreenID has an expert from Thailand. She lives in Hanoi and worked at the New Capacity for Earth. Finally, for its part, Khanh understands the role of GreenID as "facilitator for the process" who also "build[s] capacity for local people." Below are the 10 steps of the LEP process (Nguyen 2017, 3):

(1) Establishing and training Local Energy Team (LET) by GreenID, VSEA, and the local authority.

(2) Preparing tools for data collection by both the expert and the community.

(3) Surveying and collecting data by both the expert and the community.

(4) Analyzing data by the expert.

(5) Identifying prioritized problems and goals by the expert and the community.

(6) Presenting and choosing solutions by the community in consultation with the expert.

(7) Developing energy scenarios by the expert.

(8) Building energy plans by the community and the expert.

(9) Consulting and communicating with the community representatives to achieve consensus.

(10) Implementing plans and replicating good results.

In 2012, LEP was pilot-tested in Nam Cuong and Bac Hai rural communes in the Thai Binh Province and was then replicated in many more communes. As of 2016, LEP has been implemented in six (6) provinces, six (6) districts, 11 communes with seven (7) local energy plans available and 15 types of energy models being applied (ibid., 1).

Purpose

GreenID highlights the challenges plaguing the top-down approaches to energy planning while stressing the unexplored opportunities that bottom-up energy planning offers. Specifically, LEP is offered as a corrective to top-down approaches in terms of the *content* and *process* of implementation.

First, LEP launches a critique of the *content* of top-down approaches. In GreenID's telling, as Vietnam energy development policies and plans are "mainly built at the central level," the Power

Development Plan emphasizes "the increase of generation capacity from traditional energy [such] as hydropower and thermal coal" (GreenID 2014a, 2) is projected to cover 50% of electricity generation in 2020. With the centralized planning's emphasis on traditional energy, it is not surprising that the role of renewable energy is not maximized. In GreenID's words, there is "less discussion on alternative energy scenario of energy demand as well as sustainable energy development" (ibid.) and "the role and potential of renewable energy [and] energy efficiency is quite modest" (ibid.).

In contrast to top-down planning, the bottom-up approaches advocated by GreenID promote clean energy development and renewable energy industry development, which essentially entails a shift from concentration to distribution, decentralization, and diversification on the application of energy sources and technologies (ibid.). Instead of heavy reliance on fossil fuel, LEP explores the potential of renewable energy solutions and the contribution of community resources in generating energy. GreenID draws inspiration and lessons from the successful experience of bottom-up energy planning in Denmark and Thailand.

Second, it is in the level of *implementation* that bottom-up energy planning stands superior to top-down planning as GreenID points out. LEP sources its strength from the active participation of the local community and the local authority. The success of this bottom-up initiative primarily rests on the local people who are more strategically positioned to act and respond, who are directly affected by any energy-related decisions imposed from the top, and who are more knowledgeable about their energy needs. With top-down planning, the process of crafting the energy plan is centralized. Khanh shares that the framework and the process of energy planning only involved high levels of government, meeting, and working within a predetermined, planning cycle:

> [With] energy planning before 2011, [the team which is tasked to craft] the energy plan will meet every five years. But after that, the new law on electricity approved [that] the planning cycle is ten years and revived every five years … As you may know, the energy [sector] is very like centralized … because the planning [team] will meet only at the national and province level, not from the district and the commune [level].

The highly centralized execution of energy plans is also reflected in the choice of leading agencies which are tasked to implement the policies and the plan. One example is the Green Growth Action Plan (GGAP) which is the plan which concretizes the Green Growth aspiration of the Vietnam State of balancing economic growth and reducing its carbon emission per unit of GDP. In the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders of the action plan, it is clear that the twelve (12) activities are to be led by major institutions at the top (GreenID 2014b, 3) such as government ministries (leading seven of the activities), the Provincial People's Committees (five activities), and the Vietnam Chamber for Commerce and Industry (two activities). The expectation is for the goals of the GGAP to start from the top levels of government and "trickle down to the lower levels" (ibid., 1).

For GreenID, while central planning has its uses especially in reviewing the financial framework and ensuring that the plan obtains similar outcomes for every province in the country, top-down planning has serious limitations (ibid., 3). Because of its heavy reliance on the stakeholders at the top, it runs the risk of hampering implementation by not actively engaging the local stakeholders who might not see the necessity and the benefits of the national policies and action plans imposed from above. Further, top-down planning often leads to suboptimal outcomes by discounting the contributions of other agencies and the local stakeholders on the ground such as the provincial, district, and communal agencies and officials who have hands-on knowledge about their respective local contexts.

Decentralized bottom-up energy planning puts the premium on the active participation of local authorities and the local people to craft and implement the local energy plan, with the support of energy

experts, government, and international organizations. As such, it has better chances of implementing national policies on the ground with more efficiency by tapping the knowledge and capacities of the local communities and by deploying innovative, context-sensitive ideas and local solutions which might already be in place, thereby, spawning a locally customized, real data-driven, multidisciplinary, and integrative approach to crafting and implementing an energy plan (ibid., 4).

Benefits of LEP

One year after the pilot implementation of LEP in two communes, a survey was conducted by GreenID to assess the impact of LEP and gather the feedback of the local people (GreenID 2014a, 6–8). The survey clustered the results in terms of economic, environmental, and social impacts.

Economic benefits are felt by the local people as 70% of the households responded that LEP was realistic, useful, and economically beneficial (ibid., 7). On the level of households, the respondents claimed that the application of sustainable energy models helped reduce the energy costs of their respective households. For example, it has been documented by the same survey that the gas produced from the installed biogas model could replace the use of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) for cooking, helping save 112 VND per month in a household. According to Nguyen (2017), since 2012, there have been 930 households using improved cook stoves, 776 households applying LED bulbs, and 215 households using biogas systems and solar water heaters.

On the community level, the kindergarten schools of the two communes saved money as much as 450.000 VND/month owing to the solar water heater and biogas which were installed through the LEP. Still in the same survey, the drinking water system using reverse osmosis technology and Solar Photovoltaic (PV) has been providing free potable water to the kindergarten schools, primary schools, and medical stations. According to Nguyen (2017), there have been LED bulbs installed in 28 classrooms across eight schools, as well as six clean water supply systems, two solar PVs for water supply systems, and one community biogas system.

LEP has also brought a positive *environmental impact*. In the survey conducted by GreenID, 77% of the households believe that LEP is contributing to protecting and preserving the environment. As LEP champions the use of renewable energy, the respondents believe that their use of improved cook stoves, solar water heaters, and LED bulbs helped reduce emissions. For those using the biogas model installed to their piggery, the foul smell from animal wastes has been solved while additional source of energy has been created, not to mention decreasing air pollution and reducing the risks of eye and respiratory illnesses in the community.

Finally, there has been a significant *social impact* of LEP. As already pointed out above, the key to the success of LEP is the active participation of local stakeholders and the tapping of their local knowledge and capacities. As such, a necessary social outcome of LEP is the increased awareness of the local authorities and the participating communes of issues related to energy and environment (GreenID 2014a, 7–8). After their participation in crafting the local energy plan and in various exhibits, seminars, study tours, the local stakeholders have gained a considerable measure of knowledge on energy saving, energy efficiency, and application of sustainable energy models. The Local Energy Team (LET) of the communes have become very proactive in their promotion of the LEP that they have been willing to articulate the benefits of LEP to higher authorities, including district and provincial agencies, and the National Assembly who are interested in LEP (ibid., 8). Within the LET, women members have been at the forefront in advocating LEP to other women as women have been proven to be the direct beneficiaries of LEP.

For future studies, the preliminary survey conducted by GreenID may be complemented with evaluation studies which use more rigorous statistical computations on the economic, environmental,

and social impacts of LEP. They might also cover a wider scope, including the additional communes that have also decided to adopt LEP. Nevertheless, at this point, it is worthy to recognize that the initial success of LEP as manifested in the encouraging responses of the participants already signals an impetus to the possibility of upscaling an approach to energy planning which takes into account the needs and capacities of the local stakeholders.

Upscaling and Integration into Existing National Plans and Policies

As explicitly stated by Nguyen (2017), ultimately, GreenID sees two opportunities for LEP: *upscaling* and *integration into existing national policies and programs.*

First, GreenID hopes that LEP is replicated to higher levels such as the districts and the provinces. Given the economic, social, and environmental benefits brought about by LEP in the participating communities, the possibility for replication to more communes and upscaling from the level of communes to districts and to provinces respectively is part of the agenda. In fact, GreenID has started to explore the upscaling potential of LEP. After the pilot implementation in Thai Binh, LEP was replicated in two more communes in Nam Dinh and in another commune in Thua Thien-Hue. In this experience, they find that "the [LEP] approach is highly adaptable and would therefore be applicable throughout the country" (GreenID 2014b, 7). The objective to expand LEP has been inspired by the experience in Denmark, and then eventually adopted in Thailand and in Mozambique. Upscaling would also not be a problem. It is projected that once data on energy use and on the availability of renewable resources is collected from representative communes in a district, an energy plan can be drawn up accordingly (Nguyen 2017, 7).

Replication and upscaling entail costs. Executing LEP requires investments in manpower, technical expertise, and sustainable energy solutions. Raising the necessary financial resources to make LEP possible has been a challenge for GreenID and the participating communities. Nevertheless, there have been schemes designed to address this challenge. According to Khanh, GreenID offers seed-funding to the community which the community appropriates to achieve the goals. Khanh describes seed-funding this way:

> It is seed-funding; we never subsidize 100%. It is seed funds from GreenID. Then, we provide seed fund for [sic] the community, but it depends on each community. They will decide on how they operate that seed-funding. For example, for the Women Union, they set up and make it become like credit and serving fund…they give for [sic] their member to borrow within 10 months. And they pay back monthly with very small amount… For some, it requires interest, but for the poor households, [just] return the money.

As for the private sector, GreenID sees its work as bridge-building between the community and the companies that offer sustainable energy solutions. GreenID organizes an exhibit of the available technologies and brings the suppliers to the community, so both the community and the suppliers can negotiate for lower prices. For Khanh, GreenID "create[s] the demand and also inspire[s] them [the suppliers] to do the social responsibility."

To overcome the financial constraints, GreenID recommends that the government "foster promising bottom-up initiatives" (GreenID 2014b, 8) by supporting seed-funding. From this perspective, the fund would be sourced from the state budgets and other resources from the local communities and civil society organizations. The creation of such a fund, GreenID proposes, would be awarded on a competitive basis based on certain criteria, but should be easily accessible. The criteria might include scalability and replicability of the project, as well as other goals such as gender mainstreaming, disaster

resilience, among others. GreenID adds that the fund could be set-up in cooperation with a donor organization which has experience handling grants while the Ministry of Planning and Investment could serve as a national partner to make sure that the money is well-spent.

With this proposed funding scheme, it is clear that GreenID needs to reckon with the issue of financial constraints and that LEP counts on the support of the state, civil society, and the private sector for its endeavors to be possible. It is not explicitly stated whether the replication and upscaling of LEP as a bottom-up initiative is seen as a way to an eventual overhaul of the top-down approaches currently in place in Vietnam. What might hint at the overall vision for the LEP is the second possibility that GreenID sees, namely the integration of LEP into existing national policies and programs.

The ultimate vision for LEP is for it to be integrated within the existing national policies and programs. It is hoped that the insights gained from conducting LEP might inform the subsequent crafting of action plans and policies which are national in scope. As discussed in the earlier section, LEP seeks to use and save energy by tapping on the sustainable energy solutions and the available local energy sources of the community through a participatory approach. It is hoped that LEP can possibly contribute to the goals of the national policies and plans currently in place concerning the energy sector, the environment, rural development, and poverty (Nguyen 2017, 5).

In GreenID's account, *first*, LEP may be integrated into the National Target Program on Use of Energy Saving and Efficiency, 2012-2015 and into Renewable Energy Development Strategy to 2030-2050. Due to the generation of renewable energy resources through the use of sustainable energy solutions, LEP can contribute to the goals of energy saving, energy efficiency, and increasing the share of renewable energy in the national energy production and consumption. *Second*, LEP may also be integrated into the National Green Growth Strategy 2011-2020 due to LEP's drive for reducing greenhouse emissions and promoting the use of clean and renewable energy. *Third*, LEP can also make contributions towards achieving the National Target Program on New Rural Development, 2010-2020 due to LEP's capacity to organize a rural commune which effectively addresses concerns relating to energy access, water supply, and the environment.

FIGURE 11.2 • An innovative solar water heater (Photo courtesy of GreenID)

Engaging Extra-local Institutions: On the Question of Scale and of the State

Given the ultimate goals of LEP namely replication and integration within the existing national policies and programs, two aspects of LEP need to be made explicit because they have important implications for any attempts at constructing alternatives concerning energy planning and environmental policy. Because of the promotion of the local, LEP has to contend with the question of scale and of the question of the state. Is "the local" romanticized as decidedly the scale in which political action and transformation can emerge? How does it address extra-local institutions such as the state?

On Scales

First, to speak of the promotion of bottom-up energy planning does not mean abandoning the top-down approaches. Indeed, it would be a misrepresentation of LEP to think this way. A closer look at the publications of GreenID suggests that LEP is hoped to complement, not supplant, the existing top-down approaches. The antagonism is not between top-down and bottom-up energy planning, but between *integrating* and *dichotomizing* the two models.

Integrating top-down energy planning with bottom-up energy planning, in many ways, reflects the current thinking on integration in many fields such as urban and city planning and in energy planning. As the Cambridge Forum for Sustainability and the Environment (CFSE) Report puts it, in the case of city planning for example, "the challenge is to *redefine the balance* between these two modes of governing cities for sustainability as we learn more about which problems can be addressed top down and which can only be resolved through bottom-up, collective action" (Linden et al. 2017, 28; emphasis added). Aiming for harmony of the two modes of governing recognizes the unique strengths of each and attempts to overcome and address the weaknesses of each through complementarity.

On one hand, still drawing on the CFSE Report, top-down planning overcomes the weaknesses of the bottom-up planning. Decentralized bottom-up planning has the tendency to create "a patchwork of solutions which is less than optimal" (ibid.) and will inevitably create a set of winners and losers in various local contexts when demands are not reconciled and balanced well. To address these weaknesses inherent in bottom-up planning, top-down approaches can bring local solutions together to reach national sustainability. Further, top-down approaches allow for "trade-offs" (ibid.) between different parts and elements of the wide territory covered by the planning process. With the centralized and wider scope of top-down planning, different demands may be better considered and balanced, least overall harm may be better achieved, and the greatest number of people who are served is better secured (Linden et al. 2017). This is also to make sure that one local community does not just pass its burdens to another community.

On the other hand, bottom-up planning can also overcome the limitations of top-down planning. The latter has the tendency to undermine the control of the local people over their community and exclude "informal processes" in decision making (ibid., 30) that is, the role of civil society who has various viewpoints about the reasons for success and failure of certain policies and initiatives being implemented on the ground. Bottom-up planning can address these weaknesses by allowing local citizens to offer local solutions and pooling their highly contextualized knowledge to bring to bear to any decisions affecting the community.

This complementarity is modelled by LEP in which the shortcomings of top-down energy planning are addressed by the strengths of the bottom-up energy planning and vice versa. According to GreenID, as energy planning in Vietnam is highly centralized, national plans and policies are rarely reflective of and responsive to the energy demands and available renewable resources of the community. This little involvement with the local communities often leads to "delays" or "cost overruns" (Nguyen 2017, 3).

With LEP, the crafting and implementation of the energy plan is spearheaded by the local community and the local authorities. This way, the community has a sense of ownership and responsibility for the outcomes of the project. Nevertheless, LEP could not completely give up top-down approaches because of their inherent value in making sure that energy planning is not a piece-meal patchwork of thinly spread local solutions across the country which lacks uniformity and coherence in terms of policies and therefore risks obtaining disparate and differing outcomes across different parts of the country. At this point, there is no available solid evidence which supports the superiority of one mode of governance over the other (Linden et al. 2017, 31).

Given the complementarity of both top-down and bottom up approaches, dichotomous orientation to energy planning (separating and pitting the two against each other) could be less optimal and even counterproductive. The way forward seems hybridization, balance, and parallelism (Linden et al. 2017), however conflicted and tensed these processes may be at times. What is known, at the very least, is that some areas of governance are better governed with top-down approaches and other areas are better catered by bottom-up collective action. One possibility for scaling is "inwards" in which governance starts with local communities and governing bodies, then, scaled up to the level of the region, nation, and international community (ibid., 2). Another possibility for scaling is "outwards" in which initiatives start at the level of the nation and penetrate into the regions, cities, and local communities. Another possibility is thinking hard about a network of governance which sits at the middle of the national and local levels which facilitates "the seamless and collaborative transition" (ibid.) between these two diametric opposite models of governance.

Scholars and practitioners have only just begun to unpack and imagine the paths to this seamless and collaborative transition and transmission between top-down and bottom-up approaches to governance. Nevertheless, following the lines of inquiry opened up by Linden et al. (2017) might be useful in reconstructing the hybridization of the two. Adapting the CFSE Report into the context of energy planning, the following questions might serve as a guide for further exploration: How can LEP as a bottom-up approach be incorporated into and/or complemented with top-down energy planning currently in place in Vietnam? What are the risks involved in this hybridization process? When is it appropriate? How can nation-states use top-down energy planning while allowing for local flexibility that bottom-up energy planning offers? How do we bring local solutions together to bring sustainability to the province, region, and the nation overall? How do we design governance systems that facilitate a seamless and collaborative transmission between bottom-up energy planning (e.g., LEP) and top-down energy planning that are effective at the level of the local and the large-scale? Answering these questions satisfactorily on the basis of solid evidence will be the work of engineers, natural and social scientists, environmentalists, and policymakers. But at this point, GreenID through its work on LEP is carefully walking the tightrope of bottom-up/top-down planning, of conformity/contestation, of theory/practice.

On the State

LEP does not idealize "the local" as the exclusive scale for transformation, and this is ultimately shown by its continuing engagement with extra-local institutions, foremost of which is the Vietnamese government. It is this constant engagement that saves it from other pitfalls in ecological movements which idealize clean technology, market incentives, and "the local."

On the surface, it might be argued that LEP easily falls prey to the three strands of eco-localism (Albo 2007). First, owing to its emphasis on eco-responsible technologies, LEP can be read as propagating *ecological modernization*. LEP champions energy solution technologies which are to be used by the local community supplied at a lower price by private firms that see this endeavor as their corporate social responsibility. These technologies are seen as generating renewable energy resources, enhancing energy

efficiency, and reducing fossil fuel use in the households and in the community. Also, LEP might also be seen as subscribing to *market ecology*. On the part of the citizens and their communities, it would appear that they are just strategizing in making investments and calculating ways to bring down the energy costs by generating their own energy sources and by using energy saving technologies. Each household privatizes the supposedly public concerns of energy security and environmental hazards. Finally, LEP might be engaging in *social ecology* by romanticizing "the local community" as the locus of direct action through the use of local solutions and decentralized governance while viewing large-scale, state planning as ineffective, external exercise to the untainted, local initiatives of the people on the ground.

Indeed, one should be mindful about how projects like LEP can have these kinds of tendencies. It is true that LEP pins its faith on clean energy technologies, induces the local people to invest and calculate their energy costs, encourages private firms to engage in ecology-friendly enterprises, and embraces localism as a venue for direct decentralized action. But any attempt towards a defossilized future should involve the use of clean energy technologies, should involve the active participation of the people on the ground, and should welcome local initiatives. But these efforts are carried out, alongside the constant engagement with extra-local institutions: *GreenID continues to engage the local state agencies and, by extension, the Vietnam State apparatus*. As mentioned above, reducing LEP as romanticizing localism and market solutions ignores the fact that LEP engages extra-local institutions by virtue of its constant contestation with the state's heavy use of coal. This is revealed in the exchange below:

> Ananeza (AltDev): I am just interested on how you complement the energy plan of the government here … What about coal? What is the role of GreenID?
>
> Khanh: In 2011, the government issued Power Development Plan No. 7, and in that plan it intend[ed] to develop 75,000 MW of coal; this means that more than 30 of the initial capacity, but in terms of the power productions is more than 60% from coal. But we do advocacy and by March 2016, revise the planning and cut out 20,000 MW of coal.
>
> Ananeza: So, the government accepted that recommendation?
>
> Khanh: I think the government recalculated and accepted this … We proposed it to cut down. We are the first one to propose to cut coal. That is the proposal. For today, after that planning approve[d], we still see that it have [sic] have a 43% of coal exist[s] in the power plant. And we thought that it need[s] to cut further. That is the reason why we conduct this new study that we launched today. And we proposed that we review coal power more then make it below 30%.
>
> Ananeza: And the government is open to that dialogue?
>
> Khanh: Today, we have one person from the government, from the ministry come to attend our event. And he said he highly appreciates our efforts and open to receive the recommendation from an organization like us. I think we had a very good discussion today.

GreenID's work on LEP and the research studies about the energy sector are primarily geared towards active lobbying with the Vietnamese government to cut down on coal in its energy plans. Through various efforts, the people involved in LEP struggle to transform the institutions beyond their local community that inevitably shape their community by seeking support and involvement of the local state authorities and state ministries to serve as partners in LEP, by increasing their awareness of the perils of coal-driven development, by persuading them to explore options such as clean energy, and

by encouraging them to earmark state funds for the implementation of LEP through grants and seed-funding schemes. At the very least, this shows that GreenID does not dispense with the state as a key player in attempts at social transformation; it is a strategy of "engagement with" the existing extra-local institutions (i.e., national, regional, and international), not "withdrawal from" them (Mouffe 2005). On the level of extra-local institutions, there has been a push towards New Multilateralism for a Global Green New Deal which attempts to design global rules, regulations, and public institutions toward "the overarching goals of social and economic stability, shared prosperity, and environmental sustainability" which are "protected against capture by the most powerful players" (Gallagher and Kozul-Wright 2019, 27).

For sure, choosing to engage with extra-local institutions such as the state has its own traps. For one, the implementation of LEP is always bound up with monitoring, surveillance, and approval of the local authorities and state agencies. Every step of the way, GreenID has to operate within the socialist framework of the Vietnam Party and State, specifically in relation to energy and environmental policy planning that is set up by the state. Second, the explicit recognition that LEP requires enormous financial investment, not exclusively but primarily, from the state reveals the fragility, if not dependence, of LEP on state funds. But because of these very same ties within the socialist framework, GreenID is also forced to work with the state and its local authorities. It is, at once, constrained but also compelled to maneuver opportunities for negotiation, contestation and maybe even transformation, no matter how tense, tentative, but nevertheless tangible these attempts are.

One might think that it would be too easy to make the case for the continuing contestations of GreenID with the Vietnam State precisely because it is operating within a socialist framework, that is, LEP in Vietnam might only be valid within the context of a socialist political order. This is not untrue; the scope of action of GreenID for LEP is always contoured by the socialist framework within which it operates. But, at the very least, what NGOs that champion "the local" in other countries might take away from this case is the key notion that they must not lose sight of engaging extra-local institutions such as the state and other major institutions as a key player to negotiate, to contest, and to transform in their attempts at large-scale transformation. LEP attests that extra-local institutions are entities which have enormous resources and capacity for transforming the major political and economic arrangements concerning energy and the environment. Further, LEP shows that "the local," seen as actively engaging and transforming extra-local institutions, should be the genesis and destination of any attempt at bringing about a defossilized, sustainable, and habitable future.

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12

Alternative Land Practice in Thailand
A Study on the Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand

SOUTHERN PEASANTS' FEDERATION OF THAILAND[1]

Introduction

Fight for land
Fight for right
Fight for liberty
Fight for equality
Fight for justice
Revolution for the democracy

(Motto printed on the Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand's t-shirt)

Land conflicts between the Thai state and the people, especially peasants, in Thailand have lasted over time since the period of modernization. Land contestation in Thailand is rooted in a land management system unilaterally centralized by the state and the dominant development discourse which aims at economic growth underpinned by neo-liberal capitalism (Hall et al. 2011; Thai Land Reform Network and Local Act 2010). In this context, land tenure has been classified into two forms, consisting of state-owned and private lands (Thai Land Reform Network and Local Act 2010; Aphron 2014) through different types of land titles (Lamb et al. 2015; Lubanski 2012). In this sense, state-owned land is allocated for national resources, e.g., conservation forest, national parks, wildlife sanctuary, infrastructure development projects, economic land concession, etc. Moreover, private land titles allow land to be commodified in a market economy.

This study aims to explore alternative economic, political, social, and cultural practices in relation to land management led by local communities. The study starts by contextualizing land governance in Thailand which results in inequitable land distribution, i.e., land concentration and eventually land conflicts. It discusses further the concept of community rights as an alternative development

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underpinning land right movements in Thailand, which includes the SPFT. All in all, this study illustrates how local communities employ alternative practices as strategic tools to countervail a centralized land management in Thailand. Those practices show how the local people have become empowered to manage their resources and to initiate participatory development and democracy.

Land Governance in Thailand

Historically, the Thai state had centralized land management and ownership since it was reigned by an absolute monarchy. During that period, monarchs, lords of principalities, and nobles appropriated taxes, in-kind and labours, from land slaves and subjects (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995). Even though the Thai state has attempted land reform numerous times, lands have not been distributed to people equally. The first attempt of land reform in Thailand was by the People's Party in 1933 (B.E. 2576) after the Siam Revolution through unifying lands and redistributing them equally to people; however, such reform was resisted by the elites who amassed the vast majority of land plots (Ariyaviriyanant 2009). In 1954 (B.E. 2497), the Thai state issued the Land Code, which established the land legislation in Thailand, including the issuance of land title deeds and utilization certificates. Particularly, it determined that one limited holding a maximum 50 *rai* (approximately 8 hectares) of land to prevent land accumulation and speculation. In addition, the code stirred people to use their land productively; otherwise it would be turned to state land if it were left barren for some consecutive years. However, the limitation of land holding was revoked by the announcement of the National Executive Council No. 49 in 1959 (B.E. 2502), as it stated that the limitation hindered the prosperity of the national economy (Ariyaviriyanant 2009; Lubanski 2012; Lamb et al. 2015). Arguably, the limitation of land accumulation has been against the principle of market economy.

In terms of forestland management, the Forest Act 1941 (B.E. 2484) defines forest as "land which is not acquired by any persons under the Land Code" (Section 4). In other words, the Thai state owns all land which has not been identified as belonging with formal documents to any individuals. However, the National Reserved Forests Act 1964 (B.E. 2507) allows business sectors to use degraded forest areas on economic concession, for a maximum of 30 years (Section 16). In 1966 (B.E. 2509), the Thai state also granted private sectors legal logging concessions for economic uses which led to the mass destruction of forest areas in Thailand. There has been a decrease of 52 percent of forest areas since 1961 (B.E. 2504) and thus, the concessions were eventually banned in 1989 (B.E. 2532) (Seub Nakhasathien Foundation 2017). In addition, to respond to the global demand of industrial crops, the Thai state facilitates private sectors to grow cash crops such as cassava, rubber, oil palm, and eucalyptus on state-owned lands, especially degraded forest areas for export-orientated agricultural products. As a result, land prices have increased and lands have been grabbed and transformed to monoculture plantations (Hall 2011).

After the people uprising in 1973 (B.E. 2516), the farmers' mobilization between 1973 and 1976 (B.E. 2516–2519) successfully propelled the Government to issue the Agricultural Land Reform Act in 1975 (B.E. 2518) and established the Agricultural Land Reform Office (ALRO). The act and the roles of the ALRO are to redistribute unused land through expropriating and purchasing from private landowners or allocating state-own land to landless and insufficient land households for agricultural purposes; the allocated land cannot be sold or leased to others. The act also set out that one should not have land over 50 *rai* or eight hectares (Lubanski 2012). However, it is arguable that the act and the roles of the ALRO have been ineffective to expropriate land from private landowners, but the office has bought land from those who have been willing to sell. Most of the land has been alloted from state-owned land, especially degraded forest (Thai Land Reform Network and Local Act 2010). Even though land from the ALRO, also known as Sor Por Kor (SPK), is issued as an individual land title, many studies discovered that land titles have been sold from entitled recipients to land speculators and investors for land accumulation

through the corrupted system, despite the fact that it is prohibited by laws (Bello et al. 1998; Thai Land Reform Network and Local Act 2010).

The Thai state formalizes land tenure through land titling processes (see Table 1 for land titles and uses in Thailand). The prominent land titling program in Thailand was launched by the World Bank with loans amounting to USD 183.1 million from 1984 to 2004 (B.E. 2527–2547) to support Thailand's Department of Land in issuing land titles to landholders by using cadastral surveying and mapping technology in the issuance of land titles. Moreover, it intended to create land tenure security as a means of reducing poverty, increasing the capacity of individuals, especially agrarians, to access finances by using land as collateral, and increasing land productivity through an efficient drive of a free market (Leonard and Narintarakul Na Ayutthaya 2003; Bowman 2004; Lubanski 2012). By the time of its completion, the project had issued approximately 13 million titles to landowners in Thailand (Bowman 2004). Arguably, there have been three critical landmarks in terms of land governance in Thailand. First, the Thai state has simplified equivocal and unorganized parcels into formal categories of land which the state can properly control and utilize through taxation according to imposed rules and regulations. In other words, land and landowners have been governed under invented statecraft binding to the nation-state system (Scott 1998; Leonard and Narintarakul Na Ayutthaya 2003). Second, the titling program can be seen as the market-led land governance (Chiengkul 2015) in which an individual land title fully enables a landowner to sell a land as well as use land as a collateral, as needed, in a market economy (Leonard and Narintarakul Na Ayutthaya 2003; Thai Land Reform Network and Local Act 2010; Hall et al. 2011). Third, the land titling program has disregarded customary land tenure at the community level such as communal land (Leonard and Narintarakul Na Ayutthaya 2003).

TABLE 12.1 • Types of land titles and uses in Thailand

Land Title	Description	Legislation/Agency	Note
Sor Kor 1 (SK1)/ Sor Kor 2 (SK2)	Land claim certificate	1954 Land Code/Department of Land (DOL)	Right to farm in the forest, need proof of pre-1954 land use
Nor Sor 2 (NS2)	Pre-emptive rights certificate	1954 Land Code/Department of Land (DOL)	Granted on condition of use, reservation license and only transferable by inheritance
Nor Sor 3 (NS3)	Certificate of Utilization	1954 Land Code/Department of Land (DOL)	Granted on condition of use, can be used as collateral and saleable after 30 days of a public notice
Nor Sor 4 (NS4) (Chanote)	Fully land ownership certificate	1954 Land Code/Department of Land (DOL)	Full title, private ownership and transferable; saleable
Sor Por Kor (SPK)	Agricultural usage certificate	1975 Agricultural Land Reform Act/ Agricultural Land Reform Office (ALRO)	Distributed to landless/poor agrarians for agricultural use and non-transferable
Sor Tor Kor (STK)	5-year agricultural usage certificate	1985 National Reserved Forest Act/ Royal Forest Department (RFD)	Issued for agricultural use in degraded forest land, limited to 15 *rai* and non-transferable but by inheritance
Community Land Title	Land use document for communal land	2010 Regulation of the Prime Minister's Office/Community Land Title Office (CLTO) under the Prime Minister's Office	Issued to a community entity for using and managing state land; non-saleable but can be returned to community entity for further management

TABLE 12.1 • Types of land titles and uses in Thailand *(continued)*

Land Title	Description	Legislation/Agency	Note
Community Forestry	Land use document in forest land	2019 Community Forest Act/ Royal Forest Department (RFD)	Allows communities to manage communal forest land and use natural resources, particularly degraded forest and non-saleable
Community Land Title	Land use documents for communal land	2010 Regulation of the Prime Minister's Office/Community Land Title Office (CLTO) under the Prime Minister's Office	Issue to a community entity for using and managing state lands, non-saleable but return to community entity for further management

Nonetheless, many studies pointed out that there was a corrupted system in issuing land title deeds, Sor Por Kor 4-01 as well as leasing and using state-own lands.[2] In addition, the issuance of land title deeds has resulted in the concentration of land, because a small number of affluent Thais who are able to gain information and capitals as well as have connections to authorities have more purchasing power in easily accumulating and concentrating land for speculation. In addition, the laws have not restricted landowners to hold manyland title deeds, which have engendered the accumulation of land in Thailand. As a result, the price of land has escalated over time in a land market which hinders landless and small landholder peasants from accessing land as a means of production. According to a study on farmer registration and census data in 2003, 2013, and 2018 (Attavanich et al. 2018), more than 50% of 5.76 million households have agricultural land less than 10 *rai* (1.6 hectares) per household. The study also showed that the scale of agricultural landholders has decreased over time.

Concepts

The SPFT has employed the concept of community rights as an alternative development whereby local communities are the main actors in creating their own development pathway. The SPFT has proposed an alternative land management model to demand the decentralization of land management from the state to the local people. It is an attempt of local people to participate in the development processes and share power from the central state. Ultimately, it is a counter-discourse which emphasizes political, social, cultural, environmental, and ethical issues in relation to the well-being of people, rather than focusing on economic growth (Ospina and Jimenez 2017). All in all, alternative development has primarily put emphasis on development from below, self-determination, and people-centred development which ultimately demonstrates how people participate in governance through participatory democracy.

Land reform movements in Thailand have used the idea of community rights, which have promoted collective land and natural resources management. The idea of self-determination is also the key idea where local people demand the right to livelihood and community rights to common properties, including land, forest, and water from the government and propose the community legitimation against mainstream development paradigm, focusing on economic growth. Local communities have employed many strategies and tactics to negotiate with the government for them to be involved in decision-making processes of national development. Those strategies and tactics include public demonstration, civil disobedience, petition, and negotiation.

[2] See case studies, especially on Northern Thailand, in Miyake (2003), Leonard and Narintarakul Na Ayutthaya (2003), and Lubanski (2012), as well as on the Sor Por Kor 4-01 case in Southern Thailand in Bello et al. (1998).

Arguably, community rights have two dimensions, including community cultures and the rights of communities to participate in governance (Rakyutidham 2011). The former demonstrates the ideal rural societies where people live in a harmonious society and help each other to develop their community. The latter has called for the enhancement of people's power to negotiate the power of state and capital. In this sense, local people need to share their grievances and ideas to create a sense of collectivism and solidarity. Collective ideologies and actions have been initiated and developed through community constitution and regulations to instill such ideas into local people. In the case of the SPFT, this process is needed to forge new settlers into a newly established community.

In terms of land management, the idea of complexity of rights proposes that there are overlapping forms of rights established in one area, between community and individual rights (Ganjanapan 2001, cited in Chiengkul 2015). The Community Land Title (CLT) is introduced to people thereby community members own land collectively while they have the right to farm on their plot of land. In addition, community members are able to access and utilize communal land through sharing labour to make use of the land in the most productive way (see Figure 1 for the concept of community rights on land management).

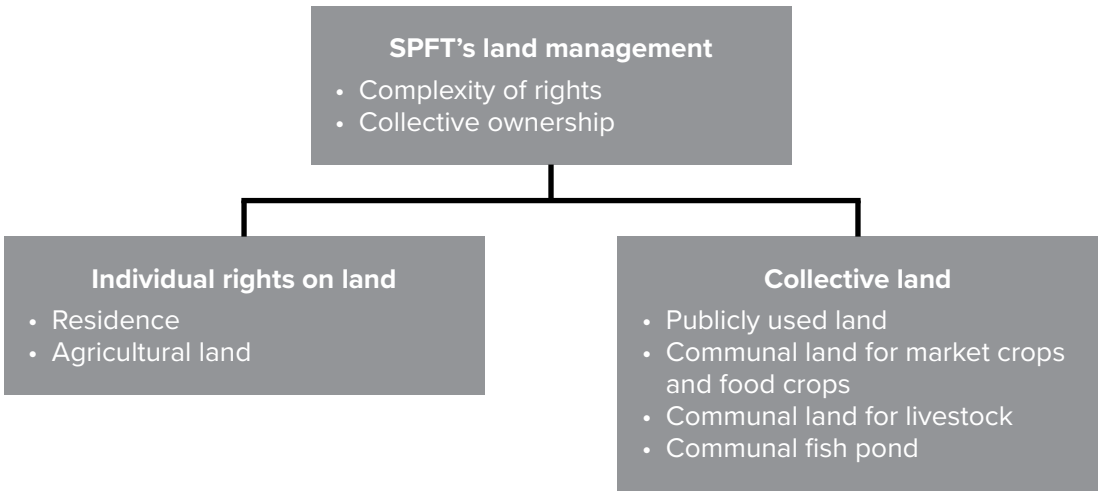

FIGURE 12.1 • The concept of community rights on land management

Methodology

This study was conducted as a qualitative research in four SPFT's communities, including Klong Sai Pattana, Nam Deang Pattana, Perm Sub, and Kao Mai Communities located in Chai Buri District, Surat Thani Province on October 1–5, 2018. The study applies various methods, including documentary research, focus group discussion, in depth interviews with key informants, and non-participation observation. The data collection tables below shows the methodologies and sample sizes:

TABLE 12.2 • Data collection table for focus group discussions

Date	Community	Male	Female
October 3–4, 2018	Klong Sai Pattana	2	3
October 4, 2018	Nam Daeng Pattana	4	6
October 5, 2018	Kao Mai	2	3

TABLE 12.2 • Data collection table for focus group discussions *(continued)*

Date	Community	Male	Female
October 5, 2018	Perm Sub	5	3
Total		**13**	**15**

TABLE 12.3 • Data collection table for key informant interviews

Date	Position
October 1–2, 2018	The SPFT Coordinator
October 4, 2018	A representative of women group in Santi Pattana Community
October 3–4, 2018	SPFT secretariats

The Case of the Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand

In contemporary history, the struggle for land in the south of Thailand started between 2001 and 2002 (B.E. 2544–2545), when a people's organization network in Surat Thani province became involved in working with the Government to analyze the encroachment of people in forest lands. They discovered that landless peasants and workers, including those who lost their lands during the period of crop booms and those who had limited land for farming, encroached and cultivated in forestland. Moreover, this opportunity brought the people's organization network to access information related to the land concessions by private companies in the South, based on their right as stated in the Official Information Act 1997 (B.E. 2540). Situated in the South of Thailand, Surat Thani Province is 529 kilometers (328 miles) from Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand., In the province, Thai and foreign companies had concessions to use 200,000 *rai* (approximately 32,000 hectares) of forest gardens and reserved forest lands. Of those areas, the concessions of 60,043 *rai* (approximately 9,606.88 hectares) were already expired. In the case of palm oil companies, they expanded cultivated land over land concessions they got and also continued to cultivate and harvest palm oil, despite expired concessions (The Southern Poor People Network 2006). It is arguable that the Government did not enforce stringent law, rather than favoring a few Thai and foreign palm oil companies to expand oil palm plantations by predominately accumulating state-owned land for export-oriented agriculture production during the period of crop booms (Hall 2011). According to the Southern Poor People Network (2006), those palm oil companies owned cultivated lands between 1,000 and 40,000 *rai* (approximately 160 to 6,400 hectares). The process has excluded landless peasants and workers as well as small-scale landholders from accessing land as a means of production. As a manifestation of Marx's primitive accumulation (2003), peasants have been deprived of means of production by commodifying and privatizing land. Moreover, the process of land concession neglects collective and customary rights on natural resources and environmental commons (Harvey 2003).

FIGURE 12.2 • The Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (SPFT)

Consequently, a land rights movement named the Southern Poor People Network (SPPN) emerged to demand governmental agencies to investigate expired land concessions of palm oil companies in 2003.

Later, the network worked with governmental agencies, especially the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to respond to land conflicts in the South. The SPPN investigated and found that more than 70,000 *rai* (approximately 11,200 hectares) of land concession for palm oil plantations already expired. During that time, government officials and local authorities responded passively to the issues. The network decided to occupy land to demand the Government to expropriate land from those companies and redistribute it to landless peasants and workers. Even though the network tried to negotiate with the Government through the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand, government armed officials cracked down on groups of people under the SPPN in October and December 2003 (The Southern Poor People Network 2006).

The Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (SPFT) was established in 2008 (B.E. 2551) after the first ripple of land occupation movement was ended in 2003 by the aggressive violence committed by the Government (ibid.). The SPFT reviewed the lessons learned from the past experiences so as to visualize the problems and challenges and eventually re-established a land rights movement in Surat Thani province. Based on lessons learned, the SPFT discovered that the previous movement primarily prioritized temporary benefits, i.e., land occupation and agriculture products on land, rather than achieving a long-term goal, i.e., the right to land for landless peasants and workers. The SPFT analyzed that the movement did not have a collective ideology and goal and lacked consciousness of the land rights struggle. More importantly, the movement lacked mutual disciplines and regulations (The SPFT Coordinator, pers. comm., October 1, 2018).

Since 2008 (B.E. 2551), the SPFT has gathered landless peasants and workers in Surat Thani province who have seen land as a means of production and as the foundation of life. This group has been excluded by the centralized land governance and the socio-economic development in Thailand. Most of them are agriculture workers, especially in rubber and oil palm plantation while some of them formerly owned and farmed land but sold it to others. Many members worked in urban areas and migrated to seek economic opportunities in Surat Thani Province (Aphorn 2014). The SPFT community members realized that land is essential for their subsistence and livelihoods. For them, the land is their social safety net. Thus, they have joined the effort of the SPFT in struggling for land rights.

In accordance with the lessons learned, the SPFT constructed solid rationales, with strong ideologies, goals and an organizational structure. Namely, its rationales consist of three critical rights of landless peasants and workers: (1) the right to land reform for a just society; (2) the community rights to land and natural resources management; and (3) the right of landless peasants and workers to new community settlements. The SPFT coordinator expressed that all rationales have been inspired by land and peasant movements in Thailand and the international communities, especially the Farmers' Federation of Thailand (FFT) during 1974 and 1976 (B.E. 2517 and 2519) and the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil, also known as the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST). In addition, the concept of community rights that has risen among social movements in Thailand during the 1980s, legitimized by the 1997 Thailand constitution, supports the SPFT's struggles on land rights (The SPFT Coordinator, pers. comm., October 1, 2018).

Moreover, the SPFT has clear goals in compliance with its rationales, including land rights, peasant rights, and democracy. For its short-term goal, the SPFT aims to achieve equitable land distribution through land reform. This is to ensure landless peasants' and workers' access to adequate housing and food security. For its mid-term goal, the SPFT aims at building food sovereignty through communities' rights to land and essential natural resources management, agricultural reform and agroecology system... For its long-term goal, the SPFT aims at establishing a democratic society and creating new peasant cultures through solidarity and equality (SPFT 2016).

For the strategies and approaches, the SPFT has promoted the community land title (CLT) campaign by advocating the Governments of granting peasants the communal land management. In

order to achieve land reform, the SPFT has further advocated three relevant measures, including: (1) the legislation of a progressive land tax; (2) the establishment of a national land bank; and (3) the protection of agricultural lands for peasants. These approaches will be discussed in the next section. In addition, the SPFT is a member organization in the People's Movement for a Just Society (P-Move),[3] which has advocated community land and natural resources management for marginalized people in Thailand at the national level.

In terms of the organizational structure, the SPFT has established internal structure and responsible persons elected by members of networking communities, including Political, Academic, Women, Agriculture and Cooperative, Campaign, Cultural, Media and Information sectors, and Secretariats (The SPFT Coordinator, pers. comm., October 1, 2018). Moreover, the SPFT has established organizational regulations through its general assembly which are guidelines ways for SPFT community members to pursue. Overall, such internal regulations are based on the concepts of democracy, equality, justice, solidarity, accountability, transparency, and communal tenure and benefits (SPFT 2016). These are the community constitution that community members conform to. The organizational committees and community committees are elected through votes by means of democracy to prevent the emergence of a dominant leader inclined to corruption.

Community Profiles

Land Reform, liberty, human rights, democracy, and justice — The SPFT motto

As of October 2018, there are five communities in Surat Thani Province networking under the SPFT umbrella, including the Klong Sai Pattana, Nam Deang Pattana, Perm Sub, and Kao Mai communities located in Chai Buri District and the Santi Pattana community located in Phra Saeng District. These communities are newly settled communities where landless peasants and workers have gathered to seek for land as a means of production and aimed to pursue land and natural resource management in compliance to communal tenure underpinned by the concept of CLT. These communities occupied land owned by state agencies, such as ALRO and RFD as well as expired land concessions of private sectors, such as palm oil companies.

According to the interviews with community members, they started assembling and occupying land between 2006 and 2013 after the first attempt of land occupation in the early 2000s. They assisted government agencies to investigate expired and illegal concessions on oil palm plantations invested by both international and national investors. Even though the SPFT and its community members successfully assisted the government agencies in issuing lawsuits towards palm oil companies, the community members have not been permitted to legally settle in those lands, instead of temporarily staying. It has shown the insincerity of government agencies in tackling land conflicts and inequitable land distribution.

It is noticeable that they have employed land occupation to claim the community rights in lands for peasants. A community member in Kao Mai explained, "We occupied land to put pressure on the government since the government lacked motivation in land reform and equitable land distribution. We had used formal ways by coordinating with the government to investigate expired land concessions of palm oil companies but there was no progress in expropriation" (A Kao Mai community member,

[3] The People's Movement for a Just Society (P-Move) is a local network organized by local organisations, such as Northern Peasants Foundation (NPF), Isaan Land Reform Network (ILRN), Four Regions Slum Network (FRSN), Bantad Mountain Land Reform Network (BMLRN) and Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (SPFT), to raise grievances of marginalized people across the country and advocate the Government for more equitable distribution and management of natural resources (e.g., land, water, forest) (Lubanski 2012).

FIGURE 12.3 • The SPFT built a memorial monument situated in Klong Sai Pattana community to commemorate the plight of land rights defenders (Photo courtesy of Supatsak Pobsuk)

pers. comm., October 4, 2018). However, community members who have occupied land are seen by the government, palm oil companies, and neighbouring communities as squatters violating the law.

During the land occupation and settlement, community members have encountered different types of violence, including assassination, forced eviction, arbitrary arrest and detention, destruction of properties and crops, intimidation, and judicial harassment. The international and national news have covered the incidents; all interviewed communities expressed that they have been threatened by unidentified armed groups which the community members believe that those are connected to palm oil companies and local influential groups to some extent. Apart from incidents of intimidation such as random gunfire into the communities at night, destruction of community houses and crops, and trespasses of local influential groups with soldiers, four assassinations occurred with members of the Klong Sai Pattana community. In the four incidents, four community members were killed.[4]

These incidents were reported nationally and internationally by media, and the cases have been taken into account as the assassination of land rights defenders.[5] Unfortunately, only two cases, those

[4] Incidents related to community members of the Klong Sai community from 2010 to 2016 include the following:
(1) January 11, 2010: Mr. Somporn Pattaphum was shot dead during dinner at his home.
(2) November 19, 2012: Ms. Montha Chukaew and Ms. Pranee Boonrat were shot and killed while they were on their way to a local market. Their bodies were mutilated by gunmen to intimidate other community members.
(3) February 11, 2015: Mr. Chai Bunthonglek was shot dead by two gunmen when he was visiting his relative's house.
(4) April 8, 2016: A gunman attempted to shoot Mr. Supot Kalasong when he was driving to the community. In his case, he was rescued by other community members and took him to a hospital immediately.

[5] For news related to the violent incidents, see Alisa Tang, "After Violent Struggle for Land, Thai Campaigners Face Challenge to Community Farming," *Reuters*, July 26, 2016, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-thailand-landrights/after-violent-struggle-for-land-thai-campaigners-face-challenge-to-community-farming-idUSKCN10603B; Alisa Tang, "Thai Land Rights Campaigners' Most Powerful Weapon? Access to Information," *Reuters*, July 14, 2016, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-thailand-landrights-idUSKCN0ZU00U; Alisa Tang, "Four Murders and a Bloody Battle for Land Rights in Thailand," *Reuters*, July 26, 2016, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-thailand-landrights-idUSKCN0Z9006; and *Al Jazeera*, "Harassed by Palm Oil Company, Thai Village Defends Land," August 9, 2017, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/06/harassed-palm-oil-company-thai-village-defends-land-170605105935706.html.

of Chai Bunthonglek and Supot Kalasong, were given justice. However, it has appeared that none of the perpetrators have been sentenced because all legal cases were acquitted, as the court claimed, because of insufficient evidence (Fortify Rights 2018). To prevent loss of community members, security measures have been employed by setting up checkpoints around communities. For example, there are four security posts located at Klong Sai Pattana where all community members are shifted to be community security guards every 12 hours to monitor security matters 24 hours a day, thus ensuring that community members are safe. The community limits one community entrance and exit, and the gate is opened at 6:00 a.m. and closed at 6:00 p.m., except for an emergency situation. To commemorate the struggle of land rights defenders, the SPFT built a memorial monument situated in Klong Sai Pattana community. This monument includes a white foundation striking with a coil spring represented as a continual evolution and three stars on top: a red one which stands for struggle; green for prosperity of peasants, and; yellow for morality.

In addition to these violent incidents, judicial harassment has been employed by palm oil companies to prosecute community members who have been charged with three criminal offenses, including the offenses of trespass, mischief, and criminal association by palm oil companies. For example, 15 members in Nam Deang Pattana community have been charged with three criminal offenses (Protection International 2017). Even though all communities under the umbrella of P-Move are mediating under land conflicts with the government agencies, criminal cases have been ongoing against the community members. While the SPFT requested a justice fund from the Ministry of Justice to assist community members in legal fees, community members expressed that the Justice Fund Office has not responded to the needs of local people timely. On the contrary, community members explained, "We have never accessed justice since we have settled here. When our community was threatened by outsiders affiliated to palm oil companies, even the local police have never taken our cases" (A Nam Deang community member, pers. comm., October 4, 2018).

Amidst the intense conflicts in SPFT communities, the SPFT approached governmental agencies, such as the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) to file complaints on human rights-related issues and the Community Organisations Development Institute (CODI) under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) to request assistance for community development. When the communities encountered violence and intimidation, the SPFT, as a representative, approached different human rights organizations at the national and the international level to petition and voice their grievances. Not only have news related to their land struggle been published in Thailand, but the issues have also spread at the international level through international media such as Reuters, Aljazeera, etc. The SPFT usually presents itself in the public sphere to raise awareness regarding the land rights of landless peasants and workers. For example, the SPFT, in collaboration with a university in Surat Thani province, organized a public forum in relation to land struggle in the south of Thailand which gained attention from students and people. The SPFT believed that a public event is a good opportunity to share their struggles, ideas, and concepts regarding communal land and natural resources management.

The Federation's Alternative Practices

More than land and solidarity of peasants' community is food sovereignty and human dignity — The SPFT motto

The case study on the SPFT shows an alternative development approach by applying community rights to land and natural resources as a countervailing approach and practice to the dominant development discourse. This section discusses the SPFT's alternative approach in relation to economic, political, social, and cultural practices.

FIGURE 12.4 • The Southern Peasant's Federation of Thailand collaborated with a university in Surat Thani province to organize a public event disseminating information about people's struggles for land (Photo courtesy of Supatsak Pobsuk)

Alternative Land Practices

The SPFT intertwines their struggle for land and agroecology with a critical change in the top-down model of centralized development in Thailand. The SPFT communities have seen land as a fundamental right of peasants. As such, land serves community members as a means of production, i.e., a foundation of community security and a source of livelihoods and food. In addition, the right to land and agriculture can be seen as a safety net and social capital so community members ensure that land and natural resources will be maintained for their descendants. The SPFT has managed their land in compliance with the concept of community land title (CLT). The communal tenure is the idea underpinning the concept. It is where all community members own land collectively, which is beyond the existing forms of land tenure in Thailand, namely state-own land and private tenure. It is arguable that the CLT is a concrete product of the concept of community rights which aims to empower people in a democratic society. Moreover, the CLT is a tool to decentralize power to local people in making decisions on issues related to their everyday life, especially livelihoods. Democratically, community members participated in establishing regulations of land uses within their community. The collective land ownership guarantees that land is used and owned by local people in a productive way, particularly for agriculture. This way, land cannot be sold to outsiders but is restored to a community where all members decide how to utilize available land. Through an agreement, community members manage land collectively while they have the right to utilize their plot of land. Ultimately, the CLT is a bottom-up approach to resist centralized land management and the commodification of land.

Along with the CLT, two proposals, including a progressive land tax and a national land bank, have been promoted and advocated for addressing land disparity. A progressive land tax will mitigate the concentration of land and land speculation, as the measure requires those who own unproductive land to pay revenue in accordance with the amount and scale of land they owned. A national land bank, funded by a progressive land tax, will purchase or lease land and distribute it to landless communities.

Community recipients will reimburse the land bank through its cooperative (Lubanski 2012; Hayward 2017). Since 2011, the Thai Government established the Land Bank Administration Institute (Public Organisation)–LABAI to be an organization that collects information regarding unproductive land owned by the Thai state, local government administration, and private sectors, where the institute will then purchase or lease those lands for landless peasants or small landholder peasants.[6] Another mission of the LABAI is to establish a national land bank as a land fund to assist peasants who need agricultural land for their subsistence.

In terms of community land management, the SPFT communities agreed to utilize land into six categories as follows: (1) individual agricultural plot; (2) collective organic farm for food crops; (3) individual residential land; (4) reserved forest land; (5) land for livestock; and (6) public used land. For example, Klong Sai community members agreed upon the land utilization plan where each household member has one *rai* (0.16 hectare) for housing and 10 *rai* (1.6 hectares) for an individual agricultural plot, including market crops such as rubber, palm oil, bamboo, banana, etc., as well as food crops. This way, community members are able to both secure their subsistence livelihoods and generate incomes. There is a 20-*rai* communal farming for both market and food crops where community members practice non-chemical farming method contributing to peoples' livelihoods and maintaining environmental sustainability. the SPFT has promoted food crops, especially agroecological rice vegetables crops in its communities for food security and food sovereignty. In a collective farm, community members work together on the plantation of food crops and economic crops and share profit from selling their products. For example, the Kao Mai community plants four *rai* of bamboos (0.64 hectares) where all community members invest, plant, harvest, and sell products together. The members earn profits by 60% while another 40% will be set aside for the next plantation, community administration cost, and other urgent community matters agreed upon by community members. The community spares 10 *rai* of land for livestock in which, the community members have also learned how to produce organic manure for their agroecological land. Furthermore, there is approximately 35 *rai* (5.6 hectares) for public space such as a community pond, a community hall, a community kitchen, an herb garden, and a commemorated monument, etc. (See Figure 12.5 on opposite page for the Klong Sai Community Land Utilisation as an example).

The SPFT established two mechanisms,the Agricultural Cooperative of the Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (ACSPFT) and the land fund, to support its communal land management in compliance with the CLT. The ACSPFT serves as a community entity for administering community land in the future. In addition, it is represented as a cooperative business center which collects agricultural products from community members and distributes locally on their behalf. For example, the SPFT has set up an oil palm collection center on behalf of the ACSPFT in the Perm Sub community to bargain a price of oil palm, thus ensuring that community members are not unfairly treated by the market. This way, the SPFT creates an alternative production-distribution practice. The cooperative is a place for community members to save their money and access financial services such as loans. The community land fund is a means for communities to save money as a seed fund for securing a community land. Both mechanisms have ensured socio-economic and land securities for local communities.

Moreover, the SPFT communities have promoted the participation of women in community development. In terms of community economic practices, women take a leading role in food processing and selling products through the ACSPFT. Currently, pickled bamboo shoots and banana chips are famous products made by SPFT community members. Particularly, pickled bamboo shoots are processed without chemicals but by using water and salt to pickle bamboo shoots. The community products, including food processing products and agricultural products, have been promoted by the district

[6] Read more about the Land Bank Administration Institute (Public Organisation) at http://www.labai.or.th/.

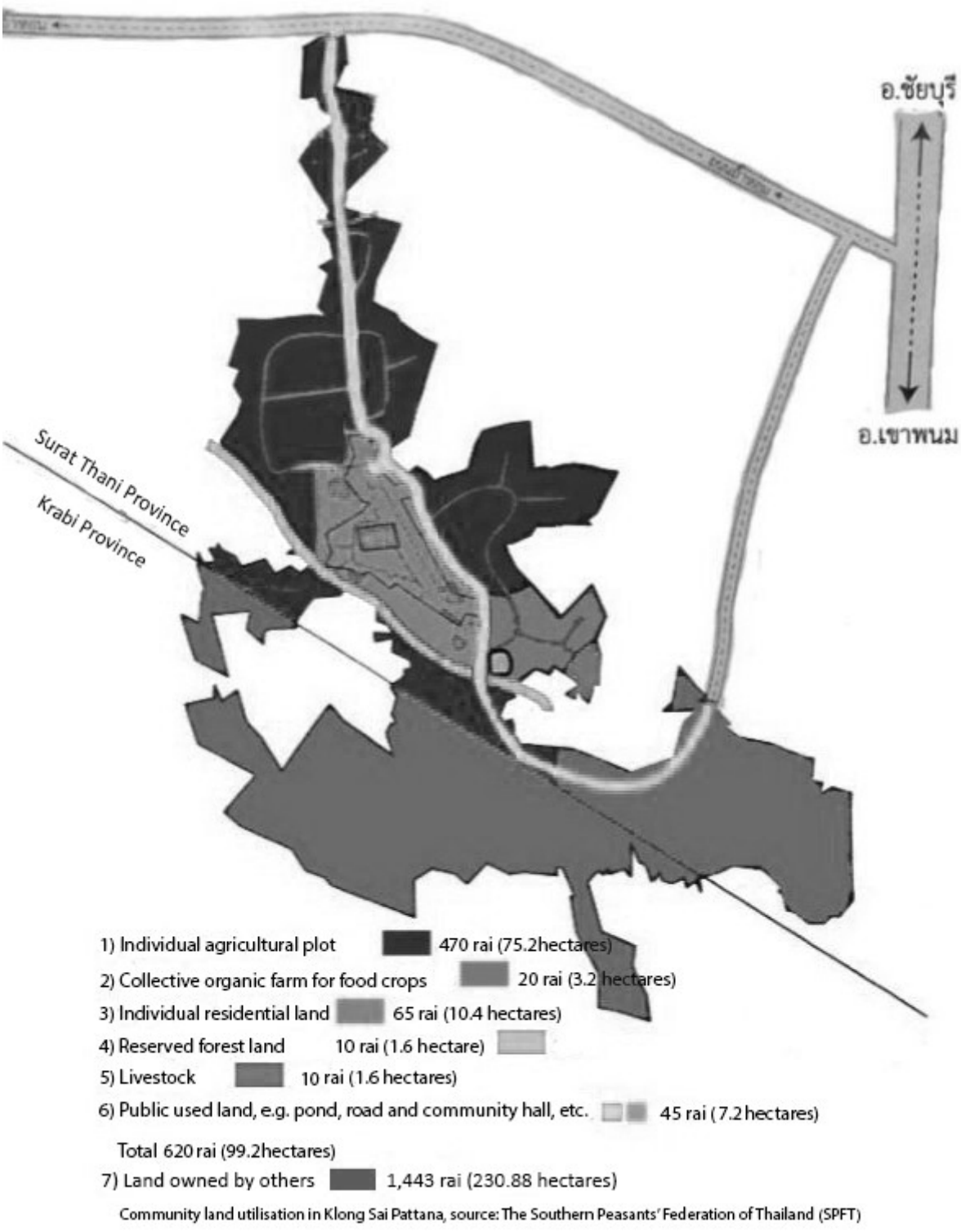

FIGURE 12.5 • Community land utilisation in Klong Sai Pattana illustrates how community members use land in a productive way based on the interests of the community (Source: Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand)

office as organic products. As the SPFT Coordinator said, "I guarantee that our community products are produced locally by organic methods unlike other communities in this district. Our products are good enough for Thai authorities to invite us to showcase at the district office promoting clean and organic food. While the district officials gain a reputation, they ignore our struggles for land" (The SPFT Coordinator, pers. comm., October 1, 2018). Nonetheless, the SPFT has seen such an opportunity as a way to promote its communities and to gain recognition from outsiders.

Alternative land management practiced by the SPFT communities counters the land development model introduced by the ALRO. The ALRO has proposed that a small-scale farmer should have five *rai* (0.8 hectares) for an agricultural plot and one *rai* (0.16 hectare) for housing, the so-called *5+1 model*. The SPFT argued that this top-down model is deficient in local participation because the state agencies have not consulted with community members in deciding on their community development in accordance with particular contexts. For example, the ALRO aims to apply the *5+1 model* to all SPFT communities without a consultation of community members. Especially in the Kao Mai community, a community member expressed that "the authorities haven't talked about land and community development with us. They told us that five *rai* for farming is enough but they have no idea about our context and people. Also, they proposed to dig a 200-*rai* pond [32 hectares] for a community water source. No one in our community wants it as such the scale of a pond is too big beyond our need. The authorities haven't concern about our livelihoods since they will construct new roads and other public utilities, crosscutting our farm plots and destroying our cultivated products (A Kao Mai community member, pers. comm., October 4, 2018). The SPFT communities also questioned the criteria of landless people who need an agricultural plot, as they realized that those registered in the government system are people who do not need land for farming, but they are gaining benefits through corrupted networks in provinces. Those who comply with the governmental model need to follow regulations set by the ALRO. The ALRO requires people who receive allocated land to plant cash crops promoted by the government, such as cassava, rubber, sugar cane, and maize. Given the lack of clear communication and consultation with local communities, it was reported that 10% of beneficiaries nationwide returned their entitled land to the ALRO (*Khaosod* 2017).

Political Alternatives

The SPFT has politically been established as a new social movement that aims to create a political space for negotiating controlled powers, in this case state and capital (Johnston 2014). The SPFT has raised their grievances and requested changes in land policies and increased the bargaining power of local people regarding land and natural resources management. As mentioned, the SPFT is a group of landless peasants and workers who lost land as their means of production through continued primitive accumulation and accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2003) which marginalized them at the edge of development. The case of SPFT has explicitly illustrated grassroots democracy and participatory development. It shows how local people organize themselves, build formal and informal networks and uses different types of approaches and strategies to resist and challenge injustice. This highlights how they are active agents who know what they want and how to manage and use their resources in a way of benefiting themselves and their community (Kerkvliet 2009, cited in Sangkhamanee 2013).

As newly settled communities, the SPFT needs solidarity among its communities. The community regulations act as a community constitution which harmonizes people originating from different locations in new settlements. The community regulations are in line with the SPFT constitutions which focus on solidarity, justice, morals, collective land management, and security measures. It is arguable that SPFT community members live together through common orders and disciplines. However, the SPFT has promoted a democratic manner within their communities to prevent a predominant community leader who tends to be corrupt and authoritarian. The SPFT has set up a political culture which encourages all community members to participate in decision-making processes regarding community

issues, from minor issues to community strategies. It is stated in its constitution that "the SPFT aims to create a democratic environment in communities and to encourage all members to participate in decision-making and community development processes."

In addition, the SPFT has established internal mechanisms to monitor the function of community regulations. A checks and balances mechanism has been formed. Those mechanisms include a morning check-in and monthly meeting. For example, members in Klong Sai Pattana Community hold a daily gathering at 7:00 a.m. to report security situations, disseminate news and information, exercise, sing a community anthem, and solve community issues. A community member shared: "When we have a community issue, we brainstorm, discuss and seek for a solution together. We make sure that we listen to every voice as it is significant. We will reach a resolution collectively with a community consensus" (A community member in Klong Sai Pattana, pers. comm., October 3, 2018). The SPFT communities hold community meetings twice a month. For example, in Santi Pattana Community, the monthly meeting is held every 8th and 20th of the month to discuss problems and lessons learned, share ideas and information, and seek out solutions for community development.

In the SPFT structure, a political sector has been set up to monitor and analyze political and socio-economic situations in Thailand in order to formulate its strategic plans, tactics, and policy. Moreover, the SPFT has realized that its community members should understand and crystallize the context of their struggle for land so that they can develop collectively their political class identity which builds community unity and eventually provides a positive impact towards the SPFT mobilization. In this case, a political school has been forged to share ideas and concepts among community members. The SPFT's political sector has conducted political education programs in communities regularly to build political knowledge and capacities of community members, especially the young generation. The SPFT has regularly engaged academic scholars at universities to conduct critical research in their communities and organize a public event to raise awareness of the struggle for land and inequality in Thailand.

Like other social movements, the SPFT has shown their resistance through protest, which is a form of civil disobedience and recognised as direct participatory democracy. They expressed their grievances on the ineffectiveness of the Thai bureaucratic system in formulating and implementing land and natural resource management. The SPFT has seen the politics of protest as a resistance tool to bargain power

FIGURE 12.6 • The processed food products and agricultural products made by the SPFT communities showcase how SPFT community members diversify food options and use them to gain recognition from outsiders (Photo courtesy of Supatsak Pobsuk)

with governmental agencies and to demand development from below. Allied with P-Move, the SPFT has joined public demonstrations on the streets and at governmental offices to demand policy changes and concrete actions towards their problems. The SPFT has also filed their petitions to and requested formal meetings with responsible governmental agencies when they encountered threats. It is worth noting that SPFT is a well-organized social movement which indicates that local people are not passive and submissive to injustice.

Alternative Social Practices

In SPFT communities, community committees have been set up to look after their community members as well as to operate community services and businesses. There are nine committees established in each community, including committees of coordination, registration, finance, agriculture, development, healthcare, women and youth, security, and culture. These committees are elected by community members through a vote to take a lead in particular community issues and coordinate with the central SPFT.

Particularly, the SPFT has promoted the participation of women in communities and empowered them to be involved in community development, as stated in its constitution that the SPFT members should respect human and women rights and promote gender equity in their communities.Women in SPFT communities have been empowered to participate in the struggle for land. A woman from an SPFT community involved in reporting the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in Geneva, Switzerland in 2017 expressed that "not many people realize how women related to land issues. Women are restricted from access to land which is a source of food for their family. Women are a food distributor and a primary caretaker of their household. If women cannot access land, I believe that the other problems such as domestic violence will happen in their family" (A woman in Santi Pattana Community, pers. comm., October 4, 2018).

Women's access to land secures community food sovereignty. The SPFT's women groups have been formed to work on the community food production in collective lands for food crops such as rice, vegetables, banana, bamboo, coconut, etc. and raising chicken and duck for eggs. Moreover, gender division of labour has been employed by community members by dividing production roles on collective farms. For instance, men work on preparing the land and mowing while women work on seeding and planting. Community members sell all harvested products for communities and use them during community activities. In addition, women groups take a leading role in processing food products such as banana chips,pickled bamboo shoots, etc. The women in each community hold a monthly meeting whereby they discuss how they can participate in community development and initiate activities to empower women in communities.

As newly settled communities, they have initiated a community welfare system as a safety net. With the ACSPFT, community members have welfare savings, one baht per day which will be allocated to community welfare, including healthcare and education. For example, community members will receive transportation costs based on the distance for travelling from their community to a hospital. As small-scale peasants, it is quite difficult for them to access formal financial services. The SPFT has thus created another community-based savings to provide microcredit to its members. Community members can save up at least 100 baht per month, and the members will earn their dividend by 7% per year, whereas 3% will be administration cost of the ACSPFT. Furthermore, those who want a loan service can access it with a low-interest rate. The SPFT continues to develop its welfare schemes to support its communities' members. A woman from Santi Pattana Community shared, "in the future, we are thinking to initiate community healthcare services, community care centres for children and elders to ensure our community members have social protection as necessary" (ibid.).

FIGURE 12.6 • Community members in Klong Sai Pattana community harvesting rice on the communal paddy which was transformed from a large-scale oil palm plantation; sharing labour among community members has been used to promote peasant culture and build collective peasant identity (Photo courtesy of the Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand)

Alternative Culture Practices

It is significant to build a spirit of solidarity among new settlers, especially through cultures. However, the SPFT represents itself as a group of landless peasants and workers and reinvents a peasant culture. The SPFT believes that such culture forges harmony among community members, in which the SPFT attempts to show the importance and value of land to peasants' life. From the struggle for land as life, the movement has attempted to develop a sense of political class-based identity among their community members through collective activities, especially sharing labour on collective farms. As mentioned, collective farms are the place where community members have rotated to work on preparing soil, seeding, planting, harvesting, selling, and sharing.

Moreover, the SPFT has encouraged community members to participate in community activities such as the morning assembly for sharing information, exercising and singing SPFT songs, monthly meetings for discussion and consultations, and other community activities such as religious rituals and sports activities. In such a way, the SPFT believes that a harmonious and stable society can be established in the communities and that this can strengthen them in terms of negotiating with the state and outsiders. The SPFT has also organized activities, particularly community anniversary activities, and have usually invited neighbouring communities to join. They see participations as a tool to gain acknowledgment from other communities and to eventually make their struggle visible and understandable in the eyes of the public. For example, the Santi Pattana community organized their 11th community anniversary on October 28, 2018 where they invited nearby communities to participate in sports activities and performances. As a community member expressed, "we used community activities such as sports and performances to build our solidarity and harmony. Beyond that, we normally invite our friends from other communities to join and to learn how we live. In this way, they understand who

we are and why we needed to occupy land" (A community member in the Santi Pattana community, pers. comm., October 4, 2018). The SPFT expressed that after they engage other communities in SPFT activities, the attitudes of outsiders have positively changed. A community member expressed that, "in the past, others called us a mob. We felt uncomfortable when we went outside our community as others were not welcome. After they have known us more through our activities, they call us neighbouring "communities" (A community member in Klong Sai Pattana, pers. comm., October 3, 2018).

To some extent, the SPFT communities are not closed communities, as they welcome conditionally new community members. The SPFT welcomes landless peasants who really want to work on agriculture and live in peasant cultures. A new community member or family will be on three-month probation, where they receive 1 *rai* (0.16 hectare) for settling and planting their food crops. During the probation period, a new member or family will work voluntarily on community activities such as security guarding, community meeting, and collective plantation, etc., whereby community committees review how they conform to the community regulations and adjust to agrarian cultures.

Concluding Remarks

Through this study on the Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (SPFT), the following points can be recapitulated to see how peasants in Thailand struggle for land.

First, landless and small-scale peasants in Thailand have struggled for land over time because of the domination of land management by the centralized power of state and economic growth paradigm. It is arguable that land reform in Thailand has not successfully been formulated and executed. As a result, equitable land distribution has never been reached, and landless peasants find it difficult to access land as a means of production.

Second, the concept of community rights has been employed to legitimize people's struggle for land. Such a concept has promoted the participation of community people in decision-making. It also proposes development from below and encourages the idea of self-determination. Eventually, local people aim to create participatory development and democracy. Community land title (CLT), which is a concrete manifestation of community rights, has been introduced to counter the predominant land tenure, including state-owned and private land, by proposing that land can be owned and managed collectively by community members.

Third, due to ineffective land management in Thailand, the SPFT used land occupation as a strategy to claim their right to land; however, community members encountered violence and judicial harassment. The SPFT hoists flags of land rights for landless peasants, human rights, democracy, and food sovereignty to counter the dominant discourse on land management in Thailand. They have developed and practiced numerous alternative practices, including land management, grassroots democracy, community constitution and community cultures as strategic tools to countervail mainstream development paradigm, normally focusing on economic growth.

Lastly, the emergence of the SPFT has called for equitable land distribution in Thailand. It has proved that land management should be contextualized, as there are alternative practices on land management. Local people are empowered to manage their resources based on their interests and knowledge. Moreover, they demand to be involved in decision-making regarding development and bargain power with the Thai state.

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