

RCSD International Conference

Revisiting Agrarian Transformations in Southeast Asia: Empirical, Theoretical and Applied Perspectives

**13-15 May 2010
Chiang Mai, Thailand**

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

Organizer:

Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD), Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand

in collaboration with

The Challenge of the Agrarian Transition in Southeast Asia (ChATSEA), a Major Collaborative Research Initiative (MCRI) of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), Canada (lead institution University of Montreal)

Date and Venue:

Thursday 13 May – Saturday 15 May 2010, Convention Center, the Empress Hotel, Chiang Mai, Thailand

Statement of Purpose:

The conference will bring together a range of scholars and practitioners working on and in the countryside of several Southeast Asian countries to exchange perspectives on how and why the rural and agricultural sectors in these countries are being transformed. Despite rapid economic change, urbanization and industrialization, the continued importance of agrarian issues in Southeast Asia is evident from, amongst others:

- the food crises of the past two years
- continued debate around the expansion of agriculture in forest zones
- concerns about safe food among middle class consumers
- the positioning of villages as a social safety net during economic crisis
- debates around the political participation of rural people

The conference is based on the premise that not only has agrarian society in Southeast Asia changed fundamentally over the past generation, i.e. since the earlier studies of agrarian transformations were at their peak in the 1970s and 1980s, but also that the conceptual tools with which we understand rural change have evolved. At the same time, there have also been continuities in how rural people are positioned in relation to broader national and global societies, while some of the questions that were central to the work of

the earlier studies are worth revisiting. These new and old ideas about rural change also continue to shape the work of development donors, farmer/fisher/worker groups, NGOs, and various government agencies whose policies seek to improve rural wellbeing as well as conserve valued environments and extract resources.

An important source of input to the proceedings is the five year joint academic program, the *Challenge of the Agrarian Transition in Southeast Asia* (ChATSEA), and the meeting will serve as the final conference of this program. It is also part of the regular Triennial series of international conferences hosted by the Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD), Chiang Mai University. The conference will allow ChATSEA scholars to present findings in the form of brief discussion papers to a wider audience, and will provide practitioners an opportunity to respond to these papers in various formats.

A key feature of the conference will be its hands-on engagement with practitioners and policy makers. Some of the key ChATSEA findings will be applied to a policy analysis and critique of current programs and policy documents, and field visits will be designed to exemplify some of the main themes under discussion. At the same time, practitioners' analysis and visions and policy makers' commentary on the academic critique will foster an engagement between different stakeholders in the process of agrarian change.

Objectives:

1. Retheorize across the spectrum of agrarian transformations in Southeast Asia in a globalized world
2. Bring together the key empirical findings of the five year ChATSEA research program and of related research in the region
3. Identify key areas of policy and practice where agrarian research can be mobilized.
4. Develop a coherent policy critique and policy dialogue from the findings of the research
5. Organize key practice-relevant research results in discussion papers, and elicit responses from practitioners including NGOs, government, farmers/fishers/workers, development donors
6. Produce outputs in the form of online discussion papers and responses, videos and other materials.

Conference Format and Activities:

Day 1: Field visits to key sites in periurban Chiang Mai, lowland agricultural areas and highland areas to see key processes on the ground. Given the number expected (200 – 300 participants), anticipate 6 sites, two from each type of area. Visits can be tied into themes (below) and participation in the conference by rural people in the area.

Days 2-3: Thematic panels comprised of researchers and practitioners, combined with plenary speakers at the beginning and end of each day.

Days 2 and 3 will be organized broadly as follows:

Plenary 1				
Theme 1 Topic 1	Theme 2 Topic 1	Theme 3 Topic 1	Theme 4 Topic 1	Theme 5 Topic 1
Lunch				
Theme 1 Topic 2	Theme 2 Topic 2	Theme 3 Topic 2	Theme 4 Topic 2	Theme 5 Topic 2
Plenary 2				

Plenary 3				
Theme 1 Topic 3	Theme 2 Topic 3	Theme 3 Topic 3	Theme 4 Topic 3	Theme 5 Topic 3
Lunch				
Theme 1 Topic 4	Theme 2 Topic 4	Theme 3 Topic 4	Theme 4 Topic 4	Theme 5 Topic 4
Plenary 4				

Themes will reflect clear policy and research fields in which respondents from diverse perspectives can be found. Topic panels will be mixed, and include participants from various sectors (farmers, NGOs, government, donors, researchers etc). The organizers of each topic will produce a short discussion paper following a specified format, including key questions for practice, setting out provocative positions and raising other points of discussion and debate. Responses will be invited to these discussion papers, and unsolicited papers will be organized to contribute to these key topic areas. It is therefore important that paper proposals indicate clearly the topic area in which they will contribute.

Each of the topic areas will be led by two coordinators, mainly but not exclusively from within ChATSEA and RCSD, and the topics will be grouped into major themes (tentatively set out below but subject to modification). The topic coordinators will take the lead in authorship or inviting authorship of the discussion papers and be responsible for identifying and inviting relevant respondents and other resource persons for the topic-based panels.

To give an example, one topic might be the significance of land titling and land reform. The two-hour panel sessions for this theme would be led by a discussion paper, for example on land titling and land reform. Another topic and associated panel might be land concessions in the context of food security.

Organizing committee:

RCSD Committee

Chayan Vaddhanaphuti	Chair
Anan Ganjanapan	Committee
Yos Santasombat	Committee
Chusak Wittayapak	Committee
Wattana Sugunnasil	Committee
Jamaree Chiengthong	Committee
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ChATSEA Committee

Rodolphe de Koninck	Chair
Tania Murray Li	Committee
Peter Vandergeest	Committee
Philip Hirsch	Committee
Philip Kelly	Committee
Jonathan Rigg	Committee
Michael Leaf	Committee
Sarah Turner	Committee
Bruno Thibert	Committee

Participants:

Geographers, anthropologists, rural sociologists, economists and others interested in agrarian processes. Key invited speakers and commentators from earlier agrarian transformation studies (e.g. Ben White, Andrew Turton, Gillian Hart)

Farmers, government agencies, NGOs, international organizations, bilateral donor agencies engaged in the practice of agricultural and rural development

Important Deadlines

Deadline for panel topics and discussion paper abstracts: 31 October 2009

Deadline for discussion papers: 15 January 2010

Deadline for paper abstracts: 30 January 2010

Deadline for papers and responses: 1 April 2010

Discussion papers should be no longer than 4000 words, and responses no longer than 2000 words if in the form of written papers. Unsolicited papers should be between 4000 and 6000 words. Responses can take multiple forms: written papers, short videos, slides etc. All papers and other materials will be posted on a public website by the above dates. RCSD and ChATSEA will look at publishing a selection of papers, to be further developed after the conference.

Possible Themes and Topics (the final selection will involve no more than four key topics under each of the five main themes below):

Theme 1: Multiple Rural Restructuring and Governance

Topics:

- New forms of regulations of agriculture
- Alternative agriculture
- Land appropriation, natural resource access
- Land reform and land titling
- Forests, conservation, boom crops, and agricultural expansion
- Water management alternatives
- Fisheries and rural livelihood

Theme 2: Transnational Mobility of Rural Actors

Topics:

- Countryside values – consumption and production spaces
- Transnational migrants and change in labor relations
- Feminization of agricultural labor
- Regional conglomeration of rural spaces and peri-urbanization
- Transnational migration, rural wage work, citizenship status
- Cross-border trade of agricultural goods

Theme 3: Global Market, Local Process and Articulation

Topics:

- Consumption and agro-food system
- Responses to the Global Financial Crisis
- Outsourcing agriculture and contract farming
- Trade liberalization and regional economic integration
- Extractive industries, investment and communities
- Urban interactions and agrarian change

Theme 4: Human Security, Risks and Vulnerability

Topics:

- Health, food sovereignty and human security
- Resource extraction and environmental risks
- Food sufficiency, security, safety and accessibility
- Increasing risks in rural environment
- Agricultural induced hazard

Theme 5: Rural Politics and Discontent

Topics:

- Citizenship rights, entitlement and representation
- Rural populism and politics of space
- Rural inequalities and discontent
- Effective rural voice in government and economy
- Agrarian movements, fisherfolk organizations and re-peasantization

Panel and Paper Submission:

Panel and paper submission should be in digital form of word processing.

Panel topic proposals should include:

- Title of the panel
- Theme and topic (chosen from above list)
- Names of the topic coordinators and any other identified respondents or resource persons
- Institutions and affiliations
- Contact address, e-mail, phone and fax numbers
- Not more than 500 word abstract describing relevance of panel proposal to the theme(s) of the conference

Paper abstract should include:

- Title of paper
- Theme and topic (chosen from above list)
- The author(s)
- Institution and affiliation
- Contact address, e-mail, phone and fax numbers
- Not more than 200 word abstract describing argument, empirical and policy relevancy to the conference theme(s)

Travel grant and funding:

Participants are encouraged to seek their own funding. RCSD and ChATSEA have some limited funds for participants in need of support. Further details of funds and travel grants will be posted on the RCSD and ChATSEA websites in the next announcements.

Correspondence:

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