

CCEASE-CCSEAS

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Photo by Remy Chhem, Champassak.

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PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

CCSEAS Legacy Lives On

It is an understatement to say we live in unprecedented and highly uncertain times.

The combined impacts of catastrophic climate changes, both sudden and incremental, and increasing social and economic inequalities, have long been hurting Southeast Asian communities, and other people around the world, long before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a short span of less than six months, the pandemic has exposed systemic structural vulnerabilities, injustices, and inequities in our life support systems – our health care, food supply chains, child care, schools, universities, manufacturing industries, physical and social infrastructures – as well as our countries' and regions' increased interconnections and interdependencies. It has also exposed how emergent populist authoritarian rulers in Southeast Asia, and elsewhere, stoke long-standing fears and persistent prejudices with pandemic-related emergency powers as “perfect pretext” or cover for increased repression of their citizens, greater political manipulation, or power concentration. Much of what is happening in the Southeast Asian region and the wider world today with the Covid-19 pandemic is deeply connected with the kinds of issues and concerns that CCSEAS scholars have long engaged with since its creation.

CCSEAS scholars have studied class structures and relations in SEA beyond the “three great classes” of peasants, workers, and landed capitalists. They have fine-tuned mainstream capital, peasant, labor, political, development, and resource studies by linking their analyses to broader challenges – including pandemics, disasters, urban insurrections and rural insurgencies – that cause severe social cleavages, economic dislocations, and intergenerational conflicts. They have connected urban, peri-urban, and rural development concerns with governmentality approaches and roles of states, non-government, and international financial agencies, magnified by resource constraints, legitimation crises, ecological stresses, and political emergencies.

They have taken up the challenge of examining “economic miracles,” “economic crises” and the political economy of “state penetration,” “crony capitalism,” “neo-patrimonialism,” “corporatization,” “financialization,” and “neoliberal globalization” over the years, concepts that have been wedded to discourses on human rights, liberalism, good governance, and democracy, whose futures and prospects in Southeast Asian region, and elsewhere, have been complicated by the still-spreading global pandemic.

To continue the CCSEAS tradition of critical scholarship and mentoring of young Southeast Asian studies scholars in Canada, well positioned to tackle old and new challenges our fast changing societies confront regularly, the CCSEAS has been blessed with a new and younger Executive Committee members – *Kai Ostwald* (UBC), *Stephanie Martel* (Queen’s), *Isabelle Cote* (Memorial), *Antoine Beaulieu* (Laval), and *Mallory MacDonnell* (York), supported by the Secretariat at the York Centre for Asian Research and *Jennifer Langill* (McGill). I am the eldest on the team as a former graduate student who had attended CCSEAS Conferences since the 1990s. At these meetings, I had the great fortune of meeting many seasoned senior scholars who undoubtedly have played a big role in my own intellectual growth and professional development as an academic and researcher.

Led by these young leaders and graduate students across Canada, we will renew our CCSEAS commitment to critical and engaged scholarship with the theme of the 35th annual conference as *People, Power, Politics, Pandemics and Other Perils in Southeast Asia*. The conference is scheduled to held at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, BC, on 21–24 October 2021.

We will monitor the public health situation next year to determine how the pandemic will affect our travel and logistical arrangements. We are prepared to hold the conference in virtual spaces should travel advisories and other essential precautionary measures still be in place. Please watch out for our conference poster and more details on how you can be involved in conference planning and preparations. Kindly get in touch with our CCSEAS Secretariat for more details at ccseas@yorku.ca.

We hope that the 2021 CCSEAS Conference will be your first post-pandemic conference of choice! *Maraming Salamat. Mabuhay!*



Leonora C. Angeles

CCSEAS President 2019-2021

RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY WITH FRONTLINE DISASTER RESPONDERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Photos by Chaya Ocampo Go



October 2018: Interviews with community disaster response leaders in Metro Manila.



November 2018: My research team, CDRC staff, and farmers in Zambales.

The Philippines ranks high in the list of countries most vulnerable to disasters and climate change. As a former emergency relief worker post-Super Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, I continue to share a commitment among colleagues in Philippine civil society organizations to remain engaged while I pursue graduate studies in Canada. How does one think critically of disasters in the Philippines, not as a lone scholar but also alongside those who serve at the frontlines? There are two levels of inquiries in my research project:

1. Mapping the ecosystem of disaster response in the Philippines: Who comprises the web of local,

national and international actors involved in disaster risk reduction and management efforts? What is the role of Philippine civil society in shaping the politics of disaster management contested by state and non-state actors?

2. Vulnerabilities and frontline response: What is the work of community leaders involved in frontline response in their own barangays or villages? What kinds of social power relations do they navigate to work for survival and well-being in their own communities?

From October 2018 to March 2019, my research team and I

travelled with staff members of the Citizens' Disaster Response Centre (CDRC), a local non-government organization, which has been promoting the practice of community-based disaster management nationwide since 1984. We selected three field sites, each shaped by distinct vulnerabilities to various disaster events: an urban poor community in Taguig City, Metro Manila; a farming village in the Province of Zambales; and a fishing community in the Island of Gibitngil, Cebu. My team and I video-recorded interviews with community members, CDRC staff members and local government officials for the purpose of creating a series of three



January 2019: Filming daily disaster preparedness efforts by fishers in Cebu.

short documentary films highlighting stories of civilian efforts in responding to various disaster events in their own communities.

In between travels to each of the three sites, I stayed in Metro Manila and also attended various forums and meetings alongside the Disaster Risk Reduction Network Philippines (DRRNet), a broad coalition of non-government organizations, practitioners, academics and advocates lobbying the Philippine Congress and Senate for a just legislation on disaster risk reduction and management. Such activities allowed me to map out the vibrant network of civil society organizations engaged in disaster response, advocacy and activism in the Philippines.

Fieldwork highlighted for me the following key lessons:

On political ecologies: There is nothing ‘natural’ about disasters. Hazards and spectacular meteorological events persist as the

main preoccupation of the Philippine state’s disaster management efforts. Vulnerability, however, shaped by political and socio-economic inequalities, is the central issue in need of sustained analysis, attention and action. Daily ‘natural’ disasters have long been normalized and are thereby disregarded: they are fires, demolitions and police violence for the urban poor in Taguig City; compounding debt, drought, and flash floods from an upland mine for rice farmers in Zambales; and coastal evictions for fishers in Cebu.

On research and advocacy: Despite the constricting space for civic freedoms in the current political context in the Philippines, I was able to witness the ongoing work championed by civil society across multiple scales. Community leaders in the three villages we visited, most of whom are women, serve in informal positions of power. Their efforts in organizing for disaster preparedness and response remain unrecognized;

their stories and lived experiences should continue to inform theoretical analysis in environmental and development studies, and calls to action for those working for social justice.

The series of three short documentary films that my research team and I are currently in the process of editing intends to share these key lessons with the general public: ‘natural’ disasters are not singular events or external phenomena that happen on a passive community. Vulnerability and resilience are constantly being re-worked on the ground in uneven ways. It is in paying attention to the daily efforts for survival that one can join the work to transform such living conditions and environments.

This work is supported by a Doctoral Research Award from the International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada.



The surf homestay area of Mapaddegat/Ebay in Mentawai Islands, Indonesia.

THE POETICS OF WAITING

An Ethnography of Surf

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Photos by Sarani Pitor Pakan

**"Waiting is not an absence."
(Craig Jeffrey, in
Ethnographies of Waiting)**

Oftentimes, during my fieldwork in surf homestay area of Mapaddegat/Ebay in Mentawai Islands, Indonesia, I was impressed by the patience of surfers. Especially in times of less consistent surf breaks, surfers had to wait: for a good swell, for the wind condition, for the waves. They are a unique tribe, I thought. They are passionate about the waves and want to play with them at all cost, but they know something is bigger than them. Mother Ocean cannot be intervened. They only have to wait.

In surfing you have to prepare by checking the surfboard, put-

ting sunscreen on the face, and so forth. You walk or take a boat to the surfing spot. Then, you must paddle to where the waves break. Once there, you must wait. Sometimes, it takes a long time before you surf your first wave. Sometimes there are no waves to surf. But you keep waiting and waiting until, suddenly, one good swell from the ocean forms a nice wave. The wind condition helps. You catch that wave and stand on the board. Finally, you can play with the waves.

Anthropological fieldwork is just like surfing. Waiting is a crucial part of it. My own fieldwork was like surfing. I prepared, I waited. Sometimes there were no 'waves' for me. But, at one point, my 'waves' came. I embraced them

with a smile. I played with them. Perhaps, I could get the 'barrel'!

In his essay *That's enough about ethnography!*, Tim Ingold (2014) discusses the importance of waiting in participant-observation. While I use surfing as a metaphor for fieldwork, Ingold uses letter correspondence. What letter writers do is not merely questioning-answering activities but acts of *co-responding*. They write their feelings and thoughts and wait for a response. For Ingold, fieldwork is just like that: we respond to whom/whatever we encounter in the field and they respond back. It goes on in such a way until the researcher leaves the field. In such correspondence, the fieldworker must be prepared to wait. 'Waiting upon things is

precisely what it means to attend to them,' Ingold (2014: 389) writes.

I experienced many kinds of waiting during fieldwork. I remember one day I was feeling too relaxed. At that moment, I was staying in a tropical surfing island — coconut trees everywhere, crystal blue seawater, the sound of the waves, you name it — so I could not avoid the holiday ambience and the mood of doing nothing. One morning, a French surfer who was staying in the same homestay warned me: 'Surfing is a sport for lazy people. Be careful, we may 'contaminate' you.' Then, I started to think about other tourism scholars who have done research in other tourist destinations. What do they feel and experience in the field? How do they balance the research objectives and the holiday ambience of a place? How can they survive the mood of doing nothing? That day I wrote in my field notes: 'I guess the answer is in 'time'. I only have to wait. One day I will feel bored of this 'holiday'.'

So, I decided to wait. 'Why hurry?' I thought. By doing so, I unconsciously immersed myself into Mentawai's famous saying *moile moile* (slowly, slowly). Waiting, as Janeja and Bandak

(2018: 1) assume, is an interplay between doubt, hope, and uncertainty. Still, it is worth to wait. Especially for the ethnographic kind of waiting.

Waiting is what makes fieldwork beautiful. Often the most important insights during fieldwork arise out of serendipity. We cannot force things to happen. We only have to wait. Yet, this should be an active/intentional waiting. As philosopher Gabriel Marcel (1967: 282) argues, 'active waiting entails hope as a generative of action'. Following Ingold (2014: 389), we might wait actively by attending 'to what others are doing or saying and to what is going on around and about; to follow along where others go and to do their bidding, whatever this might entail and wherever it might take you.' Here, waiting becomes the method.

Looking back on my fieldwork experience, I find it as a series of acts of waiting. Waiting for my supervisor to let me go to Siberut, waiting on suitable gatekeepers and participants, waiting to be ready to conduct formal interviews, waiting for people to talk about the waves, waiting for the serendipitous moments to be observed, waiting for the moment to leave the field and go back home,

etcetera. In all these forms of waiting there was anxiety, doubt, uncertainty, and hope. They coalesced into what I call 'my fieldwork'.

Remember: we only have to wait and stay *moile moile*.

Ingold, T. (2014). That's enough about ethnography! HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory, 4(1), 383–395.

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Marcel, G. (1967). Desire and hope. In N. Lawrence & D. O'Connor (Eds.), Readings in existential phenomenology (pp. 277–285). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Sarani has conducted his research on surf tourism and human-waves relationship in Siberut, Mentawai Islands, Indonesia.

MOVE OUT, MOVE UP:

Spatial-social Mobility in a Migrant-sending Community in Cambodia

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Kandal village in Preah Netre Preah commune, Banteay Meanchey.

Images provided by Veang Seang Hai

This essay describes the interrelation between spatial and social mobility by using empirical data from two migrant-sending villages in Banteay Meanchey Province, Cambodia. In line with previous literature, it argues that spatial mobility plays a role in social advancement and income generation. Not only do migrants “move out” from their economically disadvantaged homes, but they also “move up”.

I define spatial mobility as any form of geographical movement from one place to another either within or across national boundaries. Social mobility is a vertical movement, which describes an either downward or upward movement in social hierarchies such as income, wealth, education, or occupation.

Downward-upward social mobility is associated with spatial mobility

at large extent. When looking at the history of Khmer Rouge’s forced evacuations in 1975, we realize that (forced) spatial mobility was strategically used by Khmer Rouge leaders to “degrade” social hierarchies of urban residents represented as corrupt capitalists. In one of my case studies in Banteay Meanchey Province, the Khmer Rouge moved the villagers, most of whom were traders and market vendors, into another place nearby a mountain to do farming (Figure 1). This change of status from owners, traders, and vendors to communal farmers can be viewed as downward social mobility.

However, the narrative of mobility has been rewritten in the emerging context of labour migration in Cambodia. Spatial mobility has become more voluntary and strategically aimed to upgrade individu-

als and groups’ social mobility. In this sense, not only individuals or groups move out from their home locations, but they also move up in the social hierarchy.

For instance, some return migrants in the sites that I study in Banteay Meanchey province have been able to climb higher up in the income ladder by moving out from their home villages to locations that offer greater economic opportunities. Figure 1 compares three locations in Banteay Meanchey province based on their level of economic activity, as determined by the country’s 2011 economic census conducted by the National Institute of Statistics. Location A, Preah Netre Preah, is the migrants’ home village with the lowest rate of economic activities (i.e. 204); location B, Chob Veari, is a nearby town with busier economic activities (i.e. 663); and location C,

Poi Pet, is a huge borderland town with the highest economic activity (i.e. 5319). Towns B and C offer much more economic opportunities because they have developed better infrastructure, such as the National Road Number 6, and serve as a trading hub between Thailand and Cambodia. Therefore, young people who move to towns B and C have more chances to get high-paid jobs and establish businesses, leading to greater income. The following cases illustrate this.

Case 1: A migrant purchased a flat in Poi Pet with assistance of his parents at home. Initially, the migrant asked his parents to take a loan from the bank by putting their land as collateral, with the promise that he would send remittances to regularly to pay off the loan. The parents had one condition: if the migrant son failed to send remittance regu-

larly, the parents would take ownership of the flat in Poi Pet because they had to deal with the bank on their own. The village headman issued the contract and witnessed the agreement between the migrant and the parents. Fortunately, the migrant was able to send remittance regularly and finally he could own the flat in Poi Pet. His business in Poi Pet is doing well (Interview with village headman, 9/02/2018).

Case 2: Interviews with Sophy and Chanty, two mothers of migrants, who shared the commonality that their migrant children moved out from home (A) to establish new businesses in a town named Chob Veari (B) (see map below). Chob Veari is a busy town along the National Road 6 with a central market, which attracts people from different villages. Sophy's oldest son and his wife are working in a construction

site in Thailand. They keep sending remittance to her to buy a plot of land in Chob Veari. Sophy told me that it would be easy for her son and his family to start up a business in Chob Veari when they return from Thailand because it is economically busier than Preah Netre Preah. Similarly, Chanty's oldest daughter and her husband opened a motorbike garage in Preah Netre Preah, but their business went so bad that they had to migrate to Thailand. Now they are saving money in Thailand in the hope of opening a new garage in Chob Veari. They have asked Chanty to keep an eye out for a suitable plot of land along the National Road 6, close to Chob Veari, where they could establish a new motorbike garage, expecting to earn more income (Interview with Sophy, 04/12/2017; Chanty, 01/12/2017).

In conclusion, I agree with existing studies that migration is a strategy for individuals or groups to move up the social ladder. This research encourages future studies to adopt an “intersectional approach” that integrates a broader set of aspects of mobility to understand current patterns of migration.

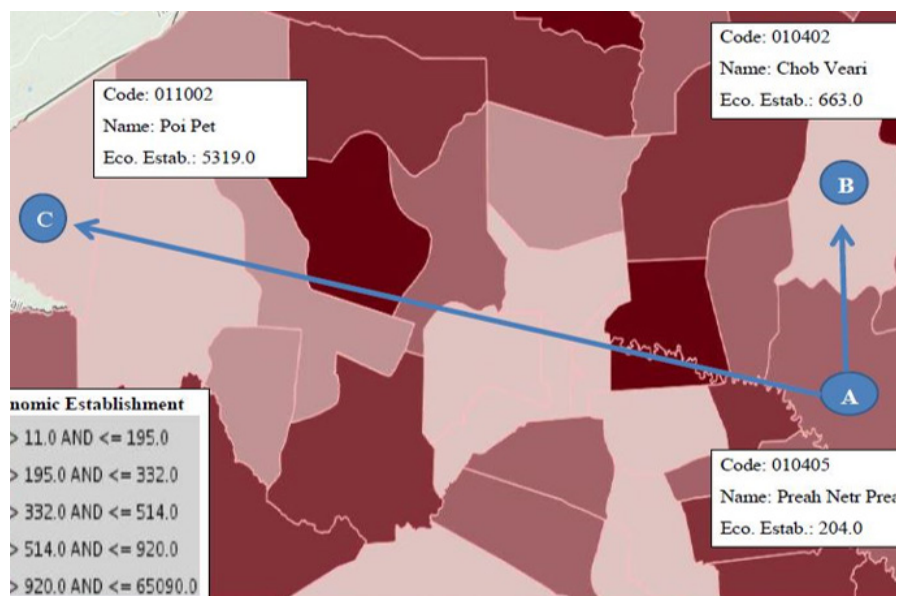


Figure 1: Map of geographical and economic variations amongst three locations.

LE PÉCHÉ DE LA SOCIÉTÉ PHILIPPINE MODERNE...

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Selon le code pénal philippin de 1930, l'avortement « n'est autorisé que dans le cas où la vie de la mère est en danger. » (art. 256, section 2) Le décret présidentiel de 1975 établit : « qu'un enfant est considéré comme un être humain à partir du moment de la conception et a le droit à la naissance ». L'avortement est donc un crime selon la loi philippine, basée elle-même sur la loi espagnole de 1870; une loi héritée de la colonisation et non-adaptée à la société philippine moderne qu'il faut changer. La situation est urgente, il faut agir et légaliser l'avortement médicalisé et sécuritaire.

Ce rejet par décret de l'avortement est profondément inscrit dans la société philippine, c'est un rejet moral qui prend racine dans la religion catholique alors que le pays compte près de 70 % de catholiques. L'Église ca-

tholique condamne l'avortement et le considère comme un grave péché, le fœtus est considéré comme possédant une âme à partir du moment de la conception.

Selon Rita Dayrit, président de Pro-life Philippines, l'utilisation de la contraception équivaut à des « tueries de masse contre des enfants cadeaux de Dieu ». Dans cet argument au dogmatisme religieux archaïque, on ne trouve aucune considération pour le droit des femmes à choisir de donner naissance ou non. Les lobbies religieux - dont Pro-life Philippines - ont lancé en 2018 une offensive légale auprès de la cour Suprême des Philippines pour stopper le renouvellement des pilules contraceptives et des implants.

En plus du lobbysme acharné des organisations religieuses, la Société des Gynécologues et Obstétriciens des Philippines participe elle aussi à l'institutionnalisation de l'avortement comme un acte immoral et illégal. Une organisation qui devrait plutôt se poser comme première défenseuse des intérêts des femmes agit comme un appareil de transmission d'une idéologie religieuse dépassée. Ainsi, continuer à s'opposer à l'avortement, c'est soutenir un système social archaïque qui op-

presse les femmes et leurs droits en les rendant dépendantes de la volonté religieuse. C'est supporter un système où des milliers de femmes mettent leur vie en danger (selon l'OMS, 610 000 femmes mettent leurs vies en danger et risquent des complications dues à un avortement clandestin.) C'est approuver un système social et politique dirigé par des hommes sous couvert d'un respect de traditions et valeurs religieuses.

Le summum de l'hypocrisie de l'État et des institutions religieuses philippines, c'est qu'elles laissent s'opérer dans l'ombre de l'église de Quiapo à Manille, le marché noir des avortements clandestins, des potions et autres élixirs dangereux. Aux yeux de tous et de la police, des pilules de Cytotec (originellement utilisé pour traiter les ulcères d'estomac) sont échangées sur la place de l'église. Des comptes Facebook et Twitter par dizaines se saisissent même de ce marché, promettant un avortement sans douleur et à l'efficacité garantie.

Les femmes décidées à avorter se tournent par désespoir vers ces remèdes-maison qui rendent leurs corps si amers que le fœtus n'y survit pas. D'autres optent pour un avortement clandestin dans des sous-sols ou motels de

Le péché de la société philippine moderne est de fermer les yeux sur les avortements clandestins qui sacrifient les femmes et leurs droits sous des prétextes moraux et religieux.

la capitale ou encore pour un massage traditionnel, le ilot, sensé mettre fin à la grossesse. Pour 15 000 pesos (environ 365\$), une pseudo infirmière s'y livre, souvent dans des conditions sanitaires douteuses et sans anesthésie.

Un acte de désespoir et de violence extrême alors que selon des données de 2015 de l’OMS, l’avortement clandestin est la troisième cause de mortalité maternelle aux Philippines. Tout aussi révoltante est la situation de certaines femmes qui ne peuvent se permettre un avortement clandestin lors des 2 premiers mois de grossesse par manque d’argent, et qui attendent jusqu’à 6 mois pour réaliser la procédure au péril de leur vie.

Le péché de la société philippine moderne est de fermer les yeux sur les avortements clandestins qui sacrifient les femmes et leurs droits sous prétexte d’un respect de principes moraux et religieux.

CCSEAS 2021 CONFERENCE

PEOPLE, POWER, POLITICS, PANDEMICS AND OTHER PERILS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, VANCOUVER, CANADA, 21-24 OCTOBER 2021

The Covid-19 outbreak has disrupted many facets of our daily lives. It has also amplified the need for Southeast Asian researchers, scholars, practitioners and artists working in various fields to share new learnings, lessons, dilemmas and dreams, inspired by current crises our world and humanity face today. Much of what is happening in the Southeast Asian region and the wider world today with the Covid-19 pandemic is deeply connected with the kinds of issues and concerns that CCSEAS scholars have long engaged with since its creation. They have fine-tuned mainstream disciplinary studies by linking their analyses to broader challenges -including pandemics, disasters, urban insurrections, rural insurgencies, social cleavages, economic dislocations, and intergenerational conflicts. They have connected urban, peri-urban, and rural development concerns with roles of states, non-government, and international financial agencies, magnified by resource constraints, legitimation crises, ecological stresses, and political emergencies.

We invite all scholars interested in the Southeast Asian region and its growing diaspora worldwide to submit paper, panel, roundtable, video art/screen work and poster proposals to CCSEAS 2021, which we hope will be among our first “live” conference in the post-pandemic period. We are particularly interested in submissions rethinking Southeast Asian political economy and location in disrupted neoliberal globalization in relation to discourses on human rights, liberalism, good governance, and democracy, whose futures and prospects in Southeast Asian region, and elsewhere, have been complicated by the still-spreading global pandemic. Please submit proposal on or before Friday, 5 February 2021 [here](#). Papers and panels may include but are not limited to:

- State, security and surveillance in exceptional times
- Pandemic preparation, management, and recovery
- Inequality and injustice during the pandemic
- Pandemic scapegoats and sacrificial lambs
- Gendered dimensions of the Covid-19 pandemic
- Post-pandemic survival and scenarios
- Contemporary Southeast Asia and East Asia relations
- Rethinking Empires: US, China, Japan and Southeast Asia
- Canada-Southeast Asian political and economic cooperation
- Changing ASEAN: responses during COVID-19
- Agriculture, climate change and biodiversity
- Art, nature, culture and community
- Mobility, migration and livelihoods
- Human rights & democracy: perils, trajectories and prospects
- Tensions, threats, and terror
- Violence, financial insecurity, tensions, fear within home and other spaces
- Food and water (in)security
- Climate and environmental (in)justice
- Public health systems: from reform to radical proposals
- Reproductive and other health care services
- Gender, race, class and sexuality in changing SEA
- Mobile bodies, precarious livelihoods, and perilous spaces
- “Essential workers” and services in everyday existence
- Class, ethnicity and gender dynamics of work, agency, and well-being

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

EDITORS

Remy Chhem (University of Ottawa) and **Wendy Alejandra Medina De Loera** (York University)

CCSEAS Newsletter is the outcome of collective work and it is only made possible by the participation of those who are intrigued by and passionate about Southeast Asia. In this edition we want to express our most sincere gratitude to all four contributors. Their willingness to share their research experiences in Southeast Asia has made this edition possible and has played a part in guaranteeing the Newsletter's continuity. We are deeply grateful to them; they all have been extremely patient with us. We also thank Leonora C. Angeles, CCSEAS President (2019–2021), for writing the words of welcome. Lastly, we want to give a special thanks to Alicia Filipowich for her never-ending and generous support. It is our hope that CCSEAS Newsletter will continue to be strengthened as both a space which links scholars, students, policy makers, and activists interested in Southeast Asia and a forum open to all of them.

A dedicated editorial team of graduate students in Toronto and Montréal edit the biannual CCSEAS newsletters. Submissions, in French and English, are accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis. Get in touch with us at newsletter@ccseas.ca. If you are aware of events or other activities that other CCSEAS members may be interested in, please share this information with us at ccseas@yorku.ca. Previous editions can be accessed on our website at www.ccseas.ca.



Canadian Council for Southeast Asian Studies (CCSEAS) is an association of scholars, students, policymakers and activists with an interest in the academic study of Southeast Asia and its connections to the rest of the world.