Risking Resources, Reckoning Risk

In 2013, Typhoon Haiyan (known in the Philippines as super typhoon Yolanda), with an intensity at its strongest of 315 kilometers per hour, made a landfall in central Philippines and killed more than six thousand people. It was one of the world's most powerful tropical cyclones. And that was just weeks after a 7.2 magnitude earthquake hit an even wider expanse of the same region.

Is there any resource—financial, symbolic, cultural—boundless enough to draw from to address the consequences of such cataclysmic events? Is there a practice resilient and forward-looking enough that can counter the risks of unpredictable catastrophes?

With these key questions in mind, the Third World Studies Center started a public lecture series in 2014 and early 2015 on natural disasters, "Risking Resources, Reckoning Risk."

It was an attempt to broaden the discussion on how symbolic and material resources measure up to unprecedented risk. The public lecture series, following sociologist Piet Strydom, posits risk to be not simply an "objective problem" that can be addressed by scientific and technical knowledge and bureaucratic and administrative processes. The contemporary phenomenon of risk can be considered as "a new discursive culture of perception, communications, and collective attempts to identify, define, and resolve an unprecedented problem turned into a public and political issue." It occasions, in the case of the Philippines, both the opportunity and the means for shared accountability in a country with limited resources and increasing vulnerability.

The public lecture series had speakers from various disciplines explore the attendant, taken for granted, and perhaps untapped knowledge practices arguably constitutive of the Philippine encounters

with natural disasters: 1) mass media and the science of natural disasters, 2) local knowledges and sense-making of natural disasters, 3) crowdsourcing in the new media and natural disasters, 4) policy and practice in post-disaster governance, and 5) history and legacy of natural disasters.

Three of the articles in this issue came from the public lecture series. These are the ones by Perlita M. Frago-Marasigan, Garry Jay S. Montemayor and Pamela A. Custodio, and Soledad Natalia M. Dalisay.

Perlita M. Frago-Marasigan's "*Ha Pagtindog han Bungto*: Improvising Local Governance and the Use of LDRRMFs in Yolanda-Ravaged Leyte and Eastern Samar" methodically describes local disaster responses in Palo, Leyte and Balangiga, Eastern Samar—the two towns hardest hit by super typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan)—as those actions relate to the actual utilization of the local disaster risk reduction and management fund (LDRRMF). Frago-Marasigan and her research team were in Leyte and Eastern Samar doing their field research five months after these areas were ravaged by typhoon Haiyan. They were there to witness first-hand how local officials were improvising ways and means to offer a semblance of governance to people who may have lost everything.

Garry Jay S. Montemayor and Pamela A. Custodio's "Communicating Risks, Risking (Mis)communication: Mass Media and the Science of Disasters" highlights the importance of issues and concerns in mainstreaming risk and science communication in disaster risk reduction and management based on their analysis of government preparations and mass media communication before typhoon Haiyan's landfall and several post-Haiyan scholarly literatures. Conceding that the call "to build a science culture in the Philippines and improve science and risk communication initiatives in the country is not at all new," their article is a detailed exploration on how various actors before and in the aftermath of typhoon Haiyan, offered varying degrees of commitment to this call.

"Engaging Local Knowledge for Disaster Risk Reduction" by Soledad Natalia M. Dalisay discusses the potential use of local knowledge in disaster risk reduction and management, citing examples of how communities in the Philippines and the rest of the Asia-Pacific region use their knowledge of their environment to make sense of and respond to natural disasters. More importantly, the article makes recommendations on how local knowledge can be incorporated into disaster risk reduction and management. These recommendations

though were made with a clear understanding of generational and cultural politics involved in appropriating forms of local knowledge. The author cautions against "extracting one aspect of local knowledge from its cultural context" just to validate its supposed scientific merits.

Though originally not part of the lecture series, the article "Civil-Military Cooperation in Peace Support Operations and Disaster Relief: A Case from Japan Self-Defense Forces' Disaster Relief Mission" by Atsushi Yasutomi and Saya Kiba is of particular importance since it provides us with a point of reference on disasters and interventions by foreign governments as well as the sometimes ambiguous framework for such intervention as in the case of Japan. Yasutomi and Kiba did an exhaustive analysis of the policies that were supposed to guide civil-military cooperation, in particular those involving the Japan Self-Defense Force delivering humanitarian assistance abroad.

Also featured in this issue is another article that was rooted in a lecture delivered as part of the 2012 South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development–Third World Studies Center Social Movements in the South Lecture Tour. Mustapha Kamel Al-Sayyid's "Social Movements as Agents of Revolutionary Change in Egypt: The Decreasing Returns of Path Dependence" offers an answer to a central question in social movement literature: Can social movements construct a new order, and if they can, to what extent? After the triumph of the Egyptians in Tahrir Square, new and old social movements in Egypt, using different repertoire of collective action, battled their way with the state to craft a future in the afterglow of a revolutionary moment. But that historic moment had passed and they must now struggle with an authoritarian regime. The article is a clear-eyed analysis of what awaits social movements that were instrumental in bringing about revolutionary changes in the political landscape, but only for that landscape to turn into a more daunting terrain of continuing struggles for rights and freedom.

This issue aims to serve as a platform for what social scientists call "contradictory certainties" without privileging one discipline over the other but possibly toward their potential alignment to meaningfully reflect upon the precariousness developing countries are confronted with. Hopefully, the articles in this issue contribute new insights, encourage critical thought, and stimulate discussion. Readers are encouraged to directly contact the authors for comments, questions, or clarifications.❁

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For this issue, we would like to welcome a new associate editor of *Kasarinlan*, Christian Victor A. Masangkay, also a Third World Studies Center research associate.