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**A political economy of rural development
in South East Asia in relation
with the many versions of the disappearance
of the peasantry**

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INTRODUCTION

The choice, in this paper, of an approach in terms of a political economy of development, is justified by the perspective it allows. The political economy of development is almost contemporary with the emergence of development theories, after WWII. These theories have emerged in all disciplines, but were part of a common paradigm, the one of modernization, supposed to be able to define the universal path of development, from the study of the emblematic case of the countries already industrialized. In this modernization paradigm, it is industrialization and urbanization which are the vectors of development, and the role of agriculture is to support this way to progress and out of underdevelopment. Despite appearances, many current discussions around the concept of sustainable rural development, do not fundamentally change this founding vision, which is still very vivid in development studies.

In this contribution one will attempt to show how much the problems and policies of rural development in South East Asia have been deeply influenced by the modernization paradigm for more than a half century. This vision provides a unifying theme of the rural development approach throughout the region, despite the diversity of the country-specific geographical contexts. One will not enter here into the discussions that take place periodically between geographers and historians about the definition of Southeast Asia as a region. One simply refers to the approach provided by the countries in the region who have formed the ASEAN, defining themselves the countries that are part of the latter¹.

If all disciplines involved in development studies have contributed to the modernization paradigm, it is clearly the economic one which has

¹ Cfr. KING V.T., *Southeast Asia :An Anthropological Field of Study ?*, Moussons, 3 juin 2001,p.3-32; GUPTA A., *The Physical Geography of Southeast Asia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2005 ; CURAMING R., *Towards a Poststructuralist Southeast Asian Studies?* SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia Vol. 21, No. 1, 2006, pp. 90–112; DELER J.P.,*Mutations économiques et recompositions territoriales en Asie du Sud et du Sud-Est*, Introduction, Ann. Géo., n° 671-672, 2010, p. 4-6 ; SHELDON SIMON,*ASEAN and Multilateralism: The Long, Bumpy Road to Community*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia* Vol. 30, No. 2 ,2008, pp. 264.-92

occupied a predominant position, around the concept of economic growth. Criteria for success or failure of development performance are based on this concept. He provided a normative and consensual development reading grid, marginalizing or often obliterating other social, cultural or institutional dimensions of the latter.

It is through an essay in “political economy of growth” that was attempted a first critical approach of this hegemonic and reductionist vision of growth and its relation to development. The pioneer book of P. Baran, was emblematic of this point of view. He raised questions about the socio-political nature of the theoretical discourse on growth. He saw in it mostly an optimistic reading of what, according to him, was nothing other than the old process of accumulation of capital, with all the contradictions inherent to its very nature².

The political economy of development has blossomed later in the wake and the logic of the approach of Baran. It is first and foremost a grid of open questions regarding the relationship between a theoretical discourse and reality. An approach in terms of political economy of development seeks simply to identify the players who produce the discourses about development, the evolution of their strategies, which are renewed according to the circumstances. It tries also to evaluate the impact of these discourses and strategies on other categories of actors, even when they are not recognized as such, but as simple "objects" of the policies of modernization. Therefore an approach in terms of conflicts, real or / and potential, between dominant players, or "ruling elites and ruling classes," and dominated actors, 'or more or less rebellious bottom actors', is at the heart of a political economy of development. The central idea is that modernization strategies are in fact searching for conditions of 'sustainable growth', in other words a "sustainable accumulation", and seek to redefine societies, institutions, culture around rules and behaviors functional to the logic of accumulation, in a framework that was first national, and then became global.

In the following contribution, the proposed approach: of rural development is seen as a broad theme which can not be reduced only to agricultural issues, even though they obviously occupy a central place. This theme requires an interdisciplinary approach able at least to

² BARAN P., The Political Economy of Growth, Monthly Review Press, New York ,1957

articulate economic, social and institutional aspects of development, but where geographical, demographic, anthropological and cultural aspects can not be neglected. And so, if one does accept that the question of the relationship between global accumulation and sustainable human development is more that problematic, the question of a 'political economy of sustainable development' is fully open.

Since twenty years, a large number of studies in terms of political economy have been published in relation with East Asia development. They have helped to put in questions the enchanted readings of the "Asian miracle" that had virtually monopolized the attention in the years 1970-1980. These recent studies have shown the role of the State in this miracle that had nothing to do with spontaneous market dynamics³.

More recently the 2008 World Development report of the World Bank, on the place of agriculture in development, has entailed interesting discussions which have contributed to register again agriculture and rural development in the field of economic development policy. As discussed below the critics of the report have especially focused on the nature of the relationships between stakeholders concerned by the recommendations of the report. According to these critics, these are based on a vision of the future of agriculture which neglects and even masks completely unequal relations between weak and strong actors in the agro-industrial chain.

An approach in terms of political economy of development, allows to focus specifically on the question of the future of the peasantry in sustainable rural development. It offers among others to recognize the peasant world as a set of specific actors capable of reflection and initiatives, and not only as stereotypes of backward non actors. It seems important to look at the realities of the peasant world in Southeast Asian in the perspective of a reflection on the place of the peasantry in the search for a sustainable rural development strategy. That the latter will remain obviously a major component of a sustainable development for all societies in the region, is the thread of the sections proposed below.

³ WADE R., *Governing the Market: Economic Theory and the Role of the Government in East Asia industrialization*. Princeton University Press, Princeton,1990; KOWALEWSKI D., *Global Establishment, The Political economy of North Asian Networks*, St Martin Press, New York,1997

I. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF RURAL CHANGE: A SKETCHY OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT THEORIES AND REALITIES SINCE WWII

I.1 Agriculture, rural territories and history in the founding theories of development (1945-1980)

In the founding theories of development between 1950 and 1965, one can see a strong interaction between the territorial dimension and the historical approach to define what is modernization, the emblematic paradigm of development since that time. A spatial aspect was very visible in this doctrine. Firstly, through the emphasis on the passage of an agricultural dominated society to an industrial dominated society, the founding theories and practices of development have given great importance to the relationship between rural and urban areas considered as instruments of modernization policies. Cities and countryside were seen as spaces to quickly adapt to the requirements of modern transformation. On the other hand, the only one "territory" to build, "expand", was the one of the national modern State. And agricultural production, like peasant labor, had an instrumental role in the consolidation of the State and the industrial sector. They were not contemplated as "territories", but should provide materials and be instruments of the national modernization policies. At the same time local populations were not regarded as actors of development, but as the object of the latter⁴.

Policies of "national modernization", inspired more or less by modernization theories have had a limited, variable success depending on the country case, with variants of liberal or socialist inspiration. But in the 1970s, national policies of modernization were weakened by increasingly numerous contradictions linked mainly with the internal limits of capital formation.

⁴ PEEMANS J-Ph., Modernisation, globalisation et territoires: l'évolution des regards sur l'articulation des espaces urbains et ruraux dans les processus de développement, Revue Tiers Monde, Tome XXXVI, n°141, 1995, p.17-41

1.2. The international and national contexts of the political economy of agricultural development during that period of “national modernization” (1945-1980)

In modernization theories, development was about modern nation building with the national level being the territory of reference. But in reality, the international context played a decisive role. First of all, because at the time, the time of the Cold War, modernization theories tried to deliver a international blueprint for development policies, trying to disseminate, over the so-called developing countries, the idea of a Western oriented pattern of development. Besides that element, there was also the enormous role that the US agricultural policies played to influence the international context of agricultural policies, all over the world. These US agricultural policies originated in the years 1930 to try to respond to a violent crisis of agriculture. The policy of the New Deal was to promote internal opportunities for grain output, through the mass production of feed for livestock and the increase of meat consumption. This is the origin of the G-F-L (Grain-Feed-Livestock) model based on the construction of a integrated food chain, combining a "farmer modernization model" (FMM), based on more specialized large farms, and industrial food processing, with support in price, credit, storage measures implemented by the Federal Government. Large farms would increase the production of grain (G), for human food and cattle feeding (F), and an other type of large farms would specialize in the production of livestock (L). These large farms were controlled upward and downward the food chain by agro industrial enterprises, providing the inputs to increase productivity and ensuring the commercialization of the products⁵.

Surpluses of American agriculture resulting from the establishment G-F-L model played a major role in the evolution of agriculture, North and South, after WWII. All successive US Governments have considered agricultural protection and promotion of exports agricultural as a major strategic goal of national security, refusing from the end of the war, that agriculture be included in the realm of the GATT, whereas the latest was oriented toward further liberalization of trade in other domains. American surpluses found first large outlets in Europe after WWII (Marshall Plan)

⁵ FRIEDLAND W.H., et al., Toward a New Political Economy of Agriculture, Westview Press, Boulder,1991

and then in the form of food aid to developing countries (PL 480) after 1950. In most countries of the South, the assumptions of modernization theory were accepted, based on the dualism between a retarded agriculture, symbol of the backwardness in development, and priority was given to growth based on rapid industrialization. Agriculture was to support accelerated industrialization, through various surplus transfers and the increase of export earnings. The great fear was that agriculture could not grow fast enough to support the growing industrial and urban population. In many countries, food policy was not directed to increase the food supply by the peasantry, but for the sake of having low food prices in urban areas (cheap food policy) by various means. Importing easily food products played an important role in this policy, notably through the PL 480 US supported programs⁶.

These dualistic model-based modernization policies showed signs of slowing down at the end of the 1960s, with growing food deficits. A version of alarmist modernization began to have an influence in the West (advocating the threat of a world famine due to population growth in the South), especially in the USA. This has resulted in an increased role given to the World Bank to support projects of accelerated agricultural modernization in a number of countries considered to see increased instability problems. This has led to the implementation of the so-called Green Revolution policies⁷.

These GR policies have been a major step in the establishment of the "Farmer Modernization model" (FMM) in the South, since the goal was to get quick results. It stated that these could be best achieved by relying on a minority of operators able to implement the technology package (selected varieties, irrigation, fertilizer and pesticides) subsidized by States, WB and with FAO technical framework loans. In that phase, the small peasantry was definitely not seen as a potential actor of change. One can also say that the GR was a first step to the diffusion of the G F L

⁶ McMICHAEL P., A food regime genealogy. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36(1), 2009, p.139–69

⁷ FABRE R., *Paysans sans terres, Les moissons de l'agropolitique*, Dunod, Paris

model in the South (through growth of G), with an incipient FMM closely related to large multinational agro-industrial firms providing the inputs⁸.

I.3. The political economy of agriculture and rural development in the context of globalization and “neo-modernization” (1980-2010)

Changes in the international context after 1980 had a significant influence on the evolution of the territorial realities of development. From that historical moment, one had the accelerated rise of new transnational actors in the field of economic activity and also new supranational political actors. A major element of the evolution of this context are the pressures that these new powerful actors have imposed, notably through the impact of adjustment policies, to redefine the role of the nation-States in development policies. Another important element of that evolution has been the new hegemonic place of neo-liberalism in mainstream development thinking. In that view, development is seen as the continuous adaptation of national spaces to the requirements of liberalization and the globalization of markets. Globalization is in fact presented as the new and inescapable stage of modernization. It is that “neo-modernization” that is at the core of development policies from the 1980’s onwards. Opening frontiers to external competition, and being able to enter in global competitive markets, is seen as the key to a successful process of economic growth. That evolution has naturally influenced the vision of the role of urban and rural areas in the dominant vision of development. Competitiveness means the emergence of “poles of performance” that are able to regroup enterprises and actors which can insert themselves into the changing standards of competition worldwide.

From the years 1980’s, the FMM, as an intermediary model between a peasant agriculture and a very capital intensive agriculture, expanded in many countries in Asia and Latin America. It has been the vehicle of the continuous expansion of the G F L model of production and consumption. In many countries the G F L model depended heavily on imports of F from the agricultural surplus of the USA and Europe. But some South countries

⁸ BERNSTEIN H. et al.,eds.,The Food Question, Profits versus People? Earthscan Publications, London, 1990

have become large exporters of F (soybeans from Brazil, manioc from Thailand) to the North. From the years 1990's, one has seen the rise of new fresh products requested by categories of high income on the world market. They are marketed by a small minority of agricultural entrepreneurs strongly supervised by large transnational agribusiness companies which control the global chain of fresh products. That period was an historical turning point in international trade with surpluses of the FMM from the North facing an increased competition from the surpluses of the FMM from the South.

It has also been a turning point in the evolution of power relations between the States and the IAIC (International Agro-industrial Complex). As regards the countries of the South, the weakening of State has led to a progressive dismantling of the instruments of an integrated and autonomous agricultural development policy (abandonment of food policies; privatization of previous public projects; reduction of the protection of the internal market, reduction in subsidies for urban food and greater opening to GFL imports at dumped prices; priority given to the diversification of agricultural exports under adjustment pressure in an increasingly competitive global marketplace framework). This has triggered an accelerated fall in terms of exchange of most agricultural products during the period 1980-2000.

Many weakened States in the South, dependent over foreign aid, were under heavy pressures to open their markets to cheap surplus. A famous example was the case of Haïti, which under the guise of food aid, had to abandon the protection of its rice culture: in ten years the rate of self sufficiency has fallen from 90 % to 10 %, local production being substituted by US rice imports. The same proceedings operated with many African countries. The consequences of that forced openings to food imports have been devastating for the small African peasantry, with capital cities being more and more dependant upon food imports. In addition, there were increasing pressures of multilateral organizations to promote policies of concentration of land (for the benefit of the FMM or foreign investors operators), and in the direction of the privatization of collective lands (dissolution of the ejido in Mexico) or communal land reform (Africa, East Asia).

As far as the power of food groups is concerned, their dynamics of fusion, concentration, differentiation of products based on the mastery of new

technologies, allowed them to reinforce their control over the entire food chain, through implementation of globalized strategies of supplies and markets penetration. Through that evolution agriculture has become increasingly a source of substitutable inputs (thanks to biotechnology) and a component of clusters of fully internationalized oligopolistic competition⁹.

A major phenomenon in the evolution of the global food system during the 1990s has been the tremendous expansion and concentration of the large distribution groups (FDIE) and their policy of global sourcing and marketing to North and South. They were more and more the main engine of the globalization of food consumption patterns. That evolution has spectacularly increased their power of bargaining with the other actors of the food chain, especially the large enterprises of the IAIC (International Agro-industrial Complex). From that period, these two global dominant actors are vying to control the largest part of the added value in the food chain. Through that evolution the globalization of the latest has gone well beyond the G F L chain, encompassing the production of fresh and processed fruits and vegetables, milk and meat products, products of aquaculture, convenience foods, etc. They are able to impose more and more stringent conditions to the producers, especially the FMM, North and South, in terms of product quality, standardization, price and delivery¹⁰.

From the years 1980, this increasing weight of dominant economic actors of the globalized agro-foodstuffs complex has been gradually reflected in institutional development, with the desire to include agriculture in discussions on the further liberalization of international trade (Uruguay Round 1987-1994). The problem of international trade of agricultural products became more important than progress in the production system. In the context of a growing trend of trade liberalization under the WTO (for instance the so-called Doha Round since 2001), agricultural trade liberalization became more and more a tool of exchange to gain concessions in the field of manufactured products and services, which were much more important sectors for the developed countries. But

⁹ GOODMAN D. et REDCLIFT M., *The international farm Crisis*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1989

¹⁰ BUSCH L et BAIN C., "New? Improved? The transformation of the Global Agrifood System", *Rural Sociology*, 69, 2004, p.321-346

these countries themselves (especially the US and EU) have been reluctant to make large concessions in the agricultural field, a problem which is at the core of the blocking since more than 10 years)¹¹.

I.4 The political economy of the growing contradictions of the “neo-modernization” model of agricultural development

The beginning of the 2000s saw the hegemonic actors of the global agri-food system able to impose renewed requirements, with respect to the liberalization of agricultural trade, and the removal of residual rules imposed by national regulatory frameworks. A new feature of the evolution was the attempt to tackle the structural problems of environmental externalities in two ways, totally embedded in the logic of the system. The first one has been the promotion as a niche market for the products of organic agriculture (bio-labels), initially driven by initiatives opposed to the logic of the dominant system, but now retrieved as a component of a marketing targeted by the FDIE. The second one has been the new opportunities offered by the so-called agro-fuel sector. Some structural problems of environment (climate warming, pollutions), not directly linked with the agro-food system, have induced a few political decisions, mainly in the North, and especially in the EU, in the sense of promoting the agro-fuels as partial substitutes for fossil fuels. The paradox of this development is that this has opened new opportunities for unlimited expansion in the IAIC, without calling into question their own logic of functioning, itself among the main causes of the environment degradation¹².

A large part of the products that can be transformed into agro-fuels had already a long career as ingredients in the food industry, including the case of oilseeds, through the great expansion of composed feeding stuffs for livestock (the F of the GFL). The environmentalist argument has therefore opened a "new frontier" for massive investment in a new phase

11 BERTHELOT J., *L'agriculture, talon d'Achille de la mondialisation, Clé pour un accord agricole solidaire à l'OMC*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2001 ; ROSSET P., *Food is different: why we must get the WTO out of agriculture.*: Zed Books, New York ,2006

12 GIAMPIETRO M. and MAYUMI, K., *The biofuel delusion*, Earthscan, London, 2009

of expansion for the IAIC, and open the door to a new wave of potentially devastating environmental consequences and resource grabbing¹³.

In addition some big financial operators have bet on a potential instability of agricultural raw materials markets, and those became a privileged object of speculation through the creation of new categories of financial derivatives. Small imbalances in the real economy of food demand and supply can thus become a base for disproportionate price increases, and become an inexhaustible source of profits for hedge funds. That evolution led to the situation of the so-called "food crisis" in 2007-2009. That crisis resulted in a dramatic increase in the prices of food products on world markets. No "experts" had foreseen this evolution. Taken by surprise, observers, scientific and other, invoked many diverse reasons to "explain" such a not expected event. Their comments have largely failed to convince. The OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2008-2017, sought to make a synthesis of all the arguments advanced to justify the prices rise in 2007-2008. The report highlighted the contrast between the increase in agricultural prices since 2005, and their dramatic decline since 1980. He noted that the increase did obviously not catch up, in nominal terms, with the decline registered since 1980. The nominal price of cereals declined by an average of more than 70% between 1980 and 2000, and the upside turn since 2005 had just corrected that evolution¹⁴.

Multiple meetings on "food crisis" in 2008-2009, translated both the contradictions between interest groups related to the various components of the global agro-industrial complex, and the permanence of a rhetoric concealing the current realities. It has clearly appeared in these numerous meetings that there was no will of the "global decision-makers" to impose, at the international level, the regulatory measures necessary to put an end to speculation, and especially to impose standards of agricultural policies other than those put in place to support the actors of the global agro-industrial complex. On the contrary, the only concern expressed by them was that the situation created a danger to see States return to a more or less strong policy of "food sovereignty". It was

13 COTULA L., DYER N. and VERMEULEN, S., Fuelling exclusion? The biofuels boom and poor people's access to land. London: IIED, Rome: FAO, 2008

14 OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2008-2017, May 2008, p.30-50

reaffirmed that the only way is to continue to promote the openness to the markets around the world¹⁵.

At this stage, one can perceive the continuity of the political choices announced during and after crisis of 2007-2008, with the ideas of the modernization and neo-modernization discourses, since more than half a century, about the place of agriculture in development.

The only new element is at the level of the practices of accumulation at the heart of globalized markets: food products are likely to replace on a large scale other products that are normally the favorite tools of speculation for major financial actors. The 2010-2011 price increases have illustrated even more clearly the role of financial speculators in the amplification of climatic hazards. That illustrates evidently the linkage between the food crisis and the financial crisis, as twin components of a single crisis of the dominant economic system. There is a kind of infernal circularity between these components. The food crisis has indeed opened new investment opportunities in the agrarian sector. From 2008, large hedge funds have decided to invest several billions dollars in agricultural commodities storage infrastructures, in order to take full advantage of prices fluctuations. Much more importantly, from this time, some groups have even decided to invest directly in the purchase of land for agricultural production or livestock raising, clearly announcing that their only motivation was the promise of high profitability of the sector in the medium term. This has accelerated a movement which was already visible since the turn of the century. At the end of the decennia, figures showing the extent of the threat have added a dramatic character to the arguments, since it indicated that between 2008 and 2011, large grants of land amounted between 30 and 60 millions of hectares. Between 2000 and 2010, the total allotted, sold or leased land, could amount to a total of more than 200 million hectares¹⁶.

These facts have entailed a new critical literature denouncing the danger of the substitution of food production for humans by the production of bio-fuels This current has highlighted that such a substitution was not only

15 Statement by the high level Conference on world food security: the challenges of climate change and bioenergy, Rome, June 5, 2008

16 OXFAM, "Land and Power. The growing scandal surrounding the new wave of investments in land", Briefing paper, 22/09/2011

a question of change in land use, but also a question of massive transfer of access rights to land, through their appropriation by the major operators of the globalized agribusiness sector¹⁷.

Discussions around the theme of "land grabbing" have also stimulated a movement of empirical research and theoretical reflection, giving the "agrarian question" a renewed central place with its multiple economic, social, environmental and cultural dimensions. An aspect which has been well documented is the diversity of actors involved in the process of search and attribution of large land concessions. Next to major agro-industrial or financial groups and speculators from the North, there is the increasing weight of agro-industrial, industrial or financial groups coming especially from the BRICS countries, and also the initiatives of rich oil States, claiming the need to ensure their food security through buying or leasing land abroad. And it is also more and more obvious that "land grabbing" is not only a matter of global or transnational actors: the development of major agro-export projects by national actors play an increasing role both in East Asia, South-East Asia and Latin America. Their impact on local populations is often very heavy, either in terms of eviction, change in land use, or in agricultural labor organization¹⁸.

The extent of the discussions about "land grabbing" have also led to efforts to situate the phenomenon in a general theoretical framework, focused on the changes underway in the "global food regime". According to M. McMichael, land is at the centre of a "new accumulation frontier", given its ability to be transformed into real assets, whose value will increase with the growth of food and bio energy production and their price rise in the long term. And therefore the new regime of global capital accumulation ensures its survival, by boosting a massive process of enclosure around the world. It is a new wave of primitive accumulation of capital, like several centuries ago in the West. What this thesis announces it is in fact a massive displacement of the bases of the world agro-food and agro-energy systems, to the countries of the South still endowed with

17 BORRAS S.M. Jr and FRANCO J.C., Global Land Grabbing and Trajectories of Agrarian Change: A Preliminary Analysis, Journal of Agrarian Change, Vol. 12,2012, No. 1, 34–59

18 BORRAS and FRANCO,op.cit., p.9

many untapped natural resources, or insufficiently exploited along the global accumulation standards¹⁹.

It cannot be denied that the emergence of a new critical discourse on the land grabbing has caused a sort of shock in the ongoing discourses on development. The emergence of this theme has reopened an unexpected front in the critical field of development thinking. All the clichés on the relationship between growth, market expansion and poverty reduction, on the link between good governance and the protection of the environment, at the heart of the certainties of the neo-liberal discourse and the post-Washington consensus, have been somewhat shattered to pieces, by the new realities of "land grabbing". These latest were clearly linked to the most dreadful aspects of the global economic system, in which the search for new growth opportunities, leads to inexorable mechanisms of pauperization and exclusion of the weakest populations. Meanwhile and despite these so many gloomy perspectives, a report by the World Bank 2011 on the risks associated with these operations, does not hesitate to say that the benefits in long term growth and therefore, poverty reduction, justify the choice for large land concessions²⁰.

19 McMICHAEL P.),The Food Regime in the Land Grab: Articulating 'Global Ecology' and Political Economy, Paper presented at the International Conference on Global Land Grabbing 6-8 April 2011, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex

20 DEININGER K., BYERLEE D., LINDSAY J., et al., Rising global interest in farmland: can it yield sustainable and equitable benefits? Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2011

II. ELIMINATING PEASANTS FOR THE SAKE OF AGRICULTURAL MODERNIZATION AND FOR THEIR OWN SAKE: WDR 2008 AND THE “DEAGRARIANISATION THESIS”

Since the 1990's, some economists have asserted that investments to support agriculture in rural areas has a high opportunity cost, and that resources would be better used to stimulate urban growth turned towards the export of manufactured goods and services, and based on the import of food products at low prices. It is in these cities, preferably near the coasts, that, according to them, does exist a comparative advantage for the export of manufactured products. Authors like M.Rozenzweig and A.Wood have not hesitated to predict, or even to advocate, abandoning all support to agriculture in "poor" areas especially in Africa. The argument was that, to enable growth to reduce poverty, investment must be concentrated in sectors where yield is the highest, which, according to them, is certainly not the case of agriculture. They even said that, in the case of Africa, it was better to promote the mass migration of rural populations to coastal cities, which could produce low-cost goods manufactured for export and be fed by massive low priced food imports²¹.

However since the beginning of the years 2000 some authors have offered a more positive view of the role of agriculture in development and the fight against poverty.

A first type of argument has been that new knowledge in the field of genetics could increase agricultural productivity in developing countries, especially in the field of so-called "orphan" crops, such as sorghum, millet, cassava, which had not received priority and are related to the feeding of hundreds of millions of poor rural households. This should benefit to poor farmers and thus become a lever in the fight against poverty in rural areas²².

21 ROZENZWEIG M., "Should Africa do any agriculture at all?", Harvard Magazine, 2004, p. 57; WOOD A., "Could Africa Be Like America?." Address to the Advisory Board of the Research Program on Enterprise Development (RPED), World Bank, Washington, 2002

22 NAYLOR R, and al., "Biotechnology in the Developing World: A Case for Increased Investment in Orphan Crops," Food Policy, 2004, Vol. 29, pp. 15-44

An other argument has been linked with the role of agricultural diversification fostered by the expansion of large commercial agro-food chains in most of the countries of the South, including fresh products with relatively high prices²³.

According to that view, the diversification of the rural economy is the key to increase rural incomes, whereas the productivity increase will allow a general increase of real incomes in all the economy, including the rise of urban real wages, enabling a further process of diversification, both in the agricultural and industrial sectors. The agricultural diversification process must gradually give way to a diversification based on industry and services in rural areas²⁴.

This continuous virtuous process will give a role for agriculture in growth stimulation and poverty reduction. These advocates of greater attention to the role of agriculture in poverty reduction have not detracted from the neo-liberal orthodoxy: good economic governance, modern economic growth, correct macro-economic policies and open door policy are at the center of the agenda. Nor have they departed from the modernization approach of the peasantry. The screen of the poverty approach has not changed the fundamentals: all is about technology, productivity increase, market expansion, global trade and investment ... and exit strategies through enhanced labor mobility and migration for those who can not adapt, i.e. the majority of the small peasants, especially if "a rural development policy is too expensive"²⁵.

II.1 WDR 2008 and its critiques

The World Bank Development 2008 report about agriculture and development, (WDR 2008), has been so far the most elaborated version of that rather optimistic approach of the role of agriculture in the reduction

²³ REARDON T. and al., "The Rise of Supermarkets in Africa, Asia.", and Latin America American Journal of Agricultural Economics, 2003, Vol. 85, no. 5, pp. 1140-46.

²⁴ LANJOUW J. and LANJOUW P., "The Rural Non-Farm Sector: Issues and Evidence from Developing Countries, Agricultural Economics. "Vol. 26, no. 1, 2001, pp. 1-23

²⁵ DORWARD A. and al., "A Policy Agenda for Pro-Poor Agricultural Growth." World Development. Vol. 32, no. 1, 2004, pp. 73-89.; TIMMER C.P., Agriculture and Pro-Poor Growth: An Asian Perspective, Center for Global Development. ,Working Paper Number 63, July 2005

of poverty. According to the WDR 2008, the reasons for optimism include the progress of governance and particularly the greater role of the private sector in the agricultural value chain. New powerful and dynamic agents now animate the agro-food chain, and they have an interest to see a prosperous agriculture set up. The report establishes an axial connection between the expansion of the agricultural value chain and the reduction of rural poverty²⁶.

The WDR 2008 presents what he calls "promising market value", at the national and international level, as something as a new promise to integrate small producers into the market, under the aegis of large agro-food firms (IAFE) and the large chains of super markets (IFDE). The role of the State is to stimulate appropriate investment incentives, and to promote synergies between these actors and producers. The State can also promote collaboration between the private sector and associative organizations of civil society that can help small farmers adapt to technical standards and quality required for competitive integration in the value chain. Associations of small producers themselves must be supported as long as they can be instruments of market integration and productivity increase. The State must also speed up the clarification of property rights, in the sense of promoting access to resources (land, water, forests) for operators most able to insert them into the high value chain. Therefore if the role of the State is encouraged where it may help to achieve the above objectives, this role has to be exercised in strict adherence to the "laws of the market". Moreover the WDR 2008 has reiterated the urgency to go faster and further in the liberalization of domestic and global agricultural markets. And the main message is that the new challenge of poverty, increasing disparities in income between countryside and cities, can in no way be resolved by protection of agriculture, or through subsidized agriculture policies. Only expansion of "markets" without barriers or undue intervention is appropriate and acceptable. Another important part of the WDR 2008 message is that when small producers are not competitive, it is better to support the emergence of commercial farms that provide them with salaried employment and thereby contribute to the reduction of poverty in rural areas. Moreover one should promote alternatives for agriculture, like the

²⁶ WORLD BANK, Report on development in the world, Agriculture at the service of development, Washington, 2008, p. 23-26

expansion of non-agricultural activities in rural areas, and especially migration out of rural areas. Policies to adapt the peasant work force to the requirements of working conditions in urban areas are the most appropriate in terms of an optimal allocation of resources.

Despite WDR 2008 insistence to present itself as very innovative with a renewed interest in agriculture, it has been the subject of strong skepticism, even very radical criticism, putting in question the entirety of its approach to the problems of the rural South²⁷.

Most critics have put forward the idea that in fact the WDR 2008 was above all a report concerned with the role of the agro-food sector, and much less with the place of agriculture. The report presents the agro-food sector as the actor that can promote market oriented growth for the benefit of small producers, but it ignores the fact that most of the time various big firms in the agro-food sector, as well as those of the large distribution sector, have become major oligopolistic groups that control the entire food chain... According to K.J.Amanor, their huge buying power allows them to impose very low prices and transfer risks to their suppliers and small producers, imposing a sharing of the added value on the basis of asymmetrical power relations. In fact the report ignores the transfer of value between the small and medium producers and agribusiness multinationals, thus leading to a trivial impact on the sustainable reduction of poverty²⁸.

Another argument advanced has been that the report, behind the screen of a rhetoric favorable to small producers, actually wants to promote the emergence of a class of medium or rich farmers, who may enter into contracts with the large firms .For A .Akram-Lodhi, this evolution can only create a trend toward a growing social differentiation in the rural world, with a growing marginalization of small farmers. The very banal phenomenon of the proletarianization of the latter is presented as a breakthrough in terms of rational choice, since the dispossession of the land of less competitive producers, by the operation of land markets, can foster the growth of the most efficient operators, and provide a higher income for the landless peasant reduced to a wage worker. But for this

27 Journal of Agrarian Change, Vol. 9 No. 2, April 2009

28 AMANOR K.J., Global Food Chains, African Smallholders and World Bank Governance, Journal of Agrarian Change, Vol. 9 No.. 2, April 2009, pp. 247-262

author, in the real world, the concentration of land can only lead a growing pauperization of large segments of the rural population. In addition this evolution may not even long benefit to middle farmers that have emerged through the concentration of land and local resources, because they will then become the first target of one-sided and unfavorable contracts imposed by large firms²⁹.

Other authors have emphasized the problematic nature of the recommendations of the WDR 2008 and its inability to locate the real issues of rural development in the future. According to P. McMichael, the report provides no serious institutional mechanism to ensure both the protection of the environment and sustainable reproduction of agriculture of small producers in the South .It seems only oriented to promote a global marketing system to feed the rich urban populations of the South and the North, while the small peasant production remains subjected to pressure from food surpluses of the latter. P .McMichael does not hesitate to say of the report is only an attempt to put a "new label on an old bottle"³⁰.

Other criticisms have focused on the threats upon civil society, with the attempt to incorporate associations of small producers as assistants of the peasant integration into value chains dominated by large firms. According to C.Oya, the report transforms organizations of civil society in simple auxiliaries of the dominant players in the food chain. It is a manipulation of grossly distorted concepts of participation, local democracy, and fair trade. Small producers are listened to, only if their wishes are consistent with the interests of dominant economic actors, and the role of NGOs is to foster behavior corresponding to the expectations of the latter. This reflects the insuperable contradictions pervading the report, torn between the assertion of the neo-liberal orthodoxy and a neo-populist language trying to root the latter in the rural world³¹.

29 AKRAM-LODHI H., (Re) imagining Agrarian Relations? The World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development, Development and Change 39 (6): p.1145-1161

30 McMICHAEL P., Banking on Agriculture: A Review of the World Development Report 2008, Journal of Agrarian Change, Vol. 9 No.. 2, April 2009, pp. 235-246.

31 OYA V., Introduction to a Symposium on the World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development?, Journal of Agrarian Change, Vol. 9 No. 2, April 2009, pp. 231-234.

The central argument of most of the authors here mentioned, is that behind a pro-poor and pro-peasant discourse, in fact the WDR 2008 does only promote the expansion of a capitalist type agriculture, under the hegemonic market power of the major food groups controlling the value chain. The so-called “agrarian reforms” are intended to accelerate the concentration of land by the modernizing farmers incorporated in that chain. The dispossession of small farmers is presented as a rational choice, and its massive proletarianization as a new way out of poverty. According to them the WDR 2008 totally ignores the question of power relations between unequal players in the food chain. Its proposals will have virtually no impact on the reduction of poverty, but instead opens the way for the mass dissemination of new forms of poverty. It is the opposite of a vision of a future for small farmers, since it encourages the end of their role through migration. Despite the fact that it talks abundantly about the small producers, it does not believe in their future nor support them³².

The sharpness of these criticisms is akin to a radical challenge of the World Bank credibility in the field of agrarian issues.

II.2 The “deagrarianisation” thesis in SEA

All these themes relate evidently also to the evolution of agriculture and the situation of the peasantry in Southeast Asia. D.Hall has suggested a critical re-reading of the WDR 2008 in terms of a political economy of South East Asia development. According to him, the WDR 2008 offers a grid of reading of the relations between agriculture and development very little relevant with respect to Southeast Asia. The WDR 2008 is based on the idea of a static peasantry, attached to the land in a subsistence economy, while in reality, the farmers of Southeast Asia are characterized by vast movements of migration, in the search for new opportunities, either in terms of colonization of new land, either in terms of urban employment. The RDM 2008 ignores completely the essential dimensions of the realities of the peasant world. It is about wishful proposals for synergies between organizations of small farmers, agro-industries and the State, whereas the stark reality is the existence of peasant social movements, protests and sometimes violent struggles against State

32 AKRAM-LODHI, op.cit.p.1160

policies and private big actors of the global economy. In addition the RDM ignores an essential dimension of the new peasant culture, in which the reference to agricultural activity is only one component, among others, of peasant life and employment strategies. According to Hall, the future of peasant agriculture is highly problematic in Southeast Asia, and instead to focus, like the WDR 2008, on the supposed integration of small producers in the global agro-food market, it would be better to think about the conditions of an "agrarian transition" allowing the peasantry a non tragic exit from agriculture³³.

That critical reading of the WDR 2008, made by D.Hall is interesting as it helps to escape a static vision of the peasantry. It shows the peasantry as a market player, capable of initiative, and mainly engaged in struggles and often intense conflicts with the dominant actors in the development process. But at the same time this reading is part of the vision of a so-called "deagrarianisation" ongoing process, and the inevitable disappearance of the peasantry, in South East Asia as elsewhere. In his criticism of the WDR 2008 in relation with Southeast Asia, T.Li rejoins that "deagrarianisation" thesis by another path. In her denunciation of the conditions of the proletarianization of the peasants, she does criticize the optimistic WDR 2008 view of the opportunities offered by the migration of surplus rural labor. But at the same time, T.Li says that in fact many actions of peasant protests do not require a greater attention to agricultural problems, but better conditions of work for migrants. These peasant protests do not therefore concern really the peasant status, but the conditions of migrant peasant labor, and the key point is to provide new strategies of successful "agrarian transition"³⁴.

At first glance, there is a paradoxical convergence between the vision of the WDR 2008, and the criticism made through the "deagrarianisation" thesis. The first wants to set the only future of the peasantry in market dynamics that condemns the vast majority of petty producers to disappear, whereas the second does predict the same inevitable disappearance of the peasantry, through the "agrarian transition." It seems therefore worthwhile to look at the arguments of that thesis, to try

³³ HALL D., The 2008 World Development Report and the political economy of Southeast Asian agriculture, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 2009, 36: 3, p. 603-609

³⁴ MURRAY LI, T. 'Exit from agriculture: a step forward or a step backward for the rural poor?', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 2009, 36, 3, p.629-636

to understand why it leads finally to the same negative conclusion about the future of the small peasantry in South East Asia. An argument often put forward to assert that peasant agriculture can no longer be considered as a priority for agricultural development policy, is that a large majority of peasants themselves don't see a future in agriculture, neither for them nor especially for their children. However, it should be noted that this statement is more often associated with a vision of peasant agriculture reduced to the small family farm living almost at the level of subsistence and folded on itself without outside contact. This is what some authors also call the myth of the "idyllic Asian village". In addition this image of a peasant parcel is always presented as the basement of the rural mass poverty one does need to eradicate by a radical transformation of the countryside.

Many elements are used to reinforce this argument. A first element is that the undeniable expansion of agricultural areas in SEA cannot any more be associated with an extension of the fields of peasant farming based mainly on food production. This expansion, in recent years, is attributed almost exclusively to the growth of large plantations for industrial crops (cash crops) for export, such as oilseeds or rubber. If in some cases these cultures are carried out on farms, these operators are bound by contracts to the major agro-industrial firms, and one cannot speak of peasant agriculture. In other cases, apparently family farms, are in fact based on a unique specialization for an export culture. One often referred case is that of the boom in the coffee sector in Viet Nam, with the rapid spread of the "pioneer fronts" of peasant-settlers from the Plains, invading the mountainous regions³⁵.

This type of approach describes the peasant world as eager to seize all opportunities to integrate with the market. Boom times experienced by the SEA export crops have led large movements of expansion of these crops, and demonstrate the will of small farmers to take any risk to get out of poverty. But most of the time, these booms are followed by periods of collapse of prices, which severely affect small farmers and push them in poverty and debt. This approach thus assert that peasant agriculture oriented towards food security is endangered, whereas integration in the

³⁵ HA, D.T. and SHIVELY G., Coffee boom, coffee bust and smallholder response in Vietnam's central highlands, *Review of Development Economics*, 2008, 12(2), 107–11.

international market of agricultural products cannot ensure sustainable exit from the poverty of small producers. And therefore the only route available for the peasants is to leave agriculture and enter, through wage labor, in the internationalized urban economy. Another type of argument is that with time, the migration from agriculture will become less and less temporary and will turn into final migration, progressively emptying the campaigns of the labor force capable of supporting the regeneration of peasant agriculture. This line of reasoning says inter alia that, with time, rural areas will no longer be a basis for retreat for the laborers of peasant origin, when there is a reduction of the demand for labor in the industrial areas and the urban economy, particularly in times of crisis. Rural areas gradually emptied of their work force will no longer be able to play the role of crises damper, because the basis of peasant food economy will have been too eroded by migration itself. In other words, in the future, the improvement of the living conditions of rural populations passes inevitably through a consolidation of the urban economy and the capacity of the sectors of industry and services to provide stable and decent jobs. The message is clear: no long term future for peasant agriculture.

Some authors such as J.Rigg emphasize the cultural aspects, the irreversible cultural change in the rural world, especially for rural youth, as well those who have already experienced migration and the non-agricultural work, that those who stay temporarily in the village, hoping to escape. For this influential author, the development of SEA is irreversibly marked by the universal trend towards the reduction of the role of agriculture in production and employment. Alternating migration will shrink to the benefit of permanent migration. No longer should one assume that agricultural development is the best way to promote rural development, and rural development, the best way of raising rural incomes and improving livelihoods There is nothing to stop or delay this evolution, and States should concentrate on improving the conditions of urbanization as the latest pace will accelerate in the coming decades³⁶.

Other authors share this approach while affirming the importance of focusing policies on the improvement of the conditions of the "agrarian transition", including the promotion of more inclusive urban policies for

³⁶ RIGG, J., Land, farming, livelihoods, and poverty: rethinking the links in the rural South, World Development, 2006, 34 (1), p.180-202.

new migrants. These authors deplore the wild "agrarian transition" conditions imposed by the dominant forms of proletarianization in SEA. But they would certainly not call into question the need for this "agrarian transition", nor the inevitability of the "depeasantisation". Even rural-rural migration is, for some authors, another example of "deagrarianisation": migrants forget their initial peasant identities and often contribute to de-structure the communities they are invading³⁷.

The literature on the "deagrarianisation" in SEA, presents itself as a new fresh look on the realities of the South East Asian rural world, discarding other approaches as outdated or romantic, including all what has been written about peasant resistance or search for autonomy, in the wake of J.Scott approach. It also put severe doubts about the new interest for agriculture in poverty reduction strategies, developed in the wake of the MDGs, and partly in the WDR 2008. Once again the overall message is: no future, other than marginal, for peasant agriculture in South East Asia.

Despite a renewed strong rhetoric, the "deagrarianisation" literature is therefore quite in line with the different variants of the modernization and of the "agrarian transition" paradigms, liberal or Marxist, with their vision of a unique and universal development way for the entire world, repeating endlessly the so called "western model". What is new is that it is asserted that now the peasant themselves want to flee agriculture and want to be liberated from the hard work linked with land tilling³⁸.

One should not be mistaken about the scope of that thesis. It is a very heavy one in terms of its social and human consequences. It is part of a new onslaught on the South eastern Asian peasantry to make it disappear as a collective actor for development, because peasant agriculture is seen as a brake on the drive to an accelerated pace of globalization. This new effort in the name of modernization is done not with arguments about the supposed stubborn backwardness of the peasantry, nor about the need to educate it to the market rules trough poverty reduction programs. It is done through the supposed peasant own will to be eradicated from the

37 ELSON, R., *The end of the peasantry in Southeast Asia: A social and economic history of peasant livelihood*. London, Macmillan Press, London, 1997

38 ASKEW M., *The cultural factor in rural-urban fringe transformation: land, livelihood, and inheritance in Western Nonthaburi*. In: F. Molle and T. Srijantr, eds. *Thailand's rice bowl: perspectives on agricultural and social change in the Chao Phraya Delta*, White Lotus, Bangkok, 2003, p. 287–321

rural development playing field, and to be incorporated fully in the global economy as a happy wage worker. Said in an other way: peasants have to be expelled from the land for their own sake, which is of course quite an extraordinary affirmation!

II.3 Toward a new political economy of the “final solution” for the peasant question? Doubts, questions and an alternative Asian view

At the level of reality, one can share the doubts of many observers for whom large scale peasant migrations can hardly be viewed as a new fact. After all, it is already in the 1950s, that various socio-demographic approaches talked about the fascination of the city, the so-called appeal of “the city bright lights”, to explain peasant migration. It can be said that many elements incite to take with very great caution the different variants of the "deagrarianisation" theory .The current situation and future prospects, particularly in East and South-East Asia, appear much more complex than the linear interpretation of some visible trends. These elements are factual elements, which require to be considered. One can not take only in consideration a reference some cultural changes that would be the main vector of change. One has to take account of all the concrete socio-economic changes in which are these cultural changes are embedded. Transformations affecting the peasants world in SEA, as in China, can not be summarized simply as an insatiable appetite for a kind of "liberating modernity." Peasants are no longer, since a long time, in expectation of modernity. They have been integrated for generations in the modern world, since the colonial era at least in most countries of the region, or from the semi-colonial time in countries such as China and Thailand³⁹ .

Since almost two centuries, the conditions of reproduction of the living environment of the peasantries have been upset by various forms of foreign occupation or intrusion .Often it has been done in the name of modernization. It is in the name of modernization that the colonial administration in Indochina, established a new cadastre of land, leading to

³⁹ BOWIE K.A., Unraveling the myth of the subsistence economy: textile production in nineteenth century Northern Thailand, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 1992, 51 ,4, p.797-823

the precariousness of land rights of peasant communities, for the benefit of the settlers⁴⁰.

Former agrarian systems have been widely destabilized at that time, and restructured according to the needs of the colonial economy, based on the specialization for export. In many regions, the peasantry itself, even in the Highlands supposed to resist the most to change, started, very early, production, or even mono-production for export (coffee, cocoa, tobacco, etc.) . Forced labor was part of that imported modernization⁴¹.

Therefore one can assert that the rural populations of East Asia are subject to the logic of modernization since generations. They have lived "the other side of modernization", the submission to market rules, and the need to adapt to the harsh realities of capitalist, colonial or post-colonial modernity. Migration from the countryside to the cities, more or less forced or free, were part of these same realities. Most of the millions of "coolies" of that time originated from thousands of Asian villages. They have build and maintained the infrastructures of colonial and imperial modernity. Large-scale temporary migration were often organized by the colonial authorities themselves⁴².

In Thailand the 2 millions migrant workers from Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia, are most of the time illegal, and their working conditions are little less precarious than those of migrant workers of the 19th century, with particular forms of precariousness hitting women, non-recognized as "true worker"⁴³.

40 CLEARY M., "'Valuing the tropics", *Discourses of development in the Farm and Forests Sectors of French Indochina, circa 1900-1940*, Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography, 26 (3), 2005, pp. 359-374.

41 BOOMGAARD P., *Maize and Tobacco in Upland Indonesia 1600-1940'*, in T. M. Li (ed.) *Transforming the Indonesian Uplands: Marginality, Power and Production*, pp. 45±71. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, Amsterdam, 1999; PINCUS J., *Class power and agrarian change: land and labour in rural West Java.* : MacMillan Press, London, 1996

42 BREMAN J., *Labour migration and rural transformation in colonial Asia*. Amsterdam: Comparative Asian Studies, Free University Press, Amsterdam, 1990; HUGO G., "Information, exploitation and empowerment: the case of Indonesian contract workers overseas", *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 2003, p.12(4): 439–466.

43 RESURRECCION B.P. and SAJOR E., "Not a Real Worker": Gendering Migrants in Thailand's Shrimp Farms, *International Migration Vol. 48 (6) 2010*, p.102-127

It seems therefore difficult to support the idea of a cultural change, induced by a recent discovery of modernity by the peasantry, which would be the so-called “revolutionary “engine of a new trend in the "deagrarianisation" process. In addition it is to ignore the experience of modernity experienced at the bottom, by those who have suffered the harsh laws imposed by the modernization process since the colonial period. These conditions have created since a long time cultural reactions either to resist that imposed modernity, either to take it over and try to transform it. In the case of Thailand, Chatthip Nartsupha has highlighted the long aversion and historical resistance of the Thai peasantry against an economic system imposed by the State and foreign interests, at the end of the 19th century. The system was regarded as un-natural and unfair⁴⁴.

It is also forgetting all the struggles of national liberation, all the Revolutionary Wars, in which the peasantries were central actors, in virtually all countries of East Asia. They have been possible precisely because of the extraordinary change of peasant mentalities which were able to mobilize for another project of modern society, supported by “traditional” peasant values of justice and equality. The active mobilization and engagement in the armed struggle for social change, of millions of farmers, men and women, has been one of the major events of the 20th in East Asia. In some countries these revolutionary movements have even taken the power, after a long struggle, like in China and Vietnam. With these historical facts in mind, it is difficult to accept the hypothesis of a supposed recent discovery of modernity by the peasants to explain the inevitable acceleration of the so-called “depeasantisation” process. That seems rather at odds with the reality of history. Worse, it leads to erase the memory of this extraordinary experiment in awareness-mobilization which extended roughly from 1925 to 1975. It has been a major component of the 20th century “cultural revolution” in Asia⁴⁵.

What has to be emphasized is that this awareness was rooted on a request to end the despoliation of peasant labor, to improve the conditions of peasant life, to strengthen the peasant economy, especially

44 NARTSUPHA C., *The Thai village economy in the past*, Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai, 1999

45 NGUYEN KHAC VIEN, *Vietnam, Une longue histoire*, Editions The Gioi, Hanoi, 2007; BLECHER M., *China against the tides*, Pinter, London, Washington, 1997

through radical land reform. This was an ubiquitous claim. It was never made with the idea that village communities had to disappear for the sake of modernization and progress. Peasant movements were not opposed to industrialization, but they saw it as tool for the improvement of production techniques and conditions of life in the countryside, or even as a component of the transformation of the latter. It was based on the expectation of the sort of small rural industrialization, which has played an important role in early development strategies in China and Viet Nam . The fact that these expectations were disappointed or diverted by the ruling elites on behalf of the "socialist modernization" does not alter the fact that there was indeed an intense peasant mobilization for a development project combining modernization and consolidation of village communities ⁴⁶ .

And this mobilization has also existed in countries where the peasant movements have been repressed and dismantled. It can be said that in all East and South East Asia, by the late 1970s, elites and leaders had been able to regain control of the peasant world, breaking its expectations of some sort of "a peasant way of development". They were able to impose their model of modernization, focused on the standards of the global economy, imposed from outside as well in the industrial sector than in the agricultural sector. W.Bello and al. have highlighted the role of the defeat of the peasant struggles in Thailand in the 1970s. It has allowed the political choice of subordinating completely agriculture to rapid industrialization, which resulted in the deep de-structuring of the rural world in the 1990s ⁴⁷ .

The dynamics of this outgoing modernization has been heavily dependent on the abandonment of a strategy giving place to a reinforced peasant economy. Pressures on the peasant economy have contributed to its weakening, and thereby provide the tens of millions of workers required by the expansion of the insatiable external demand-oriented sectors. It is unnecessary to recall here the abundant literature on the new forms of frenzied exploitation of underpaid work without minimum social protection for these new global accumulation underdogs. Difficult also not

46 KOLKO G., Vietnam, Anatomy of a Peace, Routledge, London and New York, 1997

47 BELLO W., CUNNINGHAM S. & LI KHENG P., A Siamese tragedy: development and disintegration in modern Thailand, Zed Books, London, 1998

to see that they are living the “other side” of neo-modernization, like their grandparents had lived already the “other side” of colonial modernization. One can therefore set aside as totally irrelevant the culturalist approach of "deagrarianisation", based on a so-called fascinated discovery of urban modernity by the peasantry of today. This does not prevent that the pressure to "deagrarianisation" is of course much stronger today than in previous generations. But it is mainly the result of structural socio-economic elements amplified by deliberate strategies of powerful actors. At the structural level, the dynamics of the urban capitalist sector has an incomparable power of attraction, compared with earlier times, given its insatiable greed for an unlimited supply of labor since thirty years. In addition, the coalitions and regimes in power have, during the same period, followed, and continue to follow a proactive policy of "deagrarianisation", supported by the belief that peasant agriculture has no future. Or worse, to secure its future could be done only at a cost of support measures which are unacceptable for the social strata benefiting of the current forms of economic growth.

However the current structural change has another often neglected dimension. The capitalist sector evolves more and more, in SEA as elsewhere, along "labor saving" technologies, and the incorporation of low-skilled rural work will not continue at the previous rate. It is unrealistic to think that the manufacturing sector may be able in the coming decades to absorb a significant part of the so-called "disguised unemployment". The "stock" of available rural labor has increased dramatically in the last 50 years, as rural population continued to grow, despite its relative regression in total population. That is important to note, since the population concerned by the development of rural areas will not decrease significantly, despite the future urban growth. The population of the ASEAN countries has risen from 300 to 500 millions between 1970 and 2000, and it is estimated that it will be 750 million in 2050. Even with an hypothesis, probably exaggerated, of a doubling of the urban population for 2025, the rural population will reach the vicinity of 300 million. This will continue to represent a major challenge in terms of development and of the mode of integration of that population, in the changes that will affect the societies of South East Asia in the coming

decades. What means the presumed and desired "deagrarianisation" in the context of a rural population nearly constant or even growing⁴⁸?

Moreover the question of the relationship between the peasant world and the capitalist sector, must not be reduced to this sole dimension of the absorption capacity problem of rural labor in the latter. P.Chatterjee analyses have contributed, through an original approach, to questioning the "deagrarianisation" theory. According to him, it is important for researchers in Asia to revisit the issue of the peasantry in post-colonial societies. The advance of capitalist industrial growth will not inevitably break the peasant communities and transform all the peasants in proletarian workers, as it was predicted countless times since more than a century. The new forms of industrial growth in twenty-first century capitalism can, in major agricultural countries, such as China, India and the countries of Southeast Asia leave room for the preservation of peasant production and peasant cultures, but in totally modified conditions than before⁴⁹.

According to Chatterjee, the Asian farmers are completely integrated into complex market networks. Integration into the market has meant that large sections of what was called the subsistence economy, as the classic description of the small peasant agriculture, are now fully under the sway of capital. As the small peasantry is integrated into the informal sector by the multiplicity of the rural-urban exchange networks, it must not be considered anymore as a population isolated from urban dynamics. It is a component of a very dense network system in both urban and rural areas, but whose heart is urban. The urban informal sector is ensured to maintain its presence, and even grow in the coming decades. Because of that fact, the future of small farmers is ensured as a component of the informal economy. In other words, the future of small farmers must be approached through a holistic view of the interconnections between rural and urban development. Chatterjee view is of course a very strong alternative to the predictions of the "deagrarianisation" thesis.

48 Cfr. ATTANE I. et BARBIERI M., La démographie de l'Asie de l'Est et du Sud-Est des années 1950 aux années 2000, Synthèse des changements et bilan statistique, Population-F, 64 (1), 2009, p. 7-154

49 CHATTERJEE P., Peasant cultures of the twenty first century, Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, Volume 9, 1, 2008, p.116-126.

Taking in serious consideration all these elements leaves open the question of the role the peasantry can play in the future. It is true that the peasantry as an actor of revolutionary wars, has been defeated and reduced to a marginal role. The political marginalization of the Asian peasantry was a task accomplished in the 1980s. But it is very insufficient to limit the role of the peasantry as a development player to that single political dimension. The Asian peasantry, historically, has deployed many adaptation or resistance strategies to alleviate pressures made by the intrusion of colonial modernization. Adaptation to the pressures of colonial modernity transformed the peasantry and the countryside. But the villages and peasant societies have not disappeared. Even if the context and the dimension of change have been transformed, nothing authorizes to suggest that the Asian rural world is no longer able to deploy new strategies to cope with yet more devastating pressures from the global neo-modernization. The level of peasant awareness has also reached new dimensions, because most of the peasants are well acquainted with changes occurring outside the villages. The question is therefore to identify in recent developments how the farmers have adapted and continue to adapt to external pressures aimed at their exploitation and possibly their destruction. But that must be done without the ideological a priori that clog the multiple variants of the modernization theories, including that of the inevitable "deagrarianisation". Many factual elements suggest to take into account these new peasant dynamics, both at the level of change in the village realities, and in the evolution of rural-urban relations.

III. RESILIENCE AND CHANGE IN PEASANT REALITIES IN SEA

III.1 The permanence of the villages and the resilience of small farmers

According to the "deagrarianisation" thesis villages are now a receding form of space occupation, because of the increasing flow of out-migrations. People, especially the young ones, are fleeing the village when they have the opportunity to do it. And it is contended that now there is a kind of urban-rural undifferentiated socio-economic space, where flows of production factors, including labor, are moving freely, following the best opportunities. What is very problematic in this approach is that peasants are not simple flows of labor. They are also people living in villages. Villages as places of life do matter. In that respect, the number of villages has increased in South Asia - East in the last forty years, parallel to the increase of the rural population in absolute numbers and to the increase of cultivated areas. According to FAO, between 1980 and 2007, the farm population of Southeast Asia increased from 211 to 256 million people, while the area under cultivation increased from 78 to 100 million hectares. Infrastructures specifically oriented towards the support for agricultural production have also strengthened their footprint on landscapes. Irrigated land in the same period has increased from 11 to 17 million hectares⁵⁰.

From the point of view of physical geography and human development, the expansion of village soil, or the creation of new villages is a very interesting phenomenon to understand the specificity of the development pattern of the countries concerned. Not only the agricultural areas have been recently extended (at the expense of the forest), but they are also more densely inhabited, even if urbanization is the most striking phenomenon. This is an important dimension of the complex changes in recent decades, which were often obliterated by the dominant reading in terms of "green revolution" connoting an intensification of the use of the existing land through a spectacular growth of productivity per hectare. Besides intensification one has to note the importance of diversification strategies.

⁵⁰ FAOSTAT, September 2009

In South - East Asia, it can be said that agricultural diversification and especially a greater diversification of sources of non-agricultural income are the two major elements whose combination creates new conditions to ensure the resilience of small peasants. It is obvious that at the macro level agricultural diversification has been driven mainly by major food companies, often governing upstream and downstream value chains. In these cases, agricultural diversification is in no way a diversification of peasant production. Instead it contributes to the marginalization of small farmers. In many areas however there are phenomena of diversification that correspond well to the peasant logic: diversify to simultaneously ensure food security and the participation in the market, without being a slave of the constraints imposed by food groups that control the value chain. This is the case of a non-negligible part of peasant-settlers in Thailand and Indonesia: they use the newly acquired land to diversify the most possible their range of culture, often combined with small livestock raising and agro-forestry practices .The VAC (VƯỜn-Ao-Chuong) in Vietnam system is an emblematic case of the complexity of that agricultural diversification, with practices developed since generations. It combines a garden - orchard, with a fish pond, and livestock, including poultry production. This system allows to renew the energy cycle and recycle organic waste to create an integrated organic farming. There is a wide variety of VAC systems adapted to the various geographical contexts, such as combining hilly rice with the technique of the raised beds in association with fish ponds. These systems allow to combine food security with an income significantly higher than those provided by cultivating rice only. These old peasant practices were encouraged by the Vietnamese Government, after the doimoi. The dissemination and development of VAC systems through the VACVINA (association of the VAC system participants) are estimated to have participated significantly to the improvement of nutrition and to the reduction of poverty in rural areas⁵¹ .

This kind of diversification is as well a practice of the small peasantry that of a fraction of the middle peasantry. Particularly in Thailand, in the

51 GIAY T. The VAC Ecosystem and models of productive VAC in Viet Nam,. Agricultural Publishing House, Hanoi, 1994, p. 7-15.; THI HOP, Programs to Improve Production and Consumption of Animal Source Foods and Malnutrition in Viet Nam, The Journal of Nutrition, Supplement 2003, American Society for Nutritional Sciences, 4006S-4009S

Philippines and Indonesia, after the 1997-1998 crisis, part of the middle peasants preferred to get out the risks of intensive rice cultivation, and moved toward diversification. Similar developments occurred in Viet Nam after the 1993 Act consolidating the land use rights. However this diversification attaches less importance to food security, and is more oriented toward fresh products with high added value, at least in the peripheries of large urban centers. A study on the estuary of Pampanga in the Philippines, showed that the small farmers tend to maintain rice in diversification, as part of food safety, combined with pig farming, fish farming and the production of fruits, vegetables and flowers for the market⁵².

The particular qualities of many alluvial and volcanic soils in Southeast Asia lend themselves very well to the implementation of very diverse cultures associated with annual and perennial systems. According to M.Dufumier, Southeast Asia history shows, that people have already a long practice of the transition from a slash and burn based system, toward an intensive system without going through a phase of a so-called “savanaization” process⁵³.

Agro-forestry systems are naturally part of the logic of peasant diversification. The peasant agro-forestry has a long history in Southeast Asia, combining species to broaden the range of local consumption (fruits, nuts, firewood) and species intended for the marketing and exportation (spices, cocoa, rubber, copra)⁵⁴.

Peasant agro-forestry systems are very complex and ensure the reproduction of the eco-system in the long term, while allowing a very varied diet, and providing more or less important monetary income depending on the products. The peasant agro-forestry diversity, ensures both the safety of the families and the reproducibility of biodiversity. It is

52 de LATAILLADE C., et al., Farming Intensification and Diversification in the Philippines :The case of the Pampanga Estuary, Moussons, 9-10, 2007, p.261-298

53 DUFUMIER M., Introduction: Slash and Burn, Intensification of Rice Production, Migratory Movements, and Pioneer Front Agriculture in Southeast Asia, Moussons, 9-10, 2007,p.7-33

54 SUYANTO S., TOMICH T. P., and OTSUKA K., Agroforestry management in Sumatra, in Otsuka, K., and Place, F. (eds.), Land Tenure and Natural Resource Management: A Comparative Study of Agrarian Communities in Asia and Africa, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2001

in marked contrast with the characteristics of large monoculture plantations developed since the colonial era, and supported by the post-colonial States⁵⁵.

This type of diversification, even if it entails a certain social differentiation, may however limit negative effects on the ability of survival of the villages. In fact these practices are based on specific local knowledge that can be enhanced by exchanges between farmers who practice them. That recreates the conditions of a certain social cohesion around the complex management of the eco-systems⁵⁶.

However the issue of the resilience of small farmers can not be reduced to their agricultural diversification initiatives. This is particularly true in South East Asia, because of the importance taken by non-agricultural activities in the evolution of rural incomes⁵⁷.

As early as the 1980s, a number of studies have demonstrated the growing importance of non-agricultural activities in the formation of a significant proportion of rural households income. This concerned all categories of income from the poorest to the richest, for obviously different reasons. The rich used their agricultural revenues to diversify their activity in trade and transport, while the peasants without land, or with too little land, searched a source of income in wage employment. According to some analyses this has helped to mitigate the effects expected of the green revolution on land concentration by rich peasants adapting new technologies more quickly⁵⁸.

55 MICHON G., and De FORESTA H., The Indonesian agro-forest model: Forest resource management and biodiversity conservation In Halladay, P., and Gilmour, D. A. (eds.), *Conserving Biodiversity Outside Protected Areas: The Role of Traditional Agro-Ecosystems*, International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, Gland, 1995

56 SURYANATA K., From home gardens to fruit gardens: resource stabilization and rural differentiation in upland Java. In T. M. Li (Ed.), *Transforming the Indonesian uplands: Marginality, power and production*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, Amsterdam, 1999

57 MOLLE F. and THIPPAWAL Srijantr, eds., *Thailand's rice bowl: perspectives on agricultural and social change in the Chao Phraya Delta*, White Lotus, Bangkok, 2003

58 WHITE B. and WIRADI G., Agrarian and non agrarian bases of inequality in nine Javanese villages. In Hart, G., Turton, A. and White, B., editors, *Agrarian transformations: local processes and the state in southeast Asia*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989, p.266-302.

For large layers of the small peasantry, non-agricultural work offers avenues for securing income as a part of the logic of diversification, which is therefore obviously no more reduced to agricultural production only⁵⁹.

This growth of non-agricultural activities resulted in a change of cultivation techniques to reduce working time devoted to agricultural output (for example the abandonment of the transplanting of rice replaced by direct seeding with improved varieties and the use of herbicides). The mechanization of the most demanding working operations has been in the same direction⁶⁰.

A significant consequence of this development was that, at this time, in many areas, the process of proletarianization was dampened by the increase in income from non-agricultural origin. Small farmers were able to keep some land, although it provided them with insufficient resources to ensure a decent livelihood, which had to be achieved through income from other activities. Taking in consideration the relation to land in terms of strategic behavior of the peasantry, allows also to have another look at poverty. While the dominant look at poverty, is about a sort of natural condition reflecting shortfalls and deficiencies of various order, in the peasant experiences, poverty is often a moment in the family life cycle. If a family has lost access to land, due to adverse circumstances, the priority is to regain access to land, and this objective can take more than a generation. Paradoxically, the market has become an element in the panoply of resilience strategies of small farmers as a social category. Small farmers found the means to maintain access to the land essentially as a guarantee of the security of family life. The plots often became too small to provide a marketable surplus. But they provide food security, and because of that role in the diversification process of the family economy, this phenomenon continues to support the vitality of the land market, which cannot be reduced solely to a vector of the increasing land

⁵⁹ HART G., Household reproduction reconsidered: gender, labor conflict, and technological change in Malaysia's Muda region. *World Development* 20, 1992, p., 809-23 and Hart G., The dynamics of diversification in an Asian rice region. In Koppel, B., Hawkins, J. and James, W., editors, *Development or deterioration: work in rural Asia*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 1994, p.47-71.

⁶⁰ OTSUKA K., GASCON F. and ASANO S., Green revolution and labour demand in rice farming: the case of central Luzon, 1966±1990. *Journal of Development Studies* 31, 1994, p. 82-109.

concentration. The land market also serves to farmers without land, or having lost access to the land, to get access to it. These change can lead to consolidate what has always been considered by the theories of agrarian modernization as the remnant of the past: the small peasant parcel, or the micro-plot. Sometimes this parcel becomes even underused because the time spent on non-agricultural activities is ever more important. But the attachment to the land remains central. Most of the authors who say that peasant agriculture is doomed to disappear, fail to take into account the meaning of that permanence or even increase of peasant micro-plots⁶¹.

Through this evolution, new types of interdependence are taking place between living conditions of peasant families, in the broad sense, and those of the village communities. It demonstrates that the behavior of small farmers, is economically rational, but can not be reduced only to economic dimensions. Attachment to a place of life, symbolized by the maintenance of the land roots, remains fundamental. According to different observers, if some forms of the so-called traditional solidarity weaken, they are replaced by new types of social links that recreate the conditions for social cohesion to face the pressures of the market⁶².

On this basis a collective sociability is rebuild, and village life can not be reduced to the single dimension of increasing social differentiation. A very contextualized approach is necessary to capture these conflicting dynamics. Regional differences are important. In Indonesia, in some mountainous regions of Sulawesi and Java, one has seen a strong tendency to social differentiation, with the formation of a class of rich farmers (MFM) based on export crops, and employing salaried workforce permanently. But in other cases, the aversion for the sale of land and the

61 In an article in 2001, J.Rigg did not hesitate to say: "... rather than to save thai agriculture, letting her die would may be better serve the interests of the rural population..." ", but in the same article he worried little to analyse why in the studied village (Tambon Tuk Sadok, close to Chaing may), 1071 households continued to share 922 acres of culture, cfr. RIGG, J. & NATTAPOOLWAT S., Embracing the Global in Thailand: Activism and Pragmatism in an Era of Deagrarianization, World Development, 29,6,2001,p.948

62 NORLUND I., Social capital or social capitalism: diversification of the Vietnamese rural scenery, Munich Institute for Social Sciences and Hanoi Institute of Socio-economic Development Studies, Hanoi, 2003

maintenance of strong extended family ties, tend to curb social differentiation, and especially to prevent it from become irreversible⁶³.

They are similarly many cases of land and forests customary rights (adat) of communities, eroded, or even eliminated, depriving local communities of the security they assured. But in other cases, the adat is still alive and reconstituted with new agro-forestry practices⁶⁴.

In the case of the northern Thailand, one has shown the existence of multiple sites of "repeasantization", with a reconstruction of strong social ties⁶⁵.

In Viet Nam, as in most of the countries of South East Asia, the vision of the inevitability of the disappearance of small farmers, seems also at odds with the nature of complex changes taking place since the doimoi. Small farmers have not been passive. But it took some time for them to adapt to the totally unforeseen conditions of the emergence of a "wild market", in a context dominated by the opacity of the relations between "new riches" and political authorities. This adaptation was made not only by the diversification of agricultural activities, but also by the diversification of sources of income in non-agricultural activities in rural areas, with more and more migrant workers outside rural areas. Some analyses have also not hesitated to assert that the opening of the market for land rights,

63 LI, T.M. 'Local Histories, Global Markets: Cocoa and Class in Upland Sulawesi', *Development and Change*, 2002, 33 (3): 415 – 37; RUITER, T.G., 'Agrarian Transformations in the Uplands of Langkat: Survival of Independent Karo Batak Rubber Smallholders'. In T.M.LI, ed; *Transforming the Indonesian Uplands: Marginality, Power and Production*, 279-310. Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1999, pp. 279-310

64 POTTER L, BADCOCK S., *Tree crop smallholders, capitalism, and adat: studies in Riau Province, Indonesia*. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 2004, 45 (3), 341-56; POTTER L, BADCOCK s., *Can Indonesia's complex agroforests survive globalisation and decentralisation? Sanggau district, West Kalimantan*. In Connell J and Waddell E (eds) *Environment, Development and Change in Rural Asia-Pacific: Between Local and Global*, Routledge, London, 2007, pp. 167-185

65 PARNWELL M., *Neo-localism and renascent social capital in North-East Thailand*, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 2007, 25, 6.

after 1993, has allowed small farmers to acquire land and thus consolidate the basis of their agricultural activity⁶⁶.

But such a view has been challenged by studies focusing on the indebtedness of small farmers, as a cause of an accelerated movement toward land concentration, for the benefit of a minority of property owners. According to Akram-Lodhi, there is a strong correlation between the increasing size of farms, their degree of capitalization and the increase in agricultural productivity. According to that analysis, one can distinguish three social layers in the Vietnamese rural world: a small layer of rich farmers, including a fraction which are becoming capitalist entrepreneurs, a majority of small farmers oriented more and more to the market, and a growing part of landless peasants, providing the labor force which is used to reinforce the expansion and the benefit of the other two categories. Such a movement therefore tend to comfort the thesis of an acceleration of the "agrarian transition"⁶⁷.

However this approach recognizes that this trend, even if it indicates what will be the future, is presently restricted to some sub-regions, particularly in the Mekong delta. This point is important to note, because very contextualized studies show a great diversity in regional developments, and invite to take into account the complexity of the elements that can influence the future of the peasantry. Regional differences are strong, from the point of view of the interaction between the land problems and social links. In the area of the Delta of the Red River, historically the communal property has a strong tradition based on the recognition of membership in the community. In the Mekong delta, the communal property has a weak tradition, with a long history of privatization of land rights⁶⁸.

In some mountainous areas, where small farmers are very active in terms of diversification and insertion on the commodity markets, at the same

⁶⁶ DEININGER, K. and JIN S., ' Land Sales and Rental Markets in Transition: Evidence from Rural Viet Nam '. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 3013, Washington, DC, 2003

⁶⁷ AKRAM-LODHI H., Viet Nam's Agriculture: Processes of Rich Peasant Accumulation and Mechanisms of Social Differentiation, Journal of Agrarian Change, Vol.5, N ° 1, 2005, p. 73-116

⁶⁸ HARE D., The Origins and Influence of Land Property Rights in Viet Nam, Development Policy Review, 2008, 26 (3) p. 339-363

time they keep a collective property of the upland rice system, which plays a role of safety net for the less integrated market farmers. The study of Sikor and Pham, in a northwestern commune, shows the transformation of much of the villagers in “peasant-traders”, inserted in local and regional markets, supporting a strong diversification of agricultural and animal production (soybeans, fruit and vegetables, pigs). Combined with a deliberate village policy to maintain an important communal ownership of land, this has allowed both to raise revenues and maintain social differentiation within limits which do not threaten the village community. The effects of the insertion in the market, therefore depend on the local context, and the maintenance of some sort of institutional buffer between the market and the community. In that case, the village is changing, but has not disappeared and may even strengthen its viability⁶⁹.

In a publication of 2010, concerning the Hoah Binh region, between the delta of the Red River and the mountains of the Northwest, Tran Thang showed the importance of taking into account the historical trajectory of the villages and households, to understand the profiles of current social differentiation. According to him these profiles are strongly contingent to contexts and are not irreversible. Instead, peasants which were boosted by liberalization, and concentrated land ownership in a first phase, may lose their status through unfortunate speculations about the types of selected productions, notably because of the very random evolution of agricultural prices⁷⁰.

This study thus rejoins the findings made by The and Scott, in 2008, in the commune of Phuoc Son in Binh Dinh province. The minority of peasants who had totally relied on aquaculture for export, and was heavily indebted to achieve that goal, was ruined in a few years by the collapse of the production, due to epidemics derived from the disastrous conditions of intensification. That minority of rich farmers was crushed under the weight of unpaid debts. They were threatened by expropriation not only of their private ponds, but of all their assets, including the family house they had rebuild during the good times, according to new criteria of

69 SIKOR T. and PHAM T., The Dynamics of Commoditization in a Vietnamese Uplands Village, 1980–2000, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, Vol.5, 3, July 2005, p.422-423

70 TRAN THI THU TRANG, Social differentiation revisited: A study of rural changes and peasant strategies in Viet Nam, *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, Vol. 51, no. 1, April 2010

comfort. They found themselves in a worse situation than the majority of the peasants who had been excluded from the boom⁷¹.

That point illustrates the importance of addressing the peasant society in terms of lifestyle, and not only in economic terms, being either liberal, neo-liberal, Chayanovian or Marxian. The question of the "deagrarianisation" is not limited to the functioning of land markets and the trend towards the concentration of land. As said already, here above, one needs a multifaceted approach of the ongoing changes. Cultural and ethical dimensions can be important components of the de-structuring of local communities, but also of the reconstruction of a certain social cohesion, despite the changes brought about by the passage to the market economy. According to the study conducted by K. Jellema, in the area of the Red River Delta, the reality is not limited to a simplistic dualism between a traditional endangered Confucian ethic and a triumphant capitalist mentality. The village collective moral has multiple historical sources through which new practices of reciprocity are reinvented. The latest may be asymmetric, but that redefine the social criteria of merit (cong) in the flux of change. In the cases studied, a village community has reinvented the title of "senior master of the sacrifices" (chu te), and has attributed it to an enriched entrepreneur who has to serve as a benefactor and a moral example to the village⁷².

Another important dimension of the complexity of the evolution of the peasant world in Viet Nam, is the existence of several schools of thought in relation with the land question. According to B. Kerkvliet, one can distinguish four schools of thought: the Socialist school which emphasizes the role of the State in the organization of agricultural production, the school which gives priority to the role of family farms, the one which gives importance to the maintenance of the role of the village in community land management, and the school which sees the market as the single vector of progress in agriculture. Moreover despite the ongoing liberalization, it cannot be forgotten that the State remains the prominent

71 LE THI VAN HUE and SCOTT S. ,Coastal Livelihood Transitions: Socio-Economic Consequences of Changing Mangrove Forest Management and Land Allocation in a Commune of Central Vietnam, *Geographical Research* March 2008, 46(1): p.62–73

72 JELLEMA K., Making Good on Debt: The Remoralisation of Wealth in Post-Revolutionary Vietnam, *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 6, No. 3, December 2005, pp. 231 -248

owner of land rights, whose only use is granted to individual operators. There is a very high resistance in much of the peasantry, to a shift towards a complete privatization of land. Also at the local level, one can see the continuation of practices which give importance to the communal management of local resources⁷³.

Local institutions can therefore play an important role in controlling the impact of the market. And in the case of the Viet Nam, the popular committees of villages (lang) continue to play a vital role in ensuring social cohesion, with a high rate of participation⁷⁴.

In the above study, B.Kerkvliet highlighted the importance of peasant resistance and struggles, in several provinces, against land grabbing by corrupt local authorities linked with private investors. These facts can give rise to violent conflicts and severe repression by the authorities. Farmers consider these practices of grabbing as deeply unfair and violating the principles that legitimize the paramount ownership of the State over land⁷⁵.

In the study of The and Scott already quoted, after the local aquaculture crisis, peasants have rebelled against a plan of reconstruction of the mangroves which would have rested on outside intervention. They burned official buildings, and finally obtained from the provincial authorities to define themselves the mode of reconstruction and management of what was historically a "common good"⁷⁶.

In very various contexts, the land claims seem to be what mobilizes farmers the most. It is no more about land reform as previously, but about maintaining the land rights of local communities. The maintenance of land rights is a fundamental requirement of peasants, even when they have other opportunities of employment and income⁷⁷.

73 KERKVLIT B. J., Agricultural Land in Vietnam: Markets Tempered by Family, Community and Socialist Practices, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, Vol. 6 No. 3, July 2006, pp. 285–305

74 HOUTART F., Hai Van, *Socialisme et Marché, La double transition d'une commune vietnamienne*, Les Indes Savantes, Paris, 2004, p.211

75 KERKVLIT B.J., *op.cit.*, 2006, p.297-299

76 LE et SCOTT, *op.cit.*, p.69

77 POTTER L., & LEE, J.. *Tree planting in Indonesia: Trends, impacts and directions*. Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). Bogor, 1998

In all countries of the region, the extension of industrial zones, prestige residential condominiums, or even golf playgrounds are often made through a brutal expropriation or even deportation of peasants. But in more and more cases, peasants react violently to the dispossession of large parts of the village land. Land conflicts have therefore new dimensions, which foster the emergence of new rural movements⁷⁸.

This is the case notably in Indonesia and the Philippines where many local mobilizations were organized for the occupation and the invasion of land⁷⁹.

Land grabbing or new restrictions on access to land through various environmental pretexts (expansion of the agro-biofuels, carbon wells, REED programs, etc.) have deprived more and more communities of many of their resources⁸⁰.

Conservation projects have therefore contributed to a growing number of local mobilizations since the beginning of the years 2000, especially in Indonesia⁸¹.

If land maintain such a great power of mobilization of the peasants, even under different forms than the struggles of the years 1950-1970, that shows, once again, how much one must be careful with the thesis of the so-called inevitable trend toward "deagrarianisation" in SEA. On the contrary, it is urgent to reflect on the issues of a "peasant way of sustainable development" in Southeast Asia .Current developments quite

78 AGUILAR Jr., F.V., Rural land struggles in Asia: overview of selected contexts. In: S. Moyo and P. Yeros, eds. Reclaiming the land: the resurgence of rural movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America. London and New York: Zed Books, 2005, pp. 209–34.

79 FRANCO J.C., Making land rights accessible: social movements and political-legal innovation in the rural Philippines. *Journal of Development Studies*, 2008, 44(7), 991–1022; .FERANIL S.H., Stretching the 'limits' of redistributive reform: lessons and evidence from the Philippines under neoliberalism. In: S. Moyo and P. Yeros, eds. Reclaiming the land: the resurgence of rural movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America. London and New York: Zed Books, 2005, pp. 257–82.

80 FORSYTH T. and WALKER A., Forest guardians, forest destroyers: the politics of environmental knowledge in Northern Thailand. University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 2008

81 PELUSO N.L., AFIFF S. and RACHMAN N.F. 2008. Claiming the grounds for reform: agrarian and environmental movements in Indonesia. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 8(2–3), 2008, p. 377–407.

clearly show that growth of the salaried work force is not necessarily accompanied by a complete "depeasantization" process. If having access to land, and securing the family livelihood, have always been characteristics known to define a peasantry, these conditions are met today in Southeast Asia. Recent developments show the emergence of a new class of peasants who derive their cash incomes from non-agricultural and even non-rural sources, but keep a parcel of land. It allows them, through the intensive use of miscellaneous inputs purchased on the market, to ensure the safety of the subsistence of the family remained in the village, and with it keeping life roots in the latter⁸².

The recurrent crises of 1998 and 2008 and latter, have certainly reinforced this trend, because they showed how the growth vagaries in the urban and industrial goods and services sectors, corresponding to the criteria of a modern capitalist economy, can provoke insecurity of employment in this sector. Millions of migrant workers have returned each time, temporarily, to the countryside. This has strengthened the security role of village land for peasant families in a totally uncertain world. But at the same time, the same peasant families must also seize the opportunities offered by access to monetary income outside the village. It can be said that there is the maintenance of a very important peasantry whose attachment to the land remains an essential component of a predominant rural anchor. But the peasantry in Southeast Asia is evidently not a homogeneous social class. It is a sort of hybrid peasantry, a very important point to grasp the whole peasant dynamics, as discussed below.

III.2 The emergence of a "hybrid peasantry" in the reconstruction of the relationship between rural and urban spaces

Since the end of the 1990s, there is a double trend in the literature about transformations in the rural areas. On the one hand, as we have already seen above, there is an important literature about the diversification of rural households activities. It has become an essential feature of the peasant way of life, with between 30 and 50% of the household income coming from sources not related to the farm. On the other hand many

82 EDER J.F. (1999) A generation later: Household strategies and economic change in the rural Philippines. Honolulu:, University of Hawai'i Press,1999

analyses focus now on the non-rural income in the formation of peasant income. More and more peasant families incorporate a source of income of urban origin in their total income, therefore adapting the amount of work devoted to agricultural activities⁸³.

Since the 1990s, an important part of the analyses highlight the obsolete nature of the division between rural and urban (rural-urban divide) to study the behavior of rural people and the characteristics of poverty. There is a growing interpenetration between countryside and cities in the peasant strategy of security and diversification of sources of income⁸⁴.

It is true that one can no longer think agrarian change in isolating it from urban dynamics. At the basis of relations that unite them they are the rural-urban flows of migrant labor and the urban-rural cash flows resulting of it. The migrant flows were estimated recently for Southeast Asia at about 15 million workers, which is considerable in relation with the rural adult population of the region. Incomes from non-agricultural activity are becoming more and more important, and especially the income derived from work in the city⁸⁵.

These overall figures cover very different migrations. Migrants from Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia (more than 2 millions) have a mainly intra regional destination (Thailand). But most migrants from the Philippines (8 millions) and Indonesia (3 millions), have much more remote destinations (South Korea, Japan, the Gulf countries, or even Europe and the USA). In the Philippines the vast majority are women⁸⁶.

At first glance the importance of these migrant populations, of rural origin in their vast majority, seems to support the "deagrarianisation" theory. A more detailed examination of the reality does not necessarily confirm

83 CEDEROTH S., *Survival and profit in rural Java: the case of an East Javanese village*. Curzon Press, Richmond, 1995; De KONINCK R., *Malay peasants coping with the world: breaking the community circle*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1992; KOPPEL B. and HAWKINS J., *Rural transformation and the future of work in rural Asia*. In Koppel B., Hawkins J., and James W., editors, *Development or deterioration: work in rural Asia*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 1994, p.146

84 RIGG J., *Rural-urban interactions, agriculture and wealth: a southeast Asian perspective*, *Progress in Human Geography* 1998, 22.4, pp. 497-522

85 HUGO G., *Best Practice in Temporary Labour Migration for Development: A Perspective from Asia and the Pacific*, *International Migration*, 2009 Vol. 47 (5), p. 23-76

86 HUGO G., *op.cit.*p.28

such an impression. According to G.Hugo, an especially important point is that these migrants maintain a strong relationship with their community of origin⁸⁷.

In most countries of the region, an important part of the income earned outside from rural areas is returned to the village, where it is used to feed a large amount of spending on improving habitat, household equipment, individual mobility (especially motorcycles), in addition to spending for social use (family holiday, education of children, etc.) and cultural (maintenance of the pagoda) reflecting the desire of migrants to remain integrated in the life of the village. But most importantly, a significant part of these resources is devoted to the purchase of land, or refers to the improvement of conditions of work and food production. Small farmers can now keep only a very small plot, unable alone to ensure full subsistence, but contributing to it and to food security⁸⁸.

Even those who have settled permanently in the city can help restore the land family heritage. In the current historical circumstances, with new access to income sources available to small farmers, one cannot be satisfied with the conventional naturalistic and individualistic approach of peasant poverty. Peasants have to be approached in terms of collective actors incorporating the extended family dimensions and territorial social networks, which are at the core of the flows of income and work between countryside and cities. There is a new agrarian and rural dynamics in symbiosis with the new urban dynamics. It is a different way of development than in the countries where the idea "the countryside is emptied by the cities" is often evoked. In this context the question of the peasantry has to be tackled in a specific way, and is part of the agrarian problems as well as of the urban problems. In all the countries of the region, much of the peasants have become wage workers or employees, part-time or full-time, in rural areas or in urban areas. Another part has been transformed into micro-entrepreneurs in the informal sector, rural and urban. That is what may be called the new

87 HUGO G., "...." The potential for this type of migration to have a developmental impact is considerable not only because of their large numbers but also because most retain a strong commitment to their home communities since they leave their families there.... "ibid, p.30"

88 MORRISON P.S.: Transitions in rural Sarawak: off-farm employment in the Kamena Basin, Pacific Viewpoint 34, 1993, p. 45-68.

hybrid peasantry. Peasant-workers take their place alongside the "farmers-merchants", particularly in mountainous areas, who combine the diversification of agricultural production with the direct marketing of these products in local or regional markets, from which they take most of their income⁸⁹.

Rural-urban migration has therefore to be seen as a part of this hybrid reality. Migration is accompanied by the creation of new territories of life and new networks of sociability between emigrants and their families remained in the village of origin. Most often migrants from the same villages are found in the same urban neighborhoods. But they maintain strong ties with the village of origin. In the case of Thailand, it has been shown how many migrant workers, even those established in Bangkok, retain a strong link with their villages of origin. They return periodically, and the number of returnees to agriculture is important, after a period of work in the city, considered not only as economically necessary, but as socially rewarding⁹⁰.

Attempts in Viet Nam, to develop small-scale industries in rural areas to maintain the population in the countryside, but out of agriculture, did not meet with the expected success, because if obliged to work as wage earners, young people prefer to be in the city than in the village⁹¹.

However, a study of migrants in Hanoi, has shown already in the 1990s, that most of the migrant people had a double identity, both urban and villager, and that many old city dwellers had the impression that rather than having migrants being urbanized, it was the city which was becoming rural⁹².

According to M.Schlecker, since the reform, the people of Hanoi have often attached great importance to restore strong ties with their village of

⁸⁹ SIKOR T. and PHAM T., The Dynamics of Commoditization in Vietnamese Uplands Village, 1980-2000, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, Vol.5, 3, July 2005, pp. 405-428

⁹⁰ KERMEL-TORRES D. et SCHAR P., Les interactions agriculture-industrie en Thaïlande, Dynamiques agraires et mobilité de la main d'œuvre, *Revue Tiers-Monde*, XLI, n° 162, avril-juin 2000, p.323-341

⁹¹ DANG PHUONG, Aspects of agricultural economy and rural life in Kerkvliet, B.J.T. and Porter, D.J., editors, *Vietnam's rural transformation*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1993

⁹² LI T., *Peasants on the move: rural±urban migration in the Hanoi region*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1996

origin. They do it in restoring and beautifying their ancestral homes, by funding major commemorative festivals, by supporting local projects in the municipalities. There is a strong appreciation of links with the places of origin, and the remembrance of a shared heritage, whether in the city or in the village. This is the reason of the multiplication in Hanoi, since the 1990s ,of the so-called "place of origin" associations (hoi dong huong), which seek to develop a form of specific sociability between people originating from the same locations, and increase the size of transfers to local projects⁹³ .

If one get rid of a pure individualistic perspective, one can understand that the logics of networks and territories are totally interdependent. They connect the new realities of urban and rural expansion. The rural-urban interactions are at the heart of the emergence of new popular actors: the peasant-workers, one foot in the countryside, one foot in the city. No doubt it is a reality to last . Through the impact of two crises in a decade, the popular hybrid classes have learned to live with the fragility and insecurity of the sphere of accumulation despite of its marvelous promises. Such a new type of collective actors can not be labeled anymore the "traditional peasantry", whereas there is no phenomenon of "repeasantization", along the meaning of the classical view of the peasantry. But territory and networks are essential dimensions to understand the originality of the new historical dynamic. If one has an erosion of the peasantry in the classical sense, while having at the same time a difficult emergence of organized workers movements in the traditional sense, it is precisely because there is that emergence of a new social actor with hybrid features: peasant-workers and urbanized villagers. Instead of farmers or workers, one should therefore speak of peasant-workers or recomposed popular actors. While the two isolated components are perceived as endangered or as anemic, taking them into consideration as hybrid collective actors allows to seize them as dynamic actors, even if these dynamic elements are often difficult to identify. The practices and demands of these actors do not match the settings of old practices of peasant resistance and labor struggles. But this does not mean that there are no claims and struggles, in new and unexpected ways

⁹³ SCHLECKER M., Going back a long way: « Home place », thrift and temporal orientations in Northern Vietnam, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological. Institute.* (N.S.) 11, 2005, p.509-526

to many observers. This is evident in the case of China, but it was also clear in the social and political crisis which has recently paralyzed Thailand during several years⁹⁴.

To understand the interaction between population movements and local dynamics of development, one cannot be limited to a simple arithmetic of human and monetary flows. These are the measurable parts of very complex social and cultural facts which are embedded in the realities of networks. Networks of popular economy between the countryside and cities, their economic, social and cultural components are inseparable from their territorial dimension. The heart of these networks consists of groups of workers and micro-entrepreneurs who travel regularly between a given village and a given neighborhood of a given city, where they stay for a more or less long time, depending on the circumstances. In the same region, one can find tens or hundreds of these micro networks, composed of members of extended families, or people connected by ties of neighborhood or local proximity. Around these micro networks, they are more sedentary groups in the village which seemingly could receive the label of peasants. But in reality they are linked in various ways to the circulating micro networks. They may either rejoin them at times, either receive work support or financial assistance. In urban areas, they are more settled workers, but who keep no less links of proximity with the circulating network, and with the village of origin. An important part of them keeps the project to return in the village, to live in a renovated house, and even to resume agricultural activity.

The particular importance of Filipino migration has led to many studies. The image they give of the impact of internal and international migration on rural areas of origin in the Philippines can not be reduced to a unique process of "deagrarianisation". D. McKay analyses of changes in the region of the Central Cordillera in the island of Luzon are very enlightening from this point of view. A contextualized approach of local realities shows a profound transformation of the local living conditions through monetary transfers by migrant women. These changes affect both the material conditions and the relationship between men and women (migrants abroad) as cultural references are changing with travel

⁹⁴ CHAROENSIN –O-LARN C., THAILAND in 2009, Unusual Politics Becomes Usual, Southeast Asian Affairs 2010, Institute of South East Asian Studies, 2010, p.304-334

abroad, and intensive use of communications technology between residents and emigrants. The culture of these mountain villages (considered as ethnic minority villages) is in fact dilated and reconstituted in a kind of composite trans-local culture, which redefines the roles of residents and migrants and the links between them. But it does not lead to the disappearance of the village life, there is rather, in many cases, a renovation of the villages, not only in the habitat, the mode of consumption, but also in the transformation of agricultural production systems, with the possibility of access to technical means for intensification and diversification, or the substitution of new crops to old food production. In many cases, this is accompanied by a tendency towards the concentration of land by those who have more financial resources through the revenue of emigration. These revenues also fund the settlement of new lands in forest areas. Often these lands are leased to peasants without land originating from the same village, and who develop new crops. . There is therefore an extension of the village, rather than a loss, but it is a village recomposed with some social differentiation, but which remains limited. They are many intensive networks linking villages and town, for example Bayyo villagers emigrants of Bayyo in Manila, through not only financial transfers, but also the permanent transfer of labor from the village to urban micro-enterprises. These latest have been founded by people originating from the village, and are specialized in the construction of jeepneys (part of these vehicles is also the basis of the transport network between the region and Manila). These emigrated workers however keep their rights to a share of the crop, and regularly return to the village to participate in farm work, when the need arises⁹⁵ .

According to McKay, there are multiple pathways of re-creation of local identity through the development of trans-local networks between the countryside and the city. The agricultural dimension does not disappear in the process, but it is no more than a part of the activities to ensure the security of the population. In addition, these analyses show the importance to go beyond the only economic dimension to assess the type

⁹⁵ MCKAY D., Cultivating new local futures: Remittance economies and land-use patterns in Ifugao, Philippines, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 2003, 34(2): p.285–306 ; MCKAY D. & BRADY C. Practices of place-making: Globalisation and locality in the Philippines, *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, Vol. 46, No. 2, August 2005,p.89-103

of change that has transformed villages, while keeping them alive. The villagers and the urban workers from the village deliberately reinvented a new identity (layasan: what unites inside a "interior incorporating outside") that they share consciously, in a highly articulated socially real and virtual territory. Through the layasan, there is a close relationship between the worker in the city and the peasant: in the village and vice versa. If we take into account these realities of the informal social networks linking the popular actors between the cities and the countryside, we realize, once more, that it calls into question many current stereotypes in the literature on poverty. The individualistic approach of poverty is unable of grasping the trajectory of individuals within groups that surround them and secure them. Of course there are individuals, families, or even fractions of people who for special reasons are isolated and are not integrated in networks. But the large majority of people are both stakeholders in cities and villages life.

At the same time these interactions networks – territories enable to better understand the maintenance of some social stability, despite an increasing income inequality, which is evident in most countries through the rise of the Gini coefficient. The effects of growth benefit the top 20%. This growing inequality is the major social fact. It is hidden by the discourse which emphasizes the reduction of absolute poverty. This latest is largely due to the fact that the vast majority of the population is henceforth integrated to the monetary economy dominated by the logic of growth. Basic consumer goods are valued at the price of the "modern" economic sector, whereas previously the traditional goods were systematically under valued, even if they met the basic needs, but in another setting of life. Out of absolute poverty, is nothing else than another formulation of the old concept of traditional society in the rhetoric of modernization, with access to modern consumer goods being taken as the yardstick of the transition from a traditional type of poverty to a supposed better type of modern poverty. However, at the same time, relative poverty has increased through the increase in inequality in the modern sector which encompass now almost the entire population. If this growing inequality does not foster more violent conflicts, it is due to the effects of redistribution between the two or three lowest quintiles in the distribution of income, on the one hand through the intra urban social networks of the popular economy, on the other hand through the social

networks between the urban and rural people's economies. Redistribution is therefore not between the privileged layers and the working classes, but between the various popular layers with more or less low income.

The problems of the urban popular economy was particularly well analyzed in many pioneer studies for African cities. But recent studies have highlighted also its importance in major Asian cities. According to the study already quoted of P. Chatterjee, in Asian cities, the informal sector of small manufacturers and traders, is organized usually in associations to deal with municipal authorities, the police, as well as with companies that manufacture and distribute products they sell on the streets. These associations are often large and the volume of business they include can be quite considerable. Obviously, operating in a situation of anonymous market, sellers are subject to the standard terms of the profitability of their businesses. But at the same time these associations have various practices to ensure the subsistence needs of their members. There are market entry conditions to avoid self destructive forms of competition among petty producers and traders. There is also a set of practices of mutual aid. Networks of the people's economy, particularly in Southeast Asia are designed primarily to maintain a certain social cohesion in a permanent adaptation to a process of change submitted to the economic logic driven by the dominant actors. For Chatterjee, to the extent that exchanges between the countryside and cities, include relations between the peasant and urban popular economies (see supra), and that a large part of the peasants are part of this informal nebula of the popular economy, this adds an other dimension to the complexity of the popular networks between cities and countryside. It cannot be reduced to the issue of transfers of income made by migrant workers. In addition new entrants in the urban popular economy, are part of migrant workers seeking out wage employment, and thus entering the associative logic of urban popular economy. This adds still another dimension to the circuits of redistribution cities-countryside⁹⁶.

All these realities require to give another dimension to the very restricted concept of social capital in much of the development literature in recent

⁹⁶ CHATTERJEE P., Peasant cultures of the twenty first century, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Volume 9, 1, 2008, p.116-126

years. Social capital is often seen as a set of relationships that an individual can mobilize, in terms of support and guaranteed access to micro-credit for example, to enter the market and increase its income. This literature often oscillates between the exaltation of a pre-existing community social capital and the need to create this capital by enhancing intervention of external actors: NGOs and donors⁹⁷.

The realities of Southeast Asia lead to have a different perception of social capital. This latest is the set of relations that unite popular networks, in a long span of time, and allow them not only to survive or to have access to the market, but to collectively reproduce a certain mode of living and some collective autonomy, through mutual assistance in order to adapt to the constraints of capitalist modernization. It is therefore a collective reality and the territorial dimension in it, is as important as the social and cultural dimensions. This territorial component is an essential dimension of these micro networks which link the countryside and cities. In the villages, the land component is central, because an important part of the urban-rural financial flows are going to it, both for agriculture and for housing improvement. Moreover many micro-finance flows of these networks support infrastructure, health, education, computer equipment or cultural projects (temples, mosques, churches, meeting centers) as part of a search for an improvement of local life conditions. They are therefore strengthening the territorial identity: of the village. Conversely, more or less festive opportunities allow urban members of these micro networks to remember the rituals and customs of the village, and daily life in the densely populated working-class neighborhoods is often a reinvention of old village social relations, but adapted to the constraints of the urban context. One has to insist that all that is about popular actors. Even if labeling them "popular classes" would add nothing to the analysis, in all cases they are distinct from the urban "middle classes", and especially from the urban upper fringes of the latter. In the words of P.Chatterjee, these latest are driven exclusively by the logic of profit (corporate capital), while the popular actors combine logics of controlled accumulation and redistribution (non-corporate capital). There is more and more a sharp demarcation between these two types of actors in Southeast Asia.

⁹⁷ PRETTY J., & WARD, H.. Social capital and the environment. *World Development*, 2001, 29(2), p. 209–227.

After two or three decades of strong economic growth, the actors linked to the "capital corporate" logic, have reached an hegemonic position in most Asian countries. As a result there is a growing intolerance of that urban middle class toward the urban informal sector. A vague but powerful conviction seems to prevail among the urban middle class that rapid growth will solve all the problems of poverty and inequality of opportunity, and that therefore one should no longer tolerate the parasitic activities of the informal sector, which threatens public order. Such an attitude leads more and more to a dynamic of conflicts which is a visible reality, or at the national level as in Thailand, or most often through multiple local realities, among others in Indonesia, and in the Philippines. "Territory" is a very important component in these conflicts, both in urban areas than in rural areas. The urban "middle classes" want to mark their urban territory and support a policy of "cleansing" the popular economy spaces, often replaced by projects which express the desire of "modernization" and "globalization" of the middle classes⁹⁸.

In addition, the aggressiveness of these middle classes also impulse their desire to conquer rural "territories" that they want to redraw for their economic, residential or recreational interests, such as golf courses. That drive for "land grabbing" is of course also related to the massive expropriations of millions of hectares of land and forests to implement the mega-projects of industrial crops and industrial crops. That involves both plantations for agro-combustibles as rubber, various oilseeds, and crops intended for human food and animal feed. Their impact has been enormous on the geography of South East Asia. This is resulting in a new phase of massive dispossession of the peasantry, and indigenous communities. This dispossession does concern not only land, but also the forests, the subsoil and aquatic resources⁹⁹.

In that context one has to underline the further ambiguity of the role played by the "deagrarianisation" literature since the beginning of the years 2000. Many authors of that school of thinking have supported the so-called "deagrarianisation" tendency in the name of modernization, even of the national interest, or the struggle against poverty. It is

⁹⁸ PETERS R., The Assault on Occupancy in Surabaya: Legible and Illegible Landscapes in a City of Passage, Development and Change 40(5), 2009, p. 903–925

⁹⁹ In 2011, these expropriations have been estimated at between 40 and 60 millions hectares

therefore curious to see the coincidence between the new wave of brutal "land grabbing", impressive even at the scale of the long history of capitalism, and the deployment of a discourse that somehow legitimizes it., since the victims would be in fact consenting: peasants asking to be freed from the constraint of the link to land, their main concern being supposed to be integrated in good conditions in the global wage economy. T.Murray Li, although partially sharing the "deagrarianisation" thesis, denounces clearly the drift of the discourse that claims to justify the dispossession of the peasant lands and their reallocation to more efficient operators to generate growth and thus poverty reduction. She shows that "land grabbing" for the expansion of large plantations is a deliberate strategy of impoverishment-proletarianization of small farmers, but that now these land grabs meet more and more peasants resistance determined to defend their right to the land¹⁰⁰.

An approach in terms of actors conflicts seems the most relevant to analyze the increasing interaction between rural and urban areas in Southeast Asia. These conflicts are and will be more and more at the core of a political economy of sustainable rural development in South East Asia. And it is in this framework that one must assess diverse issues of the future of "a peasant mode of sustainable development" in South East Asia.

¹⁰⁰ LI T. M., 'Centering labor in the land grab debate', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38: 2, 2011, p.281-298

IV. THE PLACE OF A "PEASANT WAY OF DEVELOPMENT" IN THE SEARCH FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SEA

Previous sections have shown the extreme complexity of the question of the place of the peasantry in the societies of Southeast Asian now and in the future. It can also be said that there are two very different perspectives to address this future. On one side, one has the point of view of the inevitability of the long term disappearance of the peasantry as a social class; the other is the point of view of the resilience of the peasantry. The first point of view is obviously in the continuity of the paradigm of modernization, although apparently it has new accents. It has been shown that both the theory of the incorporation of the peasantry in globalized markets under the aegis of their dominant players, and the "deagrarianisation" thesis, even in its "soft" version, are elaborated in the perspective of the inevitable disappearance of the peasantry. But one has also seen that many facts reveal new peasant practices that attest to the resilience of small farmers, and their adaptability to the constraints of the globalized world. These facts are consistent with the arguments of the current of thought which, since more than a quarter of a century, has attempted to reconstruct a vision of the peasantry as an actor, and not only as object or victim of development.

In a first point below, one will briefly recall this theoretical approach developed without specific reference to the context of South East Asia. In the following section one will emphasize the implications that can be drawn from that theory, to assess the place of a "peasant mode of sustainable development" in general, and in South East Asia in particular. This relates on the one hand to the interaction between the role of family and village communities, on the other hand to the articulation between social and territorial dimensions in a process of sustainable development, and finally on the question of the relationship between local governance and the State.

IV.1 Recent views on the role of the peasantry in development

In a contribution referred to above, A Akram-Lodhi does not hesitate to say that the WDR 2008 is only the most recent attempt to reformulate the

theory of modernization as a dominant paradigm of development, reasserting its founding principles, developed already more than half a century ago¹⁰¹.

The programmed elimination of small farmers, under the guise of modernization policies to reduce rural poverty, has resulted along half a century in different stages of deepening pauperization of small farmers. Each new stage opens the way to a new strategy of "fighting poverty". Agricultural modernization, elimination of the small farmers, and the fight against poverty are therefore today, as yesterday, coextensive dimensions of the strategies of the dominant players of the accumulation of capital at the national and global levels. For half a century the reading of development proposed by modernization, this always been to present poverty as a "lack", a deficiency, which can be measured in a monetary way. The result of this discourse is to reduce to a simplistic imagery of poverty all the popular layers, peasantry and petty urban producers alike, those who the historian F.Braudel analyses, called: "the actors at the bottom"¹⁰².

Despite their claim to originality, the discourses on poverty of the years 1990 and 2000 are the continuation of the same approach. More that never the "poor's" are seen as to be freed from their "culture of dependency"; including their dependency upon State support, and be transformed into entrepreneurs and consumers, through the promotion of "a new economic mentality", which will allow them to improve their standard of living¹⁰³.

This approach argues to be in line with A.Sen vision according to which poverty is a situation of lack of freedom, and the poor's lack capacity to define and fulfill their own interests. Therefore, one has to help them develop such a capacity. Insofar as that vision of liberty, is centered on the individual acquisition capacities, it has become a sort of ethical basis

101 AKRAM-LODHI A., (Re) imagining Agrarian Relations? The World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development, Development and Change 39 (6): p.1145-1161

102 VERSCHAEVE F.X, *Libres leçons de Braudel*, Syros, Paris, 1994; Braudel F., *La dynamique du capitalisme*, Arthaud, Paris ,1985

103 SALMEN L., *Reducing Poverty: an Institutional Perspective*, in *Poverty and Social Policy Series 23, 1*, World Bank, Washington, 1992

of the neo-liberal vision of poverty: poor people have to be liberated from poverty in order to be able to enter modernization¹⁰⁴.

Besides the discourse on poverty, the recent evolution of the concepts of participation, "empowerment", civil society, have also been presented as a contribution to free people from oppression and poverty, and improve the capacities of rural poor's to enter modernization. These dominant languages of development have multiplied all these many positive views of the future for peasants and village dwellers. But they can not hide anymore the harsh realities of the ongoing process of "real rural modernization" denying to the peasantry the possibility to be something else than an object of "modernization policies".

But despite its prevalence as the reference for consensus in the discourses and policies formulated by the dominant actors of the global accumulation process, the modernization paradigm has lost the hegemony and even the legitimacy it had enjoyed for half a century since WWII. Since the years 1980-1990, many analysts of rural development have rediscovered the vitality and creativity of the peasant societies, their infinite ability to survive and adapt to all sorts of environmental and institutional constraints, to maintain the conditions of reproduction of the whole family and village, or even in many cases to improve their often precarious living conditions. Gradually one has rediscovered the management rationality of peasant holdings, their openness to the market, their ability to innovate and to intensify the production by original modes of management of local eco-systems¹⁰⁵.

This new look is the opposite of the still dominant belief that only policies of radical modernization of agriculture would be the solution to all the problems of the so-called "backwardness" of the rural world, and that an accelerated promotion of "the farmer modernization model" has to be

104 SEN A. Development as freedom. New York: Random House, 1999. NUSSBAUM M. Women and human development: the capabilities approach, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000.

105 RICHARDS P., Indigenous Agricultural Revolution: Ecology and Food Production in West Africa, Hutchinson, London, 1985. Brokensha, D., Warren M., & Werner o., eds., Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Development, University Press of America, Washington, 1980; BROOKFIELD h. & c. PADOCH, "Appreciating Agrodiversity: A Look at the Dynamism and Diversity of Indigenous Farming Practices", Environment, 36,5,1994, pp. 6-11, 37-43

the only path of agrarian development. For that new approach, diversification in the heart of the strategic behavior of the peasantry¹⁰⁶.

This diversification is of course not the one advocated by the WDR 2008. For this last, diversification means producing more to fit in the value-added chain controlled by the multinational foodstuffs companies or major distribution chains. Diversification is therefore synonymous with dependence on the dominant actors of global accumulation. Instead the peasant diversification strategy aims to ensure security in the maintenance of autonomy. It is based on flexibility in a long-term perspective which aims to ensure both welfare and the secure reproduction of the peasant family. The emphasis on flexibility means that the peasant idea of development is not exclusively focused on the preservation of a minimum income nor alternatively on the sole pursuit of maximum profit¹⁰⁷.

It is a holistic approach to development where peasants seek both to minimize their risk and expand their activity opportunities. At the economic level this leads to a preference for the polyculture instead of specialization in a single culture, an orientation to a diversified structure of working time, including seasonal migrations; the marketing of ancient cultures, the implementation of a sector of artisanal activities, etc¹⁰⁸.

Peasant culture includes both resistance to the subordination and relative egalitarianism. These two elements are crucial to maintain and the community and the system of collective security that it may provide¹⁰⁹.

It is in that perspective that one can understand the sustainability of peasant practices concerning as well relations to the land, the security of tenures, environmental considerations, than socio-cultural relations and village institutions around which the peasant life is built. Stronger integration in the market is also accompanied by a stronger demand for

¹⁰⁶ BERRY S., Rural Class Formation in West Africa, in Bates and Lofchie W.F., eds., Agricultural Development in Africa. Issues of Public Policy, Praeger, New York, 1980

¹⁰⁷ DUFUMIER M., Les organismes génétiquement modifiés (OGM) peuvent-ils nourrir le Tiers-Monde? Actes du Festival International de Géographie, Saint Dié, 2004

¹⁰⁸ BERRY S., No condition is Permanent: the Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1993

¹⁰⁹ ANDERSON L.E., The Political Ecology of the Modern Peasant, Calculation and Community, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1994

security in face of the new risks. The insertion in the market is governed in the invention of new networks of sociability with multiple dimensions, combining both solidarity, clientelism, competition and new associative forms. Peasant development practices are therefore not retrograde or static, but they accept and even seek change, when it is in harmony with the search of an improvement to meet human needs and aspirations"¹¹⁰.

Peasant knowledge must therefore be taken in consideration in the sustainable development concerns, and one cannot ignore the potential of the contribution of a "peasant way of development"¹¹¹.

The peasant logic can integrate technical progress; but this technical progress will be another type than the one imposed through the farmer model of modernization¹¹².

This new insight on the peasantry, patiently built through thousands of field researches in the last quarter of the XX century, has finally begun to have a sort of official recognition, in a publication strangely co-edited by the same multilateral organizations which, during that same quarter of a century, led to the implementation of policies totally contradicting the results of this research. The IAASTD report was published in 2009 under the aegis of FAO, UNEP and. The World Bank. Directed by a team of four hundred researchers from different disciplines, it has called into question, in many chapters, the dominant orthodoxy in agricultural and rural development, including the vision proposed by the WDR 2008!¹¹³

The IAASTD report recognizes the importance of "traditional and local knowledge, based on the practices and knowledge of "local communities" to implement sustainable agricultural practices, protection of biodiversity, and find a way out of poverty. Instead of simply locating agriculture in a

110 AKPOKAVIE C., *The Intervention of International Organizations in Food Policies in Sub-Saharan Africa: a Case Study of Ghana*, CIACO, Louvain-la -Neuve, 1996

111 SANDERSON S., *Poverty and conservation: the new century's 'peasant question?'*. *World Development* 33, p.323–32, 2005

112 SHEPHERD C., *From In Vitro to In Situ: On the Precarious Extension of Agricultural Science in the Indigenous "Third World"*, *Social Studies of Science*, 2006,36,3, p.399–426.

113 McINTYRE B. D., et al., IAASTD, *International Assessment of Agricultural knowledge, Science and Technology for Development: Global report* ., IAASTD, Island Press, Washington ,2009

globalised value chain, it gives a central place to the role that agriculture can play to contribute to the improvement of living conditions of local populations. The report clearly states that the implementation of poverty alleviation and sustainable agriculture targets, requires the recognition of the multifunctional role of agriculture and the plurality of actors in it; in sharp contrast with conventional agricultural modernization policies. The report states clearly that a multifunctional approach means that agriculture can produce marketable products, but also non-tradable products, such as the conservation of the natural environment, the production of landscapes with a use value for the local identity, and many components of cultural heritage. The problems of agricultural sustainability require therefore a multidisciplinary approach. The recognition of local peasant knowledge is seen as an important element to improve production and productivity. The recognition of local specific contexts have to play a central role, with regard to the improvement of soils, water resources management, the fight against pre - and post harvest ravages, diversification of production in the respect of the biodiversity, etc. Local markets must be consolidated to reduce the costs of transaction for small producers and ensure them a greater share of the value created. Despised since the very moment of its publication by the lobbies of the agri-business, this report has almost no possibility to see its recommendations implemented. But that publication itself demonstrates simply that international organizations concerned with rural development, are now forced to recognize that another view of rural development, scientifically based, is possible, even if all their practical choices continue to deny the conclusions of the report.

In addition to that new theoretical discourse on the place of the peasantry in development, a very important fact since the end of the 1990s has been the emergence of a new international peasant movement, aspiring to become a global player. This movement, la Via Campesina, want to be the representative of small and landless peasants, medium farmers, rural women, and youth, farm workers and of indigenous peoples¹¹⁴.

The movement, which in 2010, represented more than 60 organizations from Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America, present itself as autonomous,

¹¹⁴ DESMANAIS A., « Via Campesina: consolidation d'un mouvement paysan international », in Via Campesina, Une alternative paysanne à la mondialisation néo-libérale, CETIM, Genève, 2002, p.71-136

pluralist, multicultural, and politically independent. These organizations meet regularly in international conferences. The main objective of Via Campesina is to develop solidarity and unity among its components to promote justice, the preservation of natural resources and their access to small producers, ecologically sustainable agricultural production and food sovereignty. Food sovereignty has been defined in the "Declaration of Nyeleni", in February 2007, as the right of peoples to organize in first instance agricultural according to the needs of local communities, through the mobilization of local resources. It involves protection of plant and animal species, and the protection of the domestic market against imports of agricultural foreign surplus at dumping prices. Food sovereignty must have priority over trade policy. Local communities must have the means to support family agriculture, which has to be the basis of the agricultural system. They must have the power to control the various components of the food chain, from production to marketing, so that peasant agriculture is not dispossessed of the benefits of his work, as it is the case in the vertical control of the food chain by large agri-business firms. Sustainable agricultural production must not be defined exclusively in ecological and economic criteria, but must ensure the maintenance of long-term local traditions and cultures, social cohesion and a lifestyle with quality. The principles of the movement have been consolidated and proclaimed in the "Charter of the Peasants Rights ", at a Conference held in Jakarta in 2008¹¹⁵.

The statement begins with a critical assessment of the situation of the peasantry in the world, highlighting what it calls violations of the peasants rights of in many countries. Land grabbing is the first grievance. Peasants land is expropriated to be assigned to projects of industrial plantations, manufacturing industries, real-estate speculation or tourism facilities. Huge projects of agrifuels, implemented by companies, often foreign, occupy a central place in the new waves of land grabbing .The expropriation of tens of millions of hectares of land belonging to peasant communities, pose to them a deadly threat. States are complicit in these expropriations, and often take the initiative, with the pretext to allow investments promoting export growth. Peasant resistance to these expropriations are confronted with new forms of violence on the part of

¹¹⁵ Declaration the Peasants Rights, proclaimed at the Via Campesina Jakarta conference, organized in June 2008.

the enterprises concerned, with the murder of peasant leaders by private militias. The States, instead of protecting the peasantry, participate in repression and criminalize various forms of resistance, in arresting, jailing and condemning to heavy sentences militant farmers. However, keeping access to land is an absolute priority for peasant communities, because the loss of land means the loss of identity and autonomy.

After this preamble, the Declaration proceeds forcefully with a long and impressive list of the peasant rights, which does clearly present an alternative view of the peasantry as an actor of development. The holders of these rights are all those who cultivate land with family labor, or through small scale organizations. The peasant families are rooted in local communities, and they take care of the conservation of local eco-systems and the quality of landscapes. As a result farmers must have the right to own land, individually or collectively, to ensure their livelihood, and have a priority to public lands access. Local communities must have the right to manage all natural resources, including irrigation systems, water, and forests. They cannot be crowded out of their ancestral lands for purely economic reasons.

The Declaration insists on the rights of farming communities to maintain and develop their collective knowledge acquired through their historical management of nature and local environment. This concerns the varieties of plants and seeds, the methods of culture, farming, fishing, forest management, the right to exchange seeds and knowledge between farmers, even free of charge,. It is also the right to refuse the methods of industrial agriculture, implemented solely by the productivity and the profit motive, without worrying about the long-term impact on biodiversity, health and the quality of social life. The right of local communities to protect and preserve the resources of biodiversity is proclaimed with force. They should refuse the recognition of patents that threaten the control of communities upon local genetic resources. Local communities cannot be forced to recognize the certification mechanisms established by multinationals, or external intellectual property rights upon products and knowledge developed by local practices. Finally the Declaration calls on States to protect the peasants rights, support them, including the improvement of conditions of production and marketing to the benefit of peasant communities. The declaration has also appealed to States to respect the peasant culture, recognize the originality of its moral

and spiritual values, of its knowledge and its institutions, to protect its cultural and organizational heritage, and take concrete steps to prevent its destruction.

There are therefore new approaches to the realities of rural development, both at the theoretical level than practice. They have great relevance for countries which at the beginning of the 21st century, yet have a strong and large peasantry constituting even the majority of the population. It is the multidimensional character of peasant practices which allows to highlight the link between them and what may be called the production of the "rural territory". These practices are indeed linked with all the features of village life: management of natural resources (agriculture, livestock, fisheries, forest, pasture), production, marketing, crafts, the improvement of the supply of water and habitat, savings and credit, services (shops and village pharmacies, grain storage facilities, village health houses, mills). But they are also linked with the production of the social link through a combination of ties of interdependence, and strategies of collective security (associations, groups, tontines, pre-cooperatives, mutual funds, etc.) In peasant practices, the mobilization of savings is often made through associative modes that combine economic initiative with the consolidation of social links. They often materialize the reinvention of new links of solidarity in a context of great uncertainty. These links of solidarity are between partners who identify themselves as equal partners of a same association based on criteria of trust and proximity (neighborhood, belonging to the same area, ethnic or religious groups ¹¹⁶ .

To recognize the experience, the needs, expectations and potential of old and new social structures (village assemblies, women's associations, youth groups) is important to substitute a quasi-contractual relationship to an authoritarian relationship that was and is still the basis of all modernization strategies proposed or imposed from the outside. To take account of the peasantry as development player, requires to take into consideration the many networks, which are inserted, in one way or another, in a historical continuity linking urban and rural living spaces. The rural and urban popular vision of space, never corresponded to the modernization imaginary, separating the "traditional countryside" from

¹¹⁶ PEEMANS J.Ph., Gouvernance locale, secteur informel et pratiques populaires de développement, in Kioni Kiabantu,ed., La république démocratique du Congo face aux défis du 21ème siècle, Academia Bruylant, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1999

the "modern city".. Migrant peasants-workers shuttle between the site of the family rural production, the urban informal sector or large agro-industrial farms. Producers activity is thus linked to different geographical sites: they are both in the urban and rural world, in the "developed" and the "underdeveloped" spaces, and their identity is made up of a set of references that refer to these different locations¹¹⁷.

For generations, the peasants and urban popular worlds were connected by invisible myriad of networks of exchange. Today these networks are globalized, through human, economic and monetary flows linking often remote villages to various national and foreign. urban centers. That means that peasants as well as popular economy actors are accustomed since centuries, to live in heterogeneous spaces, where the popular practice of construction and reconstruction of mini-territories are implemented through diverse types of struggle and resistance. The relations city-countryside are much more complex and contradictory than the normative readings of modernization and globalization would suggest. However this new complexity does not remove the role of the rural "territory" as a component of the peasant identity. The rural territory of peasants-migrant remains the place which can integrate the various components of well-being supported or enriched by revenues from the migration. It is a fortiori true for those whose life in the village is the base of their activity, and who play often the role of "keepers of the collective heritage" for those who "move".

IV.2. The question of the interaction between family farms and village communities

One has seen that there is sufficient evidence to consider the future of the peasantry of South - East Asia, not as "a species being endangered", but as a collective actor inseparable from the issue of sustainable development. The peasantry can no longer be reduced to a simplistic classification or a homogeneous social category. The peasant world is a very differentiated world, composite and hybrid, whose rural and urban dimensions are closely interconnected.

¹¹⁷ KEARNEY M., *Reconceptualizing the Peasantry, Anthropology in Global Perspective*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1996, ch.5

However the rural anchoring of the peasantry remains the central dimension of its place as social actor for the future. A strategy of sustainable development, should give particular attention to the potential offered by a "peasant way of sustainable development". This means going out of the individualistic approach that has been at the heart of the farm modernization strategies for more than half a century, and which is still present in the so-called "poverty reduction" strategies, and in those aimed at integrating small farmers in "value chains" dominated by the major operators of the agro-food sector.

The economic and social base of the overwhelming majority of small farmers is the family farm, but at the same time it is inseparable from the general situation in the villages, which are historical collective actors. Recent studies at the level of villages in a large number of countries show that there are many village institutions that are still well alive. Peasant communities have reinvented or created in the last quarter century thousands of associations directed towards the improvement of the well-being of the community. These peasant associative and community initiatives play an important role to ensure collective security through changes affecting the village life. Their common vision of local development is the search for integration between the technical, economic, social and environmental activities. Very often this is linked with attempts to renew the achievements of collective knowledge, inherited from the past, in the control of local eco-systems to improve local living conditions. Recent studies have shown that taking account of soil quality empirical knowledge of a peasant community, can ensure better results than a pure scientific and undifferentiated approach of the same local soils¹¹⁸.

A very interesting case of maintenance and renewal of collective farm practices concerns the exchanges of improved seeds. These practices are very old, in Southeast Asia, as in other regions of the world... Within the villages, peasants were used to share between themselves the seeds that they had improved during long years of "trying and learning" on their farms. These exchanges are off-market and based on links of reciprocity. They allow both to consolidate the latter, and collectively improve the

¹¹⁸ SALEQUE M. A. and UDDIN M. K. and al., Use of Farmers' Empirical Knowledge to Delineate Soil Fertility-Management Zones and Improved Nutrient-Management for Lowland Rice, *Communications in Soil Science and Plant Analysis*, 39, p. 25–45, 2008

knowledge and the level of quality and productivity of the plant species concerned. A recent evolution is that these peasant practices of selection, are now based on new varieties of seeds provided by agro-industry, or public agronomic stations. They are also done by crossing old varieties with new varieties from trade and agro-industry adapted for use with new inputs of industrial origin (case of maize in East Java). Peasants often recognize the benefits of these varieties for their resistance or performance, but regret often the special qualities of some old varieties, including flavor. In Viet Nam these informal collective practices have allowed to maintain the qualities of particular kinds of rice flavor especially appreciated by consumers (Tai Nguyen rice variety of the Mekong delta) In the Philippines, the PSB (Philippines Seeds Board) has recognized several seed varieties developed by the peasant practices from strains from IRRI.

In Viet Nam and the Philippines, more formal innovation associations (like Pedigrea), have developed to systematically improve the seed qualities through the creation of hybrids of old and new seeds. These practices illustrate the collective creativity of the farmers through the renovation of former reciprocity practices, adapting them to new constraints and new potential from external resources. Of course the consolidation of these practices, which can be at the heart of a "peasant mode of sustainable development" are faced with the opposition of the firms wanting to maintain their monopoly on the supply of industrial seeds, and seeking to extend the respect of their patents to the prohibition of these practices. These peasant collective practices cannot therefore survive without protection and institutional support appropriate to each context, and without the recognition of their intellectual property rights¹¹⁹

It must however be noted that often the peasant collective initiatives are facing external stakeholders that do not recognize their potential for sustainable development adapted to the local context. External interventions are often in contradiction with local initiatives seeking complementarities and integration between themselves. These peasant initiatives are weakened by external interventions relying on the contrary upon the privatization of resources, the specialization of the production

¹¹⁹ SALAZAR R. LOUWAARS N. et VISSER B., Protecting Farmers' New Varieties: New Approaches to Rights on Collective Innovations in Plant Genetic Resources, World Development Vol. 35, No. 9, p. 1515–1528, 2007

value chain, marketing and credit systems, and forms of management in the hands of local and foreign experts. Most of the time, these external interventions cause extreme forms of social differentiation and polarization that weaken the existing village communities and their local bargaining power. In the name of the fight against poverty, in fact they pave the way for new forms of "modernized impoverishment". Taking account of a "peasant way of sustainable development" requires therefore to abandon the various types of authoritarian modernization projects imposed externally (often disguised under a participatory rhetoric), and recognize seriously the potential of community structures and associative local initiatives (peasant associations, village meetings, women's association, youth association, etc).

IV.3. The question of the link between territorial and social dimensions in a process of sustainable development

The point of departure for a reflection on sustainable development is to escape the confusion between modernization, growth and development. It must propose a more demanding and more open vision of development, than the success of growth. Taking in consideration the territorial dimension can help to expand the vision of development. With a territorial approach to development one can say that: "development is the process of mobilization and use of resources of a territory, through which, the people of this territory sets, within an institutional framework appropriate to the latter, his relationship with nature and his way of life, constantly improving its social system and its well-being, and building his own identity that has a material base in the construction of the territory"¹²⁰.

A sustainable mode of development is based on the recognition of the diversity of urban and rural territories and their patrimonies inherited from their long history. This recognition of diversity contrasts with the tendency to homogenization of spaces related exclusively to the standards of globalized growth. A sustainable mode of development is part of an ongoing process of construction of the conditions of a high quality of life for the entire population, including the needs of security of

¹²⁰ PEEMANS J.Ph., Le développement des peuples face à la modernisation du monde, Louvain-la-Neuve, Paris, Academia-Bruylant, L'Harmattan, 2002, p.457

the latter, in their material and spiritual components. An integrated sustainable development strategy has to include the question of a balanced relations between the countryside and the cities and the quality of life in the urban, peri-urban and rural territories, including the many issues of the food chain, mobility, health and habitat ¹²¹.

This development approach, besides its normative aspect, highlights the conflicting nature of initiatives and demands around a territory.: either the territory is seen as a deposit of human and material resources to mobilize in an optimal way to foster growth and accumulation, either the territory is seen as a place to live, in which resources must aim primarily to build the framework for "a good life", security and the dignity of all. Therefore this approach can help to analyze in a relevant way real development processes and issues of conflict between actors and players who compete for the control of a territory. However, it should be noted that this concept of territorial development is far from the one which prevails among the ruling elites in South East Asia. For half a century, one of the main concerns of State powers in the region, has been to ensure the extension of the "national territory", through the strengthening of control of the central regions on marginal areas, be it in the name of the fight against subversion, of economic modernization or even recently, of the protection of environment ¹²².

In recent decades, the "community development" rhetoric was often used, as a proxy for "territorial development", particularly in the Philippines, to strengthen the control of the State on local communities ¹²³.

121 PEEMANS J.PH., Acteurs, histoire, territoires et la recherche d'une économie politique d'un développement durable, *Monde en Développement*, n° 150, Juin 2010, p.23-42

122 VANDERGEEST P., & PELUSO N. L.. Territorialization and state power in Thailand. *Theory and Society*, 1995, 24, 385–426

123 GAULD, R., Maintaining centralized control in community-based forestry: policy construction in the Philippines. *Development and Change*, 2000, 31,p. 229–254; McDERMOTT M. H., Invoking community: indigenous people and ancestral domain in Palawan, the Philippines, in A. Agrawal, & C. Gibson (Eds.), *Communities and the environment: Ethnicity, gender, and the state in community-based conservation*, Rutgers University Press., New Brunswick, 2001, p.32-62

In addition, it is clear that the South East Asian ruling elites are currently totally addicted to a vision of development based solely upon outward oriented growth and urban "poles of growth" supposed to be the engine and center of capital accumulation. The countryside is seen only as an instrument of this policy. Their main concern is to ensure an adequate mobilization of their human and material resources to ensure the viability of the urban poles of growth. One can have very serious doubt that such a strategy can ensure the long-term conditions of a sustainable development for the vast majority of the population in the cities and the countryside. Soon or latter, the ruling elites of the region will be obliged to change their mind, and give a more serious attention to a balanced view of territorial development, with an other type of relation between the cities and the countryside. In that perspective, the territorial dimension in the rural areas will have to take account of the role of the peasantry as a real actor of development., and the potentialities of a "peasant way of development" .It is the peasantry, organized at the local level, that gives a meaning to the territorial dimension as a component of sustainable development. Such an approach is in line with the 2008 "Declaration of Peasants Rights", not inadvertently promulgated precisely in Jakarta, with a very active involvement of SEA peasants organizations.

In this context, a social sector of "associative economy (SSAE) can play a key role in the territorial construction of sustainable development. A SSAE based on the mobilization of local resources for local needs through the consolidation of associations created by local populations, can promote a maximum internalization of the revenues created by various activities in a region A SSAE can provide the appropriate institutional framework to ensure a broad diversification of agricultural production, the processing of agricultural products, marketing and procurement, the promotion of crafts and small rural industries, micro-credit associations, and mutual health services. It may also coordinate initiatives to improve the infrastructures and the conservation of the local ecosystem. All these activities can complement and reinforce each other, to create a "threshold effect" to visibly improve local living conditions¹²⁴ .

124 PEEMANS J-P, Etat, marché et enjeux d'un développement rural durable, Conférence francophone sur le renforcement de l'exploitation agricole familiale en Asie du Sud-Est, Vientiane, 16-18 juillet 2001, Fonds International de Coopération Universitaire, AUF ed., 2001, p.55-84

A SSAE is of course the antidote of a system rooted on the crude exploitation of the peasantry (as often it was the case with the State cooperatives), or its disguised exploitation (as is the case now with the subcontracting systems, or outsourcing to rural workshops). An area of associative economy has nothing to do with the conservative vision of "imagined communities" which is abundant in some literature on participatory development. Such an approach of these communities as an immutable tradition of natural solidarity, has paradoxically reproduced often the clichés of modernization, featuring local communities with a fixed identity based on values radically opposed to change. This vision is patently at odds with the reality in most peasant societies of today..In the case of Southeast Asia, the latter are integrated to the vagaries of the contemporary world, and adapt to it, often in a way that has nothing to do with the supposed virtues of the "natural community"¹²⁵.

A sector of associative economy can help to strengthen the capacity of coordination, organization and innovation, of actors who have already informal practices of association. This can allow them to deal with the market constraints, in a better bargaining position, to face the powerful actors which in fact control the markets. The institutional framework of a SSAE can prevent it from being transformed into a mere instrument of accumulation for the benefit of the enrichment of a minority, with at the same time the increase of new forms of poverty¹²⁶.

The fundamental difference between a SSAE and producers associations promoted by the WDR 2008, is that, for the latter producers associations are merely a tool to promote the competitiveness for the global market, while a real SSAE is an organization that seeks to achieve a better quality of life within a community related to a territory. In that sense a SSAE is a powerful instrument to combine what has been at the heart of the peasant culture for centuries, the search for a human-oriented development and for a "good life", with a participation in a socially embedded and controlled market. Because of its very nature, a SSAE can

¹²⁵ AGRAWAL A., & GIBSON C. Enchantment and disenchantment: the role of community in natural resource conservation, *World Development*, 1999, 27(4),p. 629–650;LI, T. M. Agrarian differentiation and the limits of natural resource management in upland Southeast Asia, *IDS Bulletin*, 2001, 32(4), 88–94.

¹²⁶ LAVILLE J.-L. *Politique de l'association*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 2010

provide a space, not submitted only to a strategy devoted to growth at any cost, but open to the construction of a sustainable development.

IV.4. The role of the State and "local governance" in the political economy of a "peasant way of sustainable development"

The support of a "peasant mode of sustainable development" requires to attach much importance to the type of "local governance" capable of contributing to this support. There has been, since twenty years a remarkable exuberance of the literature on "participatory community development." It is a literature from diverse origins where the authors (academics, NGOs, international organizations) are engaged in a semantic outburst about the virtues of the so-called "participation at the base". Behind the multiplicity of the discourses, however, there is a large unity in an attempt to legitimize and do make accept external projects by local communities, which most of the time are fed up with "the top down" approach¹²⁷.

In this context the imported version of "local governance" seeks to define local institutions in a way which is as much functional as possible for overseeing a good "market transition". It is this type of governance that the WDR 2008 encourages to promote the integration of peasant agriculture in agro-food value chains. In counterpoint to that approach, the importance of voluntary and community initiatives of the peasant world itself have to receive attention. They are both in a continuity and a revival of what was a "historical" local governance, through which thousands of local communities have tried for centuries to define the rules of "living in common", to ensure their safety and their viability. The remembrance of historical governance can also be an important tool to give local communities self-confidence, and reinforce the historic link between local development and cultural identity. Otherwise, the loss of self-confidence opens the way for an accelerated destruction of culture and values able to support a sustainable way of local development. The following lucid reflection of K.Polanyi is worthwhile to be quoted in relation with that process: ".it is not economic exploitation, as it is often assumed, but the disintegration of the cultural environment of the victim

¹²⁷ CRAIG D., PORTER D., *Development Beyond Neoliberalism? Governance, Poverty Reduction and Political Economy*, London, Routledge., London, 2006

which is the cause of degradation. The economic process can provide the vehicle of destruction and, almost invariably, the economic inferiority will make the weak give up, but the immediate cause of its loss is not mainly economic, it is rooted in the deadly wound inflicted to the institutions in which his social life is incarnated "¹²⁸.

An illustration of that point is given by a recent study of the Karen minority villages in the West of Thailand. It has shown that the consumption of non-timber forest products, known by the population for centuries, can deliver a nutrient equivalent to products sold on urban markets. But these original products are systematically downgraded in the dominant Thai culture, to the point that even the local populations begin to doubt their interest. They are thus forced, by a cultural pressure, to enter the consumption of so-called "superior" products, which contribute to their poverty ¹²⁹.

One of the roles of strong local governance is to help communities to enhance their cultural and material heritage. A new local governance based on associative networks inside the local community can play an important role in supporting "a peasant mode of sustainable development". This local governance is a framework that can stimulate synergies between associations of farmers, provide a framework for cooperation between them and the village authorities. It often depends on the conservation and improvement of the productive potential of local ecosystems, creating synergies and complementarities between their various components. In view of the gap between the requirements of long-term sustainability and profitability in the short term, the management of interdependence between these components cannot be left to individual entrepreneurs through the privatization of resources. There is a large number of field activities that require a collective organization in order to reinforce the potential synergies between them. They include: community agro-forestry projects; valorization of NWFP (non-timber forest products); reforestation operations; the fight against erosion and desertification; the production of biomass for energy; the treatment of plant and animal waste for the production of natural

¹²⁸ POLANYI K., *La grande transformation*, Gallimard, Paris, 1983, p.88

¹²⁹ DELANG C.O., *The role of wild food plants in poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation in tropical Countries*, *Progress in Development Studies* 2006, 6, p. 275-286

fertilizers; the integration between vegetal, animal and aquaculture products the construction of light irrigation systems; improved seeds production; the improvement of village storage facilities, etc...

Many of these activities are in fact eco-infrastructure projects that can help improve the security of the conditions of production and the existence of small farmers, and increase sustainable agricultural production without being exclusively dependent on inputs provided by the market operators, fostering a system of uneven exchange, leading to impoverishment of the small farmers. The implementation of these projects can play a big role in sustainable rural development strategies. This involves to give consideration to the peasant heritage in integrated agriculture-livestock systems, well illustrated in Indonesia Viet Nam experiences, and which are now regarded as a way to consolidate a sustainable rural development¹³⁰.

Several studies have highlighted the interest of local agro-forestry practices, through diverse forms of forest management which do meet the criteria of sustainable development. These methods of management of the "domestic forest" combine a relationship between agricultural rotations and productive management of certain parts of the forests aiming at the regeneration of the existing forest. This has been the case for many historical agro-forestry systems in Indonesia. These systems were based on historical governance, since they have focused on collective rules of forest access, combined with individual rights of use. Together they ensured social cohesion and permanence between generations¹³¹.

These studies focus on the link between sustainable reproduction of the forest in the long term and sustainable socio-cultural reproduction of the communities concerned. These elaborate systems of agro-forestry are real "territories of life", and combine the management of the forest

130 ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, Building Climate Resilience in the Agriculture Sector in Asia and the Pacific, Manilla, 2009,p.179

131 MICHON G., H. de FORESTA H, KUSWORO A., and LEVANG P.,The Damar agro-forests of Krui, Indonesia: justice for forest farmers. Pages 159-203 in C. Zerner, editor. People, plants and justice: the politics of nature conservation. Columbia University Press, 2000,p.159-203

resource and the construction of cultural identity and social links between the members of the community¹³² .

In a growing number of cases, this form of governance is threatened by the pressures made on local communities to reconvert to a private management oriented toward export products controlled by agro-industry. In the case of agro-forestry systems combining the damar (a softwood), food crops (rice and vegetables) and perennial productions (coffee and pepper), in the South of Sumatra, there is a decrease in revenues from the damar, which is at the centre of the agro-system. This evolution encourages some of the producers concerned to cut down these trees when the price offered for their wood is high . However the cultural and symbolic elements attached to the system still ensures its resilience. New trees are planted by young farmers who have an urban employment, and areas based upon the integrated agro-system continues to expand .The legacy of local governance is able therefore to ensure the reproduction of this system, despite unfavorable conditions. But it seems obvious that its future will depend on a clear policy of support by the Indonesian State¹³³ .

Another example illustrating the role of local governance is the implementation of local projects of bio-energy based on the use of fairly hardy plants (jatropha). It also involves strong institutions of local governance to ensure the effects of complementarities between the components. These projects can provide not only domestic energy for lighting, cooking, but also for irrigation pumps, fertilizer production, etc¹³⁴ .

Biogas production can help also to improve considerably the well being of peasant communities, through animal and plant waste recycling (anaerobic digestion), for the production of energy and other use. It has a

132 MICHON G., De FORESTA H.,LEVANG P. and F. VERDEAUX F., Domestic forests: a new paradigm for integrating local communities' forestry into tropical forest science, *Ecology and Society* 12(2): 1,2007

133 KUSTERS K. et al., Will Agroforests Vanish? The Case of Damar Agroforests in Indonesia, *Human Ecology*, 2008, 36, p.357–370

134 EWING, M. and MSANGI S., Biofuels production in developing countries: Assessing tradeoffs in welfare and food security. *Environmental Science and Policy*, 2009, 12 (4). pp. 520–528

visible effect on the environment through the drastic reduction in the firewood consumption it entails¹³⁵.

These facilities operate optimally at the village level, within a dynamic local governance. This is what has shown the experience of China which has been a pioneer in the sector, and where in 2010, more than 27 million peasant families were related to this type of energy resource. Also in the Chinese experience, it is interesting to note the relationship between the role of the State and the local initiative, since government subsidies cover two thirds of the equipment cost¹³⁶.

Strong institutions of local governance can also renew the relationship between local communities and the State, in what may be called a new "Pact" for sustainable development. Charters of local and regional "sustainable development" can be concrete instruments for the construction or reconstruction of local territories. A new legitimacy of the State may be based on its ability to allow the largest possible majority of associations and local communities, to extend the sphere of their social and economic rights. The SSAE mentioned above, can contribute in a particularly positive way to a new relationship between local governance and the State, in order to implement a sustainable development policy. The role of the State should be to protect these activities by appropriate regulations ensuring their access to the resources needed for their development. Coordination of local associative systems could be made through a very light system of local planning by communes or municipalities, which could become the point of articulation between the State, the public sector and the associative sector. In this way, the three could be mutually reinforcing each other, in the search for a common strategy promoting the sustainable development of the national territory. That means the State authorities would recognize the legitimacy of the local historical governance. However, in most of the countries of the region, the colonial powers and more or less authoritarian powers in recent decades, have weakened or even largely obliterated the historic governance institutions. Moreover the temptation of some "democratized" States is to redefine local institutions in a way they will

¹³⁵ van NES, W. J., Asia hits the gas: Biogas from anaerobic digestion rolls out across Asia., Renewable Energy World,2006, (January–February). pp. 102–111

¹³⁶ ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK,op.cit., 2009, p.190

support only better central State control, despite a extensively use of the participation rhetoric.

An example is the KDP (Kecamatan Development Project) in Indonesia, considered being the most important program of this kind in Southeast Asia. Established in 1998, this project is supposed to give the power to the villagers to define of what are their priority development projects. Firstly implemented in 28,000 villages, it has been disseminated by decree in 2006, to 60,000 villages. Accepted projects can receive support from the State ranging from 60,000 to 110,000 dollars. However, in practice, it seems that, in many cases, the assemblies put in place are in fact an instrument of the central authority to better assert its control over local elites, through some form of popular participation. But the local collectivities seem to have a very weak capacity to propose projects reflecting popular demands. According to many recent studies, Indonesia is showing many examples of the ambiguity, or even the duplicity of the State policies in face of the peasant world: on the one hand one has a pervasive assault against the communities historical governance practices, on the other hand the implementation of so-called participatory institutions supposed to restore power to local communities, but in fact under the aegis of an often opaque alliance between State actors and large national or foreign firms, aiming at the control of local resources¹³⁷.

Another example is the great ambiguity of the CBNRM programs (Community Based Natural Resources Management) implemented in the mountainous regions of several countries. These programs claim to be based on the desire to involve local communities in the management of natural resources, because they are supposed being better able to preserve the local environment and biodiversity, and to ensure the maintenance of the local population security of existence. However, some observers have doubts about the conformity of this discourse with the realities it covers. It represents local populations as natural communities

¹³⁷ GIBSON C., & WOOLCOCK M., Empowerment, Deliberative Development, and Local-Level Politics in Indonesia: Participatory Projects as a Source of Countervailing Power, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 2008, 43, p.151–180; GUGGENHEIM SE. Crises and contradictions: explaining a community development project in Indonesia. In: Bebbington A, Guggenheim SE, Olson E, Woolcock M, editors. *The search for empowerment: social capital as idea and practice at the World Bank*. Kumarian Press, Bloomfield, 2006. p.111-144

focused only on the basic subsistence needs, while in fact these populations are often very interested and very able to mobilize the resources of their natural environment to increase their income. Through authoritarian conservationist views, the “traditional communities” designated as such are compelled to management practices, imposed by national bureaucracies and foreign donors, whose programs deny local communities any initiative not corresponding to the clichés of a supposed transition to modernity¹³⁸.

In the Philippines as in Indonesia, programs supported by NGOs specializing in the conservation of natural resources, have met and meet more and more stiff opposition from local communities, because the foreign sponsored projects are at odds with their ancestral local eco-systems management practices. T.M.Li has shown how the language of participation in fact often covers a will of States to extend their control over communities having maintained some de facto autonomy. Much worse, the environmental concern officially displayed, is manifested especially in areas that have already been completely devastated by wild logging during the years 1980-1990, conducted by large multinational firms. In many cases, the argument of environment protection is a pretext to justify new large projects of biofuels. Local communities are forced to accept collaboration with new multinational in this sector, all under the auspices of these so-called CBNRM programs¹³⁹.

However one cannot reduce the relations between States and local communities only to a heavily distorted power game in which the political authorities are trying to manipulate the local populations to better control or exploit them, in collaboration with the most powerful economic actors. An example of another possible link between State and local communities has been the project of village funds established in Thailand in 2001. The Thai Government has created in 2001 the "Village Fund" system, establishing a public micro-credit system, involving an amount of approximately 30,000 US \$ available to each of the 77.000 villages of the country. The funds made available to the villages in the whole of the

¹³⁸ LYNCH O. J., & TALBOTT K., *Balancing acts: Community-based forest management and national law in Asia and the Pacific*, World Resources Institute, Washington, 1995

¹³⁹ MURRAY LI T., *Engaging Simplifications: Community-Based Resource Management, Market Processes and State Agendas in Upland Southeast Asia*, World Development, 2002, Vol. 30, No. 2, pp. 265–283

country amounted to 1.5% of GDP. The organization of village funds was based on a system of local governance, deliberately supported by the State, since the creation of these funds was a component of the National Act of Village and Community Fund in 2001. The purpose of this Act was to support and stimulate the initiatives of local communities to improve the conditions of production, employment and life in general. This Fund has changed deeply the credit access conditions in rural areas¹⁴⁰.

In that system, loans are allocated through a village committee composed of 10 to 15 delegates, elected by the villagers, in meetings where at least 75% of households must be represented. Loans are granted for 1 year and may vary from 500 to 1,500 dollars, at a rate of approximately 6% interest. There is an obvious link between the State and the villages, since in fact the village funds are technically operated by the local offices of the BAAC (Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives), both for the granting of loans and for repayment. However these offices, are supposed not to intervene in the decisions or the control of village funds. Loans are used for consumption or for production purposes. What is important to emphasize is that they are village committees who decide who can benefit from loans, according to local criteria. These credits are not awarded according to international or national technocracies criteria, defining potential beneficiaries through their own typology of poverty. It is at the level of the village that is decided "those who need money" for an emergency, or to undertake a project. Those who request and receive a loan are normal people, "peers not poor's". Through this procedure it is not because there is a lack of money that a villager must be stored in a degrading "poor" category with a lower despicable status, and submitted to a severe "market pedagogy". Through this institution, the State was recognizing the peasantry as a collective actor, organized at the village level. It is a very different approach than the individual micro-credit programs, controlled by a bank micro-bureaucracy, as in the case of the Granmeen Bank. It is interesting to note that in the villages studied by Menkhoff et Rungruxsirivorn, in the provinces of Buri Ram, Nakhon Phanom and Ubon Ratchatani, 70% of borrowers are considered as peasants, 20% as wage workers, and 10% as independent. That social structure shows incidentally that the "peasantry" remains the heart of the

¹⁴⁰ MENKHOFF L. and RUNGRUXSIRIVORN O., Do Village Funds Improve Access to Finance? Evidence from Thailand, World Development, 2011, Vol. 39, No. 1, p. 110–122

rural population, and that it wishes to participate actively in the market via the credit¹⁴¹.

The Thailand Village Fund illustrates a situation which is rather at odds with the "deagrarianisation" thesis. It helps to put the real issues of that theory in terms of a "political economy of development". The creation of these funds has been part of a political project, aimed to give a new political base to the regime of Prime Minister Thaksin who came to power in the 1990s. The objective of that billionaire tycoon had clearly some sort of populist overtone. It aimed to mobilize the votes of rural masses through a policy of improvement of infrastructure, health, education, provision of basic rural services. In a certain way, it was a sort of late implementation of a basic needs policy. But it was also in line with the more recent discourses about poverty, including the Millennium Development Goals. This policy received a positive welcome from a large part of the rural world. It has resulted in a inclusion of the peasantry as a stakeholder into the political scene monopolized until then by the intra-elites fractions struggles. But urban elites reacted very negatively to this evolution, accusing the Thaksin government, not only of populism, but of squandering public funds for purposes contrary to the requirements of growth and competitiveness of the Thai economy. This has led to the coup of 2006, throwing Thaksin out of power, and to a permanent political crisis since that year. The urban elites have been mobilized in more and more radical and violent manners to demand the end of the reforms undertaken by Thaksin. According to Chairat Charoensin-o-larn, because of the latter, the Thai ruling classes have developed a genuine hatred of parliamentary democracy if it leads to strengthen the place of the popular classes in the society. They consider themselves the only ones to represent civil society, while not hesitating to take the streets (occupations of airports by the so called "yellow shirts")¹⁴².

But the urban elites violent reaction has entailed a parallel mobilization of popular masses, including rural dwellers especially from the so-called "backward areas" from the North East, to defend the reforms and demand the return of the exiled Prime Minister. This led to the

141 MENKHOFF L. and RUNGRUXSIRIVORN O., *op.cit.*, p.114

142 CHAROENSIN-O-LARN C., THAILAND in 2009, Unusual Politics Becomes Usual, Southeast Asian Affairs 2010, Institute of South East Asian Studies, 2010, p.304-334

occupation of central Bangkok by their movement of "red shirts". The end of this occupation by military force did not end permanently the protest movements that have continued to occur. Thailand has thus entered a state of permanent instability, which even had an impact on its relations with its neighbors. According to many observers, the border conflict with Cambodia has been fostered by elements directly related to the nature of the political crisis in Thailand. These events are not solely relevant as political anecdote. In fact they highlight the emergence of very violent conflicts between the ruling elites and a popular movement, now self confident and organized, that demands its place and the recognition of its interests in the political system. But people's who have spearheaded that movement are in fact the new hybrid popular actors, mentioned here above, composed largely of peasant - workers, circulating between the cities and the countryside. They belong to both worlds, but require that the State do recognize their identity as rural people who maintain a fundamental commitment to land, natural resources and village life. The situation of Thailand probably foreshadows the future evolution of most of the countries of Southeast Asia. It allows to challenge seriously the predictions of the "deagrarianisation" theory. The central issue is not the disappearance of the traditional peasantry. It lies with the reconstruction of the power relations between actors in the political economy of development. The new hybrid peasantry has been transformed into a popular player which can no longer be reduced to the image of a backward peasantry, or a mass of poor's waiting for their incorporation into markets and growth. They are a new unexpected type of development actor, ready to confront old and new economic and social elites.

CONCLUSIONS

One has tried here above to show that an approach in terms of political economy of development allows to highlight the major issues of the future of rural development in South East Asia.

A first component of that political economy is the overwhelming influence of the most conventional development theories focused only upon the themes of economic modernization and now globalization. Both phenomena continues at a frantic pace since a quarter of a century. Their impact on South-East Asia rural areas has been and remains quite impressive. In fact these conventional approaches, old and new, are all focused on the visions of a linear progress, based on the universality and the inevitability of some supposed development laws. These laws have become normative principles, justifying policies intended to accelerate, at any social or environmental cost, the pace of modernization. One obvious case is the idea of the inevitability of the alignment of the Southeast Asian food model on the western norms of consumption and production And that idea does entail of course policies giving priority to the expansion of large firms in the agro-food and retail sectors. The deagrarianisation theory is also a piece of these inevitability discourses. Even if it is presented with new semantics, it is difficult to see anything but a reformulation of the good old theories of dualism or of the agrarian transition, predicting the inevitable disappearance of the peasantry in the universal movement to progress for the ones, to capitalism for the others. Its only novelty is to say that the peasantry itself wants massively to leave agriculture in which there is no more future: peasants have therefore to be "liberated" from agriculture. Recently the "new economic geography" current has advanced the theory that the future belongs to mega-cities of tens of millions of people, connected through multimodal transport and telecommunications networks being the keys to global performance and competitiveness. For this thesis it is therefore important to encourage the concentration of investment in these urban growth poles and not waste or scatter resources in rural areas. This is nothing else than an ultimate version of the "urban bias" often denounced in the years 1970-1980, which resurface now, in a more radical version where the rural areas are definitively obliterated as a development component.

A second component of the political economy of the rural world is that its realities are much more complex and at odds with many of these predictions about inevitability. It seems a bit too early to bury the Southeast Asian peasantry. The peasants of South East Asia continue to develop ever more diversified and intensive economic activities, agricultural land and village numbers are in expansion, despite the enormous pressures that are exerted from various origins. Moreover the peasant world is a world full of initiatives and innovations that cannot be reduced only to economic dimensions. In the same vein, migration cannot be reduced to the one way interpretation made by the "deagrarization" theory. Migration gives rise to the establishment of new social relationships between the villages and urban working-class neighborhoods, through multiple initiatives of migrants networks. Besides a peasantry that remains essentially focused on agricultural activity, there is the emergence of a "hybrid peasantry", half rural, half urban, contributing to redraw the contours of the village life, and to establish new relationships between cities and countryside. A strong attachment to the land remains common to these various categories of peasants.

A third component of a political economy of the rural world in Southeast Asia is that they are a variety of possible routes for its future. A complete deagrarianisation process or alternatively, a pure "peasant way of development" are not the only ways. Practices and initiatives of the various categories of the peasantry are however indicating that the peasantry, being hybrid or not, has to be recognized as an insuperable actor of a sustainable way of rural development. A major problem for thinking in terms of sustainable rural development is the ancient and persistent refusal of dominant political and economic elites, to take into consideration the diversity of possible routes. Their vision is obliterated by projects wanting to impose the sole path of accelerated modernization, now even restricted to the sole requirements of globalization. This ideological vision most often masks the interests of a minority of powerful actors for which the peasantry and its natural life supports are only instruments to accelerate the trend towards the hegemony of capital accumulation rules. However, a growing number of case studies show this type of reasoning leads to an intractable deadlock, in terms of both social and environmental imbalances and deepening agrarian and urban crises. A reflection on sustainable development

cannot only be restricted to some sorts of incantatory discourses. It has to take into account the reality of the existing power relations between the conflicting actors of different paths of wild capital accumulation or sustainable human development.

A fourth point of interest in terms of a political economy of development of the rural world, is that at least it can help to highlight what is at stake in these power relations, well beyond petty political games.. The Thai case is perhaps emblematic of the upcoming changes in the whole of the region. On one side one has a block of very radical and aggressive elites in defense of their privileges and of a way of development centered only on the logic of growth and capital accumulation. For them, clearly the respect for "formal democracy" has no more interest if it does entail to share more equitably the results of growth. On the other hand, one has the emergence of newly recomposed and vocal popular actors, including various categories of the peasantry. These players require to take their demands into consideration, including their future security in relation to land and access to natural resources. That is the only way to ensure not only their survival, but also the improvement of their living conditions. That would require an evolution toward a "substantive democracy." This point is certainly not at the order of the day for the ruling elites of the region, and certainly not of the Western countries, so eager to promote, at any social cost, a sort of "market democracy". But it will certainly be at the heart of the conflicts and struggles to come. The more or less violent repression, or the more or less peaceful emergence of a space for a "sustainable peasant way of development", will be key components of these conflicts and struggles.

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GRAESE : Groupe de Recherches Asie de l'Est et du Sud Est



Le **GRAESE** (Groupe de Recherches sur l'Asie de l'Est et du Sud Est) regroupe des chercheurs concernés par les problèmes du développement en Asie Orientale et Sud Orientale. A son origine se trouvent des académiques et des chercheurs ayant participé à des projets de recherche, d'enseignement et de coopération dans cette région du monde depuis le milieu des années 1990. En Belgique, ces activités ont associé, dès le début, des chercheurs de l'UCL, des FUSAGX, et de l'ULG qui poursuivent une coopération régulière depuis une quinzaine d'années. En Asie ces activités ont concerné un grand nombre de chercheurs et d'académiques de diverses universités et institutions vietnamiennes, laotiennes, cambodgiennes, thaïlandaises et chinoises. L'Université Agronomique de Hanoi (UAH) est un partenaire privilégié depuis le début. Ces activités ont concerné particulièrement les projets de développement agricole, les composantes socio-économiques du développement rural, les rapports villes-campagnes et les politiques affectant ces différents domaines. En outre plusieurs thèses de doctorat ont été réalisées dans le cadre de ces activités, et sous diverses formes de partenariat entre les universités belges et asiatiques concernées. Le **GRAESE** vise à donner une meilleure visibilité à ces diverses activités, à faciliter la circulation de l'information entre les chercheurs et centres de recherches concernés, et à appuyer et soutenir l'intérêt en Belgique et en Europe pour les problèmes du développement asiatique dans un public plus large.

En pratique le **GRAESE** a pour objectif :

- 1) de stimuler la recherche interdisciplinaire concernant les problèmes et les enjeux du développement en Asie orientale et sud orientale
- 2) de publier sous forme de Working Papers (format papier ou online) des résultats de recherche liés aux projets en cours et aux questions concernant les diverses thématiques du développement appliquées à l'Asie orientale et sud-orientale, avec une attention particulière aux thèmes évoqués ci-dessus.
- 3) de réaliser des publications scientifiques de divers types concernant ces problèmes et réalisées par des chercheurs des différents centres partenaires en Europe et en Asie.
- 4) de fournir un lieu de rencontres entre chercheurs concernés par ces thèmes, particulièrement dans le cadre des doctorats en cours.
- 5) d'organiser des activités d'enseignement et d'information sur les problèmes du développement de l'Asie de l'Est et du Sud Est, notamment à travers l'organisation de conférences et séminaires donnés par des académiques et chercheurs asiatiques de passage en Belgique.

En Belgique les activités du **GRAESE** sont coordonnées par Ph.Lebailly (UEDR-Gembloux-ULg) et J.Ph.Peemans (CED-UCL). Le secrétariat du **GRAESE** est assuré par l'UEDR.

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