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Civil Society in the Chi River, Northeast Thailand

**A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Social Policy and Social Work at Massey University, Auckland,
New Zealand.**

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ABSTRACT

The thesis 'Civil Society in the Chi River, Northeast Thailand', aims to answer the questions of what civil society means in the Northeast Thai village context, which factors make civil society proactive and how civil society is activated. Participatory action research (PAR) was carried out in two communities in the Chi River Basin to answer the inquiries.

The research discusses the contexts of the Northeast Region and the two communities in the Chi River Basin. The people in this area are of the Thai-Laos ethnic group and hold particular beliefs in an amalgam of Buddhism and animism which creates cultural rituals that are different from other regions. The society is based on kinship ties. The economic situation has transformed from an agrarian society to a commercial agriculture society.

Through the research process the new term of 'grounded civil society' was created. It means 'the sphere of an autonomous group of local people who actively participate in collective action to deal with their struggles and promote their common interests by mobilizing cultural and social capitals in consort with other people to productively solve their problems. Grounded civil society may include traditional forms of mutual assistance, and formal or informal social associations. It seeks to have a significant influence on public policy at any level'.

The research found that grounded civil society was activated by both outside and inside factors. The outside factors included the negative effect of government development projects and the intervention of the participatory action research, which stimulated local people to engage in civil society. The inside factors activating civil society were the poor economic conditions of the villagers and the social capital existing in the communities. The social capital was built up around kinship ties and cultural capital, which generated the social values and norms of the local people. The research concluded with an analysis of the causal links between social capital and civil society claiming that social capital facilitated the creation of civil society. Further research possibilities are suggested.

DEDICATION

For my parents who had encouraged and supported me in my education.

I am saddened that they did not live to see my successful education.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Table of Contents	vi
List of Maps	x
List of Figures, Charts and Diagrams	xi
Glossary of Thai Terms	xii
Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations	xiv
Preface	xvii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Literature Review	10
Civil Society, Development and Democracy	10
A Brief History of the Concept of Civil Society and Its Transformations	11
Contemporary Civil Society and its Definitions	14
Perspectives of Civil Society: Marxist, Libertarian and Communitarian	19
Components that Constitute Civil Society	22
Different Terms of Civil Society and its Characteristics	23
The Concepts Social and Cultural Capital	25
Definitions of Social Capital	27
Three Dimensions of Social Capital	30
Components of Social Capital	30
Characteristics of the Functionability of Social Capital	31
Measurement of Social Capital	32
Conclusion	33
Chapter 3 Civil Society in Asia	35
Civil Society in Thailand	37
The Perspective and the Features of Civil Society in Thailand	41
Factors that Nurture and Constrain Civil Society in Thailand	49
Conclusion	52
Chapter 4 Theoretical Framework	53
Emancipation: Emancipatory Research and Emancipation Methodology	53

Emancipatory Research	54
Emancipatory Research Methodology	55
Emancipation Theory	57
Critical Theory	57
Critical theory and Methodology	58
The Key Phases of Emancipatory Research: Enlightenment and Empowerment	59
Postmodernism	60
Characteristics of Postmodernism	61
Postmodernism and Methodology	62
The Conceptual Framework of the Two Communities	63
Conclusion	66
Chapter 5 Methodology	67
Action Research	67
Meaning of Action Research	68
The Process or the Model of Action Research	69
Community- Based Action Research	70
Characteristics of Action Research	71
Aims of Action Research	72
The Key Concepts Concerning Action Research	72
The Principles of Action Research	74
The Role of the Researcher in Action Research	75
Validity in Action Research	75
Research Methods	76
Methods Used in the Thesis	77
Methodology in Practice	81
Ethical Consideration	89
Conclusion	91
Chapter 6 Regional Settings	92
Geographical Setting	92
Culture: Belief and Religion	100
The Transformation of the Northeast Region (Isan) and the Chi River Basin	102
Political, Governmental and Administrative Systems	102

Communication	106
Education	106
Health	107
Economy	107
Development Programs and Foreign Aid	111
The Impact of Development Projects	114
Conclusion	115
Chapter 7 Background of Wungwern Village	117
Resources and Natural Resources	120
Economic and Household Production	124
Education	130
Culture: Religious Beliefs and Cultural Values	131
The Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in the Village	134
Community Problems	136
Conclusion	137
Chapter 8 Background of Nong Phue Village	138
Natural Resources	140
Economy and Household Production	141
Community-Based Development	145
Education	149
Culture: Religious Beliefs and Cultural Values	150
Mutual Aid and Reciprocity	155
Politics	157
Conclusion	158
Chapter 9 Experiences of Participatory Action Research (PAR) in the	
Case Studies	159
Experiences of Participatory Action Research in Wungwern Village	159
Experiences of Participatory Action Research in Nong Phue Village	186
Conclusion	200
Chapter 10 Case Analysis and Findings	202
The Working Definition of Civil Society	202
Context and Conditions Influenced the Formation of Civil Society in the	
Rural Community	203

The Inside Factors Activate and Nurture Civil Society	205
The Outside Factors Which Activate Civil Society	217
Conclusion	235
Chapter 11 Conclusion and Discussion	236
Theoretical Implications	239
Implications for Public Policy	244
Implication for the Frontline Community Workers	246
Implications for Future Research	247
Appendix	249
Bibliography	258

LIST OF MAPS

Map of Thailand	93
Map of the Northeast Region	94
Map of location of Wungwern Village	118
Map of location of Nong Phue Village	118

LIST OF CHARTS, FIGURES AND DIAGRAMS

Chart 4.1 Conceptual Framework of Wung Wern Village	64
Chart 4.2 Conceptual Framework of Nong Phue Village	65
Chart 6.1 Chart of Government Administration Structure	105
Chart 9.1 Participatory Action Research in Wungwern Village	185
Chart 9.2 Participatory Action Research Process in Nong Phue Village	199
Figure 7.1 Sketch Map of Wungwern Village	119
Figure 8.1 Sketch Map of Nong Phue Village	139
Diagram 9.1 The Effects on Environment of Reducing Chemical Usage	193
Diagram 9.2 Framework of the Project	197
Diagram 10.1 Research Findings	204

GLOSSORY OF THAI TERMS

Buaed Pa	tree ordination ritual.
Bun Sungkatan	the ritual organized for making a merit in the Buddhist Lent.
Bun Huay Nam Khem	the ritual organized to pay respect to the Iilone'spirit in Nong Phue and the nearby villages.
Bun and baab	merit and demerit.
Bun Kathin	a ceremony to make a merit for ancestors.
Clum	cluster administration unit in a village.
Cham	a person who communicates with supernatural spirits.
Isan	refers to the Northeast Region and the people who live there.
Isan Khiaw	the green revolutions project in the Northeast.
Chao Muang	ruler held autonomy to govern huamuang.
huamuang	town and its territory of the former Thai administration system and now replaced by the provincial administration system.
Hiet Sibsong Kong Sibsei	a yearly cycle of rituals of the Isan People.
Long Khaek	the system of a traditional mutual assistance. Villagers help their relatives and neighbours, and then will be assisted in turn when they need help.

Nai Hoi	Isan traders.
Phii	Spirits.
Pu-ta	the Lao version of an ancestor's spirit.
Pha Pa	making a merit by collecting money and necessities and donating these to monks and temples.
Prachakom	civic group.
Prachakom Moo Ban	village civic committee.
Prachakom Tambon	sub-district civic committee.
Prachakom Changwat	provincial civic committee.
Rai	approximately .2529 acres.
Siam	The name of Thailand previously before 1939.
siao	close friend.
Sima Asok	a self-reliant community in Thailand. This group strictly practices Buddhist principles.
Sarakham Pattana Project.	A development project initiated by the ex-governor of Maha Sarakham province.
Thammarat	good governance.
Tai Chi	name used to describe poor people who live near the Chi River Bank.

GLOSSORY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Alternative Agriculture Project	The non-governmental organization which aims to promote and develop alternative agriculture for small scale farmers in small scale agricultural businesses.
BAAC	Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives which mainly gives credit to farmers for investment in agricultural occupations.
Bowring Treaty	The agreement between Siam (Thailand) and Britain in 1855, which aimed at commercial and political issues. It opened up Siam to Western influence and trade.
Brahma	the Hindu god.
Community – Based Organizations (CBOs)	the development groups in a village which may be launched by villagers or promoted by government officers with financial support from the government for operations.
Kong Chi Mun Project	the project which aimed to draw water from the Meakong River to supply irrigation for agriculture production in the Northeast Region.
Local Administration Act 1914	The first law which endorsed the subdivision of local administration organizations.
NESDB	The National Economic and Social Development Board which is the central planning agency undertaking a continuing study of the country's

economy and drawing up plans for its development.

One Tambon One Product	the government project support for each sub-district to select a typical local product based on traditional indigenous expertise and local know-how. The project then assists to develop production, product promotion and marketing.
People's Bank Project	the government project started in 2001, offering small loans to low-income earners through the Government Savings Bank branches across the country, in order to help poor people secure low-interest loans without collateral for their business operation.
Phu-mi-bun Rebellion	Rebellion of the Isan people against local government authorities.
SAO	Sub-district Administrative Organization.
SAOC	Sub-district Administrative Organization Council.
Sambok Rebellion	The rebellion which occurred in Khon Kaen province to refuse paying taxes to the central government.
Supanimit foundation	The non-government agency which aims to help orphans.
Rajapranugroh Foundation.	Formed in 1963 under the royal patronage. Literally the word means "mutual help between the King and the people". The foundation aims to give basic assistance to the victims of public hazards and to prepare a public hazard protection

system throughout Thailand, and to give assistance for education to poor children.

The 1997 Constitution

The Sixteenth Constitution in Thailand, which incredibly increased and ensured the rights of Thai people to voice their political opinions. The Constitution launches a more open and accountable political system, and enhances the system of government administration checks and balances.

The National Education Act (1999)

The Act serves as a fundamental law for education reform in a) Learning reform which focuses on student or learners. b) Administrative reform includes upgrading the teaching profession by reorganizing systems and increasing efficiency in the utilization of resources and investment for educational purposes.

The Eighth National Economic and Social Developmental Plan (1997-2001)

The Plan focused on a holistic people-centred development. The Plan is strategy focussed on people's respective potential. Development Strategies included the upgrading of the potential of the target groups at all ages and genders, to encourage popular participation, and to strengthen the economy and the development administration.

Village and Urban Revolving Fund

The government project which funded one million bath (\$ US 25,000) for each community as a loan for individuals and households for local investment and to create new local employment.

PREFACE

'All people, no matter how poor, can develop themselves if they have opportunity to'. This is my motto that I have developed from my own experiences.

I am an Isan¹ native. I was born in a middle class family and as a result I had the opportunity for a good education. I did my first degree in Political Sciences at Thammasat University, the original institute of politics. This institute has the slogan 'I love Thammasat because Thammasat teaches me to love the people.' For this reason, I did not hesitate when I was offered a position as a community development worker in a remote village in the Isan region where I could work with underprivileged people.

I worked for Foster Parents Plan International (PLAN), one of the world's largest international, child-centred development organizations, which has branches in over 45 developing countries. The community where I worked was very poor and the villagers struggled with their livelihood on a daily basis. There were infrastructure scarcities with little water, electricity or roads. They lived on infertile land affected by drought, which yielded very little. They walked a long way to catch fish from small rivers or to collect mushrooms and insects from the forest. I lived and worked with them and tried to help them solve their problems.

I learned many things about how Isan people survived in difficult conditions. This was a major factor in my intellectual development. Even though I was born in this region, I had never come across these circumstances before. The more I worked with them, the more I realized that the villagers had a lot of potential. They could go a long way towards solving their problems by relying on their indigenous knowledge, even though they had to cope with such difficulties. I found that people had the capacity to develop if only they were given an opportunity. My five years in and out of the village taught me that the best way to understand these people's problems was to 'stand in their shoes' and experience them by

¹ The term Isan refers to both the people and the region of North-eastern Thailand

myself. I also realized I needed even more practical experience. If I wanted to understand their way of looking at life, I would have to adapt my thinking to match theirs.

This experience in the remote village inspired me to gain more formal knowledge which could be applied to practical methods for these people to use. I decided to continue my studies by taking an MA. in Community Development at Thammasat University. There, I spent one and half years of the two year program taking courses, including the subjects: Theories in Community Development, Management in Community Development and a Seminar Course in Community Development. The other six months I spent in field work in Roi-et Province, also a part of the Isan Region. My dissertation was on 'The Evolution of a Community Development Organization: A Case Study of a Rice Mill² Cooperative. The cooperative I chose was in the Phonesai Sub-district of Roi-et Province and had a membership of 13 villages. Its activities were buying unhusked rice from its own members, milling the grain, putting it into sacks and selling it. This cooperative helped the farmers in this area to sell rice and make a good profit. Even though this cooperative was very successful for the villagers, there were frequent problems concerning its functioning, especially in the area of communication: the farmers did not understand how the committee worked. I concluded that this problem could be reduced if they had more meetings but I also discovered differences in other areas. The experiences identified in this case study needed more analysis so I could make suggestions for other cooperatives.

Since finishing my MA, I have been working as a lecturer at Mahasarakham University, which is located in the central part of Isan. I have also continued to work with rural communities. As a Lecturer in Community Development I have had many opportunities to formulate and supervise the field studies of my students. From their research, I gained a great quantity of field data, much of which I found helpful in my own areas of interest. I also participated in many research projects including 'Civil Society and Participatory Planning at the Provincial Level', 'The Social Capital and Self-sufficient Economy in the Chi River Basin', 'The Factors of Civil Society at the Sub-district Level', 'A Study of the Slums of Maha Sarakham, and 'The Conceptual System Management of Villagers for the Conservation of Community Forests in Thailand'.

² Rice mill is a machine for removing the husk for harvested rice

The experiences I had in these projects inspired me to seek more answers around the concept of civil society. The Thai practice of ‘civil society’ seemed to be different from the theory coming out of the West. Thai civil society was not horizontally organized, and it needed to work with the government sector at some level in order to achieve its objectives. It desired legitimacy for its activities. These attributes contrasted with the characteristics of civil society as defined in Western literature, which explained civil society as horizontally organized, and separated from the state and market (Rooy, 1998). I had questions about how civil society might be interpreted in rural communities. I participated in a number of seminars on local development projects and developed a proposal for an action research project to develop and refine these questions for this study. My focus was ‘Civil Society in the Chi River Basin in Northeast Thailand’ and employed participatory action research as the methodology. I believed that community development was a process and that participatory action research would be tool to empower the people in the area of my study. I could learn from them, they could learn from me, and we could both learn from the process.

When I did my field work in 2003 in the local communities, I felt as if I had travelled back to the time that I had spent working as an NGO community development worker in poor rural communities. I selected two communities in the Chi River Basin, and the villagers and I worked together through the PAR process. A number of problems in the two communities were solved through the working process, such as flooding, deforestation and chemical use in agriculture. We enhanced our knowledge and experiences from working together to deal with the villagers’ hardship. The research process and the outcomes of the project also were very useful for me to understand civil society in Thai rural communities. Although my research project is finished, I intend to continue with my ongoing research interest with people in the region in which I was born. I fully intend to work with them in order to improve their way of life.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, civil society has been invoked as a globally prominent issue by those engaged in forms of community and political action outside the state and the market sectors. Civil society is considered to liberate citizens from oppressive states, strengthen people power and enable development (Baker, 2002; Guan, 2004; Alagappa, 2004). In the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, civil society was mentioned and its role anticipated as a watchdog to ensure governments' fulfilment of commitments, a monitor of those responsible for delivering results, a shaper of democratic debates on economic and social policies in poor communities, and opening the voices of ordinary people (UNDP, 2003:32). The concept of civil society has been discussed in various contexts. For example, different histories, ethnicities, religious and cultural societies, and different state regimes have delineated a civil society that is different in both theory and practice. In addition, definitions and characteristics of civil society have varied because of the competition between normative¹ and alternative assumptions, including a political and religious tradition of classical liberalism, egalitarianism, liberalism, critical theory, feminism, and non-Western perspectives (Rosenblum & Post, 2002; Guan, 2004).

In Thailand, the concept of civil society was raised in public debates when Thailand faced the economic crisis in 1997-1998, which came after more than 40 years of continuous economic growth. The Thai baht was devalued in July 1997 and the economic downturn subsequently led to similar problems in the entire Southeast Asian Region (Blondel, Inoguchi, & Marsh, 1999). In Thailand, the economic crisis resulted from corrupt politicians and government errors in macroeconomic policy, some of which were the insistence on a fixed exchange rate when circumstances no longer suited it; and a dependence on direct foreign capital investment since 1985 which had increased the risk of economic instability (Warr, 2005). This crisis caused a massive increase in Thai poverty for an estimated 2.5 per cent of the total population or approximately 1.5 million people (Kakwani, 1999). Arguably, weak governance was

¹ A normative statement is a statement regarding how things should or ought to be.

also one of the fundamental reasons for the crisis. Up to the mid-1980s, the history of Thai political democracy was mixed. Weak governance resulted from continuous rule by semi authoritarian governments, periods of liberal rule with military-led governments and democracy (Blondel, Inoguchi, & Marsh, 1999). The central administration was highly centralized, although fragmented, and ran on the principles of seniority and hierarchy (Koeberle, 2005).

To recover from the crisis, the government launched financial restructuring policies aimed at greater management efficiency. A number of projects were launched to support the poor, such as the Village and Urban Revolving Fund², One Tambon One Product³, and the People's Bank Project⁴ (The Public Relation's Department, 2004). However, all these projects were geared to income support as a short term solution. In the long term, the strategies for national recovery from the economic crisis were established by the government. Political reform was proposed to counter centralized political domination, top-down development planning and to make government administration transparent and responsive to public concerns.

The Sixteenth Constitution in 1997⁵, the Eighth National Economic and Social Developmental Plan (1997-2001) and the Decentralization Act were factors that fostered social and political reform. The constitution influenced the nature of civil society, since it expanded the rights of the Thai people and created a public space for civic groups to participate in, and be responsive to the social and political arenas. The developing civic groups increased pressure on government for transparency and the provision of better services.

Over the past ten years, the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), the agency responsible for developing Thailand's five year plans, has been successful in helping Thailand reach a high level of growth. With rapid economic growth has come a wide disparity in the level of development throughout the country,

² This funded 7,125 villages on July 5, 2001 with one million baht (about US\$ 25,000(40 baht = US\$ 1) each as a loan for the individuals and households of each community for local investment and to create new local employment.

³ Promoting each community to develop and market its own local product or products based on traditional indigenous expertise and local know-how.

⁴ For low income people to access to banking facilities and resources to enhance their capacity to increase their income from self employment.

⁵ The constitution increased individual rights such as the freedom of speech and the freedom to associate. It introduced compulsory voting. The right to recall MPs was also given, with 50,000 electors able to initiate the procedure.

creating income gaps between urban and rural areas, and increasing levels of social protest. The crisis eventually led to a turning point and in 1997 the NESDB changed the strategy of the Eighth Plan to put more stress on human development, in an attempt to broaden public participation in national decentralized, participatory planning approaches.

The Decentralization Act declared an increase in the power and degree of accountability of local administrative units. For example budget allocations to Sub-district Administrative organizations (SAOs) will be about 35 percent of total government expenditure in 2006, compared to 8 percent in 2000. Some collection responsibilities were also transferred to SAOs (Warr, 2005).

This reconsideration of basic values, based on Thai cultural and religious traditions, was stimulated to counter the economic breakdown. With input from the King, the ideas of self-sufficiency and self-reliance were raised, broadening economic and cultural discourses. The Communitarian ideology, which focuses on community and cultural values encompassing indigenous knowledge; local practices; social relations; and social values, such as the mutual assistance which already existed in Thai society, was held up as social capital for a strategic movement. These strategies strengthened the traditional and local institutions of family, community and temple, as well as a self-sufficient economy, as the foundation for facing economic globalization (Chai-Anan, 1997). New perspectives and social values were emphasized by looking inwards for a basic resistance to and resilience from the destructive forces of the crisis.

In terms of social reform to aid recovery from the crisis, the idea of collaborative partnerships working together on public issues in the social, economic, and political arenas was proposed. This form of collaborative partnership was intended as a civil society promoting government transparency, honesty, accountability and efficiency. For example, Thirayut Bunmee (1998) proposed the idea good governance (*thammarat* in Thai), which he saw as co-operation between business and social forces to balance the power of the state. Saneh Chamarik (1998) reinterpreted good governance in the Thai context as grassroots participation. Prawase Wasi(1998) redefined *thammarat* as a self-sufficient, community based economy and society. Later, Prawase Wasi (1999) proposed the idea of 'five partnerships' or *benjaparkee* in Thai, involving academics,

NGOs, the government, business and people organizations sectors. Civil society from this perspective called '*prachakom*', was placed in the Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001) as civic assemblies at provincial level attempting to formulate development plans and guidelines (Cornor, 2003). Civic assemblies were also put into practice by government authorities at the sub-district and village level in the form of committees to give guidance to the local administrators. These concepts and activities saw civil society come into fruition.

However, civil society in Thailand had had a long evolution in political, social and cultural contexts before it was raised in the public discourse of the economic crisis. It has appeared in different forms and with different perspectives and has not always been called civil society. Earlier forms of civil society have been social movements against government projects and the authoritarian military regime. Civil society was also manifest in forms of self-governance organizations, community-based organizations, non-government organizations and grassroots indigenous groups (See more details in Chapter Three). Civil society thus has had varied forms and definitions depending on the contexts and the perspective of the interpreter. Any analysis must give room to these particular contexts to be understood.

The prominent contemporary use of the term civil society in Thailand has been influenced by western writers. It concerns a democratic regime, rather than considering the original Thai cultural underpinning (Wiarda 2003; Hudson, 2003). Civil society in the form of a community based and indigenous model has been less recognized than other forms of civil society. Most publications and researchers have addressed questions of civil society in the scope of democratic regimes and political arenas. There have been few research projects which attempted to examine the character of civil society as developed from a Thai foundation. One of these, Thai Civil Society: The Making of Thai Citizens (Anuchat & Kritiya, 1999) presented civil society in various dimensions such as civic education and gender, as well as discussing the roles of Buddhist ideology, mass media and law in fostering civil society. The practices of philanthropic organizations and grassroots social movements were presented to reveal the civil society movement in Thailand. However, the research projects were examined by macro analysis.

My thesis studies the concept and reality of civil society in the context of grassroots communities in order to analyze and interpret civil society from the experience of local people. Civil society from this perspective, which I call 'grounded civil society', is developed from peoples' engagement in self governing and self-help organizations to support their daily lives.

In terms of the physical area of study, I focus on two of the communities in the Chi River Basin. The Chi River is the longest river in Thailand (765 kilometers in length) and it is the main waterway flowing through the central part of the Northeast Region. It has a significant cultural history of more than one thousand years, over which time the local people have developed their own society and culture. Local manifestations of civil society, therefore, were developed and connected with the cultural and social context of the community.

Few researchers have studied the history, evolution and changes in social and economic conditions of the communities in the Chi River Area (Chob, 1986, 1993; Suwit, 1985, 1993, 2003; Wirot, 1986; Thaweasil, 2005). Thaweasil Suebwattana and eight other researchers⁶ (2005) studied history and expansion of communities along the Chi River Basin. This research examined the adaptation of local people to changes in environmental, economic, social and cultural conditions around the Chi River. The research overviewed the history of the communities and reflected how local people developed competence in dealing with changes in order to sustain their livelihoods in 'real-life'. It was the first research that attempted to find 'local people power' reflected from the point of view of the local people. However, the research did not engage in exercising 'people power' in dealing with common issues.

My thesis, therefore, is a new contribution to the question of how grassroots people deal with their common issues. The thesis aims to find factors which have influenced the formation of civil society in two rural communities in the Chi River Basin and how civil society is proactive. The thesis asks how grounded civil society can be interpreted. The findings from the case studies support the concept of grounded civil society through its

⁶ Eight research projects concerning local history along the River Chi Basin

reconstruction and interpretation from the villagers' point of views. The study will contribute to recovering, conserving, strengthening and sustaining grassroots civil society in Thai society.

I chose two communities in the Chi River Basin to be my case studies: Nong Phue village in the upper part and Wungwern village in the middle part of the Chi River. There are three reasons for the selection: firstly, the communities have their own history of solving common issues together; secondly, the communities have a prominent collective practice of cultural activities; thirdly, the communities have current problems which can be enlarged upon to become public issues.

In terms of research methodology, I employed participatory action research (PAR) as the main methodology. There are two main reasons I was inspired to choose PAR methodology. Firstly, from a theoretical standpoint, PAR allowed me to examine 'grounded civil society'. PAR facilitates and provides an opportunity for villagers to participate in collective action for the common good, which is a process which can mobilize civil society. The PAR process allowed me to intensively investigate the phenomenon of civil society in action.

Secondly, from a practical standpoint, my own practical research background motivated me to use PAR. I had completed a number of research projects, both alone and in cooperation with others. In these projects, as a 'professional expert' I had designed the project, gathered the data, and interpreted the findings. I had not reflected the results to the participants, although I gained professional accreditation from my research. I had presumed that most researchers who did research in these communities gained the benefit, rather than the participants. In 2002 I had the opportunity to work as a coordinator for the Community Based Research Project⁷. This organization uses participatory action research as the main methodology of working with local people. As I worked I was impressed by PAR, particularly because I saw that there were some positive changes in the people whom I worked with. The research questions answered

⁷ Community Based Research (CBR) is a division of the Thailand Research Fund (TRF- a government agency under the Office of the Prime Ministry, but independent from the government administrative bureaucracy). CBR mainly uses development or action-research to promote community learning by working through research projects and helping communities solve problems. This project aims to promote area-based action research to solve local problems and serve the needs of the communities.

their needs and their problems. In addition, I attended a workshop called 'Rural Projects: Participatory Design, Monitoring and Evaluation' with AusAid support in 2000. This training provided me with the techniques for participatory action research. These experiences assisted me to build up the PAR methodology and research skill for my thesis.

The Scope and Method of the Enquiry

This thesis is based on research conducted in 2003 in two rural communities in the Chi River Basin in the Northeast Region of Thailand. Data are drawn from research projects, including secondary data from local government officials at the Sub-district Administrative Organization (SAO) and the Governmental District Organizations. Primary data were gained from the use of multiple methods such as interviewing, observation and the undertaking of participatory action research with local people in the two communities. The data and consequences of action research process were used in analyzing and answering the research questions. The central research questions focus on:

What does civil society mean in the Northeast Thai village context?

What factors activate civil society?

How is civil society activated?

Outline of Chapters

The thesis consists of ten chapters. Chapter One briefly describes the background of the thesis, including the importance of the theme and the area of study. It provides the scope of the research aim and inquiry.

Chapter Two then reviews the literature and introduces the different contexts in which the concepts of civil society and social capital are used. This chapter is divided into two sections. Firstly, I offer a brief description of the historical development of the concept of civil society and the contemporary usages of civil society. The definitions and the perspectives of civil society, including Marxist, Libertarian and Communitarian are presented. The components that constitute civil society, different terms of civil society

and its characteristics are also outlined. In Section Two, I present the concept of cultural and social capitals, social capital evolution as well as definitions and dimensions. The components of social capital, the characteristics of its functionality and the measurement of social capital are detailed.

Chapter Three investigates the literature on civil society in Asia, and is separated into two sections. The first section outlines the nature of civil society in Asia and its conceptual distinction from Western civil society. The second section briefly describes the evolution of civil society in Asia, specifically the perspectives and the features of civil society in Thailand, including Marxist, corporatist relations and communitarian perspectives. The factors that nurture and constrain civil society are also presented.

In Chapter Four, I outline the theoretical and analytical framework. I describe emancipation research and methodology, which includes critical theory. Section Two outlines postmodernism, and its characteristics and methodology. Conceptual framework charts for each of the two case studies are presented.

Chapter Five provides details of the methodology used in the research. It begins with action research theory including its meaning, the process of action research, community based action research, the characteristics of action research, the aims of action research, its key concepts, the principle of action research and the role of the researcher. Then I discuss action research in practice including the process of selecting the communities and the specific methodology for this research. Several qualitative research methods and rapid rural appraisal tools are detailed. The last section considers the ethical issues associated with the research.

Chapter Six gives a general overview of the regional setting, and historical and geographical background of the Northeast Region of Thailand and the Chi River Basin. The historical narrative focuses on the transformation of the Northeast region and the Chi River Basin, including communications, education, health, and economic change.

The latter of these is divided into three periods: sufficient economy, pre economical period, and entering the era of trading. This chapter ends with development programs, foreign aid and the impact of development in the region and on the Chi River communities.

Chapter Seven describes the background of Nong Phue village. It presents the geography, the chronology of economic change, the education system and the development of the community. This chapter also includes a discussion on the culture, including religious beliefs and values.

Chapter Eight outlines the background of Wungwern village. It involves a discussion on man made resources and natural resources, economic life, the education system and culture, including religious beliefs and values. Political and development groups in the village community, as well as community problems, are outlined.

Chapter Nine describes the experiences of participatory action research (PAR) in the field study. The first section introduces the practices of PAR in Wungwern Village and the second section looks into PAR in Nong Phue village. In each section, PAR and the multiple techniques which were employed with the villagers, as well as the research outcomes from PAR are outlined. The research practices in each village are detailed in terms of the different research phases and the charts are presented demonstrating the process of participatory action research in both communities.

Chapter Ten then analyzes and concludes the main research findings. It reviews the major themes of inquiry and the arguments made. In this section I analyze the factors and the conditions that activated civil society in the context of rural Thai communities. Then I describe how civil society is proactive in the two communities through the PAR process. The research also points out some of the problems and shortcomings of this research and finishes with some general suggestions for future research on civil society at the local community level.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I present a review of the literature on the concepts of civil society, and cultural and social capitals. The theoretical literature provides a basic understanding of the concept of civil society and the varying perspectives used in the different contexts. The concepts gained from the literature have assisted me in developing a framework for civil society and social capital for this thesis. This chapter is divided into two sections. In section one, I offer a brief description of the historical development of the concept of civil society, including perspectives and definitions. In section two, I present the concepts of cultural and social capitals and outline definitions.

Civil Society, Development and Democracy

The notion of civil society has appeared in the public discourses of social scientists, policy makers, and political practitioners as a social thought since the 1980s. It is considered to be a complement of political democracy and economic development (White, 2003). Some claim that the dense network of civic associations helps to create more political participation, improve the quality of governance and strengthen people power, thus enabling development (Hall, 1998; Bob & Foley, 1998). In a similar vein, having active citizens who engage in the governing of their communities and country is regarded as a significant component of a strong democracy (Driver, 2000).

Civil society is considered an essential element in the development process, particularly in developing countries (Howell & Pearce, 2002). It is viewed as a developmental panacea by many international development agencies and governments because it is believed to alleviate problems arising from a post-modern society, such as the overuse of the power of the state and market economics. Some believe that it is the ideal vehicle to free society from authoritarian, corrupt and incompetent governments, to strengthen citizens' liberties and human rights, to promote good governance and economic growth, to generate well-being and to solve ethnic conflict, as well as to initiate democratic consolidation (Encarnacion, 2003; Edwards, 2004). This can be seen in the policies of the

United Nations, the World Bank and international donor organizations¹, which have intervened in developing countries in order to resolve a variety of problems. Since the 1960s, development schemes have included infrastructure development, agrarian reform, community development, family planning, basic human needs, sustainable development, civil society and good governance (Wiarda, 2003).

Civil society contributes to the development of social and political performance in that in many ways, it helps to democratize political culture (White, 2003; Hyden, Court & Mease, 2004). Firstly, a growing civil society can balance the power of the state by helping to establish democratic institutions. Secondly, civil society enlarges the state's accountability to its citizens. Strong civil society can affect public morality and performance by improving the accountability of politicians and administrators. Thirdly, civil society plays a role as a mediator between state and society by articulating and conveying the demands of the people to the state. Civil society is the place where interests and demands are initially expressed, and it creates an enabling environment for policy input. Fourthly, civil society creates and sustains a set of new democratic norms which regulate state behaviour and the character of political relationships between state and citizens. Fifthly, civil society increases citizens' participation in the policy-making process, particularly for marginalized groups such as women, ethnic minorities and the poor, by advocating public policies on their behalf. Sixthly, civil society provides civic education in democratic politics, both through publications and also through direct participation in democratic institutions.

A Brief History of the Concept of Civil Society and Its Transformations

The concept of civil society is founded in the history of Western politics. The concept has no single definition. Rather, has evolved within the different contexts of each society. The term, whether European, American, Asian, or Latin American civil society, has been used in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes, functioning as a pragmatic rather than a theoretical concept.

¹ Wiarda (2003, p. 136) points out that development policies were imported as foreign aid programs to Third World countries as panaceas.

Ancient Greeks

The ancient Greeks viewed civil society as part of the state, with the terms civil society and state being used interchangeably. Human beings were free and equal by nature, but they wanted to be regulated by a state that ensured them maximum freedom to pursue their self-determination. Both state and civil society referred to political associations that governed and protected the basic rights of its members through common laws (Edward, 2004, p.6). Theorists such as Aristotle (384-322 BEC), Plato (427-347 BEC) have viewed society in their time as non-democratic and hierarchical. Citizens were subservient to the state power. Society therefore required good citizens to participate in the discourses of society.

The Enlightenment: the Development of the Commercial State

The concept of civil society changed in the seventeenth century with the work of prominent theorists Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and John Locke (1632-1704). For them, civil society referred to interested associations which were subordinated by the state power. However, there had to be a social contract between the state and citizens to guarantee individual rights in 'natural law', given that individuals have freedom derived from natural law. The state was given power to protect civil society from the conflict of individuals, but it must not intrude on individual freedoms. This social contract for Locke was the foundation of liberal democracy (Hyden, Court & Mease, 2004). Civil society from this perspective tends to be socio – liberal, in that it balances the interests of different groups of society (Goran, 1997, p. 4).

Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), the prominent Enlightenment thinker, in his work 'An Essay on the History of Civil Society' (1776), proposed that the emergence of modern commercial society reinforced liberty and personal security. It reduced the decline of civic and communal virtues. For Ferguson, civil society was conceived as a market-organized sphere of voluntary associations that protect individual rights and freedoms from the invasion of the state (Hall & Trentmann, 2005; Alagappa, 2004; Edward, 2004).

The idea of civil society changed again with the work of George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and Karl Marx (1813-1883). Hegel (1812) explained Europe and society in the work 'Elements of the Philosophy of Right'. He claimed that society had a division of labour which created stratification between people, as well as increasing conflict between groups of people. For Hegel, civil society was a realm of social interaction situated between the family on the one hand and the state on the other. In Hegel's view, individuals were free to associate to pursue their needs and interests. The state intervened in the activities of individuals and civil society to protect their common interests. Civil society was thus subordinated by the state and it needed to be balanced and ordered by the state (Hyden, Court & Mease, 2004).

In the writing of Karl Marx (1975), civil society became an arena of class struggle. He defined civil society in the context of the rise of capitalism and the struggle against it in nineteenth century Europe. He followed Hegel by arguing that civil society was controlled by the bourgeoisie who exercised social and economic power through the state. For Marx, communal movement created a sphere of autonomous economic activity, unrestricted by the political and religious guidance that might limit freedom of economic choice (Howell & Pearce, 2002).

Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) (1990 cited in Edwards, 2004) observed community associations based on American society in his work 'Democracy in America'. In his view, society comprised three sectors: government, market and civil society. Civil society played a more important role than the state and the market through a grouping of voluntary organizations in which civic values and democratic politics would naturally increase. De Tocqueville argued that the market had the competitive pressures of capitalism and influenced people to have more individualism² and independence. It damaged civil associations and it reduced the time people had to devote to civil society. De Tocqueville claimed that social associations influenced and nurtured members to engage cooperatively in pursuit of the common good and to participate in the wider community. In this way, individual power was enhanced and the power of the state decreased (Rudolph, 2004). De Tocqueville launched the idea of voluntary associations

² For De Tocqueville, the individualizing pressure came from the division of labor and specialization that occurred in competitive markets. The habit of being private made people hold their own counsel and not engage in collective activity. Thus, social bonds, common values and civic associations which promoted social cohesion were weak. The physical separation and privacy granted by material prosperity also weaken civil society

as part of the workings of democracy at the local level.

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), who followed the Marxists, defined civil society as the realm of social life outside the state and the economy. He saw the cultural realm as an important arena of class struggle. In Gramsci's view, civic associations were the mechanism for elite classes to exercise control in society with the elite class dominating the working class through cultural hegemony. Therefore, groups within the working class could struggle to establish counter-hegemony, joining together to fight for their own interests in the arena of civil society. Gramsci's ideas influenced the context of analysis and actions against bureaucratic authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe, dictatorship in Latin America and communism in Asia from the 1970s to the 1980s. Gramsci's idea of civil society is often termed the 'New Left' (Encarnacion, 2003).

In the 1960s, Jurgen Habermas (1929 -), the most influential of New Left theorists, proposed the idea of civil society as a 'public sphere' where private people came together to discuss their world and share the meaning of their life through communicative action. In this way the basic democratic sphere could be increased through equality for all individuals. He emphasized civil society's role to act protecting the autonomous development of public opinion in the public sphere from being undermined or colonized by the state bureaucracy (Baker, 2002). Habermas's work introduced the words 'public sphere' to the concept of civil society and democracy.

Contemporary Civil Society and its Definitions

As the previous two sections have shown, the concept of civil society has altered over time and is currently applied in various forms. In this section I present the definition of contemporary civil society used in this thesis.

The revival of interest in the contemporary concept of civil society began in the 1970s in opposition movements in Central Eastern Europe and countries such as Poland and Hungary. Civil society in this period comprised the principles of solidarity, plurality, communication and participation (Markus, 2001).

The various concepts of civil society were clarified by Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato. Cohen and Arato, who were influenced by Habermas, seized on a liberal perspective which emphasized the idea of participatory dialogue and public responsibility. For them civil society was distinct from the state and economic realms. It was

a sphere of social interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication (Cohen & Arato, 1995, p. ix).

In Cohen and Arato's view, civil society played the role of defending the role for society against the state.

Charles Derber (1996) claimed that modern liberal American society focused on the individual, making people self-centred. This behaviour, which he called 'wilding' harmed others and destroyed a social constitution. For him civil society was:

the underlying antidote to the wilding virus, involving a culture of love, morality, and trust that leads people to care for one another and for the larger community. A civil society's institutions nurture civic responsibility by providing incentives for people to act not just in their own interest but for the common good (Derber, 1996, p. 145).

In recent years the debate about a decline in social membership, social trust, and social capital in America had been led by Robert Putnam and Francis Fukuyama, and writers who are identified as communitarian such as Amiti Etzioni and Michael Sandel (Barber, 1998). The most influential concept of civil society has been presented by Robert Putnam, who drew on the ideas of de Tocqueville. Putnam presented civil society in his research 'Making Democracy Work: Civic Tradition in Modern Italy' (Putnam, 1993) and 'Bowling Alone: the collapse and revival of American community' (Putnam, 1995a) as made up of civic associations where networks were generated, which in turn contributed to the effectiveness and stability of democratic government. Social capital could be generated within civic associations and included trust, reciprocity and networks which were beneficial for economic development. Furthermore, a robust civil society could

solve the problems arising from the growth of modern society. Some of these problems might include a declining of social cohesion, lowered engagement in community activities and lowered levels of trust. For Putnam, civil society was a voluntary association of people participating on an equal level.

Putnam's concept of civil society has general concurrence with James Coleman's (1990) use of the term 'social capital' and with de Tocqueville's theory about the virtues of 'voluntary associations'. Putnam's idea of civic engagement³ is similar to Derber's (1996), in that civic engagement is a channel for individuals to pursue their interests and to support one another to solve problems.

Michael Walzer (1995, p. 7) claimed that civil society was a space of uncoerced human association. For him civil society was the "space of voluntary associations and also the set of relational networks - formed for the sake of family, faith, interest, and ideology - that fill this space". He stated that people have lived in civil society for many years without knowing it, or at least, without paying any attention to it (Walzer, 1991). In Walzer's definition of civil society, voluntary association was similar to Putnam's definition of 'civic community'.

Putnam's idea of civil society was adopted and interpreted in the context of voluntary organizations by the World Bank and the United Nation Development Program (UNDP). The World Bank has defined civil society as

the arena in which people come together to pursue the interests they hold in common, not for profit or the exercise of political power, but because they care enough about something to take collective action (The World Bank, 2000, cited in Amoores & Langley, 2004, p. 92).

For the UNDP, civil society includes non-governmental organizations, professional associations and other civil society groups [which] are regularly called on to help design and implement poverty reduction strategies...the three roles of civil society [are]as: participants in the design of strategies, as service

³ Civic engagement is citizenship in a community being characterized by active participation in public issues. Being interested in public issues and being prepared to be involved in debates and common activities are important signs of civic virtue.

providers through community organizations and national NGOs and as watchdogs to ensure government fulfillment of commitments (UNDP, 2003).

Traditional indigenous concepts of 'civil society' can be found outside the Western model. For example Swain's (Swain, 1999) research in Samoa discusses fa'asamoa, a form of civil society. Fa'asamoa has provided a sense of identity, social customs, social interactions and a traditional form of mutual assistance for hundreds of years. Samoan sociologist Maria Kerslake (personal communication, May 18, 2005), has stated that fa'asamoa was "an holistic concept which literally means the Samoan ways of doing things, such as collective decision making, processes and practices". It still defines roles and responsibilities for community members to act in culturally approved ways. It works as social control to build up social cohesiveness.

The concept of civil society was defined broadly by Nancy L. Rosenblum and Robert C. Post (2002, p. 3). For them civil society ranged from groups based on religion and ethnicity, to voluntary associations organized around ideology, professionalism, social activities or the pursuit of money, status, interest, or power. They ranged from circles of friends to single-purpose political advocacy groups. Civil society also included communities of primary socialization, strong attachment, and common history and expectations. It included cultural group institutions of all kinds, from the deep, constitutive practices of a cultural group with a common language and history, to the wildly diverse popular culture of self-help groups.

Although Putnam and other neo-Tocquevillean ideas of civil society focussed on associational life and social capital as a crucial variable of civil society, they have been criticized by other scholars for disregarding the outside factors, such as political influences. For example, Theda Skocpol (Skocpol & Fiorina, 1999) argue that civil society could be generated by outside factors, such as the state. This contrasts to Putnam's proposition that civil society has an internal capacity to produce such attributes as trust, norms and social networks, or 'social capital'. Encarnacion (2003) challenged the idea that social capital was generated from below by grassroots and voluntary organizations, instead claiming that it was a product of leadership and institution building from above, by elites in the state and in political parties. Putnam's idea of civil society as a horizontal relationship organization was contested by Berman (1997), who claimed that it was not

necessarily a fact that horizontal organizations contributed to the formation of civil society.

From the above discussion it can be seen that there is no single definition of civil society. However, civil society can be classified into three forms encompassing all these definitions. The first form of civil society is a form of associational life which facilitates collective action, which I will call a structural model. The second form is a cognitive model which comprises attitudes and values such as cooperation, trust, tolerance, and non-violence. The third form of civil society is a public sphere for 'active citizenship' to dialogue with each other and exercise their activities to meet the common interests. In this thesis, civil society is identified in these three forms, and each form can be combined together to support each or both of the others and to strengthen civil society in some circumstances. I will explain and discuss more of this approach in Chapters Three and Ten.

From the 1980s onwards, the concept of civil society has been applied in the context of postmodernism, and the complex societies that have developed from the rapid growth of commercialization and industrialization. Therefore, the concept of civil society in the twenty-first century should be applicable to complex societies. The plurality of thinking and the new meanings of civil society should take the voices of diverse groups: women, ethnic groups, and non-western grassroots groups, into account (Howell & Pearce, 2002). Different meanings could be initiated from their different agendas and their cultural contexts.

This brief scoping of the debates around the concept of civil society has revealed the transformation of the concept through different contexts and times. The evolution of civil society in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe emerged in the context of the development of capitalism. This traditional view of civil society saw it as a positive development which could solve moral problems with state guidance. In contrast, Marx and Gramsci viewed civil society as an arena of exploitation which had to be solved by revolution. In de Tocqueville's and Putnam's concepts of civil society it was viewed as a positive force in the cooperative actions of people pursuing their common good, in an era of weakening associations. This evolution of the concept of civil society influenced the characteristic of civil society which derived from different philosophical foundations. In

the following section, I will discuss civil society perspectives which provide an analytical framework to make understandings and distinctions among the differences of each perspective clear. Some key terms concerning to the concept of civil society, which I will use throughout the remainder of this thesis, are defined.

Perspectives of Civil Society: Marxist, Libertarian and Communitarian

Although civil society is multifaceted, there are some common components that frequently occur within understandings of civil society.

The history of the idea of civil society is divided into many streams, including liberalism, critical theory, pluralism or communitarian, Marxist, and democracy (Alagappa, 2004; Eberly, 1994). In some current debates civil society is differentiated into two views: a 'conflict' view and a 'social capital' view (Guan, 2004). However, the concept itself is interpreted from three main perspectives: the Marxist, the liberal and the communitarian perspectives (Deakin, 2001; Wiarda, 2003). Each view has been developed from different contexts, which I will now introduce.

Marxist Perspective

The Marxist perspective is based on Marxist tradition. It is rooted in early twentieth century contemporary thought about the characteristics of Eastern European communist states, totalitarian states with highly controlled economies. This perspective views civil society as oppositional to the state. Marxist perspective implies a transfer of power from the political system to civil society. The state power derives from its legitimacy and its promotion of civil order, but there is limitation on the state's capacity to function and accommodate the cultural differences of minority groups within society. The structure of inequality was preceded by the state, where the bourgeois class dominated over subordinated classes; cultural minority associations, ethnic groups, women, religious groups, local communities, which demanded particular treatment. This led to the opposition of subordinated groups which demanded inclusion of their collective identities in the public spheres, and the creation of a protected societal sphere separate from the state. Civil society in this perspective, therefore seeks to empower and open a space for individuals and disadvantaged groups to organize and articulate their interests for their

well-being (Guan, 2004). Civil society in this viewpoint is illustrated from its activities in opposition to a centralized or autocratic state and has come to mean limiting the state. It takes the side against the state, bringing it into conflict and confrontation with the state (Arizpe, 1998). Theorists influential in this stream are Hegel, Marx, and Gramsci.

Liberal Perspective

The liberal perspective emerged in America and Western Europe in the 1980s. The origins of this perspective can be traced to the Scottish Enlightenment of 1740s to 1790s (Guan, 2004). The perspective on civil society focused on individual rights and liberties. It provided space for freedom of individual expression and group differences, particularly in decision-making (Barber, 1998). The liberal approach is situated in the marketplace, and is individualistic in that it is based on the freedom to associate autonomously under the rules of the market, by contract rather than membership (Deakin, 2001). From this point of view, civil society is expected to provide an opportunity for marginalized citizens to enhance their potential and become more active participants in politics. It tends to protect private liberty and private property from state intrusion (Seligman, 1992, p. 11). However, the liberal perspective does not take account of conflicts and the inequality of marginalized citizens which might occur in organizational structures (VonDoepp, 2002, p. 276). Scholars in the libertarian stream include Locke, Ferguson and de Tocqueville. This perspective emphasizes voluntary self-organization outside state. However, liberal perspectives are mainly concerned with increasing political institutions' levels or spheres of responsibility, while neo-liberal perspectives focus on a greater political space for citizen participation and reducing the role of the state (Glasius, Lewis, & Seckinelgin, 2004).

Communitarian Perspective

The communitarian perspective is focused on the domain of the community where people and their interactions are embedded. People are tied to community by birth, bloodlines, kinship associations and clans, which in turn bind them to higher social associations, such as clubs, neighborhoods and communities. People's attachment to cultural feeling makes them feel they are in the same group (Barber, 1998). The communitarian perspective argues that individualism and liberalism lead to the reduction of community life as

individuals become more engaged in the mechanisms of the market and state, rather than in public issues (Etzioni, 1996; Walzer, 1995; Sandel, 1996; Barber, 1995). Communitarianism, therefore, aims to increase civic engagement by enhancing people's understanding and ability to participate in the resolution of common problems and give value to public virtues in line with the traditions of the community (Tam, 1998; Seligman, 1992). Communitarians respect the equality of inclusion in decision-making and collective action to ensure that the community members' goals can be achieved.

According to Henry Tam (1998, pp. 12-18), the apparatus for building inclusive communities involves three principles. The first is co-operative enquiry through which people learn by questioning life without having predetermined answers. The way to find possible solutions is by searching and cooperating with others while respecting different opinions, and remembering that the most acceptable way of acting at the present time could still be questioned in the future. The second principle involves community members following common values and notions of mutual responsibility. Communitarians believe that common values enable individuals to come together to support others in a community. When co-operative enquiry is achieved, four types of values derive from human experiences: the value of love: experiences of loving and being loved, caring for others, passion, tenderness, friendship, sympathy, kindness, compassion and devotion; the value of wisdom: experiences of understanding, clarity of thought, being able to think for oneself, being able to weigh evidence, and being able to make good judgments; the value of justice: experiences of being treated by others and treating others without any sense of discrimination and respecting reciprocal relationships or the golden rule 'do as you would be done by'; the value of fulfillment: experience of developing and realizing one's potential, feeling of satisfaction and taking pride in one's action and achievements. The third, social structures in organizations or communities should provide members to participate equally in every social situation.

Overall the three perspectives imply different types of engagement in civil society, depending on the different background, assumptions and values of theorists and practitioners. Communitarian and Marxist perspectives are relevant to my position in this thesis. Such perspectives provide me with the concept of grounded civil society in a small community in which local people have established collective actions to challenge the government's power from their own cultural foundations.

Components that Constitute Civil Society

From the literature there appear to be a number of important components of civil society. These significant components involve a public sphere, social ties and networks of citizens. In this section I will explore these components in order to establish the foundation of my own framework.

The public sphere is a critical part of civil society. It refers to the space where citizens exchange ideas, knowledge and reflect upon their common affairs; place their concerns on the public agenda; and establish an arena of discursive action where participants look for common opinions (Fraser, 1992, p. 110). In the view of the Frankfurt School (1962), the public sphere is a space where information exists and communication occurs in a public way. It creates public discussion and deliberation. In sum, the public sphere comprises three main facets. Firstly, it gives opportunities for people to communicate face to face and interact with one another. Secondly, it is a 'space' of equality where everyone should be able to participate and where all voices are equal in decision making, regardless of ethnicity, religion, sexual preference, gender, or economic status. Thirdly, the public sphere mediates between people and institutions, between those that may be powerless and those that may be extremely powerful (Schuler & Day, 2004, pp. 3-4).

Social ties are a key component of civil society because they are an important factor in strengthening civil society. Social ties, which are characterised by different models of linkages and ties among people, create associations and cohesiveness. The consequence of social ties is that citizens bond together to pursue their communal interests (Geisler, 2005, p.106).

Networks are patterns of social exchange and interaction that continue over time. In these networks people connect with each other through mutual expectation of benefit and reciprocity (Uphoff, 2000, p. 219). Networks are regarded as an important feature of social capital, whether they are formal or informal. Dense networks of civic engagement and complex relations between the members and social exchange are a crucial condition

for the rise of the norm of generalized reciprocity of a community (Putnam, 1993).

Different Terms of Civil Society and its Characteristics

Civil society goes by many names, including the independent sector, the voluntary sector, grassroots social change organizations, non-state actors, self-governing organizations, voluntary associations, new social movements, community groups, grassroots organizations, non governmental organizations (NGOs) and non - profit associations such as trade associations for commercial enterprises (Deakin, 2001, p. 10; Howell & Pearce, 2002, p. 17). Although civil society has been called various terms, Hadenius and Ugglå (1998) claim that it comprises at least six characteristics. Here I will outline the characteristics of civil society.

1. **Autonomy:** Civic organizations must be free to create their own policy agendas, to command essential economic and administrative resources, and to control the process of selecting their own leaders. They should be independent from state authorities and other power centers in society such as large commercial business.

2. **Organizational upgrading:** In the future, organizational development should not be limited to local community involvement, but should have regional and national input.

3. **Inclusion:** Linkages should be presented between the civil society and public arenas, such as with the political parties or other actors within a democratic setting.

4. **Inter-segmental affiliation:** Organizations should be opened to members from different segments of society.

5. **Internal democratic structure:** The organization should be democratically structured.

6. **Horizontal affiliation:** Organizations should have a horizontal mode of relationships, in other words a relatively flat hierarchical structure.

Barry Knight (1993, cited in Deakin, p. 2001) expands on the characteristics of voluntary associations by including independent beginnings, self-governing structures,

independence from other agencies; independent funding, use of volunteers; and distribution of surpluses, but not for profit.

Key Terms

The following terms concerning the concept of civil society form the basis of the definition of civil society that I use in my thesis.

‘Democracy’ means social equality, an evocation of participation, of decision making by consensus. It can also imply a homogeneous community (Greenwood & Levin, 1998).

‘Deliberation’ is a practice that promotes informed and active citizenship by working with others to understand their views on issues that concern them. Deliberation is a helpful step for civic involvement. It links people together by creating a public space where people can meet together to deal with problems. In this public sphere, people are free to exchange and share knowledge, and make decisions and judgments (Driver, 2000).

‘Politics’ in this thesis follows the work of Hummel (1980) and Mathews (1999). According to Hummel (1980), a grassroots, or basic, level of politics is one in which the mutual benefits of social organizations and the decision-making process that determine the organizations occur intrinsically. Mathews (1999) defines the term ‘politic’ in a wider sense than the conventional term as ‘the ongoing social association of collective action taken to solve problems that affect the public well-being’. People are already practising politics. Public politics is a citizen centred responsive activity aimed at solving problems for their common future. The goal is to find ways to work together with less confrontation, even when there are different opinions and interests, and consensus cannot be achieved. Public Politics takes a comprehensive approach to problem-solving, rather than separating problems by type and dealing with them one by one (Driver, 2000). I have adopted these definitions from Hummel and Mathews for the term Grounded Civil Society that I use as my working definition.

The popular concept of civil society and its characteristics were developed in Western contexts, from the literature on civil society. However, it could not explain the realities and experiences of civil society in non-western societies. In non-western societies,

particularly in Asian countries, there are a wide range of contexts, including religion, ethnicity, society, culture and economic conditions, which influence the formation of civil society.

My thesis thus aims to contribute a new dimension to understandings on civil society in the specific context of rural communities in the Northeast of Thailand. I propose the idea of 'grounded civil society' for discussing the concept of civil society in my thesis. Grounded civil society, I suggest, exists in the sphere of 'community life' and 'public politics' as discussed by Hummel (1980) and Mathews (1999), rather than in the 'political society'⁴ of Cohen. 'Grounded civil society' can be defined as: the sphere of an autonomous group of people in a particular locality actively engaged in collective action to deal with their struggles and in defense of their common interests by mobilizing social networks, including intimacy relationships, to meet their goals. Civil society may include traditional forms of mutual assistance, and formal or informal social associations. It seeks to have a significant influence on public policy at any level.

This working definition is formed from my fieldwork experience with local people, which is discussed in depth in Chapter Nine.

The Concepts of Social and Cultural Capital

In this section I am going to introduce the concepts of culture and social capital, which is important because it contributes to an explanation and understanding of the development of civil society. Many academic researchers have found that abundant stocks of social capital in voluntary associations can bring about a vibrant civil society and contribute to the conditions necessary for democracy or/and good governance (Putnam, 1993 and 1995a). A dense network of voluntary associations is important for the formation of social capital because such organizations generate the norms of reciprocity and civic engagement. Voluntary associations help in building social trust and providing networks where social relations can be mobilized for civic action (Putnam, 1995).

⁴ Cohen (1995) identifies a fourth space outside of civil society, the market and the state, as political society. Two crucial elements of political society are political parties and political leaders, which can act to strengthen or weaken democracy. This political society involves citizens engaging in the sphere of political parties, lobbies, and other bargaining forums that directly influence the state.

Cultural and Social Capital

Social capital and cultural capital are capitals among different kinds of capital: human, physical, social, cultural, environmental and financial. Human capital refers to the knowledge and skills which can invest in people directly, through job training or schooling; Physical capital is considered to be infrastructure of a community, such as roads, real estates, equipment, power plants, civic centers etc; Social capital is built through the social networks that create norms of reciprocity and trust in a community. Cultural capital refers to a high cultural knowledge that creates social advantage; Environmental capital refers to the community's natural resources, including water, land, air, wildlife, and vegetation; And financial capital refers to money available for investment (Morse, 2004; Halpen, 2005; Wilson & Musick, 1997, p.1997). Each kind of capital can be transferred from one form to other forms. For example, a social network, which is a form of social capital, might be transformed to economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986, cited in Verter, 2003). In my case studies, cultural capital transforms into social capital, which in turn is a source for forming civil society. I will discuss this in Chapters Seven, Eighth and Nine.

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital has shared a meaning similar to spiritual capital and religious capital (Iannaccone, 1990). Iannaccone (1990, p.299) classified this capital as 'the skills and experience specific to one' religion including religious knowledge, familiarity with church ritual and doctrine, and friendships with fellow worshippers'. Cultural and religious capitals manifest their forms as religion's doctrines, rituals, traditions and member's participation in rituals. Bourdieu (1986 cited in Verter, 2003, pp.159-160) claimed that cultural and religious capital were classified into three forms: the embodied, the objectified, and the institutionalized states. The embodied state embeds in the social structure. It is characterized as knowledge, beliefs and the understanding people have about religion. It is built up through the education and socialization processes. The objectified state is a feature of physical objects which are religious symbolic substances such as sacred objects, books, clothing as well as religious principles. It is institutionalized as a church or temple which has the authority to promote and exercise religious practices.

Social Capital

Social capital is particularly critical for the formation of civil society. It is also believed to enhance governmental, political and economic performance. Putnam (1993) states that investment in social capital is not an alternative to, but a prerequisite for, political mobilization and reform. Social capital is significant for poverty alleviation and sustainable human and economic development (The World Bank cited in Harriss, 2002).

The idea of social capital first appeared in Lynda Judson Hanifan's work in 1916 and 1920 and was later theorized in the 1980s by Pierre Bourdieu and James S. Coleman. The concept became popular in the 1990s through Robert Putnam's work on Italy (1993) and his claim that there was a decline of social capital in the United States (1995) (Halpern, 2005, pp.6-7). Social capital is regarded as the mechanism for solving problems in the era of modern society. These problems include social break down, lack of social cohesion, lowered participation in communities, lowered levels of trust, and alienated individuals. Furthermore, the traditional roles of family and community units have been replaced by state functions (Latham, 1997, pp. 7 - 24). Robinson (1999, p. 23) claims that social capital is the glue that holds society together. It plays an essential role in helping people to meet not only their physical needs, but also higher level social and moral needs.

Definitions of Social Capital

Over the last ten years there have been many debates surrounding the idea of social capital. Like civil society, the idea of social capital has been defined from many different theoretical and ideological positions. Among the literature I have reviewed concerning social capital, I have noted that the concept is used in many different ways. According to Pierre Bourdieu, social capital describes the assets which individuals can access and use for their own benefit. He explained social capital from a Marxist perspective, emphasizing the position of working class people in the 1970s and 1980s. Social capital was a process through which individuals in the dominant class, by mutual recognition and acknowledgement, gained the privilege necessary to access resources (Gaggio, 2004). The unequal access of individuals to institutional resources was based on class, gender, and ethnicity through mechanisms of exclusion. Thus, social capital was another way of maintaining and reproducing the dominant class. For Bourdieu social capital is

the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119).

Social capital has also been regarded as a collective asset, in that it operates beyond the individual level at the group and/or community level. Social capital consists of social structural features or resources that are useful to individuals for specific actions. In this view, social capital is a public good that all members can access (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993, 1995; Fukuyama, 2000; Lin, 2001).

The American sociologist James S. Coleman was interested in linking different types of capital in a model of individual behaviour that he referred to as the basic model of rational choice where individuals can seek to maximize their interests. Social capital in his view is defined by its function.

Social capital is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain action of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within that structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible (Coleman, 1988, p.96).

For Coleman, social capital was the skill of co-operation among people in organisations or society to realise common interests and to create connections within groups. This skill is based on the recognition of common values and norms which he argued can generate a strong economy (Coleman, 1988).

Fukuyama (2000) defined social capital as a cultural feature of moral values which creates relationships between people. Loyalty, trust and honesty were the basic foundations of social capital. For him, social capital was a moral resource. It is dynamic when a community shares values and norms that let them cooperate with one another. The norms that produce social capital include virtues like truth telling, meeting obligations, and reciprocity.

Putnam's work was in contrast to Bourdieu's and Coleman's conceptualizations, in that social capital was seen as being society's property. For him social capital was a

feature of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue their objective. It is generated by a dense network of secondary associations in which people have interactions and mobilized norms and reciprocity (Putnam, 1993, p. 167).

Putnam focused on trust as the key element of social capital. He suggested that the presence of trust among people enabled them to engage in collective action for common benefit. He also stated that 'the more connectedness, the more people trust each other and vice versa' (Putnam, 1995, p. 665). The more people have civic involvement the more social capital increases, which in turn makes more civic involvement possible. The voluntary associations which contribute to the formation of social capital should be horizontal bonds, rather than vertical bonds, of relationship. The horizontal relationship brings equal status and power of citizens. Putnam (1993) claimed that underdevelopment resulted from a lack of social capital, civic involvement and civic organizations. Putnam's idea of social capital has been adopted by development organizations such as the World Bank and UNDP and as such his work is significant in the international development discourse. Among some international organizations, social capital is regarded as 'the missing link' in development theory (Harriss, 2002; Gaggio, 2004). In their view, civic associations therefore need to be built up through project interventions. The World Bank adopted this idea of social capital as being critical for poverty alleviation and sustainable human and economic development. The Bank defines social capital as

the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions [which] underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together (The World Bank, 2005).

Lin (Lin, Fu & Hsung, 2001) views social capital as resources which are embedded in a social structure and are accessed and mobilized for a purposeful action. This definition of social capital contains three elements: resources embedded in the social structure; resources accessible to individuals; and use or mobilization of resources by individuals who mobilize these resources for purposeful actions.

To sum up, social capital can be defined as the resources that exist in social relationships, both formal and informal, which comprises a set of norms: reciprocity, honesty, trust; networks of civic engagement; and values that individuals or groups mobilize in order to cooperate to achieve a common purpose.

From this definition, social capital can be viewed as having two main categories: cognitive and structural. The cognitive category includes norms and values and derives from mental processes and the resulting ideas. This category is reinforced by culture and ideology, specifically norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs that contribute to cooperative behaviour. The structural category is the more concrete side. It is the social networks that are constructed through linkages and practices between individuals and organisations in a community. It involves roles, rules, and procedures, as well as a wide variety of networks (Newton, 2001; Uphoff, 2000)

Three Dimensions of Social Capital

There are three dimensions of social capital which form a framework for analysis. Firstly, its main components of networks, norms and values, trust, and reciprocities; secondly, the level of analytical approach of micro level (individual level), community level (meso level), or macro level (regional or national levels); and thirdly, its characteristic functions of bonding, bridging and linking (Halpern, 2005). In this section I will discuss two of these namely the three components of social capital and its characteristics of functional ability.

Components of Social Capital

Social capital consists of three crucial components: networks, norms of reciprocity and norms of trust. Social trust in complex modern settings can arise from two related sources - norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement (Putnam, 1993, p. 171). According to Barber (1983, p. 165) trust involves “socially learned and socially confirmed expectations that people have of the natural and moral social orders that set the fundamental understanding for their lives”. Trust can be used to facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit of the members.

Social networks are the connectedness of people through the expectation of benefits and reciprocity from each other (Uphoff, 2000). Social networks may come from people held together by different mechanisms including kinship ties and cultural identity. Social networks can generate norms of reciprocity in a community (Putnam, 1993).

Norms of reciprocity are patterns of interaction among individuals. Ostrom (1998, p.10) defined reciprocity as involving collective action and including:

- 1) an effort to identify who else is involved,
- 2) an assessment of the possibility that others are conditional cooperators,
- 3) a decision to cooperate initially with others, if others are trusted to be conditional cooperators,
- 4) a refusal to cooperate with those who do not reciprocate and
- 5) punishment of those who betray trust.

A norm of trust is defined by a feeling or a sense of mutual obligation to one another. Norms and values refer to common sets of beliefs and cues for the development of behaviour in close associations (Deaken, 2001, p.73). They involve expectations of how another person will perform on some future occasion. Trust itself is not a form of social capital, but is in fact an outcome of social capital and is a key link between social capital and successful collective action (Sahd, 2004, p. 87). Using this explanation, trust consists of two main components: beliefs and commitment (Sztompka, 1999, p. 25).

Characteristics of the Functionability of Social Capital

The functional character of social capital can be divided into three characteristics (Putnam, 2000, pp.22-23; Woolcock, 2001, pp. 13-14):

- a) **Characteristic One:** Bonding types of social capital are dense networks of social ties between people in similar situations and kinship, such as immediate family, close friends and neighbors.
- b) **Characteristic Two:** Bridging types of social capital are weaker social ties, which encompass more distant ties between people, such as loose friendships

and workmates. They are better for making links to external assets and for the diffusion of information.

- c) Characteristic Three: Linking types of social capital are ties between people in dissimilar situations, such as those who have access to resources and power, with those who do not. Thus social ties enable members to access resources that are not available within their own community.

Measurement of Social Capital

Social capital is social networks, and norms and values, or rather the effects of networks and norms. A range of studies has used the number of associations and their membership numbers as a measure of social capital. For example, in Robert Putnam's work 'Making Democracy Work', social capital is measured by a civic community index (CCI), which measures networks in terms of participation and membership in various kinds of associations ranging from sports clubs to interest groups and voluntary activities. It also measures political participation, such as voter turnout and the indicators of how people spend their waking hours (Putnam, 1993). Moreover, the index is an indicator of informal sociability, for example, how much time individuals spend visiting friends and the average number of times people entertain at home (Putnam, 2000, p. 291).

However, the index constructed by Putnam in his Italian and American studies may not work in other contexts. Other measures of social capital have been developed in different cultural settings where there were few formal associations found (Krishna, 2002, p. 56). They found that the level of social capital was positively related to development outcomes. For example, Narayan and Pritchett's (1999, p. 890) survey of data from Tanzania, found that local organization was a key to successful development. It also showed that a higher level of village social capital was associated with higher levels of individual incomes, even after controlling for household education, physical assets and village characteristics. Trust is an abstract component of social capital. The level can be measured at both a community level and individual level, such as trust in other people, groups or organizations, as well as in the government. Various characteristics of associations, such as homogeneity and heterogeneity, and horizontal and vertical linkages are also found to affect the level of trust and social capital (Krishna, 2002).

The World Bank has developed and categorized measurement of social capital into six sections (Grootaert et al, 2004, pp. 3 - 14). The first were the groups and networks which individuals were involved in, such as various types of social organizations and informal networks. The second was trust and solidarity which included trust towards neighbors and key service providers. The third was collective action and cooperation, including the degree or level of collective action, the type of activities undertaken collectively, and the extent or willingness to cooperate and participate in collective action. The fourth was information and communication that detailed how households receive information and the extent of their access to communications infrastructure. The fifth was social cohesion and inclusion. The sixth section was empowerment and political actions. Empowerment referred to the expansion of assets and the capabilities of people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affected their lives, as well as the ability to make decisions that effect everyday activities and might change the course of one's life.

Although many theorists try to measure social capital, it is difficult to measure it with standardized tools and indicators because of cultural differences. The norms of Western countries such as Britain and the United States are different from Eastern norms, particularly in the positioning of community ahead of self-interest (Halpern, 2005). Therefore, the assessment of social capital in different cultures should be applied and measured in different ways. Nonetheless, the study of social capital and civil society are still interesting for politicians and scholars because they are key components in social, political, and economic development.

Conclusion

The concepts of civil society that I have illustrated in this chapter are still based on idealizations or philosophical accounts that are largely derived from Western culture. There are limited non-Western culture perspectives represented in the concept. Nonetheless, civil society has various facets and perspectives. It varies according to how it is valued by the people who are using it, and it depends on the different contexts where it is used. Civil society can be regarded as an ideology, a concept and a practice. Although there are many debates surrounding the concept of civil society, in my case studies I will show that civil society is shaped by the practices of the people who live in the rural

communities where I did my research. In these case studies civil society is generated and activated through the community's culture and the process of participatory action research. Action research enhances the capacity of the group in decision-making and in collective action to control community resources and generate activities for solving community problems. My argument in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight is that social phenomena in rural communities are complex. Building on the communitarian perspective and participatory action approach brings to the researcher in - depth knowledge from local people's points of view. I hope to contribute to the debate on civil society by emphasizing the local context and by proposing the idea of 'grounded civil society', which I will demonstrate in Chapter Nine and Ten.

In the following Chapter I will present civil society from a non-Western cultural perspective, focusing in particular on Asian countries, and specifically on Thailand. The concept of civil society in Asia differs from the Western concept because of the diverse historical backgrounds, ethnicities and religious beliefs, all of which influence and shape civil society so that it 'fits' the different contexts.

CHAPTER 3

CIVIL SOCIETY IN ASIA

In this section I will present a brief evolution of civil society in Asia and Thailand. The literature on the concept provides an understanding of the formation and the features of civil society in the Asian and Thai contexts.

Civil society in Asia has developed through different historical contexts and within diverse ethnic, religious and cultural value systems and levels of economic development. It comprises several arenas of power, struggle, and cooperation and changes over time. It displays features of both the neo-Tocquevillean and neo-Gramscian perspective with wide ranging forms of voluntary and non-voluntary groups (Alagappa, 2004, pp. 10-11). Civil society in these countries is distinctive because their colonial histories, most of them having been colonized by American, British and European countries during the sixteenth and early nineteenth century. The colonial governance brought about transformations in the social, cultural, economic, and political institutions of these countries. New forms of institutions were substituted for the indigenous forms and structures. These were changed through the educational system and media institutions that articulate ideas about society (Aspinall, 2004; Franco, 2004; Shah, 2004).

In the 1950s and 1960s Asian civil society faced common constraints from military regimes in countries such as the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Korea and Thailand. A similar pattern emerged in the 1970s in the authoritarian and communist political states of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. These constraints limited the freedom of civil society groups. Nonetheless, in countries such as the Philippines, Thailand, South Korea, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Burma and the Peoples Republic of China (PRC), civil society has played an important role against authoritarian governments in the past two decades where there have been a number of civil society movements for human rights, women's issues, environmental issues and freedom from oppression.

From the 1970s onwards, civil society in Asia has increased in parallel with the decline of indigenous civil societies. The expansion of capitalism has led to industrialization and urbanization and a transformation of economies and social structures. Economic

growth has brought about the differentiation of labor and the transformation of class based groups that replaced ethnic and cultural groups. This helped to create an urban middle class whose leadership was important for the emergence of private non-profit organizations. The campaign of individual rights replaced the indigenous rule of social relationships. Civic type associations in the city were acknowledged, rather than ethnic and religious-based groups, and new social movements began to emerge, for example student, environmental, women's, human rights and consumer groups, and other public interest movements (Guan, 2004).

Civil society in Asia has increased since the mid -1980s. Nonetheless, there are very few studies on Asian civil society (Alagappa, 2004). However, in the 1980s and early 1990s, there were arguments from Asian scholars that Asian culture was not suited to the Western concepts of civil society and liberal democracy. One argument from Wiarda (2003) is that civil societies in Asia are likely to be established and imposed by the state and bureaucracy. Wiarda presents the context of the developing world where the state mostly controls development through regulation. Wiarda calls this a 'corporatist system'¹. This circumstance of state-led development is that it frequently comes with foreign pressure in the form of development aid. Within Asian society there is a diversity of religions; Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam, and a variety of indigenous groups. These diversities mean that the context and meaning of civil society in Asia differs from Western civil society. This corporatist system always occurs in societies which have organic political histories and a cultural base of community, for example, in communitarian societies such as Japan and China. The corporatist system is also found in many Catholic countries, but not in the United States (Wiarda, 2003; Alagappa, 2004). In contrast, in Europe civil society is composed of autonomous, voluntary associations and based on pluralities (Schak & Hudson, 2004, p. 3).

The concept of civil society in non-Western countries, and particularly in Asia, is open to controversy. Firstly, it is debated whether civil society existed in society before the state or the nation. There is strong evidence of civic activities at local and village levels in pre-industrial Asian society (Weller, 1999; Rowe, 1989, 1993; Embree, 1939, cited in

¹ Corporatism or corporativism is a system of social and political organization in which the state controls, limits, sometime monopolizes, and even creates the interest-group or civil society (Wiarda, 2003, p. 28). Unlike pluralism, in which many groups must compete for control of the state, in corporatism, certain unelected bodies take a critical role in the decision-making process.

Schak & Hudson, 2004). For example, civil society in India originated in the mid-nineteenth century when peasant groups and traditional caste and religious groups formed a number of social reform movements in order to gain independence and to emancipate themselves from exploitation (Jayal, 2001, cited in Alagapp, 2004, p. 12). Secondly, the notion of civil society in Asia should not be assumed to link to a democratic regime, as civil society has arisen in both democratic and non-democratic societies. In China and other East Asian countries civil society is strong regardless of non-democratic, state-centered governments (Wiarda, 2003, pp. 22-24; Hudson, 2003). This idea is different from Western theory that assumes that democracy and civil society go hand in hand. Third, in agrarian Asian societies people engaged in community self-help or philanthropic activities with self-governance (not state governance) which was beneficial for the 'public' and the 'well-being' of local communities. Therefore, 'these activities are more properly a 'public sphere' rather than civil society activities' (Schak & Hudson, 2004, p. 3). This position was supported by Leonora C. Angeles (cited in Chantana, 2004) who claimed that social movements in Asia are responsive to basic human needs.

From the above discussion, it may be misleading to analyze Asian civil society using Western notions of civil society. The adoption of one particular idea of civil society can lead to stereotyping and potentially a lack of consideration for the different histories and traditions. Therefore, the concept of civil society in Asia should be analyzed, defined and approached in the various Asian contexts.

Civil Society in Thailand

Civil society in Thailand reveals its form in both indigenous civil societies and social movements. In the following section I will present the dynamics of civil society in Thailand. To help explore these dynamics I will briefly introduce some grassroots social movements that have opposed authoritarian government. In the last two sections I will present examples of Thai civil society as it existed in the traditional rural context. The final section will also show the nurture and constraint factors of civil society in Thailand.

Many actors contribute to civil society in Thailand and as such civil society in the Thai context takes various forms. Among the actors are NGOs, voluntary associations, academics, activists, local people and the bureaucratic government. These actors contribute to the formation and evolution of civil society in different ways and at different levels.

Civil society in Thailand can be traced back to 1932 when civil servants and a Western-educated military overthrew the absolute monarchy and replaced it with a constitutional monarchy. The consequence of this was the establishment of parliamentary democracy. Although it launched liberal democracy in Thailand, politics were still controlled by bureaucratic elites and military rule until the 1980s (Chantana, 2004; Ockey, 2001).

Thailand's first voluntary organization can be traced back to the late 1960s and the Thailand Rural Reconstruction Foundation (TRRF), which was started by one of Thailand's leading technocrats, Dr. Puey Ungphakorn. TRRF work centered around development that focused on rural needs and demands. This contrasted with the centralization of government development projects. Another initiative was the anti-American movement led by Suluk Sivaraksa. He criticized government policies that focused on modernization and material wealth which he believed weakened traditional institutions. He suggested that development should be based on Buddhist principles and self-reliance. The ideology of the anti-American movement and the TRRF influenced some NGOs that were working in the countryside on community development. Many of these NGOs began incorporating a commitment to local community, and Buddhist principles, education and culture in their work (Pasuk & Baker, 1995).

Since the 1970s there have been a number of social movements in Thailand. On October 14 1973, university students led a successful protest against the authoritarian military regime. Almost three years later, with the possible return of military rule, students protested again on October 6, 1976. These incidents led to an increasing number of voluntary organizations whose membership was educated, middle class and not afraid of activism. These groups often cooperated with non-government organizations (NGOs) and have played a key role as catalysts for social movements since the late 1970s. Some NGOs worked with local people helping them to organize rural movements. Some of the middle class were involved in the political, educational and economic sectors. Some

launched an urban economy and ran communication businesses in the mid 1980s, which opened a space for the public media to deliberate on social and political issues. The new middle class was made up of student activists and NGOs and the mobilized movement on human rights. This environment and development was a key factor in the May 1992 uprising. This uprising aimed at removing military leaders from the positions of power that they had seized during a coup in 1991 (Pasuk & Baker, 1995; Suthy, 2004; Chantana, 2004). In summary, these rebellions popularised civil society in Thailand through new social movements and the political liberation from the military government which had been in power since the 1970s.

From the mid 1970s the number of social movements in Thailand has also increased because of inequalities that had arisen from government development projects. The development perspective based on modernization theory was actively approached and broadly influenced Thai society. It found potential influence in government development policies. Government policy was clearly focused on economic growth and urban-based development which led to inequalities between rural and urban areas. The commercialization of agribusiness increased conflicts between local people and the state and macro business agencies around the utilization of natural resources. These conflicts led to movements of local people defending their access to resources such as land, water and forests. Farmers were struggling to maintain their livelihoods and traditional culture was declining. In addition, government development policies towards rural areas, such as dam constructions and forestry, brought exploitation of natural resources to the countryside. There were a number of people struggling as a result of the negative effect of government development projects. (Pasuk & Baker, 1995; Suthy, 2004). Government policies were exclusive and marginalized vulnerable groups for the benefit of development. This increased the movements of marginalized people in claiming and protecting their livelihoods and culture. NGOs and activists assisted the struggling people to organize movements opposing the government and macro agribusiness policies. I will briefly present some evidence of these social movements in the following section.

From the late 1970s it is clear that NGOs played a crucial role in social movements in Thailand. They advocated for underprivileged groups to participate in their development

process. These NGOs, with local villagers, sometimes challenged the development policies and the accountability of the government. NGOs were involved with local people in campaigning on various issues such as human rights, the environment, water, forest and land resources, health, education and poverty alleviation. They worked with target groups such as women, children, indigenous people and hill-tribes and in urban, rural and slum areas (Pasuk & Baker, 1995; Cornors, 2003; Chantana, 2004).

In the late 1970s, a number of international relief organizations initiated projects helping the Indo-Chinese refugees in Thailand. Some of these organizations moved on to work on rural development programs. In the same decade a group of Thai NGOs proposed anti-capitalist ideas. This group claimed that mainstream capitalism, which was the main policy of the government, destroyed the villages' self-reliance and local culture. In the NGOs' view, community was an autonomous society where the people could manage their own economic, educational, and cultural lives. This group of NGOs valued local wisdom and traditional culture. They worked from the bottom-up with participatory approaches. This group of NGOs called themselves '*Wattanatham chumchon*' or 'localism'. The idea of localism was espoused as an alternative development in the 1980s. Intellectuals involved in this group were Bumrung Bunpanya, Father Niphot Tienviharn, Apichart Thongyu, Seri Phongphit and Kanchana Kaewthep (Seri, 1986; Pasuk & Baker, 1995).

A new constitution was promulgated on 11 October 1997. Various groups of the populace contributed to the drafting of the constitution and thus it was called a 'People's Constitution'. The constitution legitimated the rights of the populace and endorsed participation from civic organizations. It opened up the public sphere for civic groups to engage in political and social issues. In addition, in 1997 there were political reforms that promoted and anticipated civil society as having a crucial role to play in challenging the actions of the state and monitoring the state's governance through the legal system (Chantana, 2004; Phananimamai & Hewison, 2002).

In 1997-1998 when Thailand faced an economic crisis, a growing number of voices proposed a policy of localism as an alternative to the negative affect of liberal modernization. King Phumiphon Adunyadet of Thailand gave a public speech on his birthday in 1997, articulating the idea of localism coming together with the principle of

a self-sufficient economy. This idea was adopted by the government and used to guide policy, particularly development policy concerned with the rural and urban areas (Uhlen, 2002). This incident awoke civil society to other perspectives for disciplining the state and to principles of accountability, transparency, and responsiveness.

Since the 1997 economic crisis, the development of civil society in Thailand has flourished. A number of civic groups emerged to monitor the recovery, including the Anti-Corruption Network, the Campaign for Popular Democracy, the Federation for Democracy, the Protection of Civil Rights and Freedom Group, and the Institute for Political Development, with all pushing for political reforms. Other groups focused on protesting the influence of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Thailand's recovery. These included the United Thai for National Liberation Club (*Chomrom ruam jai thai ku chat*), Save the Nation Forum (*Prachakhom kop ban ku meuang*), Civicnet, Bangkok Forum and Environment Groups. These organizations are opening space for the populace to participate in the political and economic arenas (Chantana, 2004; Cornor, 2003).

To sum up, since the 1970s, civil society, in the form of social movements, has emerged in Thailand for two main reasons. The first is the opposition to the legitimacy of the authoritarian government in the 1970s and 1990s. The second is the protests against the negative effects of the government's development policies. The new political reform and the new constitution of 1997 led to the liberation and legitimacy of individuals to participate in public issues. Moreover, it brought about the growth of a variety of non-government organizations working to challenge the government's power and its transparency in areas such as anti-corruption and election monitoring.

The Perspective and the Features of Civil Society in Thailand

In this section, I will survey the incidences of civil society which reveal different perspectives and forms of civil society, including the Marxist, corporatist and communitarian perspectives.

Marxist perspective: Social Movements at the Grassroots Level

In the previous section, I presented civil society in the form of social movements against the authoritarian government. In the following section, I will present some important examples of grassroots movements which protested against the government's development policies.

Social movements at the grassroots level came about through the aggression of government development projects. A number of people's movements emerged in the countryside, particularly in the Northeast Region, where organized groups protested against government projects in the 1980s and 1990s. Examples were opposition against dams and construction, and macro agribusiness (Pasuk & Baker, 1995; Rajah, 2005).

A powerful grassroots movement occurred in 1995, which clearly demonstrated the strength of civil society in Thailand. This movement became known as the 'The Assembly of the Poor'. Over 10,000 peasants and laborers from all over Thailand came together to protest on a range of issues relating to government development projects. Some of these protestors had been adversely affected by land and agriculture projects and dam construction. Others, such as slum dwellers, had been driven from their homes for urban development projects. They also set up groups and networks on various issues at the provincial and regional levels to continue protests against aggressive government policies and as a forum to turn their demands into direct political action (Suthy, 2004).

Another long-term protest was against the construction of the Pak Mun Dam (International River Network, 2004) in 1990-1997. The dam was built in Ubon Ratchathani province on the Mun River, the largest tributary of the Mekong River. This dam project was considered by local people to cause a reduction in the fish population. More than 20,000 people who lived in local communities along the Mun River were affected by this project. They organized a group to oppose the government and to find a way to solve the problems caused by the dam. However, not all the problems have been solved. In 1999, more than 5,000 villagers set up a new village near the Pak Mun dam site called Ban Mae Mun Man Yuen No 1, 'Long-lasting Mun River Village No1'.

Another protest against dam construction was the Rasi Salai Dam project (International River Network, 2004) on the Mun River in 1994. The dam was one of 13 dams in the Kong–Chi–Mun Water Diversion project which planned to irrigate land in northeast Thailand. The project did not meet its aim because stored water in the dam was too salty for irrigation. Today, local people struggle because the construction of the dam resulted in their losing natural resources which supported their livelihoods. When the reservoir was filling more than 15,000 people lost their farmland through flooding. It also exploited the freshwater swamp forest which was a source of food and traditional medicine for the villagers and a fish habitat. The dam caused a reduction in the fish population. As a result of this, in 1999 more than 1,850 people founded a village on the site of the reservoir area called Mae Mun Man Yuen Village 2 or ‘Long lasting Mun River Village 2’.

The local people affected by the Pak Mun and the Rasi Salai Dam projects wanted the government to compensate them for their loss of farmlands and fishery resources. They also demanded that the government open the dam gates permanently to restore the fisheries of the Mun River. These social movements revealed a model of defensive response of powerless people to the faulty policy of the government. Nonetheless, the Kong–Chi–Mun Water Diversion project has already constructed dams on the Chi and the Mun River. People in the communities along the Mun and the Chi River have experienced similar problems to the ones highlighted above. When I surveyed the communities and interviewed local people along the Chi River, flooding had become a serious problem for the communities. One of these communities is included in the case studies presented in Chapter Eight.

The above examples of grassroots movements reveal the power of underprivileged groups who struggle from the negative affects of government development projects. Their movements confront state power. Although the poor could not change government policy, their response is part of a civil society development process that aims to increase the power of marginalized groups and open up a space for them to be involved in public issues. Chantana (2004, p. 229) states that ‘although social movements at the grassroots level could not achieve much in terms of policy change,

the valuable outcome was the increasing visibility of marginalized people in the public sphere’.

What these examples describe is ‘civil society’ from what I consider to be a Marxist perspective. However, there are still controversial debates on civil society in Thailand which reveal other perspectives and forms of civil society beside the Marxist social movement perspective. The concept of civil society in the Marxist social movement perspective has not been widely accepted. What seems to have been commonly supported is civil society in corporatist relations with the state. I will now discuss the features of what I refer to as a corporatist relations civil society perspective.

Corporatist Relations Perspective: Benja parkee, thammarat, Civic Forums, Philanthropic Organizations and Pracha kom

Civil society or ‘*prachasangkom*’ (the Thai term) is regarded as the collective action of a group of people from many sectors, including the state and business groups. However, there are many terms that are used to describe similar phenomena, a number of which I will review now.

Benja parkee and Thammarat

An example of ‘*prachasangkom*’ comes from the academic Prawase Wasi (1999) who suggested the term ‘*benja parkee*’ which is translated as ‘five stakeholders’. He suggests these stakeholders are academics, NGOs, the government, business sectors and citizen’s organizations. The idea of ‘*benja parkee*’ is that co-operation between these stakeholders creates a ‘synergy’ of social power which creates a much stronger civil society than if the various spheres (state, business spheres and NGOs for example) were to work separately. This view is advanced by Chai-Anan Samudavniya (1997) who suggests that civil society might co-operate with the state in order to promote public responsibility and civic action. Thirayuth Boonmee (1998) proposes the term ‘*thammarat*’ which he refers to as good governance. He claimed the state, business and social sectors should cooperate in overcoming the national economic crisis.

Civic Forums

There are other forms of civil society that show cooperation between the state and development organizations. This form can be seen in urban-based organizations which are made up of urban middle class people from different groups. These forms of civil society create mutual assistance among members, social participation and movement in public issues and are sometimes called civic groups or civic forums. Their activities are concerned with a variety of issues such as skill training, school alumni fund raising and radio networks with interactive communication for helping people relieve the stress of personal problems and traffic congestion. Groups of local people are cooperative in various activities in their urban local areas. Some focus on environmental conservation and some focus on encouraging people to know their local history in order to create local awareness and bond them to their mother land. For example, the movement of local people concerning their provinces in Petchburi, Nan and collective actions in public issues in these local areas (*Khon Rak Muang Petch*, and *Hak Muang Nan*)(Kritiya et al., 1999, p. xlv; Supawul, 2002; Juree, 2003, pp. 94-97).

Philanthropic Organizations

Other forms of civil society are the traditional philanthropic organizations that are mostly organized by wealthy and well-known persons. These civil society groups are autonomous and self governing. They are voluntary associations and sometimes engage in charitable or development activities. These voluntary groups aim to provide short-term relief for vulnerable people through benevolent health, food and housing projects, often administered by religious-based organizations. Between 1998-2003, a philanthropic movement organized countrywide collective action by campaigning for fundraising to help the nation recover from the 1997 economic crisis. This movement was led by Luangta Maha Bua² (Acariya Maha Boowa Nansampanno, 2004), a charismatic Buddhist monk. During this time there was also opposition to the government's privatization policy and overseas takeover of domestic enterprises. (Supawul, 2002; Juree, 2003, pp. 94-97; Chantana, 2004, p. 229). This movement was attached to the nationalist movement and pressured the government to reconsider the

² His fundraising collected \$ US 10,803,600 and 11,037.50 kilograms of gold were put on deposit in the National Reserve Fund.

policy.

Prachakom

The Government announced a decentralization of administration as the government policy. This policy directed that a civic group called *Prachakom*³ (in Thai) be set up at a local administrative level as a mechanism to support the local Administration Organization planning. The policy was included in the procedure of the Interior Ministry entitled 'The Planning and Coordination in the Local Administrative Organization' issued in 1998 and in the amendment in 2003. Civil society in this form is conceived more broadly than the other forms in that it is endorsed in the 1997 constitution as a public sector. Civil society in this form is anticipated to bring demands from the local people into the planning process of local government administration. Furthermore, in sections 58, 59 and 60 of the Thai Constitution it is stipulated that civil society tasks include organizing a public hearing process and participating in local government administration. Civil society in this form is thus attached to government bureaucratic structures such as local administration organizations: at the village, sub-district, district, and the provincial levels (See Figure 6.1 on page 105). In practice, civil society has been adopted with a static meaning of the 'pracha kom'. With a restrictive and mis-understood concept of civil society ideology, civil society in this form is conceived only for legitimizing the government's development plans in local administrations.

In summation, the Thai intellectuals' advocacy of new ideas of civil society, the new constitution and the political transform action triggered an opportunity for people's organizations, the government, NGOs and business sectors to join in social, economic and political participation. The idea of civil society was transformed from the older form of class-based struggle of the 'Marxist social movement perspective' in the 1970s and 1980s to a new way of conceptualizing pluralist politics. After the economic crisis in the late 1990s, new norms of civic engagement of 'corporatist relations civil society' have been a central perspective and influenced the formation of cooperation rather than

³ Prachakom is a group of local people (10-15 persons) who are selected by the villagers in that local area to be involved in the local administration system. Each level of Prachakom has one committee at the provincial, district, sub-district and village levels. Their tasks are to report local administrations on people needs and to give advice on policy at each level.

the confrontational forms of civil society.

Communitarian Civil Society Perspective

The last perspective is mainly used and discussed by intellectuals and the NGOs who work at the grassroots level. Many of these groups have adopted a communitarian perspective since the late 1980s, holding the idea that strengthening local communities acts as a counterbalance to globalization. These forms of civic groups are the foundation of support for empowering local people (Pasuk & Baker, 1995; Kritiya et al., 1999, p. xlv). These forms, which are found at the local level, include community-based organizations (CBOs) and indigenous forms of civil society. CBOs are formed by people who are familiar to each other. CBOs may be launched by villagers or promoted by government officers with some operational funding. These groups have autonomous management. They seek to support local people's livelihoods, strengthen community and create people-centered learning processes. CBOs engage in various activities, such as co-operative stores, rice banks, buffalo banks, and credit union groups. Some of them are very successful and have become a model for other villagers. An example of this is the cattle raising project of Ta Nang Neaw sub-district, Chonnabot District, Khon Kaen Province which now has members throughout the Northeast region. Saving groups, or so-called community banks, of which villagers are members, are another example. While the country's economic crisis caused collapse in a large number of banks at the national level, this contrasted with the villagers' banks which remained successful in their business. They expanded their membership and networks across to the provinces in the South. They initiated regulation of the banks for the benefit of all villagers. The interest gained from running the community banks provides a social welfare system for members, such as medical fees, wedding facilities, life insurance, and community development projects in the localities where they are based. In 2005, there were a number of CBO's scattered over the country and some of them are a strong force in local and national civic movements (Supawul, 2002; Juree, 2003, p. 94-97)

Indigenous civil society is initiated by local people and takes the form of small self-help groups. These types of collective groups have a longer history than the other forms of civil society in Thailand. Although the term 'civil society' itself was not traditionally

used, there is a history of self-governing, non-state associations and voluntary associations based on the daily struggle in people's lives. Villagers applied the concepts of 'communal property' 'indigenous knowledge' and 'community control' to manage, protect and allocate their resources. A good example of this is the self-governing model of the water irrigation in '*Meung-Fai*⁴ and the conservation of watershed forests in the North of Thailand in which local communities manage their natural resources without state interference. Currently, there are more than 1,500 community forest groups around the country. These groups have joined together to campaign on environmental problems and to make the community forests legitimate and recognized by government (Chayan, 2003, p. 159). Nonetheless, these kinds of indigenous-based groups are weakened by outside forces such as the dominant state policies. The government development projects frequently ignore the significant local wisdom and traditional management systems and replace them with a modern form of management in formal organizations. Another aspect utilized by the neo-Marxist perspective is to analyze the economy of villages in the past. Their argument supports the communitarian perspective that recognizes Thai villages as autonomous societies. This argument suggests that before state intervention, villages had self-reliant economic systems. Intellectuals in this group include Chattip Nartsupha and Kanoksak Kaewthep (Pasuk & Baker, 1995; Pasuk, 2005).

From the literature I have outlined it can be seen that there are many perspectives and forms of civil society in Thailand. Firstly, there is the Marxist perspective that takes the form of social movements and which includes voluntary groups and NGOs. Secondly, there is the liberal perspective which is proposed by academics who have a Western educational background. Lastly is the communitarian perspective which is promoted by intellectuals and grassroots NGOs. Civil society in this final perspective is revealed in the form of self-governance, community-based organizations and indigenous groups. Therefore, any analysis of civil society requires room for a variety of perspectives to be included and their particular contexts to be understood.

⁴ Meung -Fai in Nan Province is a model of management water irrigation has been organized by local people for more than a hundred years to solve the problem of the lack of water. They collectively dug the river, and made an irrigation storage facility. They set up regulations to utilize water in that local area without conflict, and organized a ritual ceremony every year to pay respect to the spirit of the water (<http://www.nancivil.net/>)

Factors that Nurture and Constrain Civil Society in Thailand

The social structure, norms and values of Thai society are part of what holds up civil society in Thailand. There are various factors that support civil society in Thailand (Kritaya et al., 1999, p. xxxv; Juree, 2003).

Buddhist principles are used to interpret the formation of social structure and social values, advocating civic virtue in the civil society sphere. The Buddhist principles in the Pali canon known as '*trisikha*' (precepts) comprising '*mettha*' (loving kindness) and '*panya*' (wisdom), influence Thais to be silent rather than having power to control others. This belief influences the corporatist system of Thai civil society. Self-reliance and self-sufficiency are grounded in Buddhist philosophy and tend to make people refuse to be dominated, as well as motivating them to have good relationships with others. This supports civil society because it helps people to live their lives in moderation. Furthermore, it supports an autonomous feeling.

Social relationships, particularly in the local communities, are based on a kinship which comes from endogamous marriage patterns⁵. This brings about intensive relationships and mutual assistance at the community level. These social ties are the foundation of cohesiveness and social solidarity. They generate an inclusive community where the members of community have a sense of being part of a group with mutual trust (Juree, 2003, pp. 88-92). Kinship is not only a reality in the genealogy of family but also appears in fictional kinship rituals, particularly the *Phuk Siao*⁶ (*Siao* can be translated as friend) in the Northeast Region. Traditional rituals encourage individuals to establish close personal relationships and create extensive links of relationships among communities.

Fictional kinship among community members is also inspired by religion and belief in supernatural spirits. There are a few studies (Sukarin, 2003; Chinasak, 2003) which have revealed how local people's belief in the supernatural creates fictional kinships.

⁵ It is characterized by the custom of marrying within the limits of clan or tribe

⁶ This traditional ritual helps to bind together two people of the same sex, age, and similar appearance and characteristics. The elders in the community are eye-witnesses in the ritual. They use cotton threads to tie the wrists of these two friends and they make a pledge to help each other and to be close friends for their lives.

The belief in the local ancestors' spirits or the guardian spirits, for example, is the foundation for linkages among people in a local area which creates close relationships. These people set up local networks of those who are under the protection of same guardian spirits. This kind of belief supports connections between local people as if they were from the same family. Moreover, they build up a 'fictional cultural space', which creates a group harmony through the similarity of their beliefs. These fictional spaces continue to exist no matter how the new central government administrative units divide the community's boundary. In addition, this belief broadens relationships and links people to the original group and place where they used to live. In other words, although they migrated out of that locality, they still hold the same belief in spirit guardians. This kind of belief creates group or community feeling. This characteristic of fictional kinships is similar to social ties in most indigenous traditional communities. For example, in Maori society social network is presented through tribal ties rather than geographical boundaries. It exists wherever its members are (Williams & Robinson, 2002).

My argument in Chapter Ten is that kinship and fictive kinship based communities such as those in my case studies work well in mobilizing trust, expectation, integrity and respect, as well as tightening networks between people in local communities and acting as a source of mutual assistance. These characteristics are the basis of the formation of civil society in local communities in which people still hold on to traditional culture.

In 2005, while the form of social relationships and traditional culture is affected by the forces of modernization in the global society, the particular norms, values and social relations in the local communities remain and function regardless.

A further factor which supports civil society in Thailand is education. Education increases a citizen's awareness of freedom, individual rights, and equality as well as supporting their ability to participate in decision-making in respect of public issues.

The new constitution of 1997 provided and guaranteed basic rights for citizens, such as the right to speak, to express views, to organize and assemble, and to access government information. These rights assist civil society activities in monitoring the state, checking for state accountability and as a counter-balance to state power (Juree, 2003; Chantana,

2004). The constitution legitimized various associations, civic groups, and movements in their participation in social and political issues. Mass media opens a path for people's participation in politics, economics, and society. The mass media responds to a local or marginalized people's needs rather than being under the control of the power of government and the market.

However, there are some factors which constrain the development of civil society in Thailand. The patron-client relationships make an unequal relationship among people in society. This kind of relationship builds up vertical affiliations between 'superior' and 'inferior' social positions. The superior people tend to be providers of resources, suggestions and protection to the subordinates, whereas the 'inferior' people working for them pay royalties to, are devoted to and support the 'superior' people. This kind of relationship cannot mobilize broad-based support. These relationships support a leadership style based on charisma, social status and connections in society.

Another constraint is the Buddhist belief in *karma*⁷ (The Law of Karma, 2004) which convinces people to be passive citizens. With the karmic acceptance of the reincarnation, people have high or low status because of what they have done in their previous life. This belief makes people accept the inequality that exists in Thai society. It socializes Thais not to attempt to resolve the different experiences of daily existence. Therefore, Thais tend to be politically and socially passive, uninvolved in social, public and political affairs (Juree 2003, p. 90). The belief in karma has been socialized through religious teachings and practice and is embedded in Thai culture.

The centralization of the state bureaucracy is another factor that weakens the civil society sector. Thai bureaucracy has been very strong since the Thai state reformed in 1893. The local community lost their autonomy after the penetration of the state into government economic and education policies. For example, the temples which used to be the center of the community in providing education, food, shelter, social welfare and sustenance for vulnerable people were replaced by the new schooling system (See more details of the effect in the Northeast region in Chapter Five). Juree (2003, p. 91) states

⁷ Karma is from the collaboration between Theravada Buddhism and pre-Buddhism animism. The law of karma, says only this: 'for every event that occurs, there will follow another event whose existence was caused by the first, and this second event will be pleasant or unpleasant according as its cause.'

that the temple is the symbolic and physical focus of communal and civic association, the place which nurtures local people to provide relief from physical and psychological weakness.

The final constraint to a healthy civil society has been the government and the major role it played in development, particularly in the 1960s with state-led development projects. This weakened local associational capacities and social resources for self-reliance in rural communities. Locally based structures and associations, such as the temples, have also reduced their roles and functions in self help and self-governing.

Conclusion

This Chapter has examined the evolution of civil society in Asia and Thailand. I have presented various perspectives and forms of civil society which have been developed in the Asian and Thai contexts. It becomes clear that civil society has various applications. It is broadly defined as a space where active citizens seek to exercise their own voice to cope with their problems. In Thailand civil society encompasses conflict and confrontation as well as consensus as possible approaches to the relationship with the state. Civil society includes philanthropic organizations, civic forums, prachasangkom, grassroots social movements, community-based organizations and small indigenous self-help groups. The last three features, grassroots social movements, community-based organization and small indigenous self-help groups, have evolved to meet the challenges of living under a state social, economic and political regime. Civil society in these forms has developed local people's capacities to manage their struggles and has constantly shifted their identities over time. Thus my argument in the thesis is that civil society in the grassroots community has developed from local people experiencing their daily life struggles, and the action research process involvement. I will express this feature of civil society as 'grounded civil society'.

CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and discuss the theories that my thesis is based on. My aims in this thesis are to explore civil society and the factors that contribute to the formation of civil society in the Thai rural context. In this chapter I will outline the theoretical framework and the methodology I have used to explore civil society from an insider's point of view.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section overviews a theme of emancipation, critical theory and critical methodology. The second section presents post-modern theories and methodology. The variety of theoretical viewpoints is made clear in the contexts of their contribution to the model of research designed for the thesis. The theories provide a comprehensive framework for interpreting the phenomena, and the effects and consequences of the research process in the case studies. The third section is the conceptual framework, demonstrated by charts.

A conceptual framework can be demonstrated in two ways: first, by illustrating what is to be studied and how the variables are believed to relate to one another; and second, by demonstrating the idea of a conceptual framework that includes beliefs about the nature of knowledge, as well as conscious and unconscious values, assumptions, feelings and experience (Wilson, 2001). The conceptual framework that I use in this thesis is used to demonstrate the concept and theories that support my research design. The conceptual framework charts outline the relating variables which I use in my two case studies.

Emancipation: Emancipatory Research and Emancipation Methodology

In this section I will outline the relationship between emancipatory research, the emancipation theory of critical theory, and their relevance to the research models in my thesis. The first part is a definition of emancipation and emancipation research. The second part discusses the theories leading to emancipation. The third section outlines the methodological approach according to the theories.

Emancipation

Emancipation is conceived of as a process for liberating people from the suffering of social structures, or from natural and man-made depression by enhancing their potential to work together to solve problems. It also brings about freedom from subordination for the oppressed within the political realm, and the social sphere (Wertheim, 1983; Ruane & Todd, 1996). In classical thought emancipation was described as a process of independence from colonialism. Now it tends to be used in two ways: first as a process of having the disadvantaged acknowledged in the mainstream, such as women's liberation; secondly, in a general sense of becoming free. The term is used by different groups, such as an excluded group for a minority struggle or for disadvantaged groups (Pieterse, 1992, p. 9).

The term emancipation is related to civil society in my thesis because emancipation is a process of becoming freed from oppression by creating autonomy and self-definition. Civil society is characterized by autonomy and self-definition, which generally involves voluntary organizations made up of autonomous individuals. Thus, civil society can be explained as the domain of the emancipation process.

Emancipatory Research

Emancipatory research is conceived of as a process for generating autonomy (Fletcher, 2000). Emancipatory research is expected to release people from constraints such as unproductive, unjust and unsatisfying social situations that limit them from self-development and self-determination. It provides an apparatus for the oppressed to participate in exploring the constraints of their lives which may come from the social structure including political, cultural, and economic structures. Emancipatory research assists the oppressed by helping them to consider whether they can manage to release themselves from constraints. The result of emancipatory research is that it generates radical thought and radical action. It guides transformative radical social change for the oppressed who are socially and culturally subordinated (Tyson, 2003, pp. 23 - 26). At this stage autonomy arises. Autonomy appears as self-governance, which shows an ability of people to handle and solve their problems.

In the process of emancipatory research, the research is focused on the participants' benefits rather than the researchers. 'If we are to engage in emancipatory research, we must stop trying to benefit ourselves, and engage in the process of researching for the greater good of our communities' (Tyson, 2003). Tyson argues that emancipatory research can release marginalized populations from their struggles because

It provides a working model for resolving the problems...it incorporates a more organic methodology, connects with the "grass roots," enhances data collection and collaborative analysis, and because the grounded theory that arises from the specificity of the day-to-day experience of oppressed people can provide links with broader social and political solutions to educational problems. Its' hopes and promise lie in courageous action for change and the desire for critical understanding (Tyson, 2003, p. 26).

Emancipatory Research Methodology

Methodology and methods can be used to answer particular questions in social reality. Some methods are suited for 'what' - descriptive questions, whereas some are suited to answer 'why' - explanatory questions. According to Blaikie (1993, pp. 202- 211), there are two different approaches for researching social reality. The first approach is based on the theories of Positivism¹, Critical Rationalism² and Realism³. Theorists from these groups believe that social reality is not ordered by independent social actors and therefore reality can be explained and observed by an outsider. Peoples' interaction in their daily lives comes from the incentive of 'external' forces such as social norms. In Positivist, Critical Rationalist and Realist approaches, research and theoretical frameworks are prepared by outsiders and peoples' concepts and meanings are ignored. Therefore, direct observation or an empirical approach needs to be adopted to facilitate an external view in order to answer a social inquiry. Hence, the researcher is more

¹ Positivism is interested in description, with recording observed regularities. It argues that generalizations inductively derived from these observations allow for explanation and prediction (Blaikie, 1993, p. 204).

² Critical Rationalism shares some aspects of Positivism's ontology but rejects its epistemology. Rather than scientists waiting for nature to reveal, they must impose deductive theories by a process of trial and error or falsify it (Blaikie, 1993, p. 95).

Ontology is the science or study of being. A particular approach for social enquiry is about the nature of social reality. The inquiry involves what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other (Blaikie, 1993)

³ Realism is concerned with what kinds of things there are and how these things behave. It is the nature of reality which is claimed to exist and act even if it has not yet been observed (Blaikie, 1993, p. 58).

central to the inquiry than the research participants.

Another group of theories is Interpretivism⁴, Critical theory, Structuration theory⁵ and Feminism. This group views social reality as produced and reproduced by social actors. Therefore, social situations may be multiple realities. The methodology for seeking social inquiry therefore involves social actors in the research process. In critical theory, researchers work as co-participants with the oppressed. The researcher's task is to facilitate the working process to help the oppressed improve their circumstances. Feminist theory encourages researchers to bring the participants' thoughts, feelings and intuitions into account. Participants involved in emancipatory research processes can bring change to their lives and situations. Interpretivism, Critical theory, Structuration theory and Feminism relate to emancipatory research by stressing participatory action. This group uses methodologies which accept the research participants' view, and encourage participants into actions, in order to be free from oppressive structures. The research process must become a process of concretization, which means the participants are given tools for their transformation. People who are used to being the objects of research become the subjects of their own research and action.

Emancipatory research requires particular methodologies. These methodologies are epistemological⁶ and as such are grounded in community in order to answer the nature of truth and reality as well as to give voice to different discourses, shifting the thinking about the participants' situations and seeking social change (Pillow, 2003).

⁴ Interpretivism aims to explain social life, report social actors' account of their experiences, how they interpret their world, the motives they attribute to their actions, or the rules which direct their actions.

⁵ Structuration means studying the ways in which social systems are produced and reproduced in social interaction. Human and social structure is considered social action. There is a duality of structures so that on one side it is composed of situated actors who undertake social action and interaction, and their knowledgeable activities in various situations. At the same time, it is also the rules, resources, and social relationships that are produced and reproduced in social interaction.

⁶ Epistemology is the theory of the method of or grounds of knowledge. It refers to the claims or assumptions in seeking knowledge of the reality, whatever it is understood to be. It is a theory of knowledge in that it presents a view and a justification for what can be regarded as knowledge, what can be known, and what criteria such knowledge must satisfy in order to be called knowledge rather than beliefs' (Blaikie, 1993, p.7).

Emancipation Theory

Critical theory is a central theory for emancipation of a human for desire for autonomy. In this section I will present critical theory and its methodology.

Critical Theory

Critical theory is the way social scientists critically approach an analysis of the process of social transformation. Critical theory aims to explain the social structure that oppresses people and seeks to liberate people from oppression. The oppressed can change their circumstances to make themselves free, autonomous and able to create and control their own lives. (Horkheimer, 1982; Blaikie, 1993). Therefore, the theory is a theory of practice. Critical theory draws on the ideas of Karl Marx in its emphasis on sources of domination and the oppression that is embedded in social organizations and social structures that restrict human freedom. Its analysis of oppression results from the utilization of benefits that accrue to privileged groups at the expense of the oppressed groups in society as a result of structural differences in power and status (Rasmussen, 1996; Fletcher, 2000). Critical theory therefore, seeks a radical socio-political transformation for the people in the form of emancipation from oppression. However, critical theory differs from Marxism in that it places the source of domination in the realms of culture and ideology (system of beliefs), not only in the economic structure of society. Therefore, critical theories critique ideology in an attempt to discover distorting forms of consciousness, or ways of thinking, that are a so called 'false consciousness'. The process of developing critical consciousness is called 'conscientisation' (Clare, 2003, p. 127, see more detail in Fay, 1987; Blaikie, 1993 and Freire, 1996).

Critical theory has three main characteristics in guiding the action of people (Luke, 1991). Firstly, critical theory is a way of giving individuals knowledge and tools for them to understand and realize their situations and their potential for releasing themselves from oppression. Secondly, critical theory guides peoples' action toward enlightenment and emancipation. People are supported to enhance their abilities of thinking and moral sensibilities and to increase a new consciousness that might help them to manage their lives. Thirdly, critical theory provides radical social critiques. The theory reveals how personal inequalities occur in terms of power and privilege of class

and group structure. This radical critique aims at supporting the unprivileged in liberating themselves from domination and daily struggle.

In summation, critical theory is used to assist people to understand themselves and to make them confront and overcome their oppressors. It aims to create a situation whereby people can release themselves from oppression.

Critical Theory and Methodology

Critical theory regards its key aim as emancipation which requires methodology and methods that explains the process of change for those oppressed (Blaikie, 1993). Therefore, the researchers have to understand the desires and social conditions of participants from the participants' point of views. Critical theorists suggest that traditional methodologies such as empirical research⁷ and interpretative research⁸ were not enough for seeking an understanding of social relations and social structure, since these methodologies did not incorporate the historical, cultural and social situations of the people. Critical theory thus requires qualitative methodology involving critical case studies, critical ethnography and critical participatory action research. These methodologies are used along with in-depth interviewing, focus groups and participant observation, which enable researchers to understand participants' values and meanings. Furthermore, the researchers need a new approach for encouraging participants to understand the realities of their historical and cultural conditions. The purpose of understanding and interpreting social life is to assist participants in developing a critical consciousness, which leads to emancipatory action (Clare, 2003). Critical consciousness is when groups exercise autonomy through the ability and practice of decision making. This autonomy releases groups from the constraints of oppressive social structures such as race, class and gender which can effect individuals' choices in society (Fletcher, 2000).

⁷ Empirical research approaches learning by means of a model of instruction. The power is held by the researchers from outside who collect data, and exercise their own agenda without people's participation. The epistemology is based on theory determinism rather than practice determinism.

⁸ Interpretative research, the external researchers regard people as objects of study, and speak on behalf of other people (McNiff & Whitehead, 2001).

Literature concerning emancipatory research and emancipation theory and critical theory provided me with ideas to apply to my research process and framework. In my research, I adopted a participatory action research approach, which is one methodology of emancipatory research. My reason and argument for this is that participatory action research can encourage local people to challenge their miserable situations and change their conditions for the better. Participatory action research facilitates local people's autonomy and self-definition. Since the data collection is not for data's sake, it becomes material for raising consciousness and for economic, environmental and political change. I have used participatory action research when seeking knowledge of civil society from the 'local' by incorporating insiders' points of view.

Critical theory provides me with an understanding of the idea of social analysis. The process of critical theory assists participants in analyzing their situation more critically in terms of the causes of their struggles and in generating social action. Critical theory allows participants to set their own agenda and make choices about themselves within circumstances of their own experiences and around their own problems. I would suggest that the theory uses a methodology of educational enlightenment and emancipation. The implication of critical theory to my research process is that it helped to create critical consciousness, empowerment, emancipation and autonomy among my research participants. All these conditions are complementary elements of the terrain of civil society which I interpret here as grounded civil society.

The Key Phases of Emancipatory Research: Enlightenment and Empowerment

Enlightenment, liberation, empowerment and emancipation are important ideas for the emancipatory process of critical theory. The process of emancipation facilitates people to change through the following phases (Fay, 1987).

Phase 1: Enlightenment

The enlightenment phase, sometimes called 'raising the consciousness', provides the oppressed with the opportunity to see themselves in a different way from their original self-conception. Critical theorists provide the oppressed with knowledge which explains

why they are oppressed or unsatisfied and why they have these conceptions. From this self-analysis, the oppressed are educated about their situations and about their potential capacity to change their situation. They are then ready to enter the liberation phase.

Phase 2: Liberation

Liberation is a state when people know who they are and what their real needs are. They have collective autonomy and can rationally decide and freely control the direction of what they want to be.

Phase 3: Empowerment

Power exists when a group comes together to achieve a goal. Critical researchers can empower the oppressed to achieve their goals by providing assistance such as skills training and materials for their actions.

Phase 4: Emancipation

Emancipation is the last phase of the process. In this phase the group is empowered by its new- found self understanding and thus uses radical change to alleviate suffering. The terms emancipation, liberation, and empowerment encompass the concept of civil society. These terms are interconnected in their meaning. For example, emancipation is a form of liberation and liberation a form of emancipation. I will discuss the linkages of the terms to civil society in the case study in Chapter 10.

Postmodernism

Literature dealing with postmodernism has covered a wide variety of disciplines or areas of study, including art, architecture, music, film, literature, sociology, communications, fashion, and technology. In this section I will present the concept of sociological postmodernism which I have used in the formation of my theoretical framework.

Postmodernism arose in the advanced capitalist countries from anti-modern sentiments

after World War II. It has emerged as an area of academic study since the mid-1980s (Dickens & Fontana, 1994). Building on the work of theorists such as Baudrillard, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard, postmodern theorists emphasized a rejection of the original assumptions of modernist thought⁹ which had as its principle the idea of 'binaries: rational/ irrational; nature/culture; male/ female'. Within all binaries one of the terms was always subordinated to the other. The focus of postmodern methodology was the attempt to 'deconstruct'¹⁰ these binary pairs (Hekman, 2004, p. 5506-5510; Patton, 2004, p. 11874). The binary pairs are discussed in order to create meaning, arguing that rather than being polar opposites, each meaning exists and is dependent on the meaning of the other.

Postmodern sociology emphasizes cultures and values which reproduce social differences and diversity. It is non-threatening and gives a voice to the experiences of marginal communities and people. In terms of research practice, postmodern sociology tends to be more qualitative, ethnographic, interpretive and textualist (Seidman, 1998).

Characteristics of Postmodernism

Postmodernization is characterized by multidirections, unpredictability and apparent chaos. There are many alternative ways to think and no material limitations. Postmodernization promotes the affectivity of cultural processes and erodes the boundaries of social structure and domains such as class, gender and ethnicity. The dominant postmodern theorist is Michel Foucault (1926-1984). Like Marxists, Foucault and other postmodernists tried to describe how 'various social hegemonies' affected the lives of individuals in society. People are better or worse depending on their knowledge and their role in relational discourse and how it transforms over time. Foucault's arguments of truth, power, and resistance were most directly concerned with the problem of legitimation. He discussed society where power over individuals and groups

⁹ Modernity focuses on linear progress, technology, positive science and reason, fragmentation, heterogeneity and difference (Larrain, 1994, p. 105).

¹⁰ Deconstructionism is a perspective that focuses on the lack of a truth "out there" or at the centre to provide meaning. It is a method for revealing the radical contextuality of all systems of thought. It concerns the way the fundamental ambiguity of meaning has been suppressed in the name of some single interpretation. This parallels Foucault's archaeological and genealogical studies of how social institutions and practices within a particular historical period were constituted by a privileged discourse about their objects (Dickens & Fontana, 1994, p. 8).

was interwoven with other kinds of relationships (in production, family, and sexuality). He claimed that resistance, like power, was multiple and effective, since it was embedded wherever power was exercised. He suggested a strategy of localized struggles against power in a variety of interpersonal and institutional settings.

Postmodernism and Methodology

Postmodernist thought stresses that the traditional social science research methods do not serve marginal groups and unexpected phenomena. Postmodernism within the social sciences thus made new room for the margins, the unexpected, the spiritual, and the metaphysical¹¹(cited in Paton, 1964). It requires flexible methods to support individuals in sharing their goals and for the liberation of self-expression and self-exploration. Postmodernism aimed to understand how action and identity were shaped by social circumstances, and to understand alternatives that would empower individuals (Patton, 2004, pp. 11868-69; Fletcher, 2000, p. 28). Sources of information come from personal wisdom, life experience and knowledge. Postmodern theorists are concerned with the interactive and reciprocal relationship between reliable knowledge and meaningful participation in the public sphere, the creation of social life and political action, the enhancement of personal development, self-expression, self-determination and collective praxis (Jennings and Graham, 1996, cited in Patton, 2004, p. 11869).

The postmodern paradigm provides the researcher with an alternative approach and tools for exploring the established understanding of knowledge. This alternative provides the possibility for an awareness of other realities and makes a space for new issues and different perspectives that might occur in the rural community. It assists the researcher in learning about new issues. The assumption of postmodernism guides the design and conduct of my research practice. The assumption is that the villagers have particular insights into particular phenomenon based on their own experiences. The

¹¹ Kant's theory of metaphysics makes a variety of assumptions on a principle of morality including: 1) there are universal moral laws, 2) there are principles of morality which exist independently of the situations in which moral decisions are made, 3) that logically necessary moral truths can be determined only by reason and not by experience, 4) that any moral philosophy which is logically valid must be based on pure reason, 5) that the motive of an action is more important than the consequences of the action, 6) that the moral value of an action should only be judged by the motives of the action and not by the consequences of the action, and 7) that in order to be good, an action must only be performed for the sake of a moral law and not for some other purpose. The validity of Kant's theory of a universal law of morality may be related to whether these assumptions are accepted or rejected.

participants are acknowledged as the 'knower' because they have knowledge about social phenomena affecting them.

These theoretical viewpoints provided understanding for aspects of the methodological approach used by the researcher to answer the research inquiries. These theories standpoints accorded with the ideas gained from the literature review, and the primary study. Surveying, interviewing, and participant observation, in the two case studies, contributed to the operational model of the conceptual framework in this thesis. Charts demonstrating a range of variables concerning how civil society originated also provided.

The Conceptual Framework of the Two Communities

The following charts show the conceptual framework of the two communities, which I have developed from the actual action of the PAR process and the community studies.

Chart 4.1 Conceptual Framework of Wungwern village

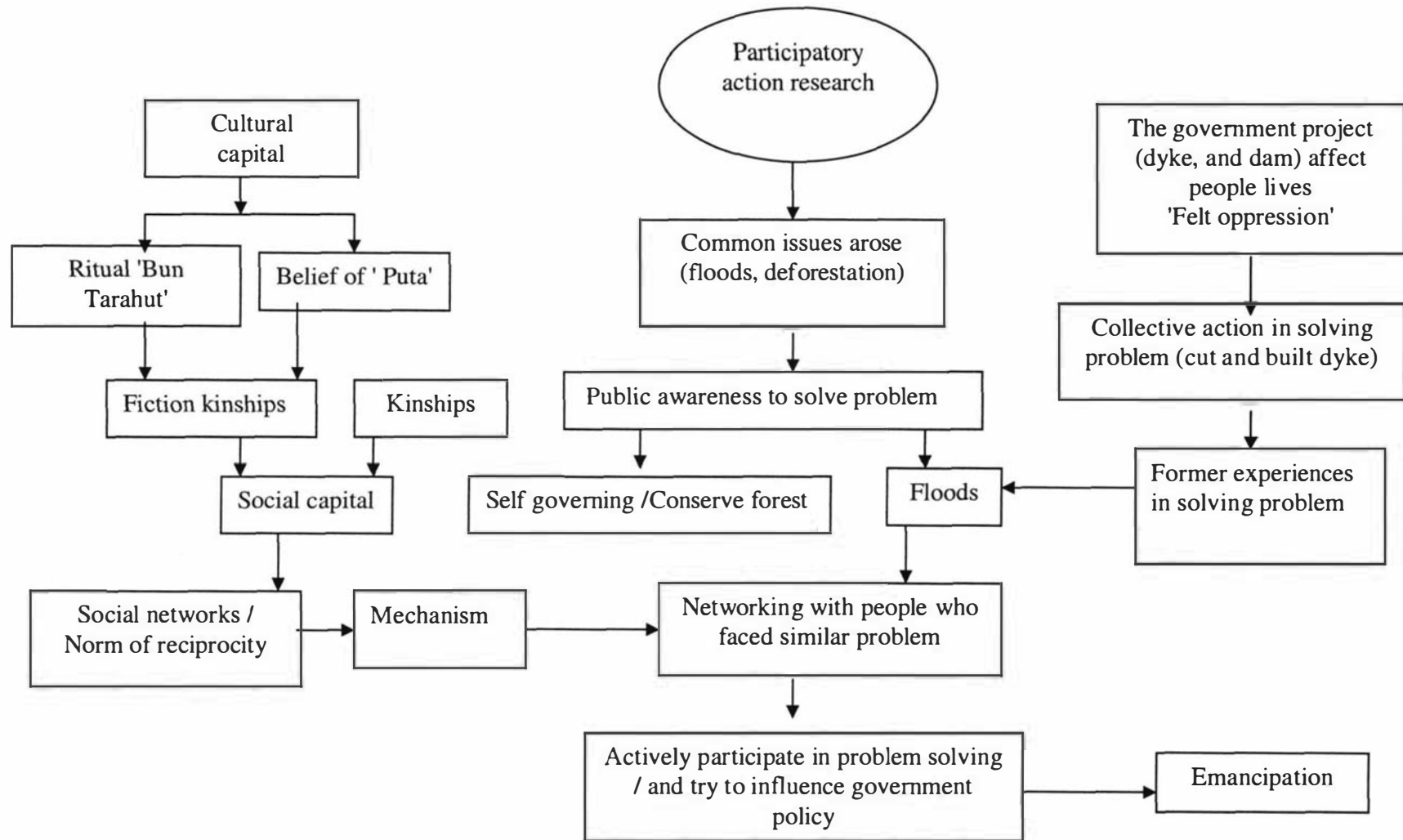
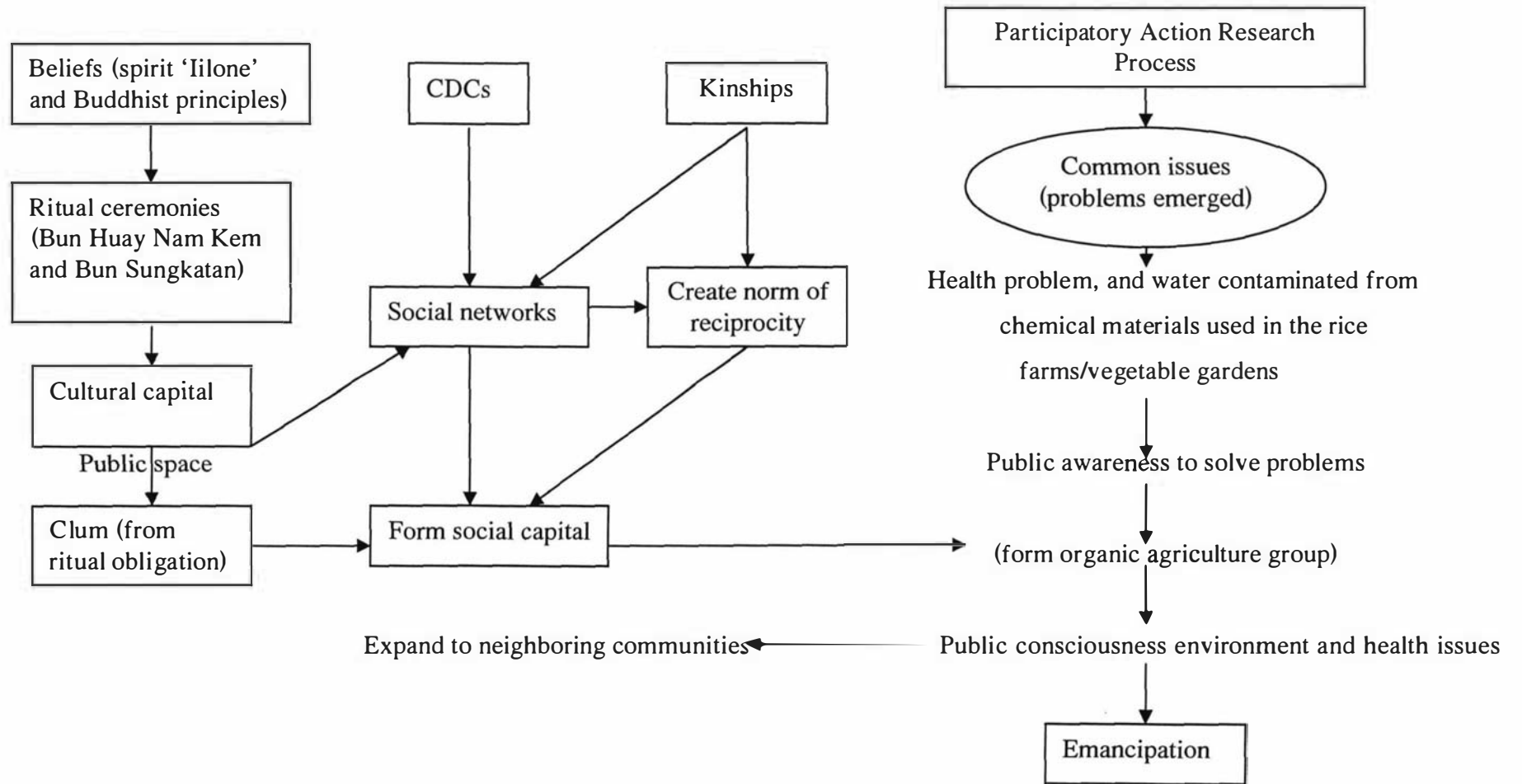


Chart 4.2 Conceptual Framework of Nong Phue village



Conclusion

The theories which informed this thesis are research for emancipation, followed by critical theory and postmodernism. In terms of methodology, emancipatory research and critical theory provide a new perspective for my research design. This new way guides the methodology of participatory action research which facilitates the researcher in community intervention. The researcher plays a catalyst role in encouraging the local people to understand their own situations and the oppression which they face and assist the development of a critical consciousness. In addition, the postmodernist theory provides the idea of pluralism and allows participants to cooperate in sharing their common interest, while self-expression and self-exploration allow them to understand their situation from their experiences and knowledge. Finally the theoretical framework which I developed from the literature review assisted me to examine civil society from the position of the local people.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

In Chapter Four I presented the methodology I am using in my thesis. The methodology which harmonized with the theoretical framework presented in Chapter Four is qualitative and involved critical case studies and critical participatory action research. The methods which go together with these paradigms have sensitivity to the varying meanings and values of the participants, such as in-depth interviewing, focus groups and participant observation (Clare, 2003, p. 128).

In this Chapter I intend to outline the methodology and methods that I employed in my thesis. Participatory action research was chosen as the main methodology as a result of its ability to empower participants. Two case studies were conducted in rural communities in the Northeast of Thailand. Additional methods were used along with the participatory action research methodology to meet the aims of the thesis. A broad review of participatory action research and the principles and process of participatory action research are also introduced in relationship to my fieldwork. Data collection methods and data analysis are outlined. Ethical considerations in the research process are also discussed.

Action Research

The concept of action research has its origins in the work of social psychologist Kurt Lewin, who developed and applied it in community experiments in the United States in the late 1940s (Greenwood & Levin, 1998, pp. 16-17). Lewin first created the term in his paper "Action Research and Minority Problems", which characterized action research as comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, as well as research leading to social action. Action research was then applied to industrial training by Ronald Lippitt. In the early 1950s the term was used in the area of education by Stephen Corey of Columbia University. The term declined in use in the 1950s and the early 1960s because of criticism that it was less than precise and limited to small-scale experiments. In

the 1970s the term re-emerged when Lawrence Stenhouse and John Elliott started using it in the educational arena (McLean, 1995, p. 4). Currently, action research is popular among social scientists as well as practitioners in a variety of contexts, including the social and caring sciences, education, organization and administration studies, and management (McNiff & Whitehead, 2001).

The term action research is used interchangeably with participatory research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory research, action learning, collaborative action research, and contextural action research, as well as participatory action research (PAR) (Argyris & Schön, 1991, pp. 86-87).

Meaning of Action Research

A number of texts were studied and reviewed to achieve a definition of action research. Action research is seen as a form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of the practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p. 5). In a sense, researchers do research on themselves with other people. In terms of process, action research is 'a form of practice which involves data gathering, reflection on the action as it is presented through the data, generating evidence from the data, and making claims to knowledge based on conclusions drawn from validated evidence' (McNiff, & Whitehead 2001, p. 16). Kurt Lewin also regarded action research as a spiral of steps, composed of planning, action, and the evaluation of the result of action. In terms of development, Susan E. Smith claims that the research process 'involves investigating the circumstances of place, reflecting the needs, resources, and constraints of the present reality, examining the possible paths to be taken, and consciously moving in a new direction. It is transformation on both personal and social levels' (Smith, 1997, p. 8).

Action research is a process of systematic reflection, enquiry and action carried out by individuals about their own practice. According to Tandon (1998, p. 13), from the experience

of practitioners, the determinants of participation in action research are as follows:

- People's role in setting the agenda of the inquiry;
- People's participation in the data collection and analysis; and
- People's control over the use of outcomes and the whole process

The Process or the Model of Action Research

The process of action research was first conceptualized by Lewin and developed by Kolb, Carr and Kemmis, and others. Action research is generally described as a 'spiral of cycles' by a number of theorists. For example, Lewin's (1946) model of action research was a spiral of steps involving planning, acting, observing and reflecting. His model was developed in industry and social relations. Stephen Kemmis's model was influential in the education sphere and is based on a self-reflective spiral of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and re-planning (McNiff & Whitehead, 2001). Some application models have illustrated the procedures, which involve 'investigating the circumstances of place, reflecting the needs, resources, and constraints of the present reality, examining the possible paths to be taken, and consciously moving in new directions' (Willms, 1997, p. 8).

However, the action research model is also described as cycles of action with four major phases: plan, act, observe, and reflect. The plan phase refers to problem analysis and a strategic plan; the action phase refers to the period during which the strategic plan is implemented; the observation phase includes an evaluation of action by appropriate methods and techniques; and the reflection phase means reflecting on the results of the evaluation and on the whole action and research process (Zuber-Skerritt, 1991, pp. xiii-xiv). Thus action research is a dynamic process in which the process may lead to identification of new problems which in turn lead to a new cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Hart & Bond, 1995, p. 54). Nonetheless, action research is not linear and does not follow step by step to the end of the process (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 162). Thus, participants can move backwards through earlier stages or revise the processes, to be more effective in achieving their goals (Stringer, 1996, p.17).

Community- Based Action Research

Community-Based Action Research (CBAR) is a model of action research for practical resolution of social problems. The foundation of CBAR is found in an interest in community problems. It links groups, enabling them to work on common interests which form a base for a consensual approach to effective solutions through dialogue and negotiation. A collaborative approach can be used to generate local action, and is applied as small-scale theorizing, in particular to problems in specific situations. CBAR seeks to enhance the lives of participants. 'It seeks to engage people directly in formulating solutions to problems they confront in their community and organizational lives' (Stringer, 1996).

The Community-Based Action Research involves three steps. The first step is looking, which involves gathering relevant information and building a picture to describe the problem and the situation. The second step is thinking. This step refers to exploring and analyzing the problems which are then interpreted and explained, for example how/why are things as they are? The third step is action including planning, implementing, and evaluating. This process will be reflexive and will be repeated to look at, to re-analyze and to modify actions (Stringer, 1996, p. 16).

Although many theorists have described action research as a model, there were criticisms of demonstrations of procedures of 'how to do action research' because the models lacked any relationship to the real practice. Bourdier, Whitehead and McNiff (2001) pointed out that the model of action research could not claim to fit all real situations and logical practice. Thus, they presented an 'image of non-definitive fluidity' in action research and suggested that 'practitioners need to see these models as guidelines'. 'To impose a model in action research is to turn action research into a technology, an oppressive instrument which can distort other people's creative practice' (McNiff & Whitehead, 2001, p. 52). Therefore, the model has been adapted to different situations, as no two situations are ever the same.

This latter view has been adopted for my research. I present this in the later section Methodology in Practice.

Characteristics of Action Research

According to action research definitions, the main characteristic that differentiates action research from conventional research is its practical nature. The focus on change, is concerned with participation and involves a cyclical process (Denscombe, 2003). The research projects are shared, jointly owned among practitioners, participants and co-researchers (Elden & Chisholm, 1993, p. 125). Therefore, it is a community- based analysis of social problems with an orientation towards community action (Kemmis & Taggart, 2003, p. 337).

Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart (2003, pp. 384-386) emphasized the key features of action research. They suggested that it is a social process of social relationships among people. It is a participatory process where individuals in a group try to get a handle on their struggles. It is practical and collaborative, where people aim to work 'with' each other in conducting the actions. It is "emancipatory", in that it releases people from their struggles against oppressive social structures. It is "critical" in that it aims to help people recover, and release themselves from the constraints embedded in the social media through their interaction, their language discourse, the ways in which they interpret and describe their world (language/discourse), and their ways of working. It is "recursive" (reflexive, dialectical) which aims to help people to investigate reality in order to change their practices. A spiral of cycles of self-critical action and reflection assist participants to learn more about their practices and their knowledge of their practices, and the social structures which constrain their practices for deliberation. It aims to transform both theory and practice. It develops individuals, people or communities in relation to the other through critical reasoning about both theory and practice, and their consequences.

Action research comprises three elements (Greenwood & Levin, 1998).

- Action research is one of the most powerful ways to produce new knowledge.
- Participants hold strong values on democracy and control over one's life situations.
- The action aims to change the condition of the groups, organization or community to liberation or more self-management.

Aims of Action Research

On the whole, there are two major aims of action research: improvement and involvement: The first aim is improvement, which focuses on three areas: to improve practice; to improve participants' understanding of their situation and their ability to use this information, along with their local knowledge, to generate change for themselves; and to improve the situation in which the practice takes place. The second aim is the involvement of the participants in the process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting to achieve the first aim (McTaggart, 1997).

Moreover, action research is viewed as an apparatus for inner transformation of practitioners in values and beliefs that can lead to changes in individual self - image and the ways individuals see and relate to others (Argyris & Schön, 1974, 1978). Tony Kelly and Russell Gluck (1979, cited in Stringer, 1996, pp. 21-22) presented the changes to person, both inner and outer, that can result from action research. These are:

- Pride: people's feeling of self-worth;
- Dignity: people's feelings of autonomy, independence, and competence;
- Identity: people's affirmation of social identities(such as woman, workers);
- Control: people's feeling of control over resources, decisions, actions, and events and activities;
- Responsibility: people's ability to be accountable for their own action;
- Unity: the solidarity of groups of which people are members
- Place where people feel at ease
- Location: locales to which people have historical, cultural, or social ties.

The Key Concepts Concerning Action Research

Empowerment

Action research is a research process to promote 'people empowerment' for changing their immediate environment, social and physical, carried out in collaborative working groups without a pre-set route (Rahman, 1991, p. 16). The research questions come out of social

action, and are aimed at enabling the oppressed groups to create and transform power through their struggles. The research process strengthens its practitioners and enhances their confidence, skills, and support networks (Ristock & Pennell, 1996, p. 17).

The term empowerment has been used as an approach to development projects, women's movements, education, welfare, and family support programs (Pieterse, 1992, p. 10). It refers to enhancing people's ability to control their own lives, or to developing a sense of collective influence over the social conditions of one's life (Young, 1994, p. 48). This is in contrast to disempowerment, which affects a person or group by 1) subordinating them in a hierarchical relationship of power, and 2) denying their ability to engage in alternative practices, and participate in social structure (Slack & Whitt, 1992, p. 573).

Empowerment comprises two elements. The first element is autonomous people's organizations which promote self-reliant¹, and assertive culture, as well as self-awareness through different forms of discussion and self-conducted research such as collective self-inquiry, and historical and socio-economic investigation. The second element is the reconstruction and the promotion of local wisdom (Rahman, 1991, p. 16).

The process of empowerment is detailed in Paulo Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (1996). For Freire, empowerment is raising people's autonomy and self-awareness through the practice of 'conscientization'. This reveals the process of empowering the oppressed by a variety of methods including appropriate education, collective self-inquiry and reflection (Rahman, 1991, p. 17). Through this process people's own inquiries build their self-knowledge. The environment in which the empowerment can be generated is therefore open for participants to give and receive valid information and make informed choices including the choice to participate. An important feature of this is the generation of an internal commitment to the results of their inquiry (Argyris & Schön, 1991, p. 86).

The process of empowerment examination is generated by different models, for example,

¹ Self-reliant is a status of a combination of material and mental strength by which one can deal with others as an equal, and assert one's self-determination. Self reliance is strengthened by a collective identity, deriving not only material but also mental strength from solidarity, sharing and caring for each other and from thinking and acting together to move forward and to resist domination (Rahman, 1991, p.206).

starting from individuals examining the power in their social relations. They experience power concurrently, by sharing and participating in each other's oppression. Then they connect personal experience to systems of hierarchical relations, and start with an emotional response to mobilize an event and make it of personal importance.

In other models, empowerment comes from an interaction of sharing everyday experiences between the oppressed people and the outsiders. The oppressed make an inquiry about the causes of the oppression and this can change their understanding (Freire, 1996). The process can help to develop the oppressed people's confidence and change attitudes and behavior. They can alter the power differentials in their relationships. Another model uses the process of analyzing ideas about the causes of powerlessness, recognizing systemic oppressive forces, and acting both individually and collectively to change the conditions of their lives.

Empowerment is a process that one undertakes for oneself. It is not something done 'to' or 'for' someone (Ristock and Pennell, 1996, p. 1). Rowland (1992, cited in Nelson & Wright, 1995, pp. 8-9) presents three levels of one's empowerment. Firstly, a person develops confidence in his/ her abilities. Secondly, an individual uses the ability of negotiation to influence relationships with the others. Thirdly, the individual works collectively with others to have greater impact than when working by oneself.

According to Douglass & Friedmann (1998), individuals should be empowered in three senses. Firstly, social power concerns an access to information, having knowledge and skills, participation in social organizations, or financial resources. Secondly, political power concerns an access to the processes of decision making and collective action which affect their own future in the local and higher levels. Thirdly, psychological power concerns individuals having a sense of potency, such as self-confidence. Psychological empowerment results from successful action in the social or political domains.

The Principles of Action Research

The principle of participatory research is that people are the agents rather than the objects of

the research. The basic idea is that people have their own ideas to interpret meaning and explain the world they experience (Elden & Levin, 1991, p. 131).

Action research comprises significant principles in operation (Smith, 1997, pp. 183-184). A sympathetic culture must be built up through peoples' relationships by sharing and providing collaborative assistance in their struggle. As action research is a dynamic process of action-reflection (praxis), the processes are always changing, are continuous, and are without predetermined time limits or fixed questions. Action research requires respect for what people know and believe, including valuing personal experiences, local wisdom and beliefs. The process has a focus on collective investigation and action where people and groups work together on their needs. Their actions promote structural changes rather than personal adaptation to oppressive environments. Finally, action research consciously produces new knowledge through the process of people's experiences in seeking a better understanding of their situation and phenomena from multiple means of knowledge. It helps participants to find alternative solutions, and to take action through different strategies.

The Role of the Researcher in Action Research

In action research, the researchers act as consultants or facilitators. They are more like a building coach than experts. The researchers link related knowledge from organizations to assist participants (Whyte, 1991, p. 40) as well as bringing specific skills such as research design, survey development, interviewing, and data analysis to facilitate the research process (Bray et al, 2000). The roles include being a catalyst, stimulating people to change in respect of their own issues, helping people to analyze their situation, consider findings, plan projects to deal with problems, and change what they want (Stringer, 1996).

Validity in Action Research

The validation of action research is to ensure that any conclusion is not just the researcher's view, but is agreed by participants or others (McNiff & Whitehead, 2001). In this sense the methodology and product requires transition from the individual to the collective. M D

Anisur Rahman (1991, p. 149) proposed that to validate data in action research, the process of social or collective verification required changing in the following ways: a) a collective definition; b) using language which participants developed together; c) agreement from participants to using valid methods of investigation.

Another way of validation is 'triangulation' which incorporates multiple methods, different sources, and various theoretical schemes or perspectives to cross-check information and strengthen the trustworthiness of the data. According to Denzin (1989, p. 237) there are four basic types of triangulation.

- Data triangulation, comprising of three dimension of cross checking : a) time, b) space, and c) person, which in turn, have three levels: aggregate, interactive, and collective levels;
- Investigator triangulation, consisting of multiple rather than single observers of the same object;
- Theory triangulation, consisting of using multiple rather than single perspectives in relation to the same set of objects; and
- Methodological triangulation, involving different methods being used.

Research Methods

Action research allows the use of a wide variety of data collection methods. These methods facilitate participants to cooperate in the process as active participants. It liberates participants through collaborative problem-solving in community actions, using their own capacity to produce knowledge. In my research, multiple qualitative research techniques were used including in-depth interviews, participant observation, group discussion, brainstorming, and surveys. These methods provided the most useful information for understanding the phenomena and the conditions of the communities.

Moreover, a number of Participatory Rural Appraisal methods (PRA)² were used while

²PRA has been described as a family of approaches, methods and behaviours to enable poor people to express and analyse the realities of their lives and conditions, and themselves to plan, monitor and evaluate their actions. PRA evolved out of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). RRA emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s as an alternative to conventional methods of appraisal and surveying based on questionnaires from a variety of disciplinary and methodological streams. In 1988, the term Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was first applied. It sets up a structured dialogue using a variety of methods to share knowledge and analysis and to develop practical actions (Holmes, 2001, p.11).

researching the case studies. I present and discuss these in the following section and make some comments on the importance of the method for contributing to the process of my field work. Examples of the methods include life histories of local elderly people, transect walks, social maps, network diagrams, and visualisation tools - mapping, diagrams, and flip charts (Holmes, 2001). These participatory techniques generated transformative effects on the participants, and resulted in a commitment to the group and a sense of co-operative direction from their own situation in the research process.

Methods Used in the Thesis

Participatory observation is a method which the researcher used to understand the community context by observing the settings where participants lived and worked. It emphasized the emic³ approach of data collecting aimed at understanding people's thoughts, and allowed for an analysis based on their concepts and their own experiences (Nelson & Wright, 1995). The elements in the observations included places where events took place, people's roles and positions, objects, acts, activities, events, purposes, and the feelings of the actors (Stringer, 1996, p. 65).

Group interviews allowed the researcher to direct the interaction and inquiry in an unstructured interview. The interviews required many skills of the interviewer: to be flexible, objective, empathic, persuasive and a good listener (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

Focus groups were used where people with similar interests discussed particular issues (Stringer, 1996, p. 69). They included 8-10 persons brought to a centralized location to respond to questions on a topic of particular interest. The interviews were led by the researcher who kept the respondents focused on a particular topic.

Brainstorming was used to generate new ideas. The researcher would focus on a particular challenge or problem, and the group members responded to each other as the idea was

³ Emic' is the understanding of the culture from the point of view of the native people in contrast to the 'etic', which refers to the study of a culture by an anthropological or outside specialist.

evaluated. This was conducted in informal and natural settings.

The informal group interview is a technique used in field work to validate previously gathered data. Thus, it can be a validity check on information gathered in one-to-one interviews. Informal group interviews may be carried out in natural settings such as rice fields and participants' houses. The phenomenological purpose may better be articulated in the formal group interview where the field worker is able to arrange for a group of respondents to meet. Both formal and informal group interviews occurred, allowing interpersonal dynamics to play out to their fullest extent, in a context where the researcher became an empathetic observer.

Participatory mapping is a method to exploring the spatial dimension of people's realities. Mapping indicates various resources in the villages, such as infrastructure, natural resources, and man-made resources. It is made by local people not experts, and is not drawn to scale. It represents what local people believe to be relevant and important for them. Thus it reflects their views of the social dimensions of their reality and has a high degree of data validity (Kumar, 2002). Social mapping develops a broad understanding of the various facets of social reality, social stratification, demographics, settlement patterns and social infrastructure. The preparation of mapping and the discussion enabled the villagers to develop their knowledge of the physical and social aspects of village life.

Another benefit of social maps is that they can be used in all stages of the research cycle, from problem identification to generating alternative solutions. Shah (1995) claims that participatory mapping is a method that enables villagers to engage in problem-solving, analysis, appraisal, planning and decision making , and implementation.

The life stories method was used, where participants told stories of the important events happening in their own lives, and in the past. It assisted the researcher to understand events from different time periods.

A transect walk is a method used to explore the spatial dimension of people's realities. It can

illustrate a cross-sectional representation of the different agro-ecological zones and their comparison against certain parameters, including topography, land type, land use, ownership, access, soil type, soil fertility, vegetation, crops, problems, opportunities and solutions. It can also describe ethnic determinants of a settlement. Access and control, and gender-related dimensions can be captured in detail depending on the objectives of the exercise. The walk is generally done after a collective resource map has been made, and therefore helps in triangulation. Transect walks have been used for various purposes, including the appraisal of natural resources, in terms of status, problems and potential, and for verification of issues raised during other exercises, particularly during social mapping and natural resources mapping (Kumar, 2002).

Linkage diagrams demonstrate flows, or connections, and causality of different matters. These have been used, for example, for marketing, tracking nutrient flows on farms, migration, social contacts, and for the tracing the impacts of interventions and trends. In this case linkage diagrams were used to analyse the causes of flood problems, and to track chemical environmental damage.

In the research, shared presentations and analysis of maps, models, diagrams, and findings were presented by the local people and the researcher at community meetings, and checked, corrected, and discussed.

A case study is a common strategy in qualitative inquiry. The case study helps the researcher to study holistically. Case studies can be separated into three types (Stake, 1995). The intrinsic case study refers to the particular case which is interesting in itself, but which needs better understanding. The instrumental case study is needed in order to provide insight into an issue, or to redraw a generalization. The researcher gains knowledge from the case to advance understanding of other interests. The collective case study refers to the study of a number of cases in order to investigate phenomena, population, or general condition. A case study is generally chosen because it is believed that understanding the case will lead to better understanding, or better theorizing around the research question.

Another important tool is field notes. I recorded and described the situations in the action

research context, the activities, the development in action, and the development in thinking, and my learning from the process before, throughout, and after my time in the field.

Analysis of the Data

Data analysis was undertaken throughout the action research activities and was shared regularly with the participants of the research. In this stage, the discussion with the participants helped in coding and re-coding the data which was collected and analyzed. The themes and ideas were re-coded and refined (Darlington, Y., & Scott, D., 2002).

Action Research Reporting

Richard Winter's work (1989, cited in McNiff & Whitehead, 2001, p. 107) suggests that action research reports should consist of the following principles

- Reflection on the work and generation of new research questions
- The offer of a dialectical critique of dynamic social phenomena
- The establishment of a collaborative resource from people's participation
- The demonstration of a multiplicity of points of view and
- Show the transformation and harmonious relationship between theory and practice.

Furthermore, Clare (2003, pp. 137-140) has suggested that to report data from critical social science, including critical case studies, action research must demonstrate outcomes of actual social change. The report should include the raw data, demonstrating individual interpretation and dialogic relationships between interviewers and interviewees. It must also demonstrate development of ideas and insights towards some form of action. The distinctive feature of critical theory is the relationship between the researcher and the participants, who have the primary responsibility for deciding on courses of action which seem likely to lead to improvements in their socio-political conditions. Writing this data into text requires considerable skill, so that the participants' insights and interests stay dominant and the researcher's are in the background of the content.

Methodology in Practice

Methodology Selection

Different kinds of research serve different kinds of knowledge-constitutive interests and are based in different kinds of reasoning (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). My challenge is to examine civil society in terms of meaning and origin and the factors which could generate or activate civil society in the contexts of the rural communities in the Chi River Basin. I will now discuss my reason for choosing action research to achieve these research aims.

Firstly, from the literature review of action research, it was clear that action research provided participants an opportunity to engage in cooperation with others, to share experiences and struggles, and to undertake their solutions to meet their common goals in real situation. Therefore, action research enabled me to investigate the thesis questions, focusing on civil society activities, which I defined as the sphere of participation of people for the common good.

Secondly, action research is emancipatory, with the possibility of liberating people from some of their struggles and oppression. As Greenwood & Levin (1998, p. 176) claim, action research aims to create a kind of liberation through greater self-realization. It helps a democratic reformation. They view poverty as the systemic outcome of oppression by powerful elites and of inequality. Action research assists people to improve their well-being and to pursue radical change. The achievement of action research plays a part in civil society when individuals cooperate with others and try to handle their constraints collectively.

A case study method was chosen for my thesis because it assisted me to study holistically, while using a variety of methods. It assisted me to understand in-depth, giving insight into issues, as well as investigating phenomena and general conditions (Stake, 1995). Focusing on two particular communities suited an action research approach, since it enabled me to be involved in the research process, and to constantly explore the consequences of the research activities.

However, action research needed several different research methods to be used to deal with different phenomena. In this study, I also used various qualitative data gathering techniques

including participant observation, interviews, surveys, and focus groups. The following section outlines the practice in action research in the two case studies. The major steps are presented as follows: community selection, research procedures, research methods, data validation, and data analysis.

Community Selection

When I developed my proposal, I came across many views of the concept of civil society. There were different perspectives from European, American, and Asian points of view. These points of view were defined in different ways, in different contexts. This inspired me to investigate how 'civil society' might be defined in a Thai context, particularly in the Northeast region, which has a long history of cultural heritage. The people are of Thai-Lao ethnicity, with different characteristics in terms of culture, norms, and beliefs from the people in the other regions of Thailand.

Since the characteristics of civil society are embedded in communities, would its nature somehow relate to culture in a particular society? This approach helped me to develop the criteria for selecting the area of my study. In selecting the case studies, I developed the criteria concerning the grounded civil society. The explicit characteristics were drawn from the concept as follows. First, the community has its own history of solving common issues together. Secondly, the community has a prominent collective practice of cultural activities. Thirdly, the community has current problems which can be enlarged upon to become public issues.

During the phase of choosing the case study approach, from mid February to mid March 2003, I mainly used the survey and interview techniques in gathering data. I surveyed communities' data and investigated the communities along the Chi River using both telephone and face to face interviews. I made inquiries with the government officers from the Development Department in the provinces of Chaiyaphum, Khon Kaen, Maha Sarakham, Roi Et, Yasothon and Kalasin and the non-government officers who worked in 'The Ecology

of the Chi River Project'⁴, Non-government Organization Coordination (NGO-CORD), and 'The Pilot Project of Small Farmer Sustainable Agriculture'⁵.

The literature review technique was used to get a picture of the history of the Chi River Basin. I studied information in official documents from the provincial, district, and sub-district levels and in the published literature of the research project, 'Local History in the Chi River Basin' which consisted of eight sub-projects. I also joined in a number of seminars on these sub-projects, such as 'The Chinese and the Expansion of Communities', 'A Model of Natural Resource Usage of the Communities', 'The Solving Garbage Problem' and 'The Salty Soil Problem'. The last two projects were supported by the Community Based Research Fund⁶. From the primary surveys and the literature reviews, I listed communities which met the criteria. Soon after that I surveyed the communities and informally interviewed the communities' leaders: two villages in Chaiyaphum, three villages in Khon Kaen, seven villages in Maha Sarakham, two villages in Kalasin, two villages in Yasothorn and three villages in Ubon Ratchani. These activities gave me an insight into the prominence of civil society phenomena in these communities.

The data derived from secondary sources and from the survey on the regions of the Chi River Basin were gathered for a comparative perspective. The prominent communities where there had been the foundation of civil society movements were listed. From this initial work I selected two communities to be my case studies. The first was the Wungwern village from the Sri Bun Rueng Sub-District, Chonnabot District, Khon-kaen Province. This village had faced flood problems for many years and the villagers in this community had performed collectively in ritual ceremonies. The second village was Nong Phue village from the Nong Bua Sub-District, Kosumpisai District, and Mahasarakham Province. Nong Phue had a problem with overuse of chemical materials in farming. In respect of cultural practices, the people strongly adhered to religion and to collective rituals. The first village was located at the upper part of the Chi River while the latter was located in the middle.

⁴ This project was funded by Community Based Research and aimed to survey and develop the ecological environment of the Chi River.

⁵ This project was funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. It aimed to promote small scale farmers in alternative agriculture. There were 3,500 small farmers in 34 provinces involved in this pilot project in 2001-2003, with 733,000,000 baht US\$15,825,000 support (1\$US=40 baht).

⁶ This organization aims to promote community learning by working through research projects and helping communities to solve problems.

Before beginning my field work, I prepared a set of guidelines for interviews to be used in the study. The interviews covered general topics such as the conditions of the villages: their history, society, economy, geography, education, culture, and the community problems. Specific topics were also prepared, such as the respondents' perception of their own socio-economic conditions, the development and the evolution of the villages socially, economically, and physically, the previous events of collective activities for public good in the communities and in their local area, the local history, as well as their traditional ceremonies.

The in depth interview technique was used with the key informants who knew about historical and current incidents in the communities. The interviews were conducted from April to June 2003, using interview guidelines. The first list of interviewees was suggested by the village head of the communities and I stratified these by age and gender. Both men and women who were over 20 years old were chosen to be respondents. Then a snow-ball technique of sampling was used to identify additional interviewees. The interviewees included local wise people, monks, the leaders of the community, the elders, and the leader of the community-based organizations (CBOs). No money was given to the informants. The interviews were face to face with both individuals and groups. During interviews, the participants were encouraged to ask questions.

The interviews were conducted at a convenient time, and to suit respondents' availability, at any time and any place, such as at night time, or day time, in the rice fields, the gardens, the temples, their homes, and locations where ritual activities were taking place. The interviews were taped and usually lasted from two to three hours. After the interviews, the tapes were transcribed and data was summarized and compared with the data gained from other techniques. Field notes and charts were kept, and then the data was written up afterwards. The other method was participant observation, which I approached through direct involvement in community meetings and cultural activities, as well as during the process of action research. This gave me a picture of the community and its socio-economic context. As Stringer (1996, p. 64) has claimed 'participant observations assist researchers to gain a clearer picture by observing in the context where participants live or work'. I also used a

digital camera to record the activities in the action research process.

Action Research Procedures

The action research procedures were constantly conducted in the different contexts of the two selected cases. According to the research time frame for doing fieldwork, the data presented in the cases are based on my involvement over 12 months in 2003 in the local setting. I worked as participant through the process of action research. My position changed from an outsider at the beginning to an insider during the process. I will discuss my role in more detail in Chapter 10. After I had finished my fieldwork, the villagers in the two communities were still continuing their actions. They continue to pursue their projects and the new issues which have come up during their collective work.

Whitehead and McNiff (2001) claimed that the model of action research can not communicate all people's experiences of reality. The model must be adapted to situations, which are always different. I therefore applied a model of action research as a guide line, rather than an imperative direction. The following section describes my participatory action research from the two cases in my field work. The action research procedures are generalized in the following section, and each case is presented in more detail in Chapters Eight and Nine.

Phase 1 Establishing Rapport

This phase was the initial stage of my fieldwork. I created relationships with groups of people by joining meetings and participating in ritual ceremonies and village developmental events, as well as associating with them in their work locations, such as rice fields and gardens. These activities helped me to understand the people's real lives and they became familiar with me and accepted me into their groups, trusted me, and had a hospitable feeling towards me. The 'Thai-Lao' language was used for communication in this project. This helped me work more easily to establish the relationships with the villagers, since it assisted them to relax and to have conversations and interactions with me.

Phase 2 Sharing an Understanding of Action Research (AR)

This phase involved sharing an understanding of the research process and the purposes of the research project with the villagers. This information was conveyed in different ways and on different occasions through individual and group communication, in community meetings, and when I was involved in social activities. While participating in these activities in the village, I took opportunities to speak with the villagers about my objectives. I also discussed the AR process so that they could understand the research process. I told the villagers about my role to assist them and ‘work with’ them to find solutions rather than ‘work for’ them. I clarified my expectations of both partners: those of the villagers, and my own expectations. Simultaneously, I investigated and looked for volunteers to be involved in the research project. At this beginning stage, most of the participants were community leaders including teachers from the local schools, and outsiders from a non-government organization (NGO) who were working on matters concerning the environmental issues. Therefore, a loose research group was informally formed consisting of the villager leaders, some of the villagers, the NGO workers, the teachers, and me. The group organized meetings and initiated group discussions with the other villagers on the different aspects on the community and the villagers’ life struggles. This phase, developing an understanding, was vitally important for the villagers to understand the researcher and for each of us to know what the expectations were. It made the following phases of the research much easier.

Phase 3 Data Collection

Community data was collected on geography, the history of the setting, economic, social, cultural, and natural resources, as well as community problems and their challenges. In this phase, I used various methods, including individual and group interviews, focus groups, timelines, participation observation, life stories, mapping, and transect walks. I interviewed key village people who had been recommended by the leaders of the village, such as monks, and leaders of community – based organizations, both male and female. I also gathered information from discussions of community events in community meetings. In addition, the life story method was used with the oldest men in the two communities to tell of the

important events happening in their own lives in the past. This helped me to know the vital events in the communities' past.

Both timelines, and trend and change analysis were used with the elderly focus groups to detail chronological events, listing major local events with approximate months and years. The changes in tradition ceremonies, ethno-biographies such as the local history of crops, animals, trees, changes in land use, and cropping patterns, migration, and the causes of community changes and trends were all gathered. The information was compiled together with the data gained from life histories and the interviews for the analysis.

Participatory mapping was used to indicate various resources in the villages including locating households, social infrastructure such as roads, dykes, temples, community halls, ponds, and resources such as rivers, forests, rice fields, vegetable gardens, and common land-use. Mapping was done through the following steps. First, I explained the technique of social mapping surveys to volunteer villagers and students in the villages. Then, the volunteers walked around the villages and pointed out the diversity of resources. They marked these on their own paper. As a third step, information collected from each volunteer was aggregated and then discussed with all volunteers. Finally the team drew the map together and depicted the data on the bigger map.

Participatory maps were done on two different issues in Wung Wern village. The first was a resources map to analyze the causes of the flood problem. The second was the community map, which was done by volunteer students and villagers for developing a new school curriculum.

The other method was transect walks to survey the forest in Wung Wern village. The survey group walked with key informants through the forest, observing, asking, discussing, and learning about different kinds of trees in the forest. A camera and video-camera were taken along and recorded pictures of trees and flowers. The gathered data was the basis of the discussion appraising the abundant forest.

Through the data collection phase, the researcher and the villagers developed a view of the overall picture of the village and the key issues. I then wrote a short report reviewing the issues from field notes, interview notes, and notes of observations.

Phase 4 Data Validation and Analysis

Data validation and analysis were done in two ways. Firstly, through focus groups, I presented the information to a number of villagers who were interested in that issue and asked them to meet to discuss the issues. Secondly, the data was reported back to the community meetings for validation and analysis of the village situation and the villagers' conditions. At this stage, various methods were employed to persuade the villagers to be involved and to seek their solutions and enhance the reflective learning. These methods included group discussions and brainstorming, supplemented by using data displays such as mapping, charts, word cards, descriptive analysis and video-tape recordings. The secondary data validation, such as the sub-district statistical data, had been checked with the villagers to fill gaps in the data and to provide the background information to show the larger context of the communities.

Phase 5 Analyzing Alternatives Solutions

The participants raised a number of key problems which were ongoing and which needed alternative solutions. Group discussion was employed as the main method for analyzing alternative solutions. A number of discussions were organized through community meetings to discuss and find solutions towards the problems. The participants discussed and found the best solutions for them. Not all solutions could be implemented. Some solutions were beyond the villagers' ability. Each community, with the support of the NGOs and the researcher, chose one or two solutions to serious problems where they considered they had the capacity to implement solutions.

Phase 6 Implementation to Meet Solution

Participants, along with the NGOs and my support, worked on the projects to solve their

problems. In some circumstances, the participants experienced difficulty with technical skills, and study trips and workshops became important tools for increasing their competence. My role as research facilitator was to provide them with assistance. For example, when the farmers found that they required more information and skills to produce bio materials to use in gardens and rice farms, a study trip and workshops were offered by linking with experts and organizations from outside the community.

Another apparatus used in this phase was networking. Sometimes networking was important to the success of the project, particularly the aspects of the project beyond the capacity of the villagers, such as the flood problem. Therefore, the NGO workers and I facilitated participants to develop the links with outsiders and organizations which could support them. These links provided them not only with emotional support, but also with organizational and community support.

Some constraints occurred during the process. Some tasks that had been set were inappropriate in some way, or their activities were blocked. When this happened, we revised our tasks. We met regularly to review progress and to revise the projects.

The approach of action research in the two cases brought out different issues. Several major themes were developed from the data analysis including the flood problem, the exploitation of the forest, and the over use of chemical materials. I will present the details of each phase in Chapters Eight and Nine.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations of action research projects were used to guide the researcher in this study. The research project was done in two rural communities in the Northeast of Thailand, and the core action group was villagers. Therefore, after I gained approval for the study from the Human Ethics Committee, Massey University, the process of asking permission in the community was done through both informal and formal means. My organization, Mahasarakham University, sent formal letters to the Heads of the Districts of Kosumphisai and Chonnabot, and the Heads of the villages of Nong Phue and Wungwern to

introduce me. An information sheet was included in the letters, including the aims and the methodology of the study. In an informal way, I introduced myself to the heads of the villages and the community leaders, and told them about my research project. Meanwhile, I probed the understanding and the interest of the villagers in joining the research project.

The processes of community and participant recruitment were conducted via two methods. Firstly, I reviewed the literature from the former research projects on the history of the Chi River basin, and selected prominent communities where there had been the foundations of a civil society movement. Secondly, I surveyed and investigated the communities through personal and group interviews.

The consent to participate was oral, because most of the participants, especially the elders, were not able to read or write. I answered all their questions, and they were happy to become involved in the research project. However, I stated that all villagers were invited to participate in whatever manner they felt comfortable with. It was not compulsory to participate and they could decline to participate anytime. Some participants did not want to collaborate in some activities because they were engaged in their day to day work.

Data collection was conducted via focus groups, individual and group interviews, participant observation, life stories, mapping, and transect walks. All data was reflected to the communities to be verified as analysis proceeded, supplemented by using data displays such as mapping, charts, and descriptive analysis. The process was participatory. All personal data were kept confidential, secure and intended for the purpose of this research report only.

The information was reflected to the communities in order to verify their own situation, and to use as they saw fit in their civil society activities. Written information collected, such as notes of observations and interview notes, will be destroyed at the end of the retention period. Visualization tools, such as the mapping, diagrams, and video-tape recordings which came from the meetings, have been handed back to the communities.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated the participatory action research methodology including the PAR process and its methods. The PAR process allowed participants to set their own agenda for data collecting, analysis and action, as well as use the outcomes of the process. PAR is a process to empower people in dealing with their day to day problems through collaborative work with others. The variety of methods used in the research, which were adapted from qualitative research and participatory rural appraisal methods, were also presented. The chapter concluded with the ethical considerations involved in the research.

CHAPTER 6

THE REGIONAL SETTING AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the historical background of the communities in the Chi River Basin around which the research is based. It will also provide an historical context to develop understanding of the meaning and the practices of civil society in rural communities in the Northeast Region. To describe the Chi River setting, the researcher has relied on studies of communities in the Northeast Region and in the Chi River Basin¹, secondary data, a local survey, and in-depth interviews. Some of these studies focus on the histories and evolution of particular communities in the region. The transformations in the Chi River Basin are explained chronologically.

Geographical Setting

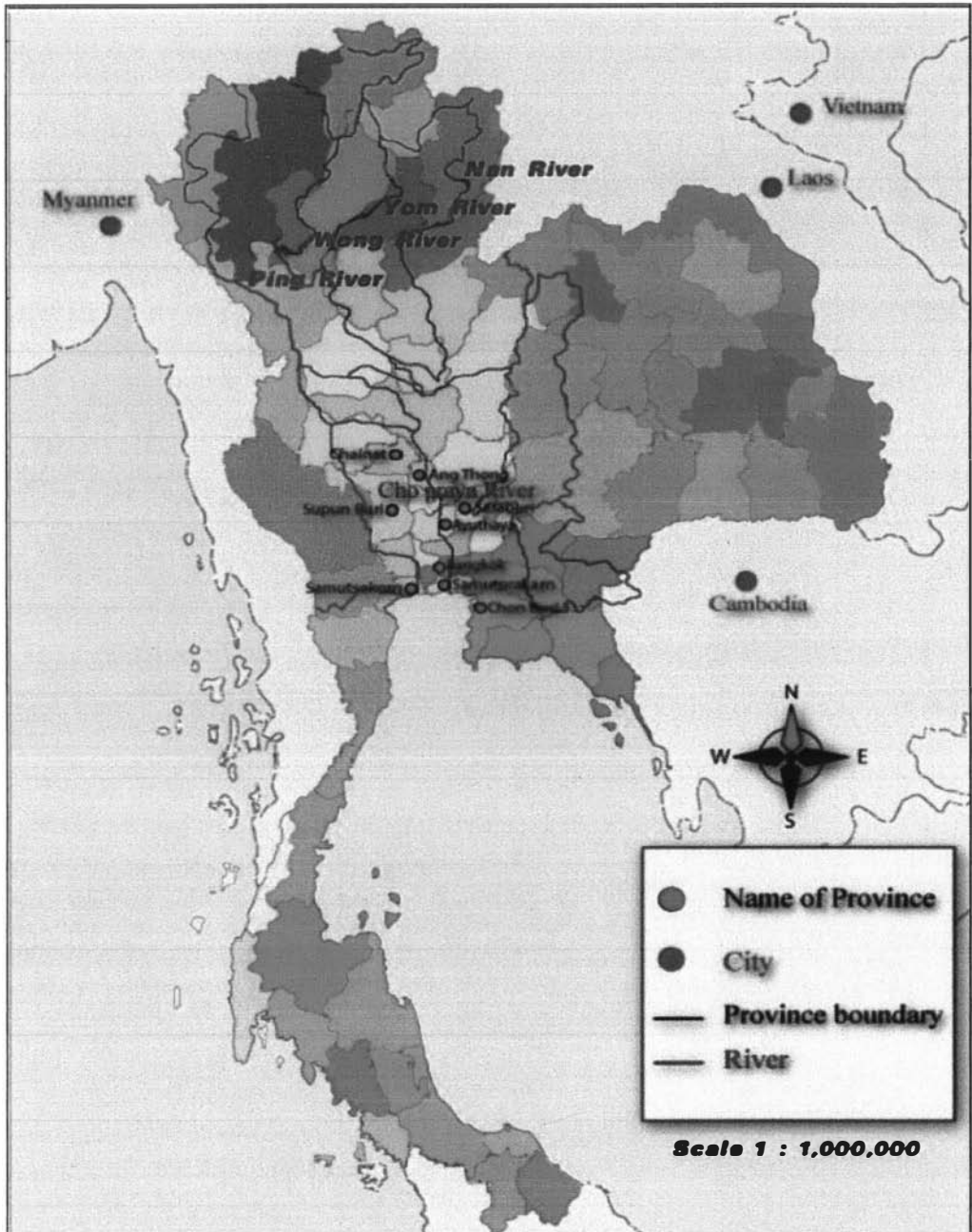
Thailand is divided into four main regions: the Central Region, consisting of the valley of the Cao Phraya River and the lower valleys of the rivers Ping, Wang, Yom Nan and Pasak; the North, consisting of the northern hills; the South, consisting of the provinces of the Malay Peninsula from Phetburi province to the Malaysian border; and the Northeast, consisting of the Khorat Plateau and the waterways and environs of the Mun and the Chi Rivers.

The Northeast Region is positioned between the borders of Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) and Cambodia. It lies between latitude 14° and 18° north and between longitude 101° and 105° east. It is Thailand's largest region in terms of both area and population. The Region covers 170,226 square kilometres², comprising nearly one-third of the total area of Thailand. The population census of 2003 reveals the Northeast to have approximately 20,759,890 inhabitants or 34.2 percent of the total population (National Statistic Organization, The Royal Thai Government, 2003). It is divided into 19 provinces.

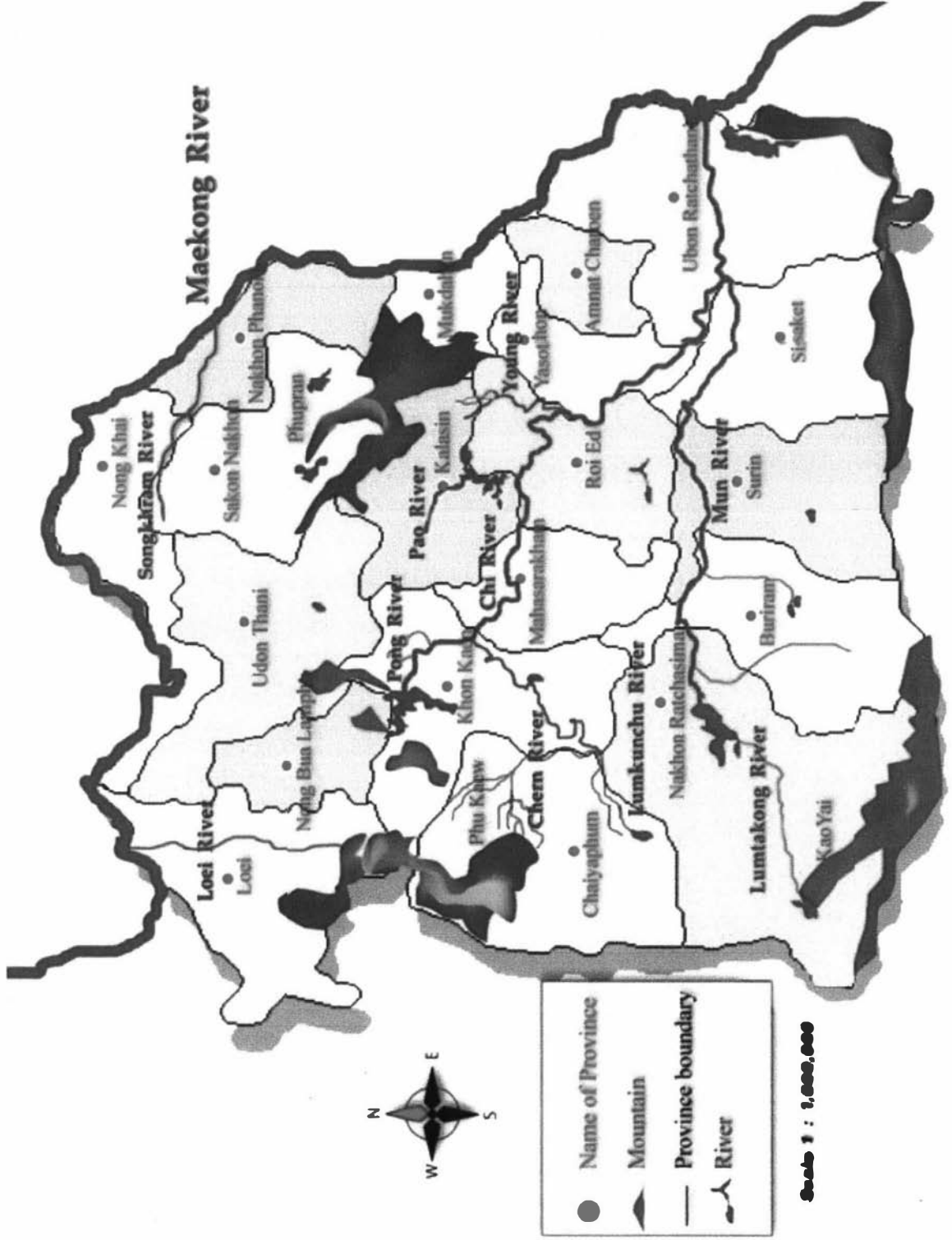
¹ See more in Thawesil (2005) and Suwit (1993).

² 66,250 square miles

Map of Thailand



Map of the Northeast Region



The Northeastern Region is located in the geographic area known as the Korat Plateau. The geography is rolling terrain and undulating hills. The land slopes down from the Phetchabun mountain ranges in the west of the region to the Maekong River Basin in the east and the southeast. Its altitude from west to east ranges from approximately 213.36-60.96 metres above sea level. The Phetchabun and Dongpayayen ranges stretch out to the northwest and set apart the Northeast from the Central Region. The Panomdongrug range lies to the south forming the border between Thailand and Cambodia. In the north and the northeast lies the Maekong River, which is the border between Thailand and the Lao PDR.

The Region comprises two main plains. The first is the northern Sakonakorn Plain part. It is drained by the main waterways, the Loei and Songkhram Rivers, which are tributaries of the Maekong River. There is a large natural reservoir called Nong Han in Sakonakorn and Udon Thani provinces. The second plain is the Korat plateau, encompassing the central and the southern area. There are two main waterways: the Chi River lying in the upper area and the Mun River in the lower area of the Korat Plain. The two parts of the Korat Plain are separated by the Phu Paan Range.

At 765 Kilometres in length, the Chi River is the longest river in the Northeast Region of Thailand. It originates in the Yoidchi and Umnang Mountains in the Phayafae and the Phetchaboon Ranges, Kasate-somboon District, Chaiyaphum Province. The Chi River runs from the Northwest of the Chiyaphum province through Khon Kaen, Maha Sarakham, Kalasin, Roi-Et, and Yasothon Provinces to the east. Then it converges with the Mun River at Ubon Ratchathani and runs on to the Maekong River. The Chi River's tributaries are the Phong (274 kilometres), Chern (150 kilometres), Prome (191 kilometres), Pao (222 kilometres), Young (180 kilometres) and Lumkunchu (105 kilometres) Rivers. The Chi River Basin covers 49,477 square kilometres. Its population makes up about 6.3 million of the region's 20.8 million people.

According to a physical features survey by the staff of 'The Ecology of the Chi River Project' (Akanit Pongphai, personal communication, April 25, 2003), the Chi River can be differentiated by its topography into 3 parts; the upper reach, the middle reach, and the lower reach.

In its upper reach which is in Chaiyaphum and Khon Kaen provinces, the Chi River flows through mountains and high land. In Chaiyaphum province, the river is shallow, narrow, and clear. It is about 20-50 metres in width. There is an abundance of evergreen forest with bamboo and other varieties of foliage trees near the riverbank. This forest has been set for forestry and as a wild animal preservation area. In Khon Kaen province the topography changes as the river becomes narrow and meandering. The realignment of the waterway has made major changes in the physical landscape surrounding the river. In some places, such as in the Chonabot and Muljakiri Districts, it has resulted in bank erosion

The middle reach of the river is in Maha Sarakham and Roi Et provinces and is wider than the upper part, around 100-200 metres in width. The geography is undulating fields, alternating with forests. Near the Chi Riverbank, there are freshwater flood plain forests. The river flows meanderingly through a landscape of rolling terrain. The turning current results in flood plain areas, oxbow lakes, and seasonal marshes near the riverbank. These natural resources benefit the peasants who live nearby and use water for their crops. Between March and June, when the water subsides, the soil near the riverbank contains accumulated organic sediment which provides fertile soil. The farmers have exploited these areas to grow rice and vegetables, such as in Nong Phue village, one of my case study villages.

Several studies (Veerachai, 2003; Sanunn, 2003) have confirmed that the current of the Chi River as it flows through Roi-Et and Yasothon Provinces causes large flood plain areas and freshwater swamp forests near the riverbank. There are rich habitats for an abundance of animals, plants and wildlife. These natural resources have provided sufficient sources of food for local people for generations.

The lower reach of the Chi River, which is in Kalasin, Yasothon and Ubon Ratchathani provinces, is massive and deep, about 300-500 metres wide. The surrounding areas are mostly flat plain area. The bank of the river alternates between sandy soil and freshwater swamp forest, such as in Mahachanachai sub-district, Ubon Ratchathani province. This is the main area for rice production as a cash crop in the Chi River Basin, notably at the beginning of the lower reach in Kalasin province. Since the construction of the irrigation system, such as the Lampo dam in 1968, and

the irrigation canal network which lies across the area, most farmers receive water from the river. The peasants can grow rice twice a year; first they grow seasonal rice using natural floodwater; and then grow a second crop using irrigated water from the Lampoa dam. The northern part of Kalasin Province includes some parts of the Phu Paan Mountain. The area is marked with evergreen forests such as Dong Mae Paid. In the south are the flat plain areas. According to Prasit Kunurat (2001) freshwater swamp forests are scattered along every part of the Chi River. The upper most swamp forest is near the mouth of the Pong River, which is a tributary of the Chi River. There is forest near the mouth of the Pao and Yung rivers in the middle river section and in the lower reach forest is found where the Yung merges with the Mun River. The biggest freshwater swamp forests are found in the Selaphum District, Roi Et Province and Muang district, Yasothon Province. This forest is flood plain forest. There is a diversity of trees and vegetables, which can endure floods. It is fertile and fosters animals. Also, the forest acts as a kidney, naturally filtering any toxins flowing with the river (Prasit, 2001, p. 28).

In the rainy season the Chi River has a very fast current and it always overflows, causing flooding over large areas near the river, particularly in the middle reach where the river meanders and water cannot run through easily. The floods take about 3-5 days to drain. In contrast, in summer (March-June), the Chi River flows slowly and nearly dries up in some parts of the river. People can walk across the river, for example, in the Waeng-Noi and Chonnabot sub-district, Khon Kaen Province, and the river has a very low level for nearly 10 kilometres in the dry season (Akanit Pongphai, personal communication, April 25, 2003). For this reason and also the steepness of the riverbank, peasants seldom utilize water from the Chi River for agriculture in the dry season. Although there are electric pumps¹, installed near the riverbank, mostly in the middle reach, to draw water for agriculture, there is still not enough water to meet the demand of all the communities along the Chi River. However, in the middle reach such as Kosumpisai district in Maha Sarakham Province and in Panomphai in Roi Et Province, farmers pump water all through the year from the Chi River to raise crops for commodities, particularly rice and vegetable.

¹ Supported by the Ministry of Science and Technology.

The Chi River is an important natural resource for the local people's livelihoods. They utilize it for fishing, rice planting and vegetable growing. In the last decade, the self-sufficient economy has become much more diverse, with rice cropping on large areas of land, and non-rice intensive cropping such as sugarcane, eucalyptus and cassava plantations. These agricultural products supply the agro-industry factories which have expanded along the Chi River over the last decade. For example, the sugar cane factories have been established in Num Pong and Lahanna sub-district and cassava slice processing factories in Maha Sarakham, Khon Kaen, and Loi-et Provinces. The forests near the Chi Riverbank were cleared for this intensive agriculture, which has resulted in soil erosion on the riverbank.

My two case study villages are located in different parts of the Chi River. The first community is located in the upper reach of the Chi River which is narrow and winding. The second community is located in the middle reach, where the Chi River is much wider. Such topography, affects people's way of life. The first community has often faced serious problems from the overflow of the Chi River in the rainy season, whereas for the second community floods did not cause severe damage. I will discuss this in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Seasons

The Northeast has an arid and harsh climate, often suffering from floods and droughts. This is due to its geographical location with the mountain ranges keeping the southwest monsoons away. The main waterways in this region, such as the Chi and the Mun Rivers flow from west to east in the direction of the depression. This causes heavy floods in the rainy season. In addition, the soil does not absorb water well, because most of the soil in the Northeast is sandy, and the under the substrata is hard soil. For this reason, the water in the rainy season is held in swamps, and when it rains, it floods very rapidly. Contrastingly, in the hot season, the swamps dry up causing drought through this area (Prapaporn, 1992).

In the rainy season, the southwest monsoon comes from the South China Sea between about June and October. Average annual precipitation varies from 2,000 millimetres

in some areas to 1,270 millimetres in the southwestern Provinces of Nakhon Ratchasima, Buriram, Maha Sarakham, Khon Kaen and Chaiyaphum.

In the cool season (November-February), the northeast monsoon from Siberia and China usually blows and brings cool and dry weather. In the cold season, the cold northeasterly winds chill the area. The lowest temperature on record is 0.1 °Celsius in the Loei Province.

The hot season is from March to May between the two monsoons. At this time, the land heats up, creating an area of low pressure above it making it hot and dry in the summer. The average temperature range is from 19.6° Celsius to 30.2° Celsius.

The Chi River Settlement

The Chi River Basin is regarded as the site of the original civilization of central Northeast Thailand. The communities along the Chi River have a long history of settlement beginning over two thousand years ago. Many archeological artifacts, such as pottery, utensils and ornaments characterizing this historical period have been found in the Chi River Basin, provinces of Khon Kaen, Maha Sarakham, Kalasin, and Yasothon Provinces (Thida, 1989 cited in Thaweasil, 2005).

During the sixteenth to eighteenth century, groups of people from Lao² had migrated from the Lao kingdom of Lan Chang, which had its capital first at Luang Prabang and later at Vientian or Wiang Chan. The migrants were divided into two groups: the first groups migrated to the Pong, Prome, and Chern Rivers in the upper Chi River area; the second group to the south along the Maekong Valley, moving the capital from Luang Prabang to Wiang Chan, now Vientiane. They then founded the Champasak Kindom in southern Laos in the early seventeenth century (Phitton, 1984). In the eighteenth century people migrated from Champasak Kingdom to Ubon Rachathani and Yasothon Provinces and then after that new townships extended to Suwunnaphum, which was in the Northeast Thailand. Over this period, the population expanded to settle new communities in the middle reach of the Chi River. These areas

² Now the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR).

included Phanom Prai, Jaturaphakphiman in Roi-et Province, Phayakkhaphum Phisai in Maha Sarakham Province, Puthaisong in Khon Kaen Province. In 1865 townships were established in Wapi Pathum and Kosum Phisai, in Mahasarakham Province (Term, 1999).

In 1824-1827, there was major migration from Vientiane Kingdom (as the Lao state was called at that time) because of the Thai Kingdom's conquering of the Lao Kingdom in King Rama III's reign (King Nang Klao, 1824-1851, of the Chakri Dynasty). People from Lao were herded to the left of the Maekong River bank, which was now Northeast Thailand (Keyes, 1967; Wirot, 1986; Term, 1999). Thereafter, there continued to be new settlements throughout the Northeast Region because of urban expansion.

As the people migrated from Lao to the Chi River Basin, they integrated with the local inhabitants. While there are different ethnic groups, such as Phu Tai, Yor and Thai-Lao, a common nomenclature for all these people is 'Lao'³ or 'Isan' people. Although the ancestors of the Chi River Basin inhabitants moved from Lao more than 400 years ago, the Lao culture continues to strongly influence local people. People have adopted the Lao dialect, rituals, beliefs and foods in their daily life. In addition, the proximity of Lao and this region have contributed to cultural similarities. This means the culture of the people in the Isan region has more in common with Lao than with central Thai culture. I will discuss this in the following section.

Culture: Belief and Religion

The influence of Khmer and Lao over the culture and religion of Isan people

The beliefs of the local people in the Chi River Basin are a mixture of Theravada Buddhism and Brahman religion⁴ (Wyatt, 1984). From the sixth to ninth centuries, the earliest Buddhism was transmitted from the Funan - Chenla and Dvaravati Kingdoms⁵ (Buddhist Information & Education Network, 2004) by Indian traders to the Southeast Asian countries, including the Isan region (Phaitoon, 1984).

³ 'Lao' can also refer to the Lao language

⁴ Devoted to Vaisnavite cults served by Brahman priests (Wyatt, 1984, p.27)

⁵ The central valley of the Chao Phya River was called the Kingdom of Dvaravati and lasted from the third to the seventh centuries when it was invaded by the Mons from southern Burma. The Mons had adopted Theravada Buddhism and so influenced the religious of Thailand.

By the end of the ninth centuries, the Angkor Kingdom (Pre Cambodian or Khmer ancestry) had replaced the Dvaravati kingdom in the Isan area, and local people gradually absorbed the Angkorian brahmanical religion and mingled with Theravada Buddhism and animism to develop their own system of religious beliefs. This amalgam religion influenced the Isan people's beliefs and their way of life during the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Wyatt, 1984). It also meant that rituals in this area were different from those in the other regions. Although Buddhism is predominant, Brahmin and animistic beliefs are still retained in religious practice in this region (Suwit, 1998). This can be seen in Isan rituals, for example, ceremonies to pay respect to spirits (*Phii* in Thai) to ensure a good harvest, to restore health, and to celebrate rites of passage, such as the birth of children, marriage, and death.

According to Isan beliefs, there are two groups of *Phii*. The first is a belief in good spirits such as *Phii Puta* (ancestor spirits), *Nang Maiw* (female spirits who live in big trees), and *Phii Ta Heage* (spirits who live in the fields). These good spirits are believed to protect the community from disasters. The other belief is bad spirits such as *Phii Pop* and *Phii Prete*. Local people believed that the bad spirits do evil deeds and bring misfortune to the communities. The villagers believe that they can contact the spirits through *cham*. The *cham* or shaman is a person who communicates with supernatural spirits and magical practitioners.

Isan people also believe in the ethical mores of '*Bun*' (merit), '*Baab*' (demerit), and karma (cause and effect). They do positive action in this life with the hope of accumulating merit to ensure a rebirth in the next life, with happiness, prosperity and wealth. In accordance with their beliefs, the Isan people organize a yearly cycle of rituals, or '*Hiet Sibsong Kong Sib Si*'. The ceremonies start with the Songkran festival on 13th April. In chronological order, they are the Bun Bangfai, or the fire rocket festival, in the sixth month; Visakhapuja day on the full moon in the sixth month, the Buddhist Lent ceremony in the eighth month of the Lunar calendar, the Khao Pradab Din ceremony in the ninth month, Bun Khao-sak in the tenth month, and the Orkphansa ceremony which falls on the full moon of the eleventh month, at the end of the Lenten period. The Loy Krathong ceremony is in the twelfth month, which is November, with the Kathin ceremony also in the twelfth month of the year (Seri & Hewison, 1990, pp. 25-29). These Ceremonies and festivals play an important role in

the social and cultural life of rural Isan. I will present these in my case studies in Chapters Seven and Eight.

The Transformation of the Northeast Region (Isan) and the Chi River Basin

The history of this region has been greatly influenced by the expansion of Thai's decentralized political and economic structures.

Political, governmental and administrative system

The crucial reformation of *Siam*⁶ was stimulated by British and French colonialism in the 1890s⁷ during the reign of King Culalongkorn (King Rama V, 1868-1910). For fear that Thailand's territory might be threatened particularly in the Isan Region, King Rama V launched a number of administrative reforms, partially based upon Western ideas and technology (Keyes, 1967; Wyatt, 1984). These reforms brought development and change either directly or indirectly to the Isan Region.

Beginning in 1893, the Thai administration centralized and unified the administrative system. This reform impacted on the system of rule in the Isan Region in 1910. The traditional administration of *huamuang*, which was an outer province under the ruler *Chao Muang*, changed into a more bureaucratic system ruled by the Central Thai government, who organized the region into provinces, districts, and sub-districts. The central government appointed officials to work at each level, under the control of the Ministry of Interior officials.

This centralized administration lessened local self government and regional autonomy, and the new government administration responded to the needs of the central government, rather than to the needs of local people (Keyes, 1967, pp. 14-18). The populace was compelled to pay increased tax to the central government, which led to many rebellions to liberate the Northeast Region from central Thai administration. In the area of the Chi River Basin, there were the battle of the *Sambok* Rebellion⁸ in

⁶ Thailand's name before 1939

⁷ The Franco-Siamese treaty of 1893 between Siam and France, which resulted in the access of the left bank of the Mae-khong to the French (Keyes, 1967, p.16).

⁸ This rebellion occurred in Khon Kaen province, the villagers refused to pay taxes which were raised by the Siamese court (Seri & Hewison, 1990, p.93).

1895 and the *Phu-mi-bun* Rebellion⁹ in 1901-1902.

In 1932, absolute monarchy ended and was replaced by a democratic state. The government developed a new style of administration and organizational division modeled on Western-style institutions (Ockey, 2004, p. 13).

The rebellions which occurred in the Isan Region were an early form of civil society. They demonstrate that people felt oppressed by government policies and organized against state power. These activities brought forward local leaders who worked as magicians to lead the local populace to freedom from state oppression. This form of civil society also occurred in the 1970s - 1990s, when local people opposed the authoritarian government and the top-down management structure of government development projects. I have discussed this form of civil society in Chapter Three.

The Isan Region has an administrative system similar to that in other regions of Thailand. In accordance with the Local Administration Act 1914, the governmental administration system is divided into three levels: the Central, Regional and Local Administration. In 2005, the Central Administration consisted of 19 ministers, out of a cabinet of 36. The Ministry of the Interior's bureaucrats coordinate and control the Regional and Local Administrations including provincial, district and sub-district offices, and also delegate the supervision of the Local Administrative Units to government officials. There are 76 provinces and each province's administration is divided into districts. Each district comprises several sub-districts, which in turn comprise a group of at least 8 villages (See Chart 6.1 on page 105). Villages are sometimes divided into clusters or *clums*, which are the smallest units for government administration purposes.

The Sub-district Head and the Village Head are the lowest positions in the local governmental administration system. They are paid by the government and are the mediators between the provincial government administration and the villagers. They act as government representatives and transmit government policies and activities to the villages. The positions are elected by villagers (Pasuk & Baker, 1997). The sub-

⁹ This rebellion took place widely throughout the North and the Northeast regions. The leaders gave the villagers spells and amulets for self-protection and against local authorities. It recurred from time to time over subsequent years (Seri & Hewison, 1990, p. 94).

district and village have their mandates for infrastructure, education, public health, social services, natural resources and the environment.

A village may have a village committee, whose elected members are taken from among the villagers. Village committees work as an advisory body for the Village Head for village development.

Since 1972, the Sub-district Administration Organization Council (SAOC) has been the other unit of local administration. The SAOC is also an advisory body at the sub-district level. Villagers elect two members to be their representatives on the SAOC, where the other council members are appointed by the provincial governor.

The Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001), directed that an associated local administration organization called the 'Prachakom' be set up in the structure at the provincial, district, sub-district and village levels. It comprises representatives from local sector groups, including people's organizations, the private sector, government officers and Non – Government Organization (NGO) workers.

The role of Prachakom is to survey problems and to recommend priorities and solutions to the local administration at each level for yearly development planning. However, it is not imperative for the local administration to take a Prachakom's suggestions into account in its financial planning. At the most local level, the Village Civic Committees of *Prachakom Moo Ban*, comprises of the village head, representatives of the Sub-district Council, the village committee, and representatives of local organizations in the village, such as occupation groups, the housewives group, monks, local wise people, one teacher, and one local health officer. At the middle level, the Sub-district Civic committee or *Prachakom Tambon*, comprises the head of the Sub-district Council, 10 percent of the representatives from the Prchakom Moo Ban but not less than 7 people, the members of the Sub-district Council, the village heads from all the villages in the sub-district, and four representatives from the villages.

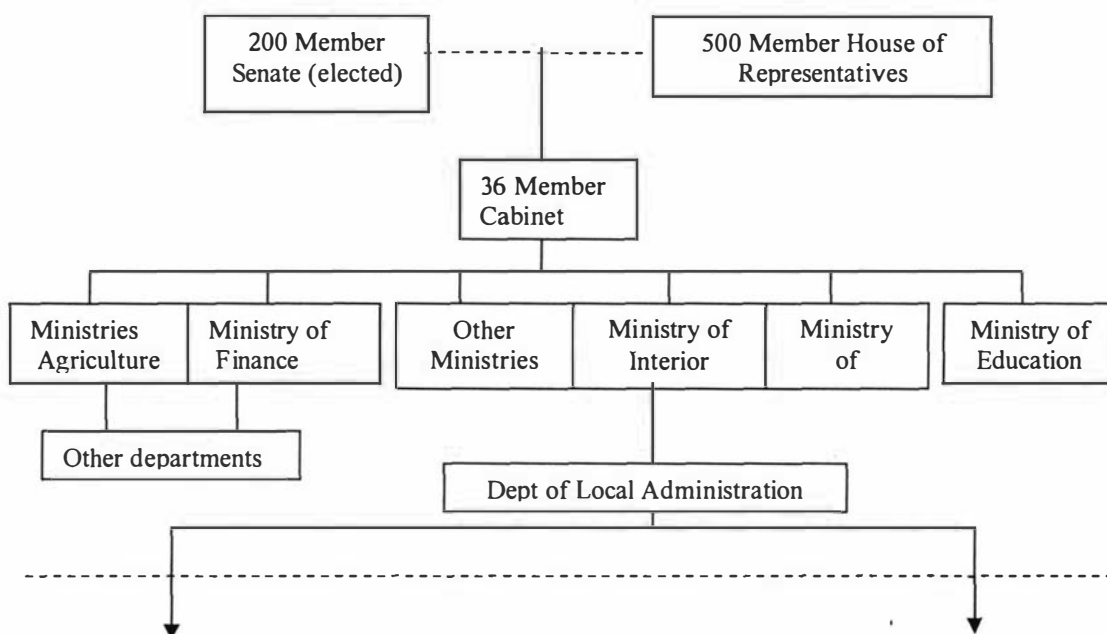
Prachakom therefore, has been put into practice by the government authority at the provincial, district, sub-district and village levels all over the country. In Chapter

Three I have argument that *Prachakom* is a form of civil society.

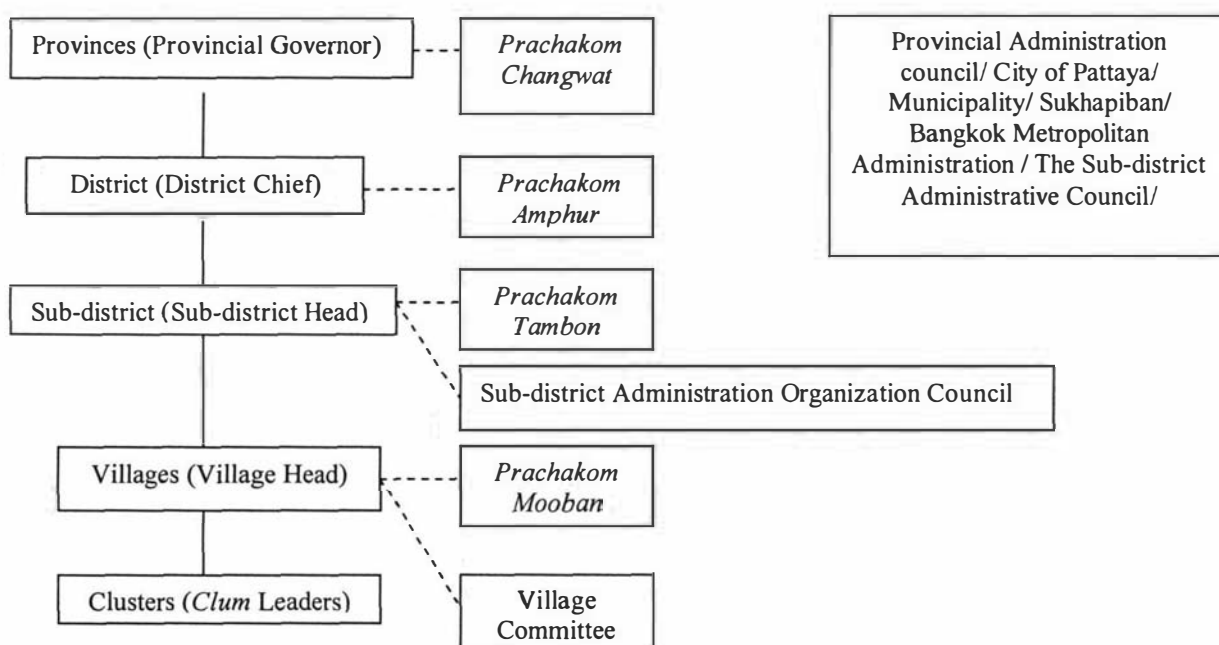
The following chart demonstrates Thai Government Administration Structure (UN ESCAP, 2005).

Chart 6.1 Governmental Administration Structure

Central Administration



Regional Administration and Local Administration



Communication

Another development that led to changes in the Isan Region was the establishment of communication networks. Post and telegraph communications were established in the Central Region in 1883 and the lines reached to Isan in 1907. After the late 1960s communication networks were expanded throughout the Isan Region (Keyes, 1967, pp.19-58) along with an electricity supply. In the 1960s, villagers in remote areas began to use electric appliances such as televisions, radios, refrigerators, fans, and rice cookers (Pasuk & Baker, 1997, p. 381). An amplifier speaker information centre was also found in every village to broadcast news from both inside and outside the community. This communication network established a link to the outside world, and through it Isan people have absorbed modern culture.

Education

The education system went through a reformation process between 1885 and 1921. In the traditional education system, local temples were centers where children learned how to read and write. Young men became ordained to learn the Buddhist principles and the monks were the teachers. However, the temple's role declined when the educational system became administered by the central government. The Ministry of Education was established in 1898 to organize the school system. Public Schools were founded, replacing the school temple, and the first government schoolbooks were published for use in schools throughout the country (Manich Jumsai, 1958 cited in Keyes, 1966). Later in 1921, in accordance with the Primary Education Act 1921¹⁰, primary education became compulsory for children aged 7 to 10 under a national program throughout the country (Tungkasemsuk, 1982). After the First National Economic Development Plan (1961 to 1966), higher education institutions were set up, such as Khon Kaen University in 1964. The agricultural colleges, technical colleges, and teacher colleges expanded into the Isan Region (Suwit, 1998, p. 71).

In 1999, the National Education Act proclaimed a new educational reform. The Act stipulates that 'individuals have the right to receive free basic education for 12 years'.

¹⁰ In the reign of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI, 1910-1925).

Formal education was legally mandated as 9 years compulsory education, including primary education (Grade 1-6) and three years of lower -secondary education (Grade 7-12). Upper secondary schooling was also expanded to include a range of basic education, but attendance was not made compulsory (The National Education Act, 1999). The government also decentralized administration to local schools, and encouraged schools to create locally based curricula subjects. Most schools in the rural area are funded by the government for all expenses, such as teacher salaries, educational activities, and building construction. Those who finish primary school and do not want to study for a higher education qualification are supported to attend informal training programs, such as handicrafts, machinery repair, and jewelry making. They may then become self-employed or work as skilled laborers in the growing number of ancillary industries and service sector businesses.

However, most children in the rural Isan region still do not attend higher education after finishing their compulsory education. This is because of poverty, and they have to help their family with farm work. Some of these young people migrate to work as laborers in factories in big towns or cities.

Health

In the late 1950s, hospitals were founded in provincial towns, and the government set up health care centers in the sub districts. Traditional healers' functions were reduced as they were replaced by modern medical treatment located in a rural setting (Suwit, 1998, p. 59).

Economy

The economic conditions of the Isan people have changed over the last hundred years. The economic situation can be divided into three periods: the subsistence economy, the pre modern economy and the trading era.

The First Period: Subsistence Economy

In the early days, from 1917 to 1952, the lifestyle of the Isan people, particularly in

the Chi River Basin, was based on subsistence agriculture. Farmers grew glutinous rice on their farms and grew vegetables near the banks of the Chi River primarily for consumption. Agricultural produce was used solely by family consumers throughout the year. Apart from growing rice and vegetables, they produced salt¹¹ and tobacco for household use. The communities along the Chi River fished in the River or nearby swamps, and the surplus was preserved in the form of dried fish, dried salted fish, and smoked fish. Fermented fish was also preserved in earthen crocks for eating over the period of a few years or for exchanging for necessities. Produce surplus to subsistence requirements was sold or exchanged through kinship networks. For example, villagers carried fermented fish, dried fish, vegetables, tobacco and salt in carts to other provinces to barter for rice (Pranut, 2002, p. 151). The barter system worked well because of the limited natural resources in different communities. Animal power was used to plow, harvest rice fields, and transport rice and other products from fields to storage areas. The farmers grew cotton and raised silk worms in order to make thread and clothes. They wove reed mats and produced utensils, such as knives and clay pottery for household use. (Suwit, 1998; Vorapon & Orawun, 2003). All of this activity produced the resources necessary to support their subsistence economy.

During this period the farmers in the Chi River Basin relied on rice, fish, and salt as the principle resources for their self-economy.

The Second Period: The pre Modern Economy

The Bowring Treaty between Thailand and Britain was signed in 1855 during the reign of Rama V (1864-1910). The treaty resulted in Siam (Thailand) becoming involved in international rice export trading (Cheyroux, 2003). Because of the demand for export rice and paddy, fields had been expanded in the Central Region and animal power was in high demand for ploughing the rice fields. Isan, Thailand's major region for animal husbandry, traded buffaloes to the Central Region. The Isan trader groups (Nai Hoi) gathered buffaloes from villages, and then walked them to the Central

¹¹ The major salt production site was the 'Bua Kathin' in Ban Phai and Chonabot districts, Khon Kaen province (see more detail in Phaiboon & Kanokporn, 2003).

Region, herding around 700 buffaloes in each journey and selling them in many provinces where rice was produced for trading, such as Ayuthaya, Bangkok, Ang Thong, Supan Buri, and Chai Nat. After all of the animals were sold, the Nai Hoi returned home by train. It took approximately 1-2 months for a roundtrip journey.

Rice production for the export market was delayed in the Isan Region because of the limited irrigation and transportation facilities (Suwit, 1998). However, eventually the Isan Region also began to participate in the new economy.

The Third Period: the Trading Era

The era of trading arrived the Isan Region in the early to mid nineteenth century, due to the development of transportation, which made it much easier for the Isan people to trade with the Central Region. Traditionally trading between towns had mostly been done by boat along the main waterways of the Mun, the Chi and the Maekong rivers in the rainy season, when the water had a high level for sailing. In the dry season, goods and products were conveyed by ox carts and horses from Ubon Ratchatani, Arunprathej, Nakhon Ratchasima, Saraburi Provinces to the Central Region.

The construction of the railway provided much shorter routes for getting goods to the Central Region. Railways were constructed from Bangkok to Nakorn Ratchasima Provinces in 1900, Bangkok to Ubon Ratchatani Provinces in 1928, Nakorn Ratchasima to Ubon Ratchantani Provinces in 1930, and Nakorn Ratchasima to Khon Kaen Provinces in 1933¹². This expansion of transportation increased rice trading in Isan and by 1935 the Isan was producing 20 percent of the country's total rice exports (Ingram, 1995, p. 47).

The transformation of the economy in the Chi River Basin has been documented by much research (Nareerat, 2003; Phaiboon & Kanokporn, 2003; Pranut, 2002; Suwit, 1998; Seri & Hewison, 1990; Keyes 1967). These scholars provide a perspective on how the villages along the Chi River were influenced by macro agricultural trading.

¹² Railways were built by the central government for national security purposes, concentrating on sensitive areas, specifically for extending central control from government, Bangkok to the North-east.

The research found that there were two groups of traders: the Isan traders (Nai Hoi), and the Chinese traders. The Chinese traders migrated to the Chi River in 1900, when the railway from Bangkok to Nakorn Ratchasima was constructed, bringing goods such as soap, clothes, thread, matches, kerosene, paper, pencils, sugar, alcohol, cigarettes, fermented foods, and agriculture tools: machinery, hoes and spades to the local people (Pranut, 2002). For the return trip they bought agricultural and wild forest products from the villages, such as lac, cow and buffalo skins, as well as rice to sell in the towns. In contrast, the Nai Hoi traded in cattle, buffaloes, pigs, salt, pots, knives, and clothes (Seri & Hewison, 1990).

Once the rail lines were extended from Nakorn Ratchasima to Ubon Ratchathani in 1928 and to Khon Kaen Province in 1933, the Chinese traders launched rice mill businesses in Khon Kaen Province. They bought rice grain from the local farmers, then husked and sold it to the other regions (Thailand, Ministry of Communication, 1947 cited in Keyes, 1967, p. 19). According to a study by Phiaboon & Kanokporn (2003), rice sold briskly in the markets along the Chi River during 1930-1957 because Chinese traders bought rice in the market and this made the rice price high. Some Chinese traders constructed rice mills and rice storage facilities near the Chi Riverbank and near the railway stations (Pranut, 2002). They also bought rice grain, pigs, horn, and cow skin from Nai Hoi, who had collected the products from local farmers and from the local markets. Rice and other products were conveyed by tugboats which were pulled by steamboats to the Chinese rice mills and storage facilities near the Chi Riverbank. Then products and milled rice were returned by boat along the Mun and the Chi Rivers to the train stations at Ubon Ratchathani, Si Sa Ket, and Khon Kaen Provinces and from there conveyed to the Central Region.

The other influence leading to changes in the Chi River Basin communities, particularly in the middle part of the area, was the construction of the Saeng Ba Dan dyke, constructed between 1937 and 1943. This government project built a dyke of 80 kilometres along the right bank of the Chi River from Maha Sarakham Province to Aj Samart district in Roi Et Province. It aimed to prevent the over flow of the Chi River in the rainy season. The dyke resulted in an expansion of rice growing in this area because the dyke prevented flooding, meaning that the massive freshwater swamp forests could be cleared for rice growing. Along with these changes, many new

communities were settled in this period of time and larger numbers of people became involved in growing rice commercially (Phaiboon & Kanokporn, 2003).

The trading along the Chi and the Mun rivers by boat decreased as the government constructed more roads and railways, and transport by car and train became cheaper than by boat. Because of the economic expansion, roads were constructed as a link between the provincial towns, for example, from Maha Sarakham to Roi Et and Buri Ram in 1925, Surin in 1926, and Ubon Ratchatani in 1930. The omnibus system was launched in 1936, running out from Roi Et to Bangkok, to Ubon Ratchatani, Ban Phai, Suwunaphum and Wapi Pathum (Nareerat, 2003, p. 212). Some Chinese traders moved to the outlying districts and traded directly with local farmers and over time Nai Hoi were replaced by the Chinese traders. This new trading system penetrated the villagers' way of life. By the late 1950s, according to Seri & Hewison (1990, p. 101), "many villages had shops in place, selling many consumer goods and daily necessities. Some of the shop owners were outsiders, while others were villagers who had learned to trade". Such access to consumer goods created incentives for farmers to increase their surplus and their cash income.

Development Programs and Foreign Aid

From 1961 to 1966, the government under Marshal Sarit (1957-1963), started the first comprehensive Regional Development Plan, known as the National Economic Development Plan. The First Plan proclaimed specific purposes for a five-year development plan in the Isan region (Char, 1996). These were: 1) to improve water control and supply 2) to improve transportation and communication 3) to assist villagers to increase production and marketing 4) to provide power for regional industrial development and rural electrification 5) to encourage private industrial and commercial development in the Region, and 6) to promote community development, educational facilities, and public health programs at the local level. In accordance with the plan, many development projects were initiated in the Isan Region. This developmental period coexisted with the period of anti Communist subversion in the Isan Region and the United States was very much involved in preventing communism by providing aid funds (Mulder, 1996, p. 23). New roads and rail networks were constructed, linking provincial towns and districts to serve national security purposes.

One of these was the Friendship Highway, which was built to link Bangkok with Nakhon Ratchasima Provinces between 1955 and 1957, to Nong Khai Province in 1961, and continued through to the neighboring country of Laos. This highway was also the main route for commercial transportation in and out of Isan. Other assistance from the USA included technical agricultural assistances, education, irrigation system construction, and economic planning (Wyatt, 1984, p. 272). 'Between 1951 and 1957, Thailand was the beneficiary of US \$ 149 million in economic aid and \$ 222 million in military aid' (Wilson, 1970, cited in Wyatt, 1984, p.2)

During the 1960s, state-led development programs also concentrated on the sensitive areas in Isan. Isan's economy had changed considerably as a by-product of the national security focus on preventing communist infiltration. During the 1970s and later in the Fifth Plan (1982-1986) rural development, national security, and the economic growth were co-existent in policies for the Isan Region (Hirsch, 1990, p. 21).

Besides these changes, the government granted concessions to the private sector to log forests in to order to prevent communists from inhabiting them. Farmers were encouraged to grow commercial crops to replace the forests. These significant physical changes in the Chi River area brought about equally significant changes to agricultural production. The development from mainly subsistence production to diverse cash and export crops, such as kenaf (fibre for making hemp rope and sacks), sugar cane and cassava was a major shift in the region's economy. By the mid 1960s, the kenaf growing area in the Northeast had expanded from nothing to 2.5 million rais¹³ (Pasuk & Baker 1997, p. 52).

Crops of maize and sugar were promoted for export by the government when the kenaf price fell in the 1970s. Sugar cane was transported to mills in the Central provinces such as the Chonburi and Kanchanaburi provinces for processing (Hirsch 1990, p. 50). Today, sugar cane is the most significant crop in Isan and is supplied to 13 sugar mills in the Northeast region, three of which are located near the Chi River in Kalasin, Khon Kaen, and Chaiyaphum Provinces. From 1966 to 1970, cassava was a

¹³ 988.53 acres

popular crop as a result of the demand from the European Economic Community (EEC). Large processing mills sliced and dried cassava before making animal food. According to data from the Department of Industrial Works, in the Ministry of Industry from 1970 to 1979, particularly in Maha Sarakham Province, there were 89 registered factories, of which 78 were cassava grinding factories (Nareerat, 2003, p. 216). Tobacco was also produced and processed in government factories scattered throughout the Isan Region.

Other development projects that affected the communities along the Chi River were the construction of the Ubonratana Dam in Khon Kaen Province in 1965 and the Lum Pao Dam in Kalasin Province in 1968. The Ubonratana Dam was expected to provide electrical power, while the Lum Pao Dam was designed to support an agricultural irrigation system in the Chi River Basin (Keyes, 1967, p. 57). The two dams reduced flooding on both sides of the Chi River bank and consequently, farmers cleared massive freshwater swamp forests near the Chi River for agricultural plantations.

Many studies (Vorapon & Orawun, 2003; Phaiboon & Kanokporn, 2003; Suwit 2003) have found that there were changes in patterns of agricultural production after the dam construction. For example, after the Lum Pao and Ubonratana Dams and the irrigation system were constructed, farmers cleared brushwood away from the middle part of the Chi River. It was replaced by large plantations for double rice cropping and the other cash crops such as corn, cow-peas, and peanuts. Farmers changed from endemic rice varieties such as early rice, floating rice, and upland rice, to a new breed, the Kor Khor 6, after its introduction by the Department of Agriculture Extension. However, this variety of rice needed more chemical fertilizers and insecticides. In the late 1960s new technology, such as chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and two-wheeled tractors or 'iron buffalo', were applied to rice farms to maximize their yields. Farmers began to markedly increase investment in their production, using multi cropping, chemicals, new seeds, axial threshers, and harvesting machines

Another consequence of the dams was the expansion of the electricity supply from the Ubonratana dam power plants (Suwit, 1998). Villagers' life styles now involved

convenient electric appliances such as refrigerators, rice cookers, stereos, and televisions.

In the 1980s the Ministry of Science and Technology provided electric water pumps for some communities to use with the new canal irrigation along the Chi River. The canal pipelines ran as a network through paddy fields, sending water to rice fields. Most farmers could grow rice twice a year.

By the late 1980s, the government was proposing the *Isan Khiaw* or The Green Northeast program. The scheme aimed to re-green Isan through reforestation, commercial tree plantations, and water development. The government launched a numbers of programs, for example, water resources, and projects for economically profitable forestry to produce soft-woods for pulp and woodchips from oil palm, rubber, fruit trees, and eucalyptus (Dixon, 1999, pp. 180-181). This led to replacing the natural forests with rapid growth forest for commercial purpose.

The Impact of Development Projects

The agricultural processing factories, such as sugar, bagasse (crushed sugar cane), and flour tapioca processing factories, were built near the riverbank in 1980s-1990s to convert the regions' raw agricultural products into saleable commodities. However, the expansion of this industry had a negative impact on the environment, particularly on the Chi River. For example, in 1992, when the Phoenix Pulp and Paper factory, which is situated near the Pong River, a tributary of the Chi River in Khon Kaen Province, released waste water from its' production process, many fish and other aquatic animals died. 'It affected many of the fish species in the Chi River. There were many fish and shell fish that died in the river and on the shore all the way along the Chi River that year' (Vorapon & Orawun, 2003, p. 29).

In 1992, another development, the Kong Chi Mun Project, which aimed to draw and irrigate water from the River Maekong to the Chi and the Mun River Basins for agricultural production, contributed to several changes in the communities along the

Chi River. Fourteen dykes, along with irrigation canals, were constructed on the Chi River as part of this project, creating environmental problems such as flooding in the upper and the middle reaches in the rainy season. Moreover, it appears that the dam construction resulted in a decline in fish species. Vorapon and Orawun (2003) claim that the dykes store water, and these overflow onto the flood plains, which are breeding grounds where fish lay eggs and fingerlings feed on small aquatic animals, vegetables, and fruits from the flood plain forest. Now that the river current has been slowed down by the dykes, the water level is too deep for fish to stay to find food.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the history and the evolution of the Isan Region, particularly the Chi River environs. The changes discussed include the geographical setting, culture, the political system, communication, education, health, the economy, and government development projects, and their impacts.

Because of its geographical setting and historical background, the Isan Region is close to Laos in terms of the origin of population and their culture. This has influenced Isan beliefs and rituals, making them different from those of the Central Region. The earlier changes in this region have come from the decentralized administration of the political and education systems since the 1890s. The traditional ways through which local people autonomously governed and organized education has become a system that is much more controlled by the Central Government. The development of communication systems has also made changes to peoples' way of life and influenced the adoption of more modern culture.

In terms of the economy, the traditional self-sufficient economy has become a cash crop economy, as the result of government development policies, including development of a rail and road infrastructure since the late 1920s. The other projects, which made changes directly to peoples' way of life in this region were the construction of dams and irrigation systems. These projects have accelerated the changes by making it convenient for farmers to produce cash crops and transport them to the markets. However, cash crop plantations have also impacted on the geography,

and environment in this area, causing such problems as deforestation near the Chi River and use of intensive fertilizers and chemicals in farms.

Overall, this chapter provides a brief macro picture of many aspects of the Isan Region and the Chi River Basin communities. It sketches how local people live and demonstrates that the changes in the Isan Region are mainly due to outside factors, particularly, state intervention in development policies and projects. These features help us to better understand the foundation of the villagers' way of life and the dynamic phenomena in the two case studies which I will outline in Chapters Seven and Eight. It also gives an idea of how 'grounded civil society' is shaped from the particular contexts which I discuss in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 7

BACKGROUND OF WUNGWERN VILLAGE

This chapter presents the context of a community in which a case study was carried out. The issues relate to resources, the economics of household production, education, culture, political system, community-based organizations, and community problems.

Wungwern¹ village is one of eight villages in Sri Bun Rueng Sub-district, Chonnabot District, Khon-kaen Province. It is located in the Northeast of Thailand, about 450 kilometers northeast of Bangkok. Wungwern is bisected by the Chonnabot-Banphai road, which is connected to part of the major Khon-kaen-Bangkok highway. It lies 7 kilometers to the north of Chonnabot-Banphai road and 11 kilometers to the northwest of Ban Phai District. About 25 kilometres to the southeast the road joins the Khon-kaen – Bangkok highway (See Figure 7.1 on page 119).

A dyke at Nong Kongkaew is used as a road and it is the only way for local people to get to the town of Chonnabot. The road runs through 6 villages in Sri Burruang Sub-District; Dondu, Nong Wai, Tamuang, Takoi, and Ta Nangluan village and the side road runs through Nong Kong Keaw Reservoir, the village Kundlum, and Wungwern-Kudlum School and ends at Wungwern village. Then the road joins with the Banphai–Munjakiri road at the town of Chonnabot.

There are no bus-trucks passing through this village on a public road. The villagers use their own vehicles such as trucks, motorcycles, and bicycles, to make the day to day trip to the town of Chonnabot. During the rainy season, when flood waters rise to high levels, the only way for local people to access the town is by paddling or in motor boats.

¹ The name of the village 'Wungwern' comes from its location near the river. Wung means the deepest and Wern means the winding part of the Chi River.

Map of Location of Wungwern and Nong Phue Villages

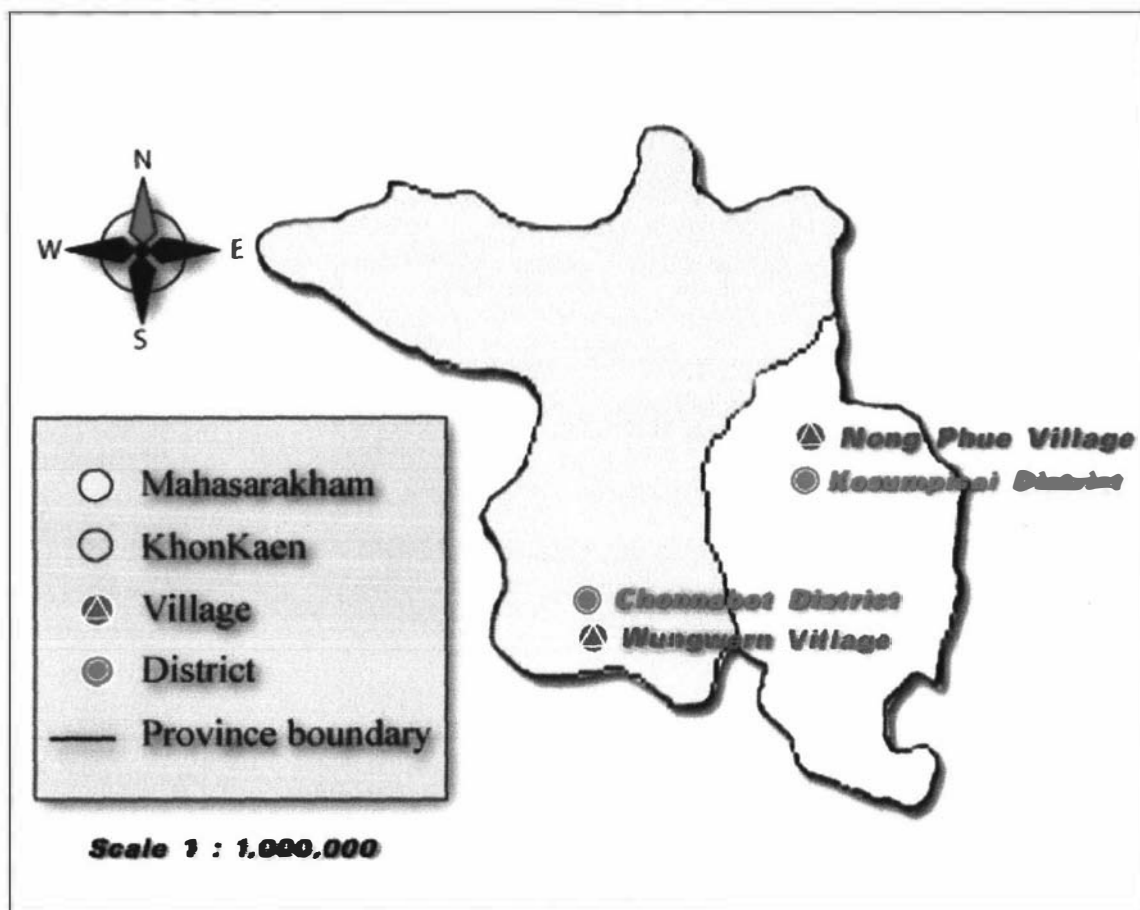
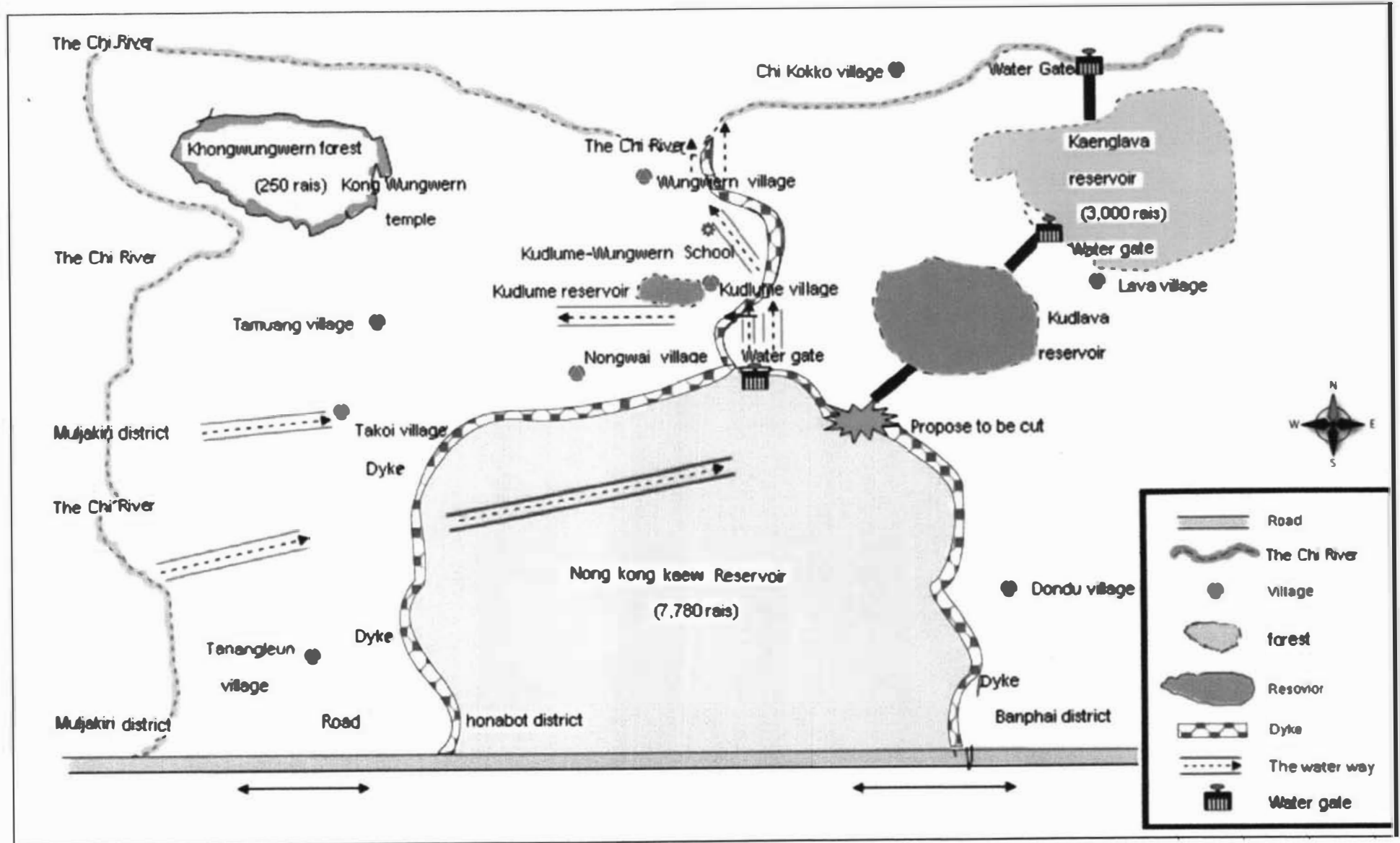


Figure 7.1 Sketch Map of Wungwern Village



According to historical records, Wungwern village appears to have existed for more than 200 years.² The first inhabitants emigrated from Chonnabot District to live near their paddy fields. The pioneers were made up of two lineages: the first lineage descended from a family called Father Nu and Mother Mid and the second lineage descended from Father Kumpa and Mother Tha. The ancestors had three main surnames: Thongasi, Cholaphai, and Chonchi. Other groups also moved and found other neighboring villages at about the same time as Wungwern, such as Ta Muang, Nong Wai, and Kudlum. Most of the inhabitants in Wungwern village and the villages nearby were all relatives who migrated from Chonnabot. This background of migration from the same place and ancestors link local people in these communities together. They feel they are relatives. The kinship ties generate mutual assistance among the villagers when they need assistance. The villagers mobilized the kinship ties for their problem solving in the flooding. I will discuss this issue in Chapter 10.

When I conducted a census in June 2003 the village contained 111 households, with 800 people. The population are of the Thai-Laos ethnic group. They speak a local dialect 'Laos language'. The Laos dialect is used in their ordinary life. They do use it as a formal dialect, but use the Thai or 'centre' dialect in school. Wungwern village is surrounded by the Chi River in the west and the north, Kudlum Village in the south, and Lawa village in the east. The village was settled on a high area and inclined to the Chi River in the west and the north. To the east of the village are paddy fields belonging to Wungwern and Kudlum farmers (See Figure 7.1 on page 119).

Resources and Natural Resources

One primary natural resource is Kong Wungwern Forest. It is located near the Wungwern temple and it covers 250 rais³. At first settlement, it was very fertile. There was a large variety of well grown big trees such as *yang*, *kraboa*, *sai*, *duae*, and *koi*, and wild animals such as monkeys, wild pigs, wild chickens, squirrels, flying lemurs, langurs, snakes and

² Wungwern was assumed to be established at the same time as Chonnabot District, in 1783.

³ = 98.85 acres

birds. The villagers could find food in the forest, such as bamboo shoots, mushrooms, and vegetables. The diversity of plant and wildlife has decreased since 1956 when Kong Wungwern Forest was deforested by merchants' saw mill businesses in Ban Phai Sub-district and by villagers constructing residences.

One of the villagers mentioned that “every dwelling in this village used wood from the Kong Wungwern forest to construct houses. Some people used it for some part of their houses, some used it to build the whole house” (Kumphan Wongchompoo, personal communication, October 2, 2003).

Trees used as traditional medicines have been over utilized since 1977. The traditional doctors from Khon-kaen Province hire Wungwern villagers to cut parts of herbal trees such as shoots and roots to use as the components of traditional medicine. As one villager, Ranat Tuha, said, “They hired us for 5 baht⁴ per time to cut shoots off trees in the forest and we carried them on our shoulders to send them off at the Ban Phai railway station” (personal communication, March 20, 2003). Another valuable resource is Ka trees. Ka leaves can be used for weaving sticky rice containers. Since 1979, Ka trees have been cut by outsiders from Khon-kaen Province to produce rice containers for selling in markets to town people. As a result, the number of Ka trees had declined and this huge deforestation has led to a scarcity of wild animals. Only small animals, such as squirrels, flying lemurs, snakes, and birds, can now be seen.

Another natural resource is Don Puta. The villagers set aside an area of 1 rai⁵ of land in the Kong Wungwern forest and built a Puta⁶ spirit house for Puta to live in. The Chi River is another important natural resource for this village. The Chi River surrounds the village from the west to the north for about 5 kilometres. The villagers pump water into tanks and then send it through water pipes to households, and to the fields. It is also a source of food supply. There are 8 deep water-bed areas in which villagers can fish: Pimpa, Phairot, Yum Hae, Wungwern, Suekok, Lao, Ta Krabuang, and Ta Jaeng.

⁴ = 0.125 US. \$ (40 baht/1 US\$)

⁵ = 0.25 acres

⁶ Puta is the Lao version; Phi puta is the village patron spirit whom villagers believe will protect the village from evils and disasters

A key man-made resource is the rocky dyke. It was constructed in the Chi River at the north of the village in 1990. Before this time, when water subsided during the dry season, villagers attempted to hold it in the river for agriculture purposes. They used sand bags to hold the water. In 1990 the Department of Energy (at that time under the Ministry of Agricultural and Cooperatives) constructed a permanent rocky dyke. The villagers could pump water for agriculture and other uses.

Another resource is the water supply system. In 1994 the Provincial Development Project provided 521,400 Baht⁷ to construct a water supply system in the east of the village, near Pimpa Bank. Water was pumped to supply household consumption in the village.

In 1997, the Development and Energy Department installed a permanent electric pump in the Chi River near the rocky dyke. The pump can draw water from the Chi River and send it to canals which flow to the rice fields. As a result, there is a water supply three times a year to grow rice, corn and peanuts in their fields.

Nong Kongkaew Reservoir is another man-made natural resource. It covers 7,780 rais⁸. It is about 2 kilometers from Wungwern village. However, Wungwern villagers can utilize it for keeping cattle in the growing season. Normally, local people keep the cattle in their fields after the harvesting season.

Before 1981, the area now occupied by Nong Kongkaew reservoir was used for rice fields by residents who lived nearby, such as the peasants from Nongwai, Kudlum, Tamuand, Wungwern and Takoi village. In 1982 the Irrigation Department claimed the lands back from the villagers to construct a reservoir. The purposes of the reservoir were to reserve water for supplying to the towns of the Chonnabot Sub-district, and for agriculture, as well as to prevent the floods in this area. In late 1982, a dyke was built surrounding Nong Konkaew Reservoir. It is 9,725 meters long and has a 287,785 cubic meter capacity. Since then water has been pumped to supply the town of Chonnabot and the paddy fields near

⁷ = US \$13,035

⁸ = 3.25 acres

Nong Kongkaew. In the last ten years, the Nong Kongkaew Reservoir has not been utilized for water supply as the supply has been pumped from the Chi River instead. Now, the sole benefit of Nong Kongkaew is the use of the dyke as a road to the town. In the dry season when the water in Nong Kongkaew has subsided, the villagers utilize this area for cattle raising and growing vegetables. However, the dyke also caused negative impacts for the villagers and the locality. When I conducted action research in this village the dyke was considered to be the cause of the flooding in the rainy season. This was an issue on which the villagers initiated civic activities to solve their problem. I will present more detail on this in Chapter Nine.

Iuen Stream flows from Waeng Yai and Waeng Noi Sub-districts through Chonnabot and ends at the Nong Kongkaew Reservoir. It is about 2 kilometers from Wungwern village. In the past, local people could fish here and use the water for consumption. Since 1972 a large number of silk factories in Chonnabot⁹ have been constructed and expanded. The contaminated water from the dying process in silk production has been drained into these water sources and this has resulted in water pollution in the Iuen stream and the Nong Kongkaew Reservoir. Most villagers do not eat fish from the Nong Kongkaew reservoir since it was proven by the Health Department that noxious residues were left in the fish. In the rainy season when the water levels rise, the water from Nong Kongkaew flows into the Chi River.

Nong Kudlum is a large swamp near the Chi River. It is located at Kudlum village and to the south of Wungwern village. The peasants from Wungwern and Kudlum village use the water for vegetable growing. In the past there was a small island with bamboo trees in the middle of the swamp. After a fire occurred on the island in 1969, the island was dug up. In 2003 the swamp was dug again to store water in the rainy season.

⁹ Chonnabot is the most famous place for silk factories in Thailand.

Economic and Household Production

Rural households typically engage in a variety of economic activities. In the past, the villagers earned their living from farm production. This included rice, livestock, and various other field crops, as well as fisheries. Wungwern peasants' conditions in the past were impoverished, since they could not cultivate enough rice for household consumption. Rice growing relied entirely on the rain but there were often droughts in summer as well as floods in the rainy season in this area. Hence, the villagers had to engage in a great deal of trading, either barter or cash, to get rice.

During the rainy season, fish were caught quite easily in the Chi River so villagers could fish and preserve a large stock of dried or fermented products. Likewise, silk cloth weaving and chilli were also sold or bartered, principally for rice, but also for other necessities. The villagers travelled to other provinces, normally where their relatives lived, for example, Khon-kaen and Chiyaphum Provinces. In this way, villagers made enough for their livelihood. Apart from growing rice, in the winter from December to February the villagers grew vegetables, such as chillies, cucumbers, and cabbages near the Chi River bank, and the Kudlava and the Kudlum reservoirs to sell to contribute to their incomes. They could sell the vegetables in the Chonnabot market.

In 1970 the villagers changed their production from vegetable growing to reed mat weaving because of low prices and the spread of vegetable diseases. The villagers not only collected the raw material (reeds) from local areas, but also from distant areas such as Nongkai, Chaiyaphum Province in the Northeast region and in the Ayuthaya, and Saraburi Provinces in the Central region. The reed mats could sell easily, as merchants from outside the village bought reed mats from the villagers and transported them in big trucks. The mats would be sold all over the Northeast region. Mat weaving was a major source of their income until 1973. Reed mat weaving was then replaced with silk weaving. Before 1973, households produced sufficient clothing for all members with homemade silk and cotton. They planted mulberry trees for raising cocoons, and after the cocoons matured they removed the silk

strands for spinning and weaving. After 1973 the villagers engaged in silk weaving as a key industry.

The nearby town of Chonnabot is known as one of the best silk weaving places in Thailand, and Wungwern village and its neighboring villages have been engaged in the Chonnabot silk factories since 1973. When silk factories were founded in Chonnabot, most local women were employed by the factories to be weavers. In 1982, silk weaving became a staple commodity, replacing agricultural production as the main source of family household income. Silk thread was bought from Kumnun Jul Farm, Petchaboon Province, substituting that which was produced by the community in the long process of growing mulberry and raising silk worms. At this time, the wages of the women working as weaving labourers in Chonnabot were approximately 80-100 baht¹⁰ per piece or per 2 meters for 2 thread silk, and 180-200 baht¹¹ a piece for 3 thread silk. Normally they took about 2 days to finish one piece.

These days, most villagers weave silk at home. They take materials such as silk thread and dye colors from the factories. Then they dye using special methods and designs. The wages are paid by meter of cloth. In this way weavers can work all day at home and sometimes in the evening. From my survey of Wungwern village, there are 40 households weaving at home for factories, 6 households whose members commute daily to work in a silk factory in Chonnabot and 10 households who weave their own silk (October, 2003). Normally silk weaving is a women's job but in this area both men and women help to weave silk. They can earn about 3,000-4,000 baht¹² per month per household.

In 1973-1974, peanuts and corn were introduced to grow in the rice fields as commodity crops after rice harvesting. After one year, the villagers had to stop growing the new crops because the investments were higher than the returns. Gardeners could not cope with the expense of hiring man power for weeding and harvesting, as well as buying fertilizers. The villagers still grew rice as a main crop, even though it was not productive in some years.

¹⁰ =US\$ 2- 2.5

¹¹ =US\$ 4.5-5

¹² =US \$ 75-100

Village leaders attempted to solve the drought problem. Although living near the Chi River, the villagers could not draw water to use in their paddy fields because the bank was high and steep and the water level was low. They wanted to draw water from the Chi River for their agriculture, so in 1975 two village leaders went to visit the Department of Irrigation in Bangkok to borrow water pumps. Each family in the village contributed money for this trip by their representatives to the city. Eventually, the Department of Irrigation lent them three petrol driven water pumps. At that time, there was no road, therefore the villagers helped to pull the pumps from the Chonnabot District through the fields. It took 2 days to get them to Wungwern village. The pumps were temporarily installed in the river so the villagers could take turns to pump the water to their paddy fields. Since then, farmers have grown rice twice a year. The first round is in the rainy season, in July-December, and the second round is in the dry season, in January–April, utilizing water from the Chi River. Still the farmers could farm only 3 rais¹³ per household because the water pumps were too small to pump enough water to serve all the rice fields. The harvest was not large enough to meet households' annual needs.

In 1975, farmers were introduced to growing vegetables in a contracting farm system which was supported by the Centre of Seed Extension (Breeding 17), Khon Kaen Province. Vegetables such as pumpkins, watermelons, tomatoes and beans were grown for seed in the paddy fields after grain harvesting. The Centre provided fertilizers and seed strains then bought seed back from the farmers at a guaranteed price. The villagers grew vegetables near the Chi River Bank but the products did not meet a guaranteed quality. This lasted only two years because the products were not of a high enough standard for the Centre.

In 1983, an irrigation canal was constructed. Fourteen years later, in 1997, it was extended through paddy fields to this local area. The canal is three kilometers long. Water was pumped from the Chi River through the canal and flowed to rice fields. Since then 85 families have been able to grow rice twice a year: seasonal rice and dry season rice. This has finally provided them with enough rice for consumption. The electric pump installed permanently in 1997, meant farmers can pump water for more hours to supply their rice

¹³ = 1.19 acres.

fields. Rice production increased to meet their year round consumption needs. Most farmers kept seasonal rice grain for consumption and sold the surplus as seed from the second round to generate cash for fertilizers and income. The rice production rate in the dry season is approximately 600 kilograms per rai. The market price fluctuates seasonally. The price of unhusked rice grain was 3-4 baht¹⁴ per kilogram in 2001. In 2002, the price increased to 6 baht¹⁵ per kilogram. In the last two years, 4 households grew rice three times in a year: in May-October, September-December and January-April. However, farmers had to invest much more than for seasonal rice cropping, because of the expense of fertilizers, insecticides, harvesting machines and the water pump fee. They could not hire manpower to harvest the dry season crop because of the high level of water left in the fields.

As a consequence of growing rice several times a year, the barter system between villagers and their relatives outside the community has gradually disappeared. However, the mutual assistance between relatives in the community still remains. Non-farm activities are now an important source of income for the villagers. Although agricultural production is still largely a subsistence activity, all households are engaged in some non-farm activities such as labour to gain cash to purchase supplementary food and production inputs for their rice farms and to pay school fees for their children and for medical medicine.

The other source of income comes from working as rice farm labourers in the growing season. The labourers are hired to harvest rice twice a year, from July- December and from January-April. They can earn approximately 10,000 baht¹⁶ per year. However, these days most farmers hire machines for harvesting instead of using labourers, so a number of farmers have left the village and work in the towns of Banphai and Chonnabot in labouring jobs, such as carpenters and drain water diggers, to earn more income. The other destinations for migrants are the areas with canned fish processing factories and the carpet factories in the Central region, for instance, Bangkok, Ang Thong, Chon Buri, Samutprakarn and the Samutsakorn Provinces. Remarkably, 15 families migrated in 2003 to work as labourers cutting sugar cane in the East region and to factories in the Central

¹⁴ = \$ US 0.075 - .01

¹⁵ = \$ US 0.15

¹⁶ = \$ US 250

region of Thailand. As the result of a severe flood in 2002, farmers could not gain sufficient production off their land. Moreover, their new debts from the credit from the Village Million Fund project, which was supported by the government, could not be paid. Migration to be labourers in town was the only way of earning money to pay back their debts. Some of them opted to stay away permanently. Some returned to the village periodically, while others made repeated trips to the city for supplementary income, but retained their long-term residence in the village. Nonetheless, most of villagers tend to continue farming and engaging in the silk industries and other labouring activities in the village and in the Chonnabot and Banphai district.

Livestock was also a source of villagers' income. About 70 households tended cows and buffaloes with the intention of converting them into cash when they needed it. There were 215 cows and 9 buffaloes (village statistic in October 2003). In the growing season, the farmers raise the cattle in the Nong Kongkaew Reservoir. Some cattle are herded across the Chi River to be raised in a field which was infertile and had little to yield. It belonged to a farmer from Munjakiri Sub-District.

It could be said that the economic condition of this village is not good. The cultivation of cash crops could not provide some households with enough income because of the constraints of land holdings and the effects of the flooding. Even though they produce woven silk as another source of income, the price of silk was low, and there is no market. A cash economy trend began to effect the way of life of the villagers in Wungwern village, causing them to move from farming to labouring. Most of the youth migrated to work in big towns, and their salaries are sent back to their families. They periodically came back home to assist in the fields, planting and harvesting seasons.

The poor economic conditions are the reasons for unsuccessful development projects in this village. It has prevented people from joining group activities and other communal activities, because the villagers have to engage in their day to day work. It is also an important factor in initiating civil society in this community, which I will demonstrate in Chapter 10.

Land Holding System

Communal land in Wungwern comprises 70 rais¹⁷ of residential areas, while the temple has 13 rais¹⁸, Kong Wungwern forest has 250 rais¹⁹ and agricultural land is approximately 400²⁰ rais (Sawat Tuha, personal communication, December 21, 2003). The farmers in Wungwern village hold small pieces of farm land. Due to the geographical satiation of being surrounded by the Chi River in the west and the north and Kudlum village in the south, land ownership cannot expand. The farmland occupied by villagers from Wungwern and Lawa villages is only in the east. The farm holdings in the village are: 27 families holding 1-3 rais²¹, 70 families holding 5-10 rais²², 19 families holding 11-19 rais²³, and only 5 families holding 20-25 rais²⁴.

The limited land holdings can be explained by the inheritance system. The villagers live on ancestral lands allocated for agricultural purposes, and newly married couples who do not have land will have to receive it from their elders. Land has been divided up among each new generation. The ones who live in the village inherit land property, while the others who do not live in the village get other property, such as cattle or money. As Ranat Tuha, one of villagers said, her great-grandmother owned 40 rais²⁵ of land. She gave it to her 3 offspring: the first person got 22 rais²⁶, the second one got 18 rais²⁷ and the third, who did not live in this village, got money, cattle, and wood for building a house. In her grandparents' generation, there were 3 offspring. Each of them inherited about 7 rais²⁸ of land. Ranat got her 7 rais. Her daughter has to work off the farm because there is not enough land for their livelihood (Personal communication, December 11, 2003). In these circumstances, villagers with an average age of about 30 years have migrated to work as labourers into the Central province. In 2005 there are 30 households working as labourers, 20 households as traders,

¹⁷ = 30.98 acres.

¹⁸ = 5.75 acres.

¹⁹ = 98.85 acres

²⁰ = 158.17 acres.

²¹ = 2.59-1.18 acres.

²² = 1.98-2.52 acres.

²³ = 4.35-7.52 acres.

²⁴ = 7.91-11.07 acres.

²⁵ = 15.82 acres.

²⁶ = 8.70 acres.

²⁷ = 7.12 acres.

²⁸ = 2.77 acres.

48 households work as farmers and labourers, and the remaining work only on farms. Clearly, the members of families who continue to engage in rice farming has declined because of the limited land holding of households and the easy access to labouring jobs by the villagers.

Education

There is one local school called Wungwern Kudlum School. It is situated between Kudlum and Wungwern villages. This school provides education from kindergarten up to Pratom 6 (Level 6) for students age 7-12 years old. Since 1998, it has been extended to a secondary school which provides education to the higher level of Mattayom 3 (Level 9) for students aged 13-15 years old. The school serves students from Wungwern and Kudlum villages.

The school and the communities have a good relationship and the villagers are generally involved in the school activities. Every year, on the occasion of the school anniversary, the villagers get together to donate money to the school in a system called 'Pha Pa'. The school then manages this donation based on community agreement about development activities in the school. The school arranges activities for the villagers from the two villages to gather together to compete in sports. Then they eat and celebrate together. Additionally, the housewives in the Wungwern and Kudlum villages are committed to helping cook food for the students every day.²⁹

Most of the young people do not continue study when they have finished their compulsory education, but migrate to big cities to work as labourers, in factories, in the centre of Thailand, and send money back to their parents for household expenses.

²⁹ The school nutrition programs include the provision of school lunch, school agricultural production, and nutrition education. Most schools in Thailand get lunch project support from the Ministries of Public Health, Agriculture and Co-operatives, Interior and the University Bureau. The students can have a free lunch meal.

Due to a good relationship between the school and the community, the teachers were important in the partnership involved in the participatory action research process during research project. I will discuss this in Chapter Nine

Culture: Religious Beliefs and Cultural Values

The most important institution unifying the villagers is the Wungwern temple. It is located near the Chi River and surrounded by the Kong Wungwern Forest. It is the centre for all religious activities. The beliefs of the local people in Wungwern village are similar to the villagers throughout the Northeast region. The beliefs were formulated from Buddhist philosophical principles merged with Brahmanic and animistic beliefs. These principle beliefs are part of the villagers' lives. They organize ceremonies according to their beliefs which are performed through out the year. These are called "*Hiet Sibsong Kong Sibsei*". Ritual ceremonies play the role of reinforcing the villagers mentally and fulfilling their needs, particularly for agricultural activities.

A particular belief of the Wungwern villagers is the belief in *Pu-ta*. Puta is the ancestor guardian spirit who founded the village and there is a wooden spirit house for 'Puta' in the Wungwern forest. The villagers believe that Pu-ta can bring happiness to them and protect them and their properties from all evils, such as bad spirits and disasters. To connect with Puta, 'Cham', (or shaman) a layperson who plays the role of intermediary between the community and the Puta, performs ceremonies to communicate with Puta through meditation. The villagers ask Puta about the future of the community, to predict what agriculture yields will be, and whether there will be any troubles in the village. The Puta's spirits are always consulted before all important occasions to ask for permission, for a blessing, or for protection. Such events include departures on long trips, sickness, and problems in the community. The villagers ask for blessings from Puta and pay respect to him by offering sacrifices such as a bottle of liquor³⁰, a whole chicken, incense, candles,

³⁰ Since Puta is defined as male, they bring a bottle of whisky to pay respect to him.

and flowers. They pay respect to Puta on every Buddhist holy day, and also every Wednesday.

The Wungwern villagers organize rituals to ask for blessings from Puta at different occasions during the year. The first is in May before the planting season. The villagers offer food, whisky, cigarettes, betel palm (cashew nut), chicken, and clay models of cows or buffaloes to ask for blessings for good production on their rice farms. The second ritual ceremony is in July, the beginning of the Buddhist Lent Period (three months during the rainy season), and the villagers offer Puta cooked meals and dessert. The third ceremony is in November, before the harvest season, and the villagers bring a small amount of green unripe rice, flowers, and incense to offer to him. Then, when they finish harvesting in February, they bring a doll cart of rice to give to Puta in thanks. In April the villagers clean the area around the Puta spirit house and sprinkle water on the Puta Spirit house on the occasion of the Songkran festival. In this festival people celebrate, and splash water at each other to symbolize washing away bad things and bringing new good things to their lives.

Another ceremony, which is different from those in other villages, is '*Bun Tarahut*'. This particular ceremony is organized by the local people in Sri Bun Rueng Sub-district. The aim of this ceremony is to pay respects to and ask for forgiveness from the angels and the spirits whom are believed to live in the Chi River. They also ask for blessings from the spirits and the angels. It was assumed that this ritual was initiated in 1783, which was the year of the establishment of Chonnabot district (Pra Kru Prasitisamanayan, the abbot of the Sribunrieng temple, personal communication, November 14, 2003).

As the eldest person in Wungwern village said, this ceremony has been held for many generations. He recalled that Prakru Bithika (Kiew Mahanamo), the abbot of the Sri Bunreung Temple in 1827, led the celebration of this ritual (Puang, personal communication, November 14, 2003). The ceremony took place in the northern part of Nong Kongkaew, where the irrigation dyke used to be. The farmers from Kudlum, Chonnabot, Tamuang, and Takoi, Nong Wai, and Dondu village in Sir Bun Rueng Sub-district helped to construct a water-wheel to irrigate water from the Chi River for their rice

farms in Nong Kongkeaw Reservoir. But these days, there is no water –wheel because Nong Kongkaew Reservoir has changed into a big reservoir instead of the flat land for rice farms.

However, the farmers from Sri Bun Rueng sub-district still organize this ritual every year in April. In this ceremony, the villagers carry sand to make different models on the dyke of Nong Kongkaew Reservoir, as well as offering meals to the monks. The monks chant blessings and the villagers eat food together. Then they splash water at each other. The abbot of the Sri Bunreung temple said that the history of this ceremony was that

it was a strategy of the leaders to create solidarity among local people. When people from many villages gathered together to perform a traditional ritual, not only did it demonstrate their cohesion, but it also showed their power. Since Chonnabot sub-district at that time was autonomous and was the centre of the towns nearby, this ceremony created relationships and bound people in this area together (Pra Kru Prasitisamanayan, the abbot of the Sribunrieng temple, personal communication, November 14, 2003).

This statement was confirmed by Puang, the oldest person in the village, who used to participate in this ceremony. “We became to be *Siao*³¹ with people from many villages when we joined in the Tarahut ceremony. We gathered together for feasting and drinking, then splashed water at each other. It was a lot of fun” (personal communication, November 4, 2003).

These days, while the ceremony is still held every year, it has changed its form, with the local people adding more activities such as singing to make it more enjoyable. Only about 100-150 people join the ceremony. The host who is from a village near Nong Kongkaew Reservoir, prepares food for monks and prepares the place. The date to celebrate the ritual is a holy day after the Songkran festival in April every year.

³¹ *Siao* means very close friend.

Feeling Vulnerable

Until three decades ago, the people who live near the Chi River were called '*Tai Chi*'³². The '*Tai Chi*' were seen as poor by people who lived in town. Although the *Tai Chi* lived near the River, they could not use the Chi River for their agriculture, as the Chi River bank was very steep. This meant the *Tai Chi* could not produce sufficiently for household consumption and thus the '*Tai Chi*' felt lowly and were discriminated against by people in town. After the Department of Energy introduced the electric pumps in 1973, the *Tai Chi* could draw water from the Chi River to grow rice. As a result the *Tai Chi* had a better standard of living. This term '*Tai Chi*' changed conceptually to one of pride and the word *Tai Chi* helped to create a sense of group feeling. The people who lived near the Chi River from the Vaengnoi, Vaengyai and Munjakiri District also feel that they are part of the same group. This feeling has helped to build up mutual assistance among local people when they need help. For example, when they discussed the flooding problem, the villagers from Munjakiri and Vaengnoi came to join their meeting.

The Community - Based Organizations (CBOs) in the Village

There are a numbers of community - based organizations (CBOs) in Wungwern village including the Savings Group, the Village Revolving Fund, the Village Rice Barn Group and the Farmers Group. Some CBOs had been stopped and some still work.

The Savings Group was established in 1984 for members to save money and take out loans at a low interest rate. This activity ended in 1992 because of management problems and a decline in membership. In 1998, it was set up again with the support of a government officer. A Savings Group member had to be a member of the cooperative rice barn, so he or she could borrow rice from the barn and borrow money from the Savings Group. The members have to put 20-200 baht³³ per month into the Group bank account. There are 81

³² *Tai* means Thai people and *Chi* mean people who live near the Chi River

³³ Approx \$ US 0.50-5

members, with 83,370.47 baht³⁴ in the bank. In 2003, all activities were stopped to evaluate how the business was organized.

The Village Revolving Fund is another community development corporation. According to the government policy of stimulating grass roots economic production in 2001, the Thai government made one million baht³⁵ available to each of the 74,000 villages and poor inner-city communities in Thailand. This fund is to provide a source of revolving funds for investments, occupational development, employment creation, and income generation. The Wungwern villagers formed a Village Fund Committee, the members of which were selected by the villagers. The villagers set up the Fund regulations and set up the interest rate at 6³⁶ baht per month. The interest has to be paid back after a year, and then the next loan would be considered and allocated by the committee to other borrowers. Money from the interest was divided into six parts: wages 30 %, public development 10%, student scholarship 10%, temple development 10%, risk insurance 10 %, and stationery. By 2003, they had earned 45,000 baht³⁷ in interest. Villagers said they spent that money on daily expenses and invested in their local occupations, such as silk weaving or cow raising. Some families could not pay the money back, so they went to work as labourers in town in order to repay it in time.

The Village Rice Barn was established in 1986. It was established with 200,000 baht³⁸ from the Community Development Department in the Ministry of Interior to purchase rice for lending to poor families. Borrowers had to return the rice with interest of about 15 kilograms per 150 kilograms of lent rice. The Rice Barn project was not successful as the members did not return the rice. This project has been stopped. There are only 3,000 kilograms of rice grain left stored in the barn.

³⁴ Approx \$ US 2,084.26

³⁵ Approx \$ US 25,000

³⁶ Approx \$ US 0.15

³⁷ Approx \$ US 1,125

³⁸ Approx \$ US 5,000

The Farmer Group was initiated by the people who use the electric pump. The members set up a management system for their group whereby farmers pay a fee of 60 baht³⁹ per hour to pump water from the Chi River to their paddy fields. Money gained from the fees is used for pump maintenance, electricity, and for a caretaker wage. Each year there are about 14,000-16,000 baht⁴⁰ left after deductions for expenses. The balance is used for development projects, such as road repair, community electricity, cultural activities, and loans to members to buy fertilizer for their rice farms. The Farmer Group is the only one (CBO) which still works in this community.

The community-based organizations (CBOs) in this village which were initiated by government officers have mostly not been operating well as the projects did not respond to the villagers' needs. This is one reason for weak social interaction in the village which is an important element in effecting the formation of civil society.

Community Problems

The flooding problem is the main problem in Wungwern village. The flooding causes damage to paddy fields, and impedes transportation. The villagers have attempted to solve flooding problems by themselves. For example, in 1996 they grouped together to cut the Kanglava Reservoir Dyke. They considered that the dyke prevented water from flowing into the Chi River in the rainy season (See Figure 7.1 on page 119). Another attempt was the construction of a soil dyke alongside the Chi River to prevent the water overflowing from the Chi River into the community. Since 1996, a few houses have been elevated to try to evade the flood waters.

The Nong KongKaew Reservoir dyke was the other government project causing flooding. After the dyke was constructed in 1982, there were heavy floods and these took a much longer time to drain, about 2-3 months. It caused damage to their paddy fields. The villagers from Wungwern had to temporarily migrate their cattle to the highlands in the

³⁹ =US\$ 1.5

⁴⁰ =US\$ 350-400

Chonnabot District. Since 1964 there have been heavy floods in 1964-1967, 1976, 1978, 1982-83, 1985, 1992, 1994-1996, 2000.

In these cases, the natural resources were a source of conflict. The natural resources, which once were controlled by the local people, are now claimed by the government. The land in the Nong Kongkaew reservoir was once available for cultivation but has now been claimed for a reservoir to supply water to the town of Chonnabot. Also the Chi River, which once provided irrigation water and rural fisheries, has now been claimed for dam construction to generate hydroelectricity for macro economic development. The development projects were defined by the development professionals and the local people were not involved. This exclusion of community and a top-down management structure caused a number of problems for the people of Wungwern village.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the background to the community at Wungwern village, including geography, natural resources, economics, education, culture, community-based organizations, and community problems. In terms of the economics, the village is in an impoverished condition because of the limitations of farmers' land holdings. The villagers therefore engage in supplementary occupations to increase their income, such as labour in the surrounding districts and in the Central region. Community-based organizations have not been sustainable, because of a lack of villagers' participation in their formation. The villagers have long social connectedness with people in the neighbouring communities, because they have the same ancestors and they have organized a yearly ritual together for more than two centuries. This is a feature of social capital and these social networks encourage local people to support each other when they face problems. The community has suffered from flooding for many years as a result of the government development projects. This is a significant factor in forcing the villagers to organize a number of civic society movements to solve their problems. They have mobilized the social capital embedded in their community in order to release themselves from hardships. I will outline this in detail in Chapter Nine.

CHAPTER 8

THE BACKGROUND OF NONG PHUE VILLAGE

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the context of the second village around which the action research study is based. The background of the village includes natural resources; community setting; economy, education, religious beliefs, political and cultural values; and community - based organizations.

Nong Phue¹ village was established in 1917. It is located in Nong Bua Sub-district, Kosumpisai district, Maha Sarakham province, in the Northeast of Thailand, about 500 kilometers northeast of Bangkok. It lies 15 kilometers to the east of the main road that passes through Kosumpisai and about 30 kilometers east of the town of Maha Sarakham. To the north, the road joins the Chieng Yeun- Khon Kaen road about 12 kilometers away, and it joins the same road to the west about 24 kilometers away (See Figure 8.1 on page 139). The village contains 263 households with 1,177 people (Community data, August 20, 2003). The population is all of the Thai-Laos ethnic group, or Isan². The village covers 5,414 rais³.

In 1974, an asphalt road was built passing the village and thirteen⁴ other villages. There are two bus- trucks for local people to make daily trips from Nong Phue village to Khon Kaen province and another route to Maha Sarakham province. Although this village is located within the boarders of Maha Sarakham province, the villagers are more likely to go shopping, send their children for higher education, and have medical treatment in Khon Kaen city, rather than Maha Sarakham province, as Khon Kaen city is bigger.

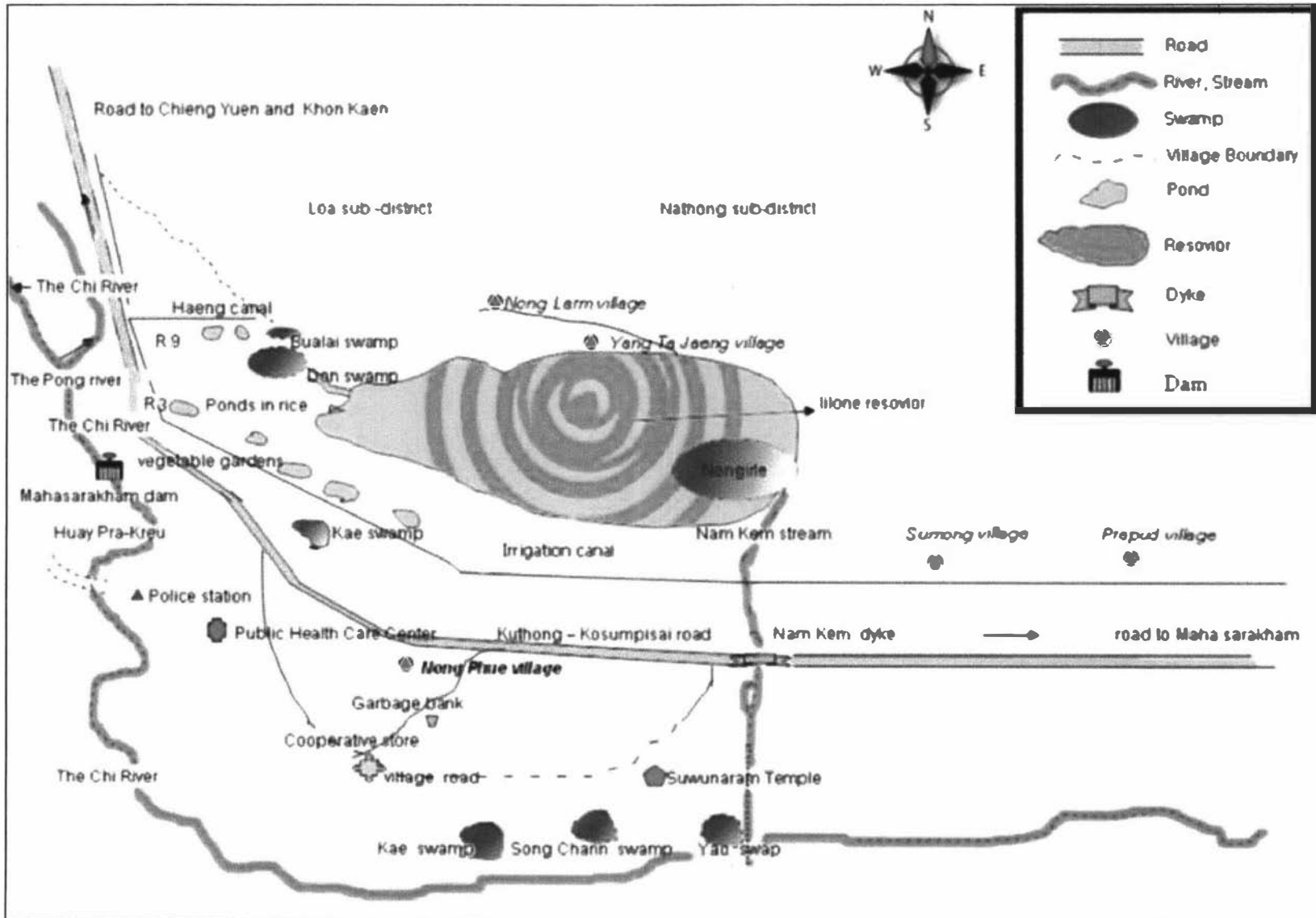
¹ Nong means swamp and Phue means reeds

² Isan refers to both the people and the region of Northeastern Thailand

³ 2,140.522 acres

⁴ Tajam and Tajeang village in the Yang Noi Sub distirct, Nong Buaiaren, Tasala, Prado, Praderd, and Sumrong villages in Yantajeang Sub district, Nong Phue, Kok, Kuicheug, Kuipeang, and Non Meung in Nong Bua Sub district, and Kuthong village in Kuthong Sub district.

Figure 7.1 Sketch Map of Nong Phue Village



Natural Resources

Nong Phue's first settlement, like many other villages in the Northeast, was dependent on the meeting of three geographical factors: higher land for settlement as a protection against flooding inundation, lower land for rice growing, and water reservoirs or a river for agricultural cropping and provision of food such as fish, shrimps, and crabs. The forebears of the Nong Phue villagers had all these three factors to contribute to their basic needs. They settled on the higher land and grew rice in the lower land in the Iilone⁵ plain. There were four swamps – the Song Chann, the Don, Yao, the Iilone, and the Hauy Nam Kem. The Chi River flows to the west and the south of the village (See Figure 8.1 on page 139). The way of life of the villagers was bound to the Chi River and the other natural resources, which were both a source of food. They fished and drew water for growing crops, such as vegetables, beans, sisal, cassava and rice, as well as for the community water supply.

In 1933, the local people from the eleven villages in the two districts of Chieng Yeun and Kosumpisai⁶, who utilized the Iilone area collectively, constructed a man made dyke on the Hauy Nam Kem at the narrowest and most tortuous part of the stream to prevent the overflow of the Chi River into the Iilone area. The dyke was 6 meters wide, 30 meters long and 10 meters deep. The dyke construction caused damming and a massive reservoir was formed. There were fish in abundance and the area became a fish market for fishmongers from Chieng Yeun district. The old people, who used to fish there, told me:

There were plenty of fish. We would put the water on to boil, then go fishing and come back to cook in time. We would throw a fish net just once and we would get almost 60 kilograms of fish (Bunmi Phumsinkaen, personal communication, August 11, 2004).

⁵ Iilone is the name of the woman called Lone who was drowned in the swamp. The local people believe that her spirit still looks after this area.

⁶ Chieng Yeun district : the villages of Nong Deun, Pho, Laubuaban, Nogn Bua, Nong Bunchoo and in Kosumpisai district : the villages of Nong Phue, Nonnau, Baek, Lam, Sumlong, Kok, Praderd, Prapud, Yang Ta Jaeng

Other dykes were also constructed in different parts of this area of the Chi River to prevent overflows, such as Park Peng and Tat Phai in 1934. The dykes were built by local men and were maintained by the government. At the time of the first settlement, there was a vast swamp full of reeds and a bamboo forest. The forest was cleared when the flat area was needed for residences and for housing and agricultural cultivation. However, due to its physical features, the village was faced with flooding almost every year until 1964, when the Ubonratana Dam was constructed to dam water for agriculture production. After that, this area was rarely flooded. Consequently, most of the forest was cleared and the land was occupied for rice farming.

In terms of the geographical setting, Nong Phue village has an abundance of water resources, which supply water for the villagers' rice fields and gardens. There are large and small swamps which may prevent flooding by absorbing surplus water from the Chi River through the Hauy Nam Kem in the rainy season. The swamps also store water for cropping in the dry season. This physical capital is an important factor assisting the villagers to have productive agriculture. Because of these conditions, Nong Phue village has a better economic situation than Wungwern village.

Economy and Household Production

In the past, villagers grew rice for household consumption and bartered it for necessities such as salt, fish, and chillies. Traditional rice cropping methods involved use of family labor and draught animals. Rice was grown once a year and relied on rain in the rainy season. The village economy and household production has changed significantly over the last forty years as a result of the outside forces, such as government development projects, including a dam, road construction, and community economic development projects. I will discuss this in the following sections.

After Ubonratana dam, a big dam was constructed on the Pong River, which is a tributary of the Chi River, in 1964 and the geography in the Nong Bua sub-district changed. The area of Iilone, which was used as a reservoir, became a new plantation area for rice farming and

was used by local farmers from many villages, including Nong Lam, Som Hong, Yang Ta Jaeng and Nong Phue.

From 1975 to 1977, rice production changed when the Irrigation Department constructed permanent canals to supply water for rice fields. The main canal pipelines supplied irrigated water from the Ubonratana dam to secondary canal pipelines. These were called the 9R and 3R canals, and they flowed across the fields. The irrigation system stimulated farmers to grow rice twice a year as a commodity crop instead of growing it once a year for consumption.

By 1979 farmers had adopted new rice cropping technologies and areas using farm machines, such as tractors for land preparation and machinery for harvesting. In 2003 three farmers bought large harvesting machines⁷ to use in their rice fields. They also earned money by providing harvesting services to other farmers in the area. A few villagers dug ponds in their rice fields to reserve water for growing vegetables. Vegetable growing along the Chi River bank for household consumption changed to a commodity crop.

In the 1980s, agricultural production began changing from a subsistence economy to a commodity economy. Some farmers began to grow rice three times a year, as the price of paddy went up and the duration of the irrigated water supply was extended. The first and the third yields of rice (January-April and July-October) got their water from irrigation, whereas the second round in May-July used floodwater. No sooner had they completed the harvesting of the rice crop, than the farmers began ploughing the seed beds and sowing the rice seedlings in the nursery fields prior to transplanting them into the paddy fields. In response to the market economy, rice farming in this area grew very rapidly through intensive land use and applying technology to cropping. In 2004, rice productivity increased to 500-650 kilogram per rai from 350-400 kilogram per rai, and the price was up to 9-10 baht⁸ from 4-6 baht⁹ per kilogram (Phangsri Todechai, personal communication, January 19, 2004).

⁷ About 1,400,000 baht per harvesting machine =US\$ 35,000 (40 baht / 1US\$).

⁸ = \$ US 00.22 - 00.25.

⁹ = \$ US 00.01 - 00.15.

Farmland holding is another factor supporting the village's rice production. The villagers hold large farmlands, averaging about 30 rais¹⁰ per household. The five biggest farmers occupy about 80-100 rais¹¹ per household.

The other consequence of the market economy has been an increase in vegetable crops. In the last three years, the incentives of higher prices and market demand have led many farmers to separate off a portion of their rice farms and reserve canal water for growing many kinds of vegetable. Vegetables are supplied to a regional vegetable market about 40 km to the north-west of Nong Phue village in Khon kaen province. About 80 households grow vegetables, harvesting different kinds all through the year. Many vegetables take only a short time, 30-45 days, to yield, including chillies, pumpkins, spring onions, salad greens, garlic, and coriander. Growers can earn approximately 20,000-50,000 baht¹² for each round of cropping. In 2003 farmers in Nong Phue village produced an average of 1,000-1,500 kilograms of vegetables per day to supply the middlemen from villages nearby, to sell in the Khon-kaen market (Rungsun Dejpgolmat, personal communication, September 28, 2003).

However, this intensive agriculture has meant overuse of fertilizers and chemical pesticides and herbicides on rice farms and in vegetable gardens, and this has become an issue both of environmental damage and farmer health. This issue was raised when I first ran workshops with the community in 2003. As a result of this discussion, a number of farmers began to think about changing to organic production methods on their farms and gardens. This will be discussed in Chapter Nine.

Sub-contracted fish farming has been another outside force for the community. A private company, Chareon Pokaphan¹³ began sub-contracting to individual farmers in 1999. In Nong Phue village, there are 10 households raising fish in hinged floating baskets in the Chi River. Farmers are provided with inputs in advance: fish feed, a marketing service, and technical advice. The farmers have to raise fish and sell them to the company at a

¹⁰ =7.59 acres

¹¹ 20.23 – 25.29 acres

¹² = US\$ 500 – US. \$ 1,250

¹³ The sub-contracted fisheries in floating baskets can be seen along the upper and the middle part of the Chi River in Khon-kaen, Maha Sarakham and Roi-et province.

guaranteed price, then pay money back to the company for the inputs. At our initial workshops, villagers raised the issue of whether raising fish caused ecological damage in the Chi River. However, there has not been any responsible study about impacts from fish raising in the Chi River. Overall, rice is still the main crop and vegetables the secondary crop in this area.

The dam construction and irrigation network were the beginning of major changes in the villagers' livelihood and lifestyle. These days the villagers are continuously engaged in rice farming and vegetable growing, largely as a result of piped water supply to villagers' rice fields and gardens throughout the year. Subsistence farming for household consumption has become commercial agriculture based on a cash economy. Under such circumstances, the villagers' lifestyle has changed with reliance on the market, which is less time consuming and much more convenient for the villagers' overall lifestyle.

It can be said that the economic condition in this village is in a good situation. The villagers have productive agriculture because of the abundance of land and water resources. The good economic conditions are one factor influencing the capacity of the villagers to engage in public issues. I will discuss this further.

The Fresh-Food Market

The twice weekly fresh-food market in the village is one example of the changes in the villagers' lifestyle. Basic necessities and fresh-food such as vegetables, fruits, beef, and fish are sold in the market every Monday and Thursday. The vendors are local people from the nearby villages of Sumlerng, Pradert, and Kuipaeng villages. There are also a few vendors from a nearby town who sell necessities such as clothes, soap, utensils, etc. The vendors pay money to the Nong Phue village committee to rent temporary spaces. The money gained is used for development projects in Nong Phue village.

The Local Technology

The villagers have not only brought in new technology from the outside, they have also invented appropriate machinery to use in their rice fields. As most farmers started growing rice two or three times a year with irrigated water from the canals, the villagers began to face a new problem with the rapid spread of the sherry snail over the paddy fields as it came in with the water supply. This made it difficult for the farmers to plow their fields, because they stepped on the snails and injured their feet. To solve this problem, one of the farmers in Nong Phue village developed a ski-ploughing machine in 1999. The machine was developed so that farmers could stand on or sit on a ski stick which was connected to the ploughing machine. In this way, the farmers could plow without wading through mud in their fields. The other advantage was that with the machine farmers were able to plow more quickly because they could speed the machine up, to pull the ski-ploughing machine, instead of walking behind the machine. This appropriate technology was adopted and became widespread in the area. It won the first prize award at the 'Local Wisdom Competition' in the Northeast region in 2003. It is a good demonstration of villagers' local wisdom.

Community-Based Development

Beginning in 1984, the provincial government initiated many development projects, such as the *Sarakham Pattana Project*.¹⁴ For this project, all villages in Maha Sarakham province were divided into clusters or *clum*¹⁵ (Thai term) as the smallest administrative units. Meeting halls were constructed for cluster meetings. The community-based organizations (CBOs) were launched by the villagers with some support from the provincial government and the Sub-district Administrative Organization (SAO), and aimed to alleviate poverty in the villages. The CBOs in Nong Phue include the cooperative store, the rice mill, the rubbish collecting projects, and the cow raising, and the mushroom growing groups.

¹⁴ Sarakham Development Project initiated by an ex-governor of Maha Sarakham province.

¹⁵ Clum is a small cluster corresponded originally to a group of close relatives. Each clum has its own name recognized by the local people. One leader is selected to be a clum representative working for their clum and with the community leadership.

The cooperative store is an initiative set up by the villagers in 1984. The villagers hold shares in the store, which is run by a committee of the villagers who check and monitor the cooperative system, including accounting and checking stock. This committee works every evening after the cooperative closes at 8 p.m., while all members are involved in its operation by rotating as salespeople. The rotations are run through the village clusters, which take turns each day to send one member from each of three families to be responsible for sales. This system has been sustained for more than 20 years without any problems or conflicts. The management system is very transparent and the villagers place a lot of faith in the cooperative store management.

Due to the intensity of rice production in this area, crop yield has increased. However, rice prices have fluctuated, in some years, the price barely covering input costs. For this reason the villagers launched the Rice Mill Project in 1998 at the suggestion of the Agricultural Extension Organization district officer. The government lent 200,000 baht¹⁶ to the project group to buy rice mill machinery and the members contributed shares of two hundred baht¹⁷ per unit. The villagers contributed to the rice construction by cutting wood and donating corrugated iron for the roof. The Rice Mill activities include buying untreated rice from the farmers, milling the grain, and packing it into 1, 2, and 5 kilogram sacks and selling it. The Mill is run by 20 villagers selected by the project members and the business performed well enough to repay the government loan in 2002. That year, the group added more activities to the business, husking brown and jasmine rice, and packing it for sale. The rice mill group has been viewed as the most successful development group in the district, as a result of the trustworthy administration and profitability. In 2003 the Sub-district Administrative Organization (SAO) provided 586,000 baht¹⁸ to them to buy a bigger mechanical rice mill and to expand its membership and services to other villagers in the sub-district. Currently, there are 151 members from Nong Phue village (Phangsri Todechai, personal communication, September 22, 2003).

¹⁶ \$US 5,000

¹⁷ \$US 5

¹⁸ \$US 1,465

The other CBOs, which were launched in 2000 - 2003, were as follows: the Savings Group, Cow Raising group, Mushroom Growing Group, and the Fertilizer and Rubbish Collecting Projects.

The Savings Group was established in 2001. There are 72 members who save 10 baht¹⁹ per month. This group aims to lend money at a low interest rate to members to borrow when they need it.

In 2000, the government provided 100,000 baht²⁰ to support the villagers small business occupations. The villagers distributed the money to the Cow Raising, Mushroom Growing, and Fertilizer Projects. For the Fertilizer Project, the committee bought fertilizer and sold it to the members in the growing season. For the Cow Raising Group, the committee bought cows for the members to raise, and then sold the cows when calves were born. The money gained was divided among the members of the group.

The other activity is the Mushroom Growing Project. The members built a glasshouse and together raised mushrooms for sale. Some of the profits was reinvested for the next planting, and the rest divided between the members.

The Rubbish Collecting Project was initiated in 2002 with the support of the Local Health Center. The group bought waste material such as paper, empty tins, and bottles, and then sold them to traders from outside the village. The profits gained were distributed to the members of the group. Currently there are 109 members in this group.

In addition, groups of villagers have been organized by government officers to contract for government services, such as the Water Irrigation Group. This group manages the irrigation system which supplies the water for farmers' rice fields through the permanent canals.

Nong Phue village achieved a first place village development award at the provincial level and a second place at the regional level in 2001.

¹⁹ \$ US 0.25

²⁰ \$US 2,500

I suggest that community - based organizations (CBOs) in Nong Phue village are operating very well. This contrasts with the CBOs in Wungwern village, most of which have not been successful. My argument is that there are two main reasons for the achievements of the CBOs in Nong Phue. First, most CBOs in Nong Phue village were launched by the villagers and supported by the government, and the CBOs thus responded to the villagers' needs. The villagers get on and manage the groups by themselves. This made the CBOs in Nong Phue strong and sustainable. In Wungwern village, the CBOs were established by the government officers and did not respond to the villagers' needs. This caused a failure of CBOs in Wungwern. Economic conditions caused further failure. In Wungwern village, people do not earn enough income for their daily needs. They have to work hard daily and have no time to engage in public issues. In Nong Phue village people have better economic conditions and they have enough time to join the CBOs.

The interaction of the villagers in the CBO's work processes has created social networks, which can generate social cohesion, and therefore collective action. This significant element influences the formation of civil society in the two communities. I will discuss this in Chapter 10.

Another important group is the Prachakom or civic group (See Chart 6.1 on page 105). In 1998 the villages in Nong Bua Sub-district, including Nong Phue village, were directed to set up the Prachakom Moo Ban at the village and Prachakom Tambon at the sub-district levels, in accordance with the Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997 - 2001). The role of the Prachakom at both levels is to survey the problems of the local communities. Then they prioritize solutions and make recommendations to the sub-district Local Administration Council. The Prachakom in Nong Phue is often touted as the strongest in the Nong Bua sub-district by the local government, because this civic group has continued to function, as a result of having good leaders who give guidance to the local administrators, whereas some Prachakom in other villages have neglected their tasks.

However, most of the projects proposed by the Prachakom have been infrastructure projects, such as road construction, water drainage, and vocational projects. This is because the local people are influenced by the old development paradigm, which focuses on

infrastructure and economic projects, rather than human development projects. In addition, people have got used to the model of the majority of rural development projects in Thailand, which are predominantly measured by concrete outputs.

I would argue that Prachakom has become distorted in its roles. When the government policy designed Prachakom their task was to give advice to the Local Administrative Organization in a planning process, and Prachakom membership were selected from fixed formal positions. This expectation distorted the view of Prachakom in terms of its formulation and its ideology. Prachakom, which is simply defined as a voluntary group of people working on whatever issues are in their common interest, has become a static group of people who have fixed tasks. Prachakom's tasks could be defined much more widely than simply as participants in the planning process. Government policy has led to a misunderstanding about the concept of Prachakom. I have discussed this issue in Chapter Three in the section on Civil Society in Thailand.

Education

In the early period of Thai education, before 1934, the school was located at the temple. Chom Srimunmart, one villager told me her life history. She said, "I was ten years old when I moved with my parents from Loeng Tai. I then entered the temple school. At that time, there were about 100 students coming from the nearby villages to study at this school" (Personal communication, September 26, 2003).

Then in 1934 the Ban Kok Nong Phue School was established, providing education for the students from Kok and Nong Phue villages. To this day, the school provides education from Kindergarten to Mattayom Three (level nine).

Apart from formal education, the children in this village can get special education in Buddhist Dharma beliefs and practices with monks at the weekends in the temple. The monks organize Dharma lessons, including the five precepts, the history of Lord Buddha, moral education, and common practice in religious rites for the young in this area. About

130 students from Nong Phue and nearby villages such as Kui Cheuk, Kok and Nong Prakeng receive moral training in Buddhist principles each year (The abbot and Pra Maha Pon, personal communication, December 11, 2003). These religious instructions nurture the young to behave morally and to understand proper religious practice. As Siliporn Suphalert, a 12 year old girl, told me about the temple school, “I study the Pali canon, proverbs and Buddhist principles. The teaching guides me to do good deeds. When I become older, I want to go to the temple to make merit” (Personal communication, November 15, 2003). One of the villagers stated that, “There are a lot of children involved in temple rituals, such as taking food to the temple in the morning. The moral teaching is a good way to socialize our children to practice the good deed.”

It is clear that the temple is not only a public space for local people to perform rituals, but it is also an educational institution which nurtures people in moral integrity through direct instruction and interaction in the ritual ceremonies. This moral behavior creates norms of trust and reciprocity, which is an element of social capital. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter Ten.

Culture: Religious Beliefs and Cultural Values

In Nong Phue village, the villagers consider the '*Bun Huay Nam Khem*' and '*Bun Sungkatan*'²¹ rituals to be the most important rituals of the year. Two of the old people (Bunme Phumsinkaen and Jiem Delaon, personal communication, April 15, 2003) told me the story their grandparents had told them about the yearly ceremony '*Bun Huay Num Khem*'. It was initiated by Nong Phue and the other nineteen neighboring villages²² more than a hundred years ago. It is a yearly ceremony to worship the spirit of '*I lone*'. At the beginning of settlement, the area of I lone was composed of a floodplain, a floodplain forest, and enormous swamps which were connected to seven small marshes covering an

²¹ 'Sungkatan' is the ritual of making merit by preparing food for the monks and donating funds, yellow robes, unprocessed food and other necessities to the monks. 'Bun' means making a merit.

²² Hinhae, Non Muang Noi, Nong Pra Keng, Kui Paeng, Kui Chuak, Kok, Nong Phue villages in Nong Bua sub-district, Pra Dert, Pra Pat, Sumrong, Swang, Yang Ta Jaeng villages in Yang Ta Jaeng sub-district, Kuan, Pak Nork, Non Nao, Non Tun in Kuan sub-district, Nong Bua, Nong Lam, Lao Bua Ban in Lao Bua Ban sub-district.

area of around 30,000 rais²³. It was a very fertile area. The floodplain served as rice farms whereas the forest contained plenty of trees as well as wild animals - rabbits, monkeys, tigers, wild pigs, chickens, and birds. These natural resources were vital sources of food for the local people, as well as enabling cattle raising in the dry season.

In 1933, a dyke was constructed on the Hauy Nam Kem, and the Iilone area was changed into a huge reservoir for local people to fish in. The legend of *Iilone* arose when one of the villagers died in the reservoir and fishermen were faced with strange events. They believed that they were caused by the supernatural spirit of *Iilone*. Out of this belief, local people from the nineteen villages who utilize this area have organized a traditional ceremony since 1935, merit for Iilone spirit. The people from the nineteen villages let off fire rockets both for entertainment and also to predict whether there will be a plentiful supply of rain in that year or not. The rite has been performed in June every year with the belief that it protects them from evil. There is a pavilion near the dyke built by local people, where they celebrate this ritual.

By 2003, with its change in ecology and utilization the value of Iilone had changed. The Iilone area had originally been the resource supplying water and fish for local peoples' basic needs, but now has become rice farms which profit some villages. Thus, the value of Iilone to people who cannot utilize it has changed. Over time, celebrating 'Bun Huay Nam Kem' decreased in value and had less community participation. Since 2000, only a few villages, Nong Lam, Sumlong and Nong Phue, have engaged in this ceremony.

Bun Huay Num Khem is a ritual which brings together people from different villages. Despite coming from different places, they all have similar beliefs and values in the Iilone spirit and a belief in supernatural beings. Performing this ritual binds local people together and creates social relationships among them. This is a form of social network generated by people who have similar beliefs. It is a form of the fiction kinship which I presented in Chapter Three.

²³ 11,861.04 acre

Another significant ceremony is the '*Bun Sungkatan*' which is held over a three day period during Buddhist Lent. The villagers organize rituals and make merit by offering the monks food. The first day is before a Buddhist holy day. The members of a cluster, or *clum* organize and share responsibility for preparing food and setting up the host's house among themselves. On the second morning, they gather to cook food for the monks at the host's house. The villagers take vegetables or rice for their contribution. All the families in the *clum* join together to bring food for the monks before noon. After the monks have finished their midday meal and blessed the villagers, all the villagers have lunch together. The third day is a Buddhist holy day. Before sunrise the host house strikes a gong calling the villagers in the *clum* to gather at the host's home to prepare the food together. At least one person from each family in the *clum* comes and helps with the cooking. Then food is brought to the monks at the temple in the morning. After the monks have finished their meal, the villagers have a meal together.

Another *clum* will take its turn to be the host for the next Buddhist holy day. In order to make a merit, lay people of 45 years or older might stay longer, or even overnight, at the temple to practice Buddhist doctrine, take precepts, chant, and meditate. The villagers believe that the moral practices during the ritual merit making can purify them and bring moral goodness to their lives. In general, more than 100 lay people stay and practice in the period of Buddhist Lent every year. The lay people told me that " It helps us have a feeling of peace and serenity when we make a merit " The monks guide the villagers " to be faithful, not to jeer at the others, not to cheat, not to steal, not to be avaricious, not to gossip, to get rid of bad habits, and tell the truth" (Sane Jantawaro and Jiem Delaon, personal communication, August 20, 2003). The villagers reflected that it was a way to practice positive actions.

Formerly, the celebrations included night –time entertainment, such as Isan traditional folk songs or movies. They held a party and killed beef cattle²⁴ to cook and eat together. Each *clum* had to organize the entertainment when they were acting as a host. The villagers

²⁴In the Isan tradition, if cattle were killed for celebration, it must be an important party

would donate money for this celebration in order to make the entertainment appealing. Sometimes there were entertainment competitions between the clums. The ceremonies and festivals served as a recreational pattern of village life. However, since 1993, the entertainment has stopped because villagers agreed that it cost too much money (Bunme Phumsinkaen, personal communication, August 11, 2003). Nonetheless, the ceremonial cultural activities were continued, transferred from generation to generation for more than seventy years.

Bun Huay Num Khem and Bun Sungkatan rituals are cultural capital which gradually formed and guided the villagers' social behavior. It generates social networks and norms of reciprocity among them. These ceremonies bridge and bind people in these local communities to have interaction. It forms social networks, norms of reciprocity, and cohesion between people in these communities, which are a key factor in shaping civil society in this village.

The Villagers' Beliefs

The beliefs of the Nong Phue village inhabitants are similar to other Isan people; they involve an interweaving of Theravada Buddhism, Brahma, and Phii (spirits). Before 1937, the traditional beliefs of the Nong Phue villagers were in Buddhism mingled with animist beliefs, such as in the ancestor spirit called Phii Puta. The villagers believed that Phii Puta would protect them from disaster and devils. They collectively worshipped spirits to protect the village, as well as their property, in an annual cycle.

In 1937, a major sickness occurred in the village and the people did not know its cause. The *Cham*, who plays the role of an intermediary between the spirit world and the community, suggested that they take on Buddhist doctrine as their principal belief. The villagers began to practice Buddhist doctrine and precepts²⁵. Four poles were installed at the corners of the

²⁵ The context of the five basic Buddhist precepts of moral practices: abstinence from theft, abstinence from taking life; abstinence from fornication, abstinence from lying, abstinence from intoxication.

village as symbols of the Buddhist principles. When the poles became rotten, the villagers built shrines to replace the old poles. They pay their respects with flowers, candles and incense at the nearest shrine to their house on every Buddhist holy day, and at least once a week. From their new belief system the villagers established social norms that have been in place more than 67 years. They declared, for example, no killing of four legged animals within the boundary of the village will happen, no meat will be taken into the village unless it was wrapped or packed, and neither man nor woman could walk topless through the village. The Buddhist holy days became a day of rest and no one could work in activities such as in the rice milling, or taking firewood to the village. The local people have strongly adopted the beliefs of Buddhist doctrine and they follow stringent rules with the belief that it will bring them to goodness.

Another belief system works through the relationship between the villagers, the temples and the monks. People respect the monks, particularly the present Abbot, Pra Khru Suwuannapachot, of Suwunnaram Temple in Nong Phue village. He was ordained forty seven years ago and counts as one of the charismatic leaders in this village and the neighboring villages. Elders told me that "our people are very religious because we have a very trustworthy abbot. He teaches us to follow Buddhist doctrine. His charisma can pull people, to work collectively both in cultural and secular activities "(Bunme Phumsinkaen, personal communication August 2, 2003). The abbot also takes on other secular roles and is active in a leadership role in community development. Moreover, the temple serves as the village social welfare center; poor families are given food and a place to stay there. There are two families in Nong Phue village who regularly come to get food left over from the monks for their family's consumption (Rungsun Dejpgolmat, personal communication, August 2, 2003) .The other evidence demonstrating the villagers' morality was that nearly eighty households offer food to the monks every morning at the temples. This phenomenon is not often seen in rural communities in the modern era as the trading relationship system influences communities, making people more dependent on making money.

The belief of the local people in religion can also be seen from the assistance given by the villagers for building the temple. The villagers donated money, wood, and cement to build

the temple hall in 1977. Another form of support is from the young who have migrated to work in the city and collectively donate money to the temple in system called "Pha Pa". In 1987, the villagers helped to construct the monks' residence from the money raised by 'Pha Pa' donations.

Although cultural values have not been undermined by modernity, to some extent there is evidence of change. The number of rituals, celebrations and festivals have reduced, and also simplified and modified. However, traditional beliefs are difficult to displace. Religious belief, which is a form of cultural capital, still influences the villagers in their norms and way of life.

In summary, this cultural sphere, including the belief system and rituals, were regarded as cultural capital. They are the foundation of religious activities and generate social capital which can mobilize and shape civil society in Nong Phue village.

Mutual Aid and Reciprocity

The villagers help one another on special occasions called '*Long Khaek*²⁶', such as in rice fields during transplanting, harvesting, and threshing rice. Although technology is currently used, the villagers still apply the tradition of mutual labour assistance to the new ways of production, especially in the harvest season. If a farmer wants to harvest, she or he asks relatives and neighbours to help. Even though they use a harvesting machine, 5-6 labourers are still needed to lift the bags of rice grain. This mutual aid is not only for the harvest season but also occurs with other activities, such as the occasion of a wedding, an ordination or a cremation. As one elder said, "Villagers are very committed to mutual assistance because when they need help, they will get assistance in return" (Promi Dejpgolmat, personal communication, December 12, 2003). On the other hand, if someone wants to hire labourers, the villagers may not go because they do not have any bond to that relationship. Money is not important in this reciprocity. I participated in the traditional

²⁶ Long Khaek is the system of a traditional mutual assistance. Villagers help their relatives and neighbors, and then will be assisted in turn when they need help.

ritual ceremonies many times in 2003 and found that members of whole families in Nong Phue village were willing to join and delegate functions to themselves without asking the host family. One of the villagers told me in the 'Bun Kathin'²⁷ ceremony that, "I helped them make an Isan rocket. If they had hired me and given me a lot of money I would not have made it, but I made it freely for them because we are all relatives in our community" (Songphon Suwunasom, personal communication, December 15, 2003).

Communal natural resource management systems were well developed before rice production became dominated by economic ideologies and technologies. Land leasing has been used to sustain the economic well being of people who needed additional farmland. The village has about 340 rais²⁸ of communal lands which is used for a variety of purposes, such as for rapid growing trees and plantations. Another piece of land is leased to one member in the village for planting and some areas are used for village common purposes. There is an area for tending cattle, and a place for growing rice to store for the temple and for ritual ceremonies, including for monk's consumption. The land lease system functions through the *clum*, and the rental rotates from *clum* to *clum* each year. One from the *clum* is selected as the leasee by drawing lots. Money gained from communal land leasing is used for development activities in the community and cultural activities in the temple. In respect of natural resource management by the villagers, there is no conflict because they have such a well-established mutual agreement.

Apart from this, mutual assistance can be seen in the sphere of fishing in the Chi River. When villagers want to go fishing, groups of 8-10 go together. Normally, the group consists of relatives or neighbors who have a close relationship. They take fishing instruments such as fishing and boats, and paddle abreast or as a group along the Chi River. Fish is shared equally among those members who help to catch fish. Mutual assistance can also be seen in the temple rice farm, which is on land donated by one of villagers. Villagers work together seasonally to plow, sow and harvest rice. The harvest provides seed for the following

²⁷ A ceremony to make a merit for ancestors.

²⁸ 134.425 acre - Tad Seau Forest-23 rais, Don Swamp -35 rais, Nong Saeng Beung 264 rais, and Yao 18 rais.

season, and the excess is sold to provide resources for cultural activities. It seems that the villagers are willing to work together for the common good.

Politics

Nong Phue village is governed by the local government administration system. Clusters are the smallest units in the village for the purposes of local administration. Nong Phue's clums have been divided into clums for cultural activities since 1947 when the villagers first organized groups of households into five groups in order to delegate the duties of the host in the Bun Sungkatan ritual.

In accordance with the Sarakham Pattana Project in 1985, provincial government development policy directed villages in the province to separate themselves into clusters of clums as community administration units. One person was selected to be the leader of each clum. The Nong Phue village clums were already formed, originating from the foundations of '*Bun Sungkatan*', and these clums then became formalized clusters.

In 1993, as a result of household expansion and population increases, the village was divided into two: Nong Phue Moo 1 and Nong Phue Moo 10. Government Local Administration policy was also attempting to create more efficiency in village development. Before the division, the villagers had a meeting and discussed the reasons for dividing. They made an agreement that even when the village was divided into two, they would still organize and work together as before. Clums were separated very carefully for fear that the process would break the relationship and cohesion of the people, but eventually, it was done by the elders and the abbot (for whom the villagers have the highest respect) after 3 years of consideration. "We took a long time to divide into clums because we were afraid that it would affect people's sentiments and make us lose our unity. So I got our elders and the abbot to help us and to make the lists of people in each 'clum' (Rungsun Dejpgolmat, personal communication, August 2, 2003). This shows that the villagers are very sensitive about community and deeply concerned about their cohesion.

It can be said that the clums were intended for government administration purposes, but the clums in Nong Phue village continued to function as before, acknowledging the social sphere rather than the political sphere. Clums in this context are different from the political intentions, which were to separate areas and populations. Indeed, the Nong Phue village clum is based on cultural and social obligation. The criteria for a clum leader is a person who practices virtue and is keen on religious ceremony, rather than one who is trained to be a development change agent and responsible to the government's representative. Clum therefore can be counted as a form of basic civil society in this village.

Conclusion

Nong Phue village is often seen as a rich community in terms of its physical and cultural capital. The physical capital includes an abundance of water resources and farmland, which are important resources for the villagers to carry out productive agriculture. The other physical capital is the community - based organizations (CBOs) in this village, which are successful and sustainable. They have responded to villagers' needs and contributed to developing the village economy. In terms of cultural capital, the villages' belief in Buddhist principles influences their moral behaviour. The rituals are the main sources of generating villagers' cohesion and norms of reciprocity. My argument is that these physical and cultural capitals generate civil society in this village. I will discuss this in Chapters Nine and Ten.

CHAPTER 9

EXPERIENCINES OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR) IN THE CASE STUDIES

This chapter will present the development of civil society in a rural community in Thailand as seen through engagement in participatory action research. I focus on the question of how a community becomes involved in civic activities and how this involvement helps in the formation of civil society. I will outline the actual participatory action concerning common problems, which facilitated the engagement of villagers in collective action and the establishment of a collective sense of responsibility for sustaining the community's well-being.

The chapter elaborates on the process of the participatory action research between the researcher, the participants and the NGO workers.

Selecting the Area for Study

The process of selecting the area for study started from surveying the communities in the Chi River in the six provinces, along with interviewing Government and Non Government Organizations officers and the community leaders about the community data. I also studied secondary data from many other research projects. I attended a number of seminars concerning the Chi River as well as different aspects including those on the Historical, Economic and the Changing of the Chi River Communities. These activities led to the choice of two communities for my research project. The first was Wungwern village in the Sri Bun Rueng Sub-District in Chonnabot District, Khon-kaen Province. The second village was Nong Phue village in the Nong Bua Sub-District in Kosumpisai District, Maha Sarakham Province. (See more detail in Chapter Five).

Experiences of Participatory Action Research (PAR) in Wungwern Village

Establishing Rapport

I started working in Wungwern village in March 2003 by contacting the villagers and establishing relationships with them. I participated in a number of community meetings where I introduced myself and became known to the villagers. I built rapport with the villagers by associating with all formal and informal groups, such as the leader's group, and the male and female groups and I attended different occasions, including ritual ceremonies and village development events.

There is usually an informal group whose members are from the women in this village. This group established relationships through their similar interests in silk weaving. They supported each other by exchanging their weaving skills and sharing materials for silk weaving. Some of them received silk orders from outside and then hired the members to weave the orders. In this situation, the 'owner' of the orders was the leader of the group.

The other method I used to develop relationships was to visit villagers at their homes and rice farms. I walked from home to home around the village and talked to them about various aspects of their way of life, their general activities, their crop production, and their work situation. Sometimes I ate meals with them and stayed overnight at the village. This gave me the opportunity to observe the everyday conditions of the families.

Introducing Participatory Action Research (PAR) to the Villagers and Building Partnerships

While I participated in social activities in the village, I took many opportunities to speak with villagers about my objectives. I also discussed the PAR process so that they could understand the research process. I told villagers that my role was to assist them and 'work with' them to find solutions, rather than 'work for' them. I clarified my expectations of them and what they might expect of me. It took long discussions before villagers

understood the characteristics of PAR. This was because the villagers had been used to 'traditional' research, in which outsiders did every 'expert' phase of a research project by themselves.

In this phase I found that it was important that the villagers understand the researcher's role and the PAR process, since villagers are expected to be involved in the PAR process from the beginning until the end. This understanding helps the villagers to commit themselves to the research process.

At the beginning of the research project there were only four people in the village involved in the research process: the Chairman of the Sub-district Administrative Organization, a local school teacher, and the village head and his assistant, who worked as a 'vanguard group'. They helped to explain the purposes of the research to the villagers. The village head felt that it was his responsibility to participate in any issues and any organization coming to the village. Other villagers thought that the village head was their representative to do everything on their behalf, so they were happy to follow his lead. After the stage of data validation and data analysis, the villagers' comprehension became clearer. There were about twenty villagers who were enthusiastic about participating in the research process and who worked along with me. The other villagers were only involved in some activities because they were engaged in their day to day work.

The outsiders, who had participated in some research phases, were school teachers and Non- Government Organization (NGO) workers. The three teachers from the local school, who joined in the village meetings, wanted to learn about the research process to engage in working with the villagers and helping them to improve their conditions. These were also responsibilities of teachers in a local school. The other outsiders were two NGO workers who worked for 'The Ecology of the Chi River' research project. They were interested in the participatory action research approach and wanted to focus on this area for their case study. Therefore, an informal research team of the villagers, the NGO workers, the teachers, and myself was started. The team organized meetings and initiated group

discussions with the other villagers on different aspects of the community and the villagers' life struggles.

Surveying Baseline Data

In mid March 2003, I investigated community data on the geography and history of the area. Information on the economic, social, cultural, and natural resources, and community problems and their challenges was collected. I interviewed the key people in the village who had been recommended by the leaders of the village, such as monks and men and women who were community leaders. I gathered information from discussions of community events in community meetings. The oldest man in Wungwern told me his life story which helped me learn important events in the history of the community. Through this process I developed an overall view of the village and the key issues.

Data Validation and Analysis

The villagers participated in a number of collective discussion sessions, which were held for data verification and analysis. The whole community was invited to the meetings. The draft of the data study was presented through diagrams, maps, and word cards showing community settlement and natural resources (illustrated in appendix, picture 3). The community's problems and the community's potential were written on cards. Each card showed one concept, for example, 'plentiful herbal trees in the Wungwern forest', or 'villagers skillfully weaving silk'. Then the villagers discussed the data to verify details, add more information and to clarify details. The villagers discussed their struggles and linked the problems with their effects on the community. In this phase, data were immediately verified and the villagers added more information. Some extra information was also learned from this process because the villagers had not thought of some matters before, for example, the migration problem. Some health problems were identified, such as the epidemics of leptospirosis and diarrhoea in the rainy season. These discussions and analysis sessions were carried out with the researcher and the local school teachers facilitating.

In terms of community potential, they identified natural resources, such as the Kong Wungwern Forest where there are many kinds of herbal trees as well as 'Ka trees' which could be used for weaving sticky rice containers. One key to community potential is their indigenous knowledge, for example, Chonnabot silk production is very famous in the Northeast of Thailand for its technique and its style. The villagers in Wungwern village are very skilled in this. Another community potential was the good relationships between the community, the temple, and the school. These helped to solve problems such as flooding - the villagers repaired the village road together when it was damaged by floods. Finally, a third strength was that the villagers work very collectively when they organize ritual ceremonies. They donate rice and money, and help each other to perform their rituals. The village has a long history of cultural heritage.

The villagers discussed how they could solve their problems and how to increase their livelihoods through their traditional careers, such as silk weaving and fishing. However, they were still concerned about the marketing of silk products. They eventually came to the conclusion that if they wanted to increase their income, it would be better to reduce their expenditure. As for natural resources, they wanted to get benefits from the community forest to earn more income, such as by weaving sticky rice containers from Ka leaves and processing herbal products as commodities. Moreover, they wanted to achieve closer liaison with the school, teachers, and the community to support them in their development activities.

After this meeting we had a number of discussion sessions about village conditions and problems. The approach helped the villagers to clarify the problems, the effects of the problems on the community, and the solutions formerly sought. The villagers raised a number of continued key problems which needed alternative solutions.

In this phase I found that it was useful to delineate the community data, problems, and its potential on a chart or diagram. It was easier for participants to think through and discuss what had happened in the past, what the community's problems were, and to identify community potential. I used cards as a flexible system so participants could brainstorm,

modify, and verify information. These visual tools helped participants to make cross-sectoral linkages in their analysis. In addition, the data validation and analysis raised the villagers' collective awareness and analytical understanding of their issues. These activities also influenced the subsequent collective action.

In the next section, I will delineate the PAR process and the approach that was worked out for different issues. Several major themes had developed from analyzing the data including the flooding problem, the exploitation of Kong Wungwern Forest, the conflict over Nong Kongkaew land utilization, the reduction of fish species, the drought problem, and health problems including epidemics of leptospirosis and diarrhoea in the rainy season. In each section I explain the process we worked through.

The Flood Problem

Phase 1: Discussing the Problem

On March 20, 2003, I attended a meeting with the community leaders. There were 13 participants and 2 NGO workers from the research project 'The Ecology of the Chi River'. We talked about the problems with flooding. Thirty years ago, Wungwern and nearby villages such as Kud Lum, Don Du, Nong Wai, and Ta Koi were continually facing floods, during the September- October rainy season, as a result of the overflow of the Chi River. Floods caused damage to paddy fields and impeded transportation. However, the floods took only 2-3 days to drain away, and when water filled the marshes and the reservoir, it would flow back to the Chi River.

In 1982 the Thai government's Irrigation Department constructed the dyke which surrounds Nong Kongkaew Reservoir to store water in the rainy season, with the intention of 1) preventing the flooding and 2) supplying water to the town of Chonnabot. Since then there have been heavier floods than before. In the villagers' opinions, the heavy floods had been caused by the construction of the dyke surrounding the Nong Kongkaew Reservoir (See figure 7.1 on page 119).

Phase 2: Analysis and Discussion of the Causes of the Problem and a Survey of the Geography

A number of discussions about the flood problems were organized in April, 2003. The leaders of the village, with the support of the NGO workers, designed a survey to determine what they considered to be the cause of problem. The team organized a group of eight people to survey the Nong Kongkaew Reservoir, the dyke, and the gateway. After the survey, we had a group discussion and drew a geographical map to visualize and analyze the cause of the floods (illustrated in appendix, picture 4). The villagers found that the Nong Kongkaew dyke blocked the waterway. The waterway used to flow from the west of Munjakiri district past Nong Kongkaew, to the northeast to Kudlava and Kang Lava swamps before reaching the Chi River. The Kanglava swamp is next to the Nong Kongkaew Reservoir and it is the last gateway to the Chi River (See figure 7.1 on page 119). In the rainy season when the Chi River overflowed and flooded rice fields, it merged with water from Nong Kongkaew Reservoir. This caused major floods in the villages around the Nong Kongkaew Reservoir and took a much longer time, about 2-3 months, to drain compared with the pre – dyke situation.

Villagers from the other provinces along the Chi River who had also faced flooding were invited by the NGO workers to participate in the meetings. For example, there were people from Lahanna Sub-district in the Khon Kaen province and the Phanomprai district in the Roi-Et province in attendance. They discussed the circumstances of flooding in their communities. The villagers realized that flood problems did not only occur in their village, but also took place in the other villages along the Chi River. They also found that the heavy floods resulted from the construction of the Kong-Chi-Mun Water Irrigation Project¹ (World Wildlife Fund International, 2005) which comprised 14 dams on the Chi and the Moon Rivers. As a result of these discussions, the villagers explained what they had done in the past to attempt to solve the problem. At first, they solved this problem by using

¹ The Kong - Chi – Mun project aimed to draw and irrigate water from the River Mekong, conveying it about 200 kilometers southwards to the Chi and Mun river basins and raising agricultural production on at least 320,000 ha. The Kong-Chi-Mun faced local opposition because of its social and environmental impacts, especially increased soil salination. After its construction, most communities along the Chi River were faced with heavy floods.

sandbags and building a wooden barrier on the Chi River bank to prevent the overflow of the River. They made a soil dyke along the Chi River near the village to prevent water from the Chi River inundating the community. They also temporarily moved some family members and their cattle to higher land in the Chonnabot District. In another effort to solve the flood problem by themselves, some villagers had filled the area near their homes with soil about 1-1.5 meters deep to avoid the flood since 1996. With each flood there was some remedial assistance from Government and NGOs to relieve them from the effects of the floods, such as donations of food, rice, clothes, chickens for raising, and vegetable seeds for planting.

However, the villagers were very troubled and could not tolerate the flooding any more when it was at its highest level, and took a very long time to drain. In 1996, twelve people grouped together to destroy the Kanglava dyke which stopped the water flowing into the Chi River. The group was reinforced by people from Wungwern and other nearby villages who had also encountered flooding. Although it was illegal to destroy state property, they still took this risk to deal with the annual problem. One of the villagers in the Wungwern village told me that:

We selected 12 strong men who could swim very well. Then we paddled in a turbulent flow in the night to the Kanglava dyke. We dug at it by hand. The dyke was cut out about 3 meters high, 5 meters long and 3 meters wide. We started at about 7 pm. and finished at 6 am. the next morning. The other villagers who did not come with us told us, that if we were caught and sent to jail because of the destruction of this barrier, they would go to jail instead of us because they had had a lot of trouble from the flooding for a long time (Sawat Tuha, personal communication, August, 18 2003).

This cut diminished the damage from flood waters, but did not stop the flooding. The villagers have still been confronted with heavy floods nearly every year since 1982. After the geographical survey of Nong Kongkaew, the villagers wanted to find some answers. Therefore, after the discussions, the villagers wanted to open a public dialogue and

consultation with government officers to find a solution. The villagers organized this activity with the researcher and the outside team's support.

In this phase, the geographical map was an important visualization tool, helping the villagers to understand the cause of problem. The geographical map helped the villagers to clarify the problems and especially the effects of the flood. Sharing experience with other people who were struggling with similar problems was also an effective method of raising villagers' confidence to solve the problem. As Freire (1972) claimed, the process of making enquiry about the causes of the oppression can help to develop the oppressed peoples' confidence.

Phase 3: Action for Finding Solutions

On April 30, 2003, a public consultation² entitled 'The Discussion on the Flood Problem and its Prevention' was held at the Wungwern Temple. The agenda was sent to the leaders of the other nearby villages who had also encountered flooding. There were 150 participants from eight villages in the Sri Bun Rueng Sub-district: fifteen community leaders from the Sri Bun Rueng Sub-District, fifty secondary school students, who were aged from eight to fourteen, eight teachers from the Wungwern Kudlum School and seventy-seven villagers from the Wungwern village. The leaders of the village and the NGO workers from the NGO project of 'The Ecology of the Chi River' sent a formal invitation letter to government officers who were responsible for natural resource issues. These officers were Burin Tunphaiboonkul, Director of Regional Water Resources 4; Chairat Hinthong, the Head of Natural Resources and the Environment at the Provincial level, Wasan Phomdesan, the Head of Irrigation and Conservation regional 4; and Kongphange Liemchaiyaphoom, the caretaker of the Nong Khongkhaew Reservoir. The NGO workers and I were facilitators, helping participants share their opinions on the stage.

² Consultation is to encourage public participation and input into decision-making.

Sawat Tuha, who was a resident of Wungwern village and the Chairman of the Sribunreung Sub-district Administrative Council, explained the flooding problems and the effects on the villagers' way of life (illustrated in appendix, picture 5). Then the consultation was opened to all opinions. The villagers proposed two alternative solutions to the government officials: 1) to cut a part of the dyke of Nong Kongkaew in order to let the water come out in the rainy season and to build a bridge instead. 2) to build a soil barrier along the Chi River bank around the village. The villagers also proposed a solution to the drought in the dry season. They wanted to build up a rock dyke in the Chi River to the north part of the village to make it higher than before, so that it could retain water in the dry season.

After hearing these ideas of possible solutions, the government officers suggested that the project alternatives be sent to the government through the Sub-District Administrative Organization (SAO) which is a part of the local government system. The government responded to the public consultation by providing a fund for constructing a soil dyke around the village to prevent the overflow from the Chi River. The other project was to clear weeds from the Nong Kongkaew Reservoir so that the water could flow more easily to the gateway. In addition, the Sribunreung SAO provided for a flood prevention project in their organization's fiscal year budget. After I finished my research project, the villagers still continued to work on their solution, one of which was repairing the rocky dyke with the cooperation of the Chi River Conservation Network, the Sri Bun Rueng Sub-District and the teachers and students from Kudlum Wungwern School. I will discuss this in more detail in the following phase and in Chapter 10.

The government officers also advised the communities to set up a specific committee for flood issues in each village, and at the sub-district level, to work together with the other communities along the Chi River.

The villagers had attempted to lobby the government in the past about this, but they did not get any response. So their hopes of some response were high when this seminar took place. One of the elders said, "I was very glad to have people from outside, especially government officers come and see our problem. In the past, no official organizations came to this

village. I think the problem might be half solved ”(Sun Chonraphai, personal communication, April 30, 2003).

My observation of this public consultation was that flooding was the main problem for the people in eight of the twelve villages in Sribunrueng Sub-District. But only the Wungwern village faced a serious problem because it caused damage both to paddy fields and to their residences, while the other villages had to deal with flooding only in the rice fields. For this reason Wungwern villagers participated strongly in the public consultation. When they heard the announcement of the meeting from the Village Head through the public address system, they were willing to help in organizing the meeting, for example, setting up the tents, donating rice, food, and money: 20 – 100 baht per family for lunch in the meeting. Both males and females enthusiastically joined in the discussion.

This evidence demonstrates that when people suffer from a problem for a long time, it can often stimulate them to act collectively. In this case, the struggle against the flooding is a factor which forced villagers to get together and solve their problems. It generates a social movement, which is a form of civil society. I will discuss this further in Chapter 10.

Phase 4: Further Planning in Problem Solving

In response to the government advice, on June 23, 2003, there was a meeting to draft the flood prevention project. I was a facilitator for the discussion. The villagers discussed the flooding problem and their effects in more detail. They decided to draft a project proposal for building a soil dyke barrier around the village near the Chi River bank and to prevent the inundation. The headmaster offered to help draft the proposal, along with community leaders. Then the project proposal would be submitted to the Sub-district Administrative Organization for financial support. They also planned for representatives from Wungwern village to meet the leaders from the seven communities in Sri-Bun Rueng Sub-district, where they faced similar problems. They anticipated that the result of the meetings would create cooperation and networking among the communities. Then they would have more

power for bargaining with the government to solve the problem. The leaders from Wungwern village organized the meetings in cooperation with the seven villages.

Phase 5: Creating Networkings to Meet their Solutions

Meetings were organized in Tamuang, Nongwai, Lava, Takoi, and Kudlum villages in the Sri Bun Rueng Sub-District from October 20-22, 2003. These villages surround the Nong Kongkaew reservoir and have been affected by floods in the rainy season. The first meeting was held at the Tamuang temple on October 20, the second was at the Lava and the Takoi villages on October 21. The third meeting was on October 22 at the Kudlum village. The communities' leaders (around 15-30 people), the four representatives from the Wungwern village, the NGO workers and I participated in each meeting. We started by introducing ourselves to the other participants and I told them about the objectives of the research project.

The participants drew a geographical map of the Nong Kongkaew Reservoir, and communities located around Nong Kongkaew, as well as the flood flow of the Chi River. Participants analyzed the causes of the flooding and the effects on their communities. They reflected that in the past when it had rained in the rainy season, water flowed from the Chi River at Munjakiri Sub-district through Nongwai, the Wungwern village, and the Kanglewa swamp, then flowed north at Lava village and rejoined with the Chi River. When the dyke was constructed around the Nong Kongkaew Reservoir, the change in direction of the water flow meant it could not flow easily.

The dyke was constructed to reserve water for the town of Chonnabot. But in the last ten years, water had been drawn from the Chi River instead. In fact, this reservoir was seldom utilized, with only 10 percent of people who lived nearby using it for fishing. On the other hand, it caused trouble for the villagers. One of villagers who lived near the reservoir said, "Nong Kongkaew caused more problems than solutions. Even Chonnabot residents were affected by the flooding" and "In the rainy season, water came out from Nong Kongkaew and flowed over our houses" (Lee Boonjan, personal communication, October 20, 2003).

When I asked what the villagers had done to cope with this problem since 1982, they said they had taken this problem to the government officers and the Member of the House of Representatives, but they did not get any feedback. Social welfare organizations such as the *Supanimit* and *Rajaprajanugroh* Foundations had donated clothes, food, rice, chickens for raising, and vegetable seeds for planting. The SAO of the Sri Bun Reung District also allocated a budget for road repair after the floods and for motor boat petrol to transport people into Chonnabot. A new budget was allocated every year and the villagers argued that since the flooding had occurred for many years, the road repair budget would have exceeded the cost of constructing a bridge to solve the problem.

The dyke construction is one example of government development projects designed by outside development professionals without local involvement. This top down management structure of the development project caused a number of problems for local people. It was an important factor in generating a form of civic action in this community. As discussed in Chapter Three, most grassroots civic movements in Thailand have developed in response to top down government development projects.

Alternative solutions for the whole sub-district were thoroughly considered at the meetings. Participants recommended building a bridge by cutting a break in one part of the dyke. They thought that if they cut the dyke and let the water flow as it used to in the past, it would solve the flooding problem. However, cutting the dyke may have solved the problem in one village, but would affect other villages. Therefore they had to carefully consider the entire area and environment.

There was progress in the problem solving, and in October, 2003 the SAO provided 110,000 baht³ to construct a soil dyke around Wungwern village to protect it from overflow from the Chi River. However, the dyke was too small: it was only 450 meters long, 6 meters wide and 4 meters high. Flooding occurred again in the rainy season.

³ 2,820.51 \$US

For further activities, they suggested that the leaders in each village should set up public consultation meetings in their communities, and list the names of all the people facing the flooding problems. Data collection was needed to confirm the nature of the problem, such as the effects on households and communities from the floods in the past and present. Therefore, we established teams to draft a questionnaire and collect data. At this stage, we moved backwards to the data collecting stage to get more information. As the action research process is a dynamic process, it can lead to new cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Hart & Bond, 1995).

I found that the leaders from each village were very enthusiastic. They were all faced with similar problems and they were willing to cooperate to solve them. One of the leaders said, "It will not take long to get a list of villagers because they have been very troubled by floods for many years. This is a very good meeting because we have had a chance to discuss the issue and to try to find our own solution" (Sawat Tuha, personal communication, April 30, 2003).

The representatives of the villages became involved in community networks with others who faced the flooding along the Chi River, with facilitation by NGO workers and the researcher. They joined the group seeking flood solutions at the regional level. The research activity fostered the community in this civil society process. When I stopped doing my fieldwork, the activities were still going on. The flood problem remained the villagers' problem. The villagers and NGO workers were collecting data from households in their village and the nearby villages on the impacts of the flooding. In addition, they planned tasks to gain more information on the broader context of the communities in the Chi River. Networks of people who faced the flooding were being created with the NGO workers' support. This activity would link the villagers with other people who encountered the same problem, and offer emotional and community support. They hoped to use the data to support their project proposal to the government.

This process describes a civic movement of villagers who were facing the flooding and trying to resolve the problem together. They set up a network with people who had the same problem to increase their bargaining power.

Deforestation

Phase 1: Discussing the Problem

The issue of deforestation was raised in a meeting with the villagers in Wungwern in April 2003. The villagers remembered that the Wungwern Forest had been very fertile in the past. There used to be a wide range of plants and wildlife but the biodiversity had decreased. The villagers considered that the exploitation was from three main causes: the first was villagers cutting trees for firewood and use when hunting animals in the forest; the second was the exploitation from merchants' saw milling businesses in the Ban Phai District in 1956; the third was the cutting of herbal trees for traditional medical practitioners from the Khon-kaen province, which had begun in 1977. The medical practitioners had hired local people to cut the stems and roots of the herbal trees to use as components in traditional medicine.

Phase 2: Surveying the Diversity of the Forest

The villagers wanted to survey Kong Wungwern Forest in order to find out the range and diversity of the trees in the forest and which trees could be used to make traditional medicine.

On April 5, 2003, we grouped together twelve villagers from Wungwern: community leaders and two traditional medical practitioners who had knowledge of medicinal plants, as well as volunteers from the village and NGO workers. I also invited four botanists from the Botanical Research Institute at Maharakham University to join us to give villagers some wider knowledge of the plants, such as their scientific names and their uses.

The transect walks was a technique used to survey the Kong Wungwern Forest (illustrated in appendix, picture 6). We divided into two teams for surveying the forest. Each team was composed of one traditional medical practitioner, two staff members of the Botanical Research Institute, and a group of villagers. We took one hour to walk through a cross-section to the end of the forest. The aim was to appraise natural resources in terms of their potential. We collected samples of seeds, leaves, barks, and flowers from the forest. At the same time we took photos of them to identify their volume, density and location. While walking, we had discussions and exchanged knowledge between the outsiders' team and the villagers, identifying the names of the plants and making comparisons between the local name, the scientific name and their uses. Then the two teams met at the *Pu-ta* cottage, which is in the middle of the forest.

We discussed all the collected samples of seeds, leaves, barks and flowers, in particular their names, and drew up a list of their uses. Forest density was also raised in the discussion. Roughly, there were 130 diverse tree, plant and flower species. The botanists helped to list their names and their uses from the information gained in the discussion. This report would be useful for the community to transfer this indigenous knowledge to their children in order to encourage them to realize the value of the forest. They made plans to take local school students to survey the forest after the report was finished.

The villagers found that the numbers of the most valuable trees were reduced when compared with the past. This realization led to plans for forest conservation. They had opinions about the transect walk survey, "It was very useful. We learnt about many kinds of trees and how they can be used as medicine and food. We can learn from each other as well as from the botanists from outside" (Kien Triwit, personal communication, April 5, 2003).

The villagers emphasized the role of the forest as a "supermarket" which supplied food and was the main alternative income source for the poor, who could collect vegetable, insects, and herbal plants for medical care. The villagers were proud of their resources. They realized that they should conserve this forest as a heritage site for their children.

In this phase the transect walk method helped the participants to appraise the reality of natural resources through their knowledge and experiences. This process of participatory appraisal created participants' awareness of the forest value. It led to an impressive level of involvement in collective action to protect the forest. I will discuss this in the following phases.

Phase 3: Conserving and Setting up Regulations for the Community Forest

After the survey, the community leaders drafted an outline of regulations for forest use, and they asked for the villagers' opinions and feedback. On April 30, 2003, the villagers proclaimed this forest as a Community Forest, set up a forest boundary, and put in place regulations to conserve and protect the forest from exploitation. The regulations were as follows:

- Yang wood cannot be cut. Anyone who breaks the regulation will be arrested and fined by the police;
- Big trees can not be cut;
- Villagers are allowed to use only dry wood for firewood;
- Villagers are allowed to use herbal trees only for their own family but not for sale;
- Whoever breaks any regulations will be fined 500 baht per time.

A tree ordination ritual or 'Buaed Pa' to conserve the forest was also carried out on April 30, 2003. The ceremony was held in the forest and the monks were invited to pray in the ritual ceremony, which transforms trees from the ordinary to the sacred. Then villagers of all ages helped to wrap the largest trees in the forest with yellow robes to mark their sacredness and this signified that they were part of the territory of the temple (illustrated in appendix, picture 7). This would discourage people from cutting the trees down. As a result, the forest would not be exploited. By doing this, the villagers applied local cultural and religious concepts to protect and conserve their forest. They also wrote the regulations on a large board and set it up at the entrance path into the forest.

Phase 4: Revising the Forest Regulations and Setting up Community Forest Committee

On June 23, 2003, another meeting was held at the village meeting hall. Twenty villagers attended. There were two main issues: the establishment of a Community Forest Committee and a revision of the regulations.

Firstly, the villagers established a Community Forest Committee which comprised twenty representatives of the village leadership, such as traditional community leaders, women leaders, and school teachers. The Community Forest role was discussed and it was decided that this committee would help to preserve and protect the forest and enforce the community forest regulations. The committee was divided into seven groups to take turns at being responsible for investigating the condition of the forest each day.

Secondly, the villagers revised the community forest regulations. Originally, they had not allowed any wild food to be collected from the forest, such as bamboo shoots, wild chickens, squirrels, and mushrooms, etc. The committee spent a long time discussing this issue. Finally they decided to allow all villagers to collect wild food for family consumption. In addition, there was a poor villager who had moved into the forest and cleared about three rais⁴ of the forest to grow vegetables and build a cottage. The opinions in the meeting were divided. One side wanted him to move out of the forest as soon as possible and the other side sympathized with him. Finally, the intruder was treated with leniency and was allowed to stay until he collected all the vegetables in that season. He would then have to move out.

Even though the villagers showed a lot of enthusiasm for protecting their forest, there was still one of the committee asking about a wage for his duty. This showed that there were problems making all the villagers aware of their responsibilities in taking care of their own resources.

⁴ 1.86 acres

Phase 5: Evaluation

A meeting took place in October to evaluate the activities which the villagers had undertaken together to solve the deforestation issue. The villagers reflected that:

We observe that our forest is denser than before. There is evidence that nobody invades our forest anymore. Nobody breaks our common rules that we drew up together.

The ceremony of 'Buad Pa' made us have more concern and consciousness about conserving our forest. (Prasit Chonlaphai, personal communication, October 2, 2003).

The activities of surveying the forest and holding the tree ordination ceremony together made local people more concerned about their environment. The concept of conservation was applied and practiced through designing communal regulations, together with indigenous cultural practices.

School Curriculum

The issue of education came up unexpectedly while I was conducting my action research in the community. On June 23, 2003, I was invited by the headmaster of Wungwern Kudlum School to participate in a meeting with some of the school teachers. I had a meeting with thirteen teachers at the school. The agenda of the meeting was related to the school curricula. According to the National Education Act passed in August 1999 and endorsed in the New Education Reform in Thailand, schools now had decentralized administration. The notion of decentralization is that school management is formed by local communities and teachers in terms of curricula and teaching methods. The reform required new approaches to learning, such as student-centered learning initiated by schools themselves. This could be seen in the Act:

Section 27: Basic education institutions shall be responsible for prescribing curricula content related to needs of the community and society, local wisdom, and the attributes of desirable members of the family, community, society, and nation.

Section 57: Educational agencies shall mobilize human resources in the community to participate in education provision by contributing their experience, knowledge, expertise, and local wisdom for educational benefits. Contributions from those who promote and support educational provision, shall be duly recognized (National Education Act 1999, cited in Srinoi, 1999).

After the Act was passed, the school was forced to implement the new approaches, but they did not have sufficient knowledge or skills to accomplish this. The school had major constraints in designing and delivering the decentralized policy. In particular, they lacked the knowledge and skills for the new learning strategies.

Phase 1: Discussing the Problem and Planning Action

The teachers planned to research many aspects of the community in order to understand the community situation and to search for local knowledge in the expectation of adapting this content into the school curricula. I discussed participatory research techniques that could be used in collecting data. The teachers were very interested and wanted to learn the techniques so that they could apply them to their work. I therefore offered to be a trainer.

The training workshop was organized among three partners: a team of teachers, students, and community leaders. The teachers selected villagers from both Wungwern and Kudlum villages school board committee members⁵, whose leaders could be trainers in the future. The headmaster organized a meeting with the three partners and discussed the process of community data collection with them.

⁵ This committee was selected from the villagers to give the school consultancy status in the administration and supported activities which the project asking from the school.

Phase 2: Collecting Community Data

On July 19, 2003, a subsequent workshop on participatory data collection was organised at the Wungwern-Kudlum school. Participants comprised ten teachers, eight villagers, and forty one secondary school students: fifteen students from the Wungwern village and twenty six students from the Kudlum village. The activity was divided into two parts. The first part was about community data and how it would be collected. The second part was the actual surveying and collecting of community data.

I told them that community data is useless unless the people involved make use of it. Thus data should be related to the community's way of life and its surroundings, and should be collected by the actual people who want to use the data. The difference between insiders and outsiders is that the insiders have better knowledge than the outsiders, therefore community data should be collected by the owners of the data, or at least they should be partners in this process. In this case there were three partners: teachers, students, and villagers, who could all count as members of the local community. We discussed what community data should be composed of. Then the team agreed to collect community data on many aspects of village life: economic, income, debt, education, health, culture, environment, and infrastructures: road and water resources, etc.

The teachers wanted to start by studying the community setting, so I suggested social mapping as a method. The team was divided into two groups and each group comprised of five teachers, four villagers and the students from their own village; that is fifteen students from the Wungwern village, and twenty six students from the Kudlum Village. Students from each village researched their own communities by doing social maps and family studies in the Kudlum and the Wungwern villages.

The students were given paper and pencils to draw a map of their community and mark the habitation patterns, the nature of housing, the natural resources, and the social infrastructure: roads, the school, the temple, paddy fields and drinking water facilities, as

well as other areas local people believe to be relevant and important for them (illustrated in appendix, picture 8).

The other task for the students was to conduct interviews about family status and situations. Each student was given structured interview questions for interviewing their own family members regarding names, ages, education attainment levels and status, for example migration, and marital statistics, etc. They also interviewed their parents about the family's incomes, and sources of income: labor, rice production, weaving (including the expenses), debt, household facilities: electric appliances, motorcycles, tractors, and property: land holdings, pigs, chicken, buffaloes, and cows etc. Then all the data were collected together as household and community data.

I found that participants were very enthusiastic about doing this activity. They had a lot of fun working together in tri-parties. Here are some opinions about this activity:

It was very useful for me, I could learn about my community and I had a lot of fun working with my friends (Ladda Tongasri, personal communication, July 19, 2003).

I found that this was a very good activity, and our school got some interesting community data. The benefit is that the school can use the data to approach students who have family problems. Moreover, our school will have a closer relationship with the communities (Veeraphan Natrichon, personal communication, July 19, 2003).

I liked this activity, it will help our children to understand our families' status. They learn how much money is needed and how difficult it is to make a living as well as to cover the families' expenses. Then they will be careful with their own money (Odd Cholaphai, personal communication, July 19, 2003).

We discussed the results of the research data gathering (illustrated in appendix, picture 9).

The social maps by the students were put together to draw the social map of both communities, Wungwern and Kudlum, on a larger backboard. This map was then used as a teaching tool to help the students explain and analyze their own communities. By September 2003, there was some progress towards a school curriculum that fulfilled the new government policy requirement that local knowledge be placed in the school curriculum.

There were more discussions on the details of the curriculum. In our opinion, the integrated local curriculum needed to have more information on all aspects of the community. So a further wide-ranging project was planned, using participatory research methodology.

Phase 3: Planning a Further Project

After finishing the pilot project, the teachers' intention was to collect more village data, so the teachers organized a meeting to plan a further stage. At this meeting a large scale project was planned. It was decided that the new study would be extended to cover all aspects of the community, such as the history of the community, the geography, the economy, the culture, and the natural resources: the Chi River, the species of fish in the Chi River, and the diversity of trees in the Kong Wungwern Forest. There were three partners in the core research team: students, five villagers from Wungwern and Kudlum villages, and five teachers. They drafted a project which they called 'The Study of Community Local Knowledge for Designing the Basic Education Curriculum using a Participatory Action Process' to ask for support from the Community Based Research Fund. This project was approved and was carried out between May 2004 - April 2005.

This activity in taking the initiative, planning and collecting community data for the school curriculum, was a new experience for teachers, students, and villagers. It was obvious that participants could learn about and understand the physical and social aspects of their village life from their activity. The household demographic and economic status data could be used as basic information and could be updated for the school, and also for the community to use for development planning in the future. No organizations had surveyed family households

before, not even those from the government sector. The other benefit from this process was that teachers could experience a process based on people centered learning, which they could apply to the new strategies of student-centered learning. For the students, this was a different way of learning but it was useful for building their confidence and their awareness of their community's situation.

Other Problems

There were some other problems which arose from our discussions while I was doing research in Wungwern village. These included conflict over land use, the reduction of fish species in the Chi River, and water contamination.

Conflict Over Land Use

The conflict has frequently occurred between vegetable growers and cattle raising owners over Nong Kongkaew Reservoir land utilization. In the early summer, from January to April, when the water in Nong Kongkaew subsides, a lot of farmers from Tamuang, Nongwai, Tanangluean, Kudlum, Takoi and Wungwern villages exploit this public area. They invade the dry reservoir to perform agricultural activities, such as growing rice with irrigated water, growing vegetables, and tending cattle. Sometimes cattle graze the vegetable gardens and rice fields in the dry area of the Nong Kongkaew Reservoir. Such events have resulted in arguments between the vegetables farmers and the cattle owners. They feel forced to go to the police station many times to make reports. These circumstances have led to conflict among the residents nearby the Nong Kongkaew reservoir and still remain a problem.

The Reduction of Fish Species in the Chi River

Since the construction of the Nong Toa dyke in the Munjakiri District, which is about five kilometers from the Wungwern village, the villagers have found that the number of fish species in the Chi River has reduced. This is because the dyke has blocked the fish from

swimming down the river. In addition, sometimes the villagers who live upstream, have poured petrol into the river, killing the fish in order to increase their fish catch for consumption and sale. These events have caused a reduction in fish species and numbers.

After we had our discussions, the villagers decided to preserve an area called Pimpa Bank for a fish hatchery near the temple on the Chi River. In April 2003, the villagers released 50,000 fingerlings into the river from the Pimpa Bank with the support of the non-government officers from 'The Ecology of the Chi River' project. Then they proclaimed the area to be a fish preservation area. To foster fish preservation, villagers who come to create merit by offering meals to the monks every morning gave leftover food to the fish in the river. It is not clear whether fish stocks are increasing or not. However, the announcement of the preservation area was sent to the nearby villagers on both sides of the river.

Water Contamination

Nong Kongkaew Reservoir is a drainage site for water from Chonnabot. Since the silk factories were founded in 1973 in Chonnabot, they have released wastewater into the Huay Hang river, which runs into the Nong Kongkaew Reservoir. Chemicals from the silk dying process have contaminated this water, and moreover, these chemicals may be present in the fish and would affect those who consume the fish. As Chalieow Chaon, who lives near Nong Kongkaew Reservoir in Chonnabot district, said, "Officers from the Department of Health found that there were chemicals left in the fish from the Non Kongkaew Reservoir. These chemicals may cause cancer for consumers" (Chalieow Chaon, personal communication, August 20, 2003). Most of the villagers who live near Nong Kongkaew Reservoir believed the fish contain toxins, so they rarely fished or consumed fish or other aquatic animals from this reservoir.

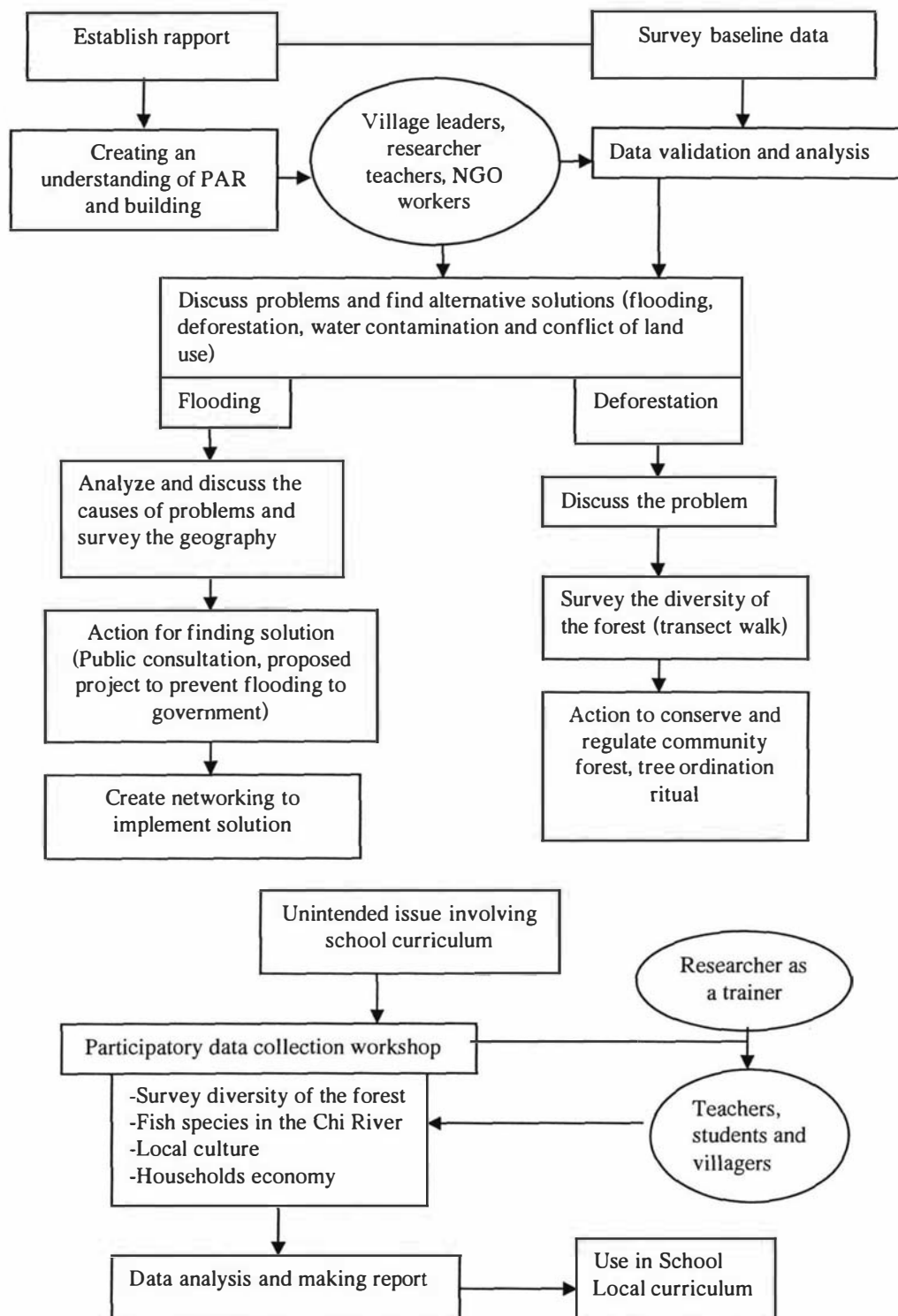
The villagers were not very much concerned about the three problems just discussed because they did not directly affect daily life, and they were not relevant to many people. The villagers felt that they could deal with these problems, but the flooding affected all of

the residents in this local area and caused a lot of damage to their rice fields. When we organized the public consultation to discuss possible solutions to the flooding problem with the government officers, a lot of villagers participated, since they have had to deal with the problem for many years.

Participatory Action Research in Wungwern Village

In this section I present the chart of the actual participatory action research process in the Wungwern village from the initial work until the end of the process. The chart shows the process of community action and the development of their own issues of flooding, deforestation, and school curriculum.

Chart 9.1 Participatory Action Research in Wungwern Village



Experiences of Participatory Research (PAR) in Nong Phue village

This section describes the participatory action research which was undertaken in Nong Phue village. The PAR process began with the researcher building a rapport with the communities, collecting data, followed by analysis and further action.

Collecting Community Data

My initial work in Nong Phue village involved researching community data to understand the community context and gain a general idea of the village. I interviewed the community leaders: two village heads, three elderly people (illustrated in appendix, picture 10), and two female leaders. The data included village settlement, natural resources, economy, Community-based organizations, education, and culture, along with information on political administration.

The information showed a major problem in the village with the overuse of chemicals in agriculture. About thirty percent of the households grew a wide variety of vegetables, and they were sending nearly a ton of produce per day to the Khon Kaen market for sale. To reach the demand, the villagers were applying chemical fertilizers and insecticides intensively to gain high yields in vegetable production. As a consequence, the villagers' health was effected: there were cases of blood poisoning and many other illnesses due to the chemicals. Even though this village was counted as one of the well developed villages in the Kosumphisai district by the government, this health issue was still a problem. It was a phenomenon that made me interested in working with this community.

Obtaining Permission

I formally made appointments with the heads of the two villages; Nong Phue Moo 1 and Nong Phue Moo 10, to notify them of my work and introduce myself. I talked with them about the process of participatory action research and asked for permission for work in the villages. At the same time, I was probing the feeling and the stance of the village heads and

some other villagers as to whether or not they were interested and could contribute to the project. I determined that they were interested in being involved in the research project.

Establishing Rapport

The preliminary activity with the villagers was establishing rapport. I spent a lot of time participating in cultural activities and working with the farmers in their gardens. I participated in the '*Bun Sungkatan*' ritual which occurs in the three months of the Buddhist Lent period. All the community members make an offering, such as food to monks at the temple to gain merit (See more detail in Chapter Eight). Through this ritual, I had the opportunity to meet most villagers. Gradually, I got to know the informal leaders in the community such as the abbot, the elders, and the leaders of the community-based organizations (CBOs). I developed a good relationship with the villagers in a short time. I had opportunities to talk with villagers about the history of the community, community problems and its potential. I also told them about my background and the research project as well as my expectations of them.

My participatory observations in the ritual helped me understand the villagers' beliefs and their religious practices. It was obvious that the villagers acted collectively in the ritual activities, and followed Buddhist principles. Many lay people were involved in the rituals in the period of Buddhist Lent and on the holy days to make merit. They stayed overnight at the temple and followed Buddhist practices.

I also investigated the community conditions and observed the working condition of the farmers in their rice farms and vegetable gardens. I talked with them about their production and their methods for growing crops. I noticed that farmers used chemicals intensively on their crops.

The collective involvement in rituals in Nong Phue village creates networks among the villagers which is a significant element of social capital. It fosters the villagers in organizing group solutions to their problems. I argue that this particular characteristic makes civil

society in the Thai rural community different from the western idea of civil society. I will discuss this in Chapter 10.

Analyzed Group Conditions and Expectations

I had a meeting with thirty five villagers at the village temple on July 31, 2003. There were representatives from community-based organizations (CBOs) in the village, such as people involved in the rice mill, cow rearing, mushroom planting, rubbish collecting, and vegetable growing. These representatives were from different age groups. The villagers brought CBOs to the discussion because CBOs were demonstrating the new model of people connecting through their work, in the development project. Most villagers were involved in more than one CBO in this community. This is the important factor to support civic engagement in the community. I will discuss this in Chapter 10.

We separated into each community-based organization and participants discussed group activities including group management, group problems, expectations and their future plans (illustrated in appendix, pictures 11 and 12). All groups suggested that they wanted to develop their own activities in order to increase investment and services for all members. They wanted to ensure the groups' sustainability.

Participants also discussed the village's strong points, including villagers' virtues, mutual assistance, and the solidarity among the villagers, as well as the ability and integrity of the village leaders. Moreover, they valued the way the diversity of the development activities of the CBOs had supported self-sufficient livelihoods and created a strong economy. They wanted the community to have a good environment, especially in terms of water and soil quality. They said that they would like people to have no debt, and to have good mental and physical health. The participants therefore selected health and environmental issues to discuss and analyze. They considered that the intensive chemical agriculture was a cause of the villagers' health problems (illustrated in appendix, pictures 13 and 14). Some villagers

were found to have high levels of toxins in the blood, resulting from the overuse of chemicals in vegetable growing.

In this phase, the issues coming up through the PAR process were not preset issues. The villagers selected the chemical over-use issue to work on and to find a solution for themselves. At a consequent meeting, the vegetable growers discussed this issue in more detail.

Participatory Analysis: Focusing On a Particular Issue: the Over-use of Chemical Materials

The second meeting was held on August 4, 2003. There were 16 participants, who were all the leaders of the CBOs, and the village head. We discussed how the over-use of chemicals in agriculture affected the environment, human beings, and animals in the area. In terms of the environmental problem, farmers applied intensive fertilizers and chemicals for controlling weeds to their paddy fields and vegetables gardens, and the chemicals remained on lands for a long time. When it rained, the contaminated water drained from the fields and gardens into natural swamps and the Chi River. One of the farmers stated that:

In the growing season, we applied chemicals to destroy snails in the rice farms. After a few days we pumped fresh water from a canal to dilute the chemical and drained contaminated water out of the fields into swamps. Thereafter, we found that aquatic animals: fish, crabs, shrimps and frogs were dead and became extinct (Amnieoysil Sirivi, personal communication, August 4, 2003).

Another problem was that farmers applied chemicals onto their farms without any protection and the chemicals therefore penetrated directly into their bodies. The farmers were not aware of the dangers of chemicals, although there were some farmers who were sick from chemicals they used. One of the gardeners said that:

Some of the farmers were found to have toxin levels over the safe amounts in their blood. Their symptoms were rashes, swelling, skin infections and irritated eyes. Some of them were dizzy, finding hard to breathe and vomiting (Songphon Suwunasom and Supoj Rungma, personal communication, August 4, 2003).

This was confirmed by statistics from the Sub-district Local Health Center in 2002. There were 200 farmers, from six villages in the Nong Bua district, who had high levels of toxins in their blood. Most of them were the farmers from Kok and Nong Phue villages. Five percent of the population, or about 50 farmers out of 1,077 people in Nong Phue village, showed symptoms of the chemical effects of exposure through their eyes and skin.

According to participants' opinions at the second meeting, they wanted to reduce chemical use and change to organic farming. However, they were hesitant to change because they were concerned about production and their income. The farmers had the following concern: would they produce less than before when they used bio materials instead of chemicals? What sources of bio materials should they use and how could the villagers produce bio materials by themselves? Are there organic markets? How many farmers wanted to participate in this project? To answer these questions, the villagers agreed that they needed to do some research.

Then participants made a list of 60 large scale farmers (growing more than five rais of vegetables) who might be interested in joining the 'Organic Agricultural Project'. They organized a meeting with these 60 farmers and the other farmers who were interested in participating in this project. As well as researching the two methods of production, the villagers also decided to survey local wisdom and traditional methods of organic farming for controlling pests and disease which they could apply to their agriculture production.

During this phase, the farmers improved their comprehension of the problem and realized that many cases of intensive chemical use had caused serious illness and damage to the environment.

Hesitation and Misunderstanding the Process

We organized a meeting on August 9, 2003 for further discussions on the farming. However, only a few people came to the meeting. The village leader told me that the farmers were hesitant about participating in this project, as they had realized that they had to completely change to organic agriculture, which they did not have any knowledge of.

At this stage, the farmers were not very enthusiastic about organic agriculture. I realized that I had to slow down my approach to working with them, so I moved back one step to learn more about the farmers' position towards this issue and the actual problem. Therefore, during August 2003 I regularly went to the village in order to develop the farmers' awareness. I joined cultural activities and exchanged ideas with them about the advantages and disadvantages of using chemicals on their crops.

This phase showed some constraints that may occur during the PAR process. The list of vegetable growers was set up without their understanding and without a participatory approach. They lacked understanding and awareness of the project and did not join in the following step. During the PAR process, it is possible that some tasks may be inappropriate in some ways, or some activities may block progress. The researcher and participants, therefore, have to revise the process. In this case, I met regularly with the villagers to review and to revise our research project. It also demonstrated that the villagers wanted to be clear about the issue at the beginning before making any decision to change their production methods. Villagers' decision making depended on empirical proof, particularly on how the change may affect their production and their income.

Study Trip on Organic Agriculture

The village leaders considered it important to give the villagers more knowledge about organic agriculture. Therefore, we coordinated with the Kosumpisai Branch of the Bank for

Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives¹ (BAAC), which promotes organic farming to its members. The BAAC sent seventeen villagers who were interested in organic agriculture to participate in an organic agriculture workshop at the Sima Asok² in Nakhon Ratchasima province. The villagers were trained in the organic methods and techniques practised on farms, such as composting and manuring, weeding, pest, and disease control products made from farm sourced materials. In addition, they also learnt about the guiding principles of sustainable agricultural systems. The participants gained greater comprehension about organic farming. Following the workshop, this group became the vanguard group in trying out the alternative of organic agriculture. They were also the core group to introduce organic farming ideas and teaching uses to the other farmers in Nong Phue village.

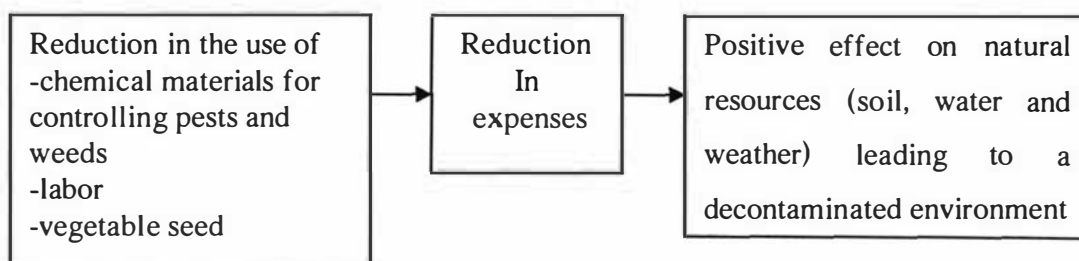
Analyzing Alternative Solutions

The meeting for presenting the results of the study trip was organized for August 28, 2003. The sixteen participants who had attended the workshop at Sima Asok discussed the knowledge and expertise they had gained from the workshop. The villagers had learned of the principle of self-sufficiency and self development, through which they adopted a lifestyle of moderation. For example, a moderate way of life would lead to a state of inner balance and a reduction of expenses by producing food for consumption. The outcome of the discussion was that the participants agreed to try growing organic produce. The scope of the discussion was broadened to include activity which aimed to reduce the expenses of agricultural inputs such as fertilizer, labor, and seeds. Subsequently, the reduction of these expenses would lessen the damage to natural resources as the following diagram illustrates:

¹ BAAC business mainly gives credit to farmers for investment in agricultural occupations with the aim of generating income and improving their well-beings.

² Sima Asok , is a group of Buddhist practitioners who follow the orthodox path of the Buddha's teaching by living together in ideological communities with the purpose of the betterment of their way of life (Apinya, 1993, p. 77). Their purpose includes the nine following qualities: 1) Subhara - Leading a very simple life. 2) Suposa - Being easily cultivated. 3) Appiccha - Being satisfied with little. 4. Santusthi - Being contented with bare necessities. 5). Sallekha - Ridding oneself of defilements. 6). Dhuta - Adhering Strictly to Buddhist precepts. 7) Pasadhika - Being self-composed in all situations. 8). Apacaya - Refraining from accumulating worldly possessions. 9). Viriyarambha - Being delight (Sunai, 1988, pp.11-12).

Diagram 9.1 The Effects on Environment of Reducing Chemicals Used



This pilot group intended to produce bio materials which were appropriate for their farms. They wanted to try setting aside part of their lands for organic agricultural production. Some participants started with rice farms and some started with vegetable gardens. However, there would be some hindrances to changing their method of production as one village leader pointed out:

Previously, we had never used chemicals materials for home - grown vegetables. Over the last ten years, we have intensively used chemicals for growing vegetables to meet the market demand. The farmers have also acquainted themselves with the convenience of using chemicals. Some chemicals, such as Sodium Salt or Hedonal for controlling weeds, have been used for more than 20 years. Now as a result of its toxicity, it has been prohibited to import Hedonal, but farmers have used just other chemicals instead (Rungsun Dejphonmat, personal communication, August 28, 2003).

For this phase, in order to change to organic agriculture the participants had to have clear ideas about organic farming principles. Their new aims were not to do with capitalist commercial cropping, maximizing short term profit through the most efficient use of resources, and maximization of labor and technology, but conversely, to develop a subsistence economy based on holistic sustainable agriculture and ecologically balanced use. This encompassed the ideology of organic farming, including individual and community ecological values. The end result was that as the farmers understood this concept they gradually shifted their personal and community paradigm to more holistic and ecological values.

More discussion about the Environmental Issue

Later on, there was another discussion about the environmental issue. I contacted four NGO workers from the Alternative Agriculture Project³ and the Community Based Research Fund to talk with the villagers about the environmental issue. Seventeen villagers, including a member of Sub-district Council, the village heads and the leaders of the community-based organizations (CBOs) attended the meeting. Participants drew a map of the village and its geography including the village resources: the Chi River, the canals and the natural swamps. The map helped participants to comprehend the large scale of the environment problem in this area. One example of this was the contaminated water drainage problem. The village waste water drained from and through the Haeng stream and the Pra-Kreu canal from the town of the Khon Kaen province to the Iilone area and drained into the Chi River. However, the local chemically contaminated wastes were drained through rice fields and vegetable gardens in Nong Phue and the nearby villages such as Kok and Pra Keng, and flowed into the Chi River in the rainy season. This concerned the villagers as it affected not only the local people, but also all the other people who utilized the Chi River downstream. Participants, therefore, raised the issue in order to reduce the use of chemical fertilizers for health and safety reasons.

An Organized group

On September 6, 2003, the villagers organized a small group of sixteen people, most of whom had been involved in the organics workshop at *Sima Asok*, to be the pilot group for trialing organic farming. They discussed whether bio-materials would be suitable for their land, rice fields, and vegetable gardens, since they used chemical materials for so many years. They raised questions about organic agriculture for discussion: How do we reduce the use of chemical inputs, such as fertilizers, insecticides and weed control chemicals? How do

³ A non-governmental organization which aims: 1) to promote and develop alternative agriculture 2) to promote small scale farmers in small scale agricultural businesses, including production, processing, and marketing. 3) to generate farmers' income to meet the goal of self reliance.

we persuade people to consume organic vegetables? Some questions needed to be answered by experiment, so they decided to change their production methods by reducing the use of chemical materials on their farms. Some farmers would experiment with using organic materials in their rice fields and some would trial them on the vegetable gardens.

Gaining More Ideas from Outsiders

In order to give the farmers more ideas about organic farming, I contacted a staff member from the Alternative Agriculture Project and one outsider farmer who was experienced in organic farming to share their experiences with the villagers on October 16, 2003. Twenty farmers participated, most of whom were the pilot group trialing organic agriculture. The community worker from the 'Alternative Agriculture Project' suggested his organization could help the villagers with a workshop on organic methods. The farmer shared his experiences about producing organic fertilizer and organic materials to control pests, and weeds, as well as appropriate technology for applying them in his rice fields. The villagers enthusiastically exchanged ideas. At this stage more and more farmers were interested in becoming involved in this project.

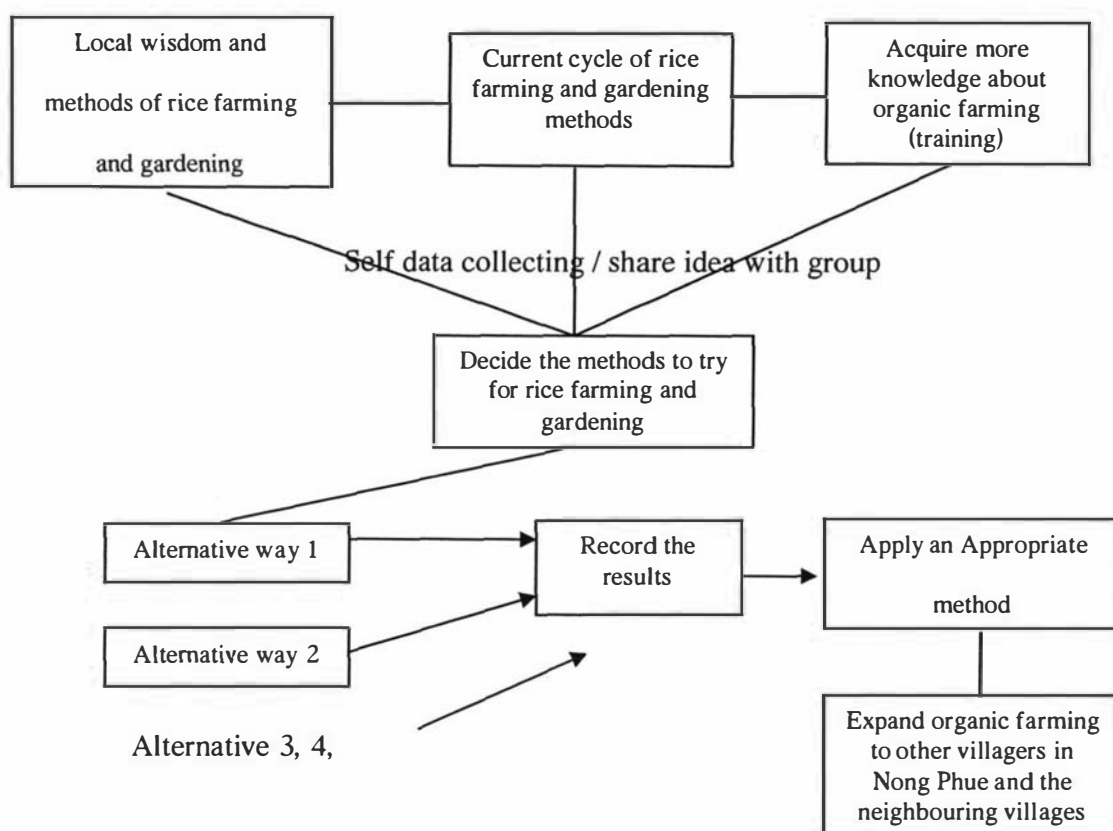
Many of the farmers who wanted to change to organic farming were hesitant. One of the leaders told me that there were three groups of farmers in this village. The first group was the leading group who were taking a risk and participating in the new project. The second group consisted of farmers who were interested and wanted to participate, but were waiting for the results of the project. If the project was successful, they would follow. And the last group was the farmers who did not want to participate because of their attitudes and their poor economic conditions (Rungsun Dejphonmat, personal communication, October 28, 2003). The pilot group trialing organic farming in Nong Phue village included the village head, and he was searching for more information about organic markets. He expected that the market demand would be sufficient incentive for the other farmers to participate in this project.

Designing the Project to Create Their Solutions

The group decided that, in order to solve the problem they should do more research. Therefore, the villagers drafted a project with the support of the Community Based Research staff and myself which they called 'Changing from Chemicals – based Rice and Vegetable Production Methods to Organic Methods'. The questions the research project aimed to answer were:

1. What were the original methods of rice and vegetable production?
2. What might be the effects and the problems from changing to the organic agriculture?
3. How much does each farmer currently invest in production, such as, for fertilizers, insecticides, labor, ploughing, harvesting, etc?
4. What are appropriate methods for organic farming?

They decided to collect their own data from the experiment on their farms. The farmers then would compare the current methods of chemical based production and the new organic methods. After that, members with particular experiences or expertise would share and discuss their experiences and knowledge. The last part of the project was to expand the idea and share their experiences of organic agriculture with the other farmers in Nong Phue and the nearby villages.

Diagram 9.2: Framework of the Project

I noticed that when the members in this group comprehended the research project, they explained it to the other farmers, which was a very effective way to publicize the research project. It was still obvious that some villagers were interested but they wanted to wait and see the results while other villagers did not participate because they did not believe organic agriculture would be suitable for their farms.

In terms of designing the project, there were some constraints. The members had expected outsider support since they had been used to projects which came with financial and material support. I explained that PAR aimed to bring about a learning process, rather than provide support by buying ready made bio materials from a factory. The villagers would have to try and produce organic materials by themselves.

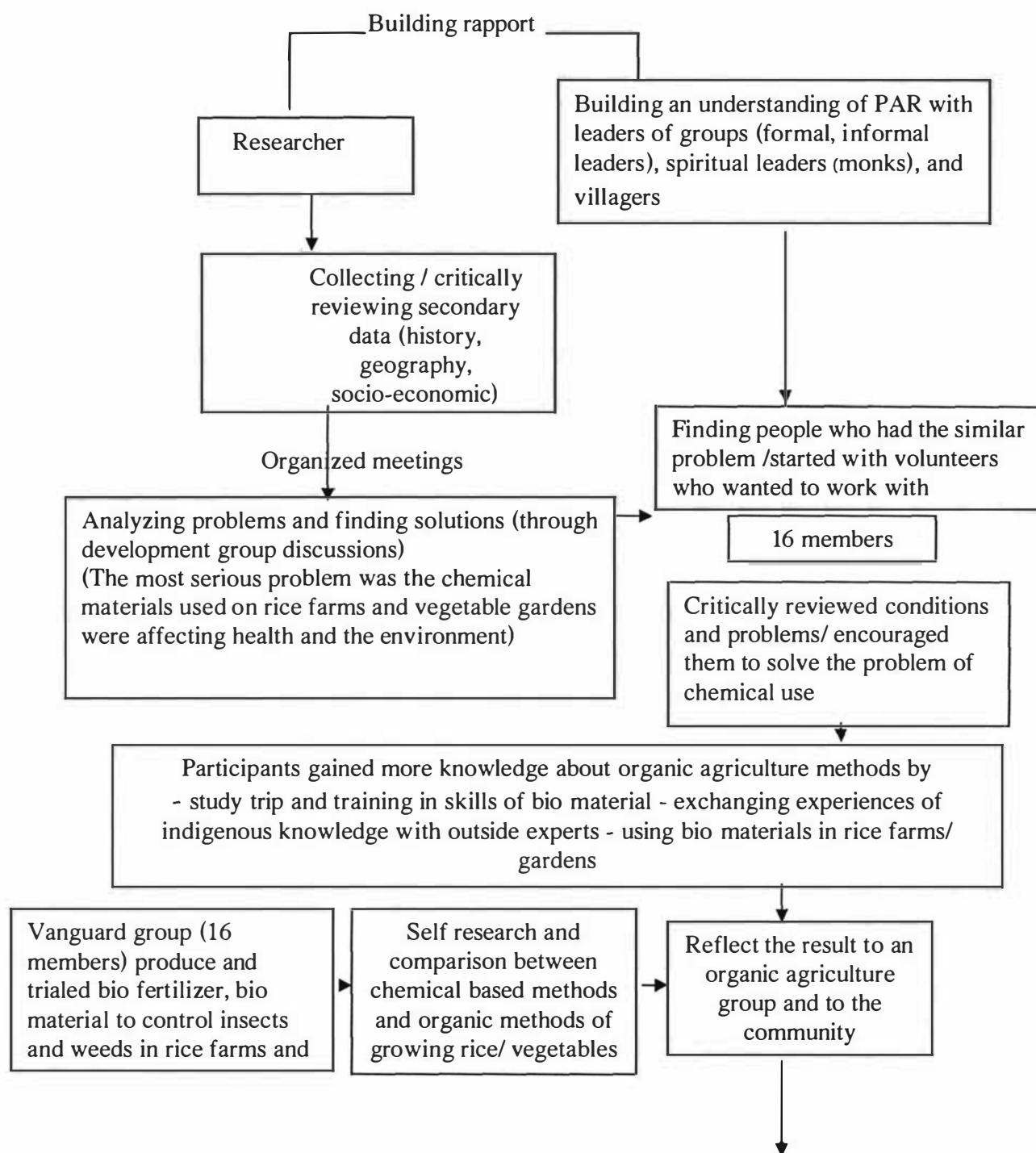
The villagers submitted the project to the Community Based Research Fund in December 2003 to gain more support for their research process. The target group was 120 farmers. The first group was the trial group: ten trial rice farmers, 10 trial vegetable gardeners and 30 farmers who were involved in some of the activities. The second group was involved in sharing information about their own productivity and this group expected to be involved in organic farming later.

Tried and Applied Organic Materials to the Farms

As I was completing my field work in January 2004, this pilot group had already started their experiment in organic agriculture (illustrated in appendix, pictures 15 and 16). They were producing and applying bio-fertilizer, controlling pests on their rice farms and vegetable gardens, and recording the information on their level of investment. The project 'Changing from Chemicals – based Rice and Vegetable Production Methods to Organic Methods' had been launched. The participants had set up a team of seven, as researchers for the project who were collecting both community data and data on farmers' productivity. A further step was sharing experiences about bio material and organic farming among the pilot group. The results of the study would be reported to the community at a later date. They invited experts and NGO workers to help them with technical issues, such as training in producing bio fertilizer, and insecticides, as well as techniques for killing weeds.

In the following section I present the chart of participatory action research in Nong Phue village. The chart shows how the organic agriculture group was formed through the PAR process.

Chart 9.1 Participatory Action Research Process in Nong Phue Village



60 members participate in bio agriculture group

Conclusion

In my experience of the participatory action research process in Wungwern and Nong Phue villages, PAR was a dynamic process which did not follow an orderly step by step procedure. Sometimes the researcher had to take a step back and revise the process, and sometimes the process was moved forwards from the first phase of data collecting directly to the action phase and then taken back to the analysis phases. This process was dependent on the nature of the village conditions, problems and participants. As Carr & Kemmis (1986) claim, action research is not linear and does not follow a step by step procedure to the end of the process.

In Wungwern village, the participatory action research process brought up the community problems including flooding, deforestation, lack of a local curriculum in the school, conflict over land use, a reduction of fish species in the Chi River and contaminated water in Nong Kongkaew Reservoir. The villagers worked together to prioritize these problems and brought up several problems, which had oppressed them for many years, to find solutions. The villagers selected two main issues to be solved: flooding and deforestation. The villagers dealt comprehensively with the process including analyzing the problems, considering the findings, doing the planning, and action. In terms of the flooding issue, the villagers decided to organize a public dialogue and consultation to urge the government to find solutions. The villagers also established a network with people who were facing similar problems in neighboring villages and communities in the five provinces along the Chi River. They intended to solve the flood problem by increasing their bargaining power with the government. In terms of the deforestation issue, the villagers set up forest regulations which they enforced with traditional rituals.

In Nong Phue village, the villagers raised environmental and health problems, resulting from the use of agricultural chemicals. The PAR process stimulated villagers to group together and try to solve their problems. Some of the villagers formed a vanguard group to trial organic agriculture in their rice fields and vegetable gardens. These farmers raised public awareness of chemical use in that locality through their experiment with organic agriculture.

It can be said that the participatory action research methodology activated the villagers in the two communities to be concerned with the communities' problems. Then they worked together to extend their understanding of their situations and thus resolve the problems that confronted them. Participation in these public issues, through the process of PAR, is a form of civil society. I will discuss this in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 10

CASE ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter aims to answer the research questions by exploring and analyzing the consequences of the PAR process and the data derived from the two case studies. The central themes elaborate the meaning of grounded civil society through the case studies. The factors activating civil society and the conditions that influence the formation of civil society in the rural communities in the Chi River Basin are discussed, as are the motivation, and the constraints of civil society in this region.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section is a new working definition of civil society in the Thai context, derived from the research process. The second section discusses the context and conditions which have influenced the formation of civil society in the rural communities in the Chi River Basin. The last section outlines how the research process facilitated the formation of civil society.

The Working Definition of Civil Society

The findings of my case studies develop an understanding and definition of civil society. Civil society develops from the reflection by local people on their personal and community experiences, particularly their day to day struggles. The participatory action research approach contributed to this. In particular, the PAR process stimulated people to jointly solve their common problems and to be involved in civic actions. This analytical concept of civil society is developed from the insights of the villagers' perspective, and their approach to the participatory action research process, contributing to an integrated definition of civil society in my thesis. I call this 'grounded civil society' and provide a working definition as

the sphere of an autonomous group of local people who actively participate in collective action to deal with their struggles and to promote their common interests by mobilizing social and cultural capitals in consort with other people in order to productively solve their problems. Civil society may include

traditional forms of mutual assistance, and formal or informal social associations. It seeks to have a significant influence on public policy at any level.

This definition of 'grounded civil society' demonstrates and includes three forms of civil society: structural, cognitive, and public space. The structural form encompasses the collective actions of local people to solve problems, which in these cases included flooding, deforestation, and the use of chemicals in agriculture. It is also demonstrated in a traditional form, which includes the belief system structures, or a *clum* in the community. The cognitive form can be measured by the public awareness of local people in their common interests, such as realizing the value of the community forest, which encourages them to perform collective actions in conserving it. The public space, such as the temple, *clum*, and community-based organizations, is where local people interact around their common issues.

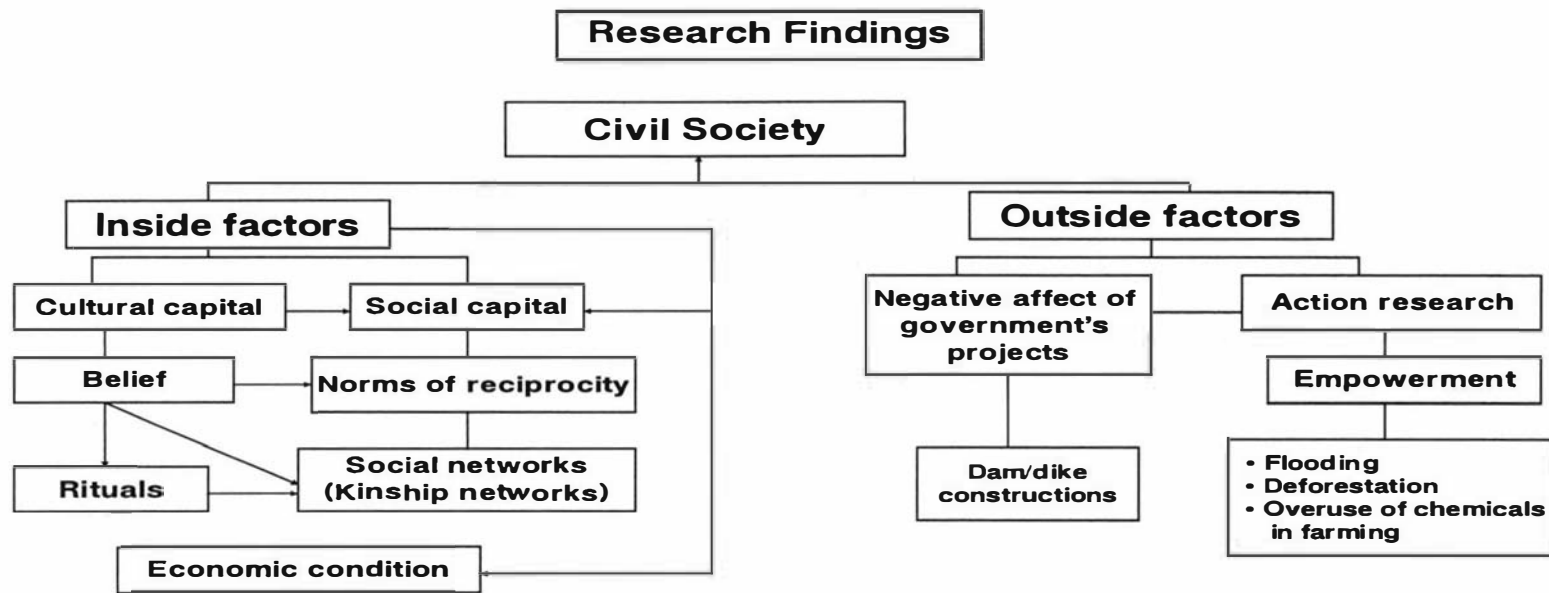
It is useful to focus on the concept and its characteristics as a working definition. I thereafter use them as a framework in section three for analyzing the process of the formation of civil society.

Context and Conditions Influenced the Formation of Civil Society in the Rural Community

Civil society is not a 'blueprint' model, as different social, cultural and political conditions influence the formation of civil society. The analysis in this section focuses on the factors which inspire local people to actively engage in and take action on common issues. Factors influencing the formation of civil society in this research can be classified into 'inside' and 'outside' factors. The inside factor is the cultural factor including beliefs, values, norms and social networks of local people. These are regarded as significant elements of social capital. The outside factor is the negative effect of government development projects. Another outside factor is the intervening process of participatory action research, which was a process involvement for the villagers, the researcher and non - government organization (NGO) workers.

The following chart shows the research findings and factors activating civil society in the two communities.

Chart 10.1 Research Findings



The two communities had different factors shaping the form of civil society in their respective villages. In Nong Phue village, the active civic groups depended mainly on inside factors, whereas in Wungwern village outside factors were more dominant. Both inside and outside factors activated and mobilized the villagers in the two communities to collectively act on different issues.

The Inside Factors Activate and Nurture Civil Society

My research found that the inside factors activating and nurturing civil society in Wungwern and Nong Phue villages encompassed economic conditions and cultural and social capitals which involved social networks, norms of reciprocity, and trust.

Wungwern and Nong Phue villages have some similar features, but the two communities also differ in some respects. The two communities are in similar locations: both are near the Chi River bank, both are predominantly agricultural, and the inhabitants of both villages are mainly farmers, although some villagers work as laborers in town. The villagers have the same Thai-Laos ethnic cultural background, which is the predominant ethnicity in the Northeast Region. Nonetheless, they are different in terms of economic conditions, historical background and cultural rituals, which have had a significant influence on the development of their different models of civic actions.

Economic Conditions

In terms of economic conditions, Wungwern village is considered to have poor economic conditions, because the average paddy yield does not meet the basic subsistence needs of the population. Most of the households hold quite small pieces of farmland with an average size of 3-5 rais¹. About twenty eight percent of families are labourers. Moreover, the villagers struggle with flooding nearly every year. To escape from economic hardship the villagers move to work in large towns in other regions which makes it difficult for the villagers to take part in community activities. As a result they have a somewhat loose relationship with their community. This can be compared

¹ 1.19- 1.98 acres

with Nong Phue village, where the villagers generally hold bigger lots, averaging 30 rais² per household and thus have more income than their counterparts in Wungwern. This factor also means agricultural products are used for both consumption and sale. In addition, the villagers earn more from secondary occupations, such as vegetable growing, fish raising and laboring in local rice fields. Because of their strong economic position, most of the villagers in Nong Phue spend most of their time in day to day work in the village, rather than outside. This is one important factor allowing people to be brought together when they are required for collective activities.

The economic conditions also influence the success of the community-based organizations (CBOs). In Nong Phue village, most CBOs are successful and sustainable since the villagers spend their days physically situated in the community and so are able to engage in CBO activities. CBOs are thus managed effectively. In Wungwern village, poverty prevents involvement of the villagers from joining non - productive communal activities, resulting in a lack of cooperation in CBOs. These CBOs are seen as an important source of civic engagement and civil society in this thesis.

How Cultural Capital Mobilize Social Capital

According to the research findings, social networks in the two villages were established and developed from interactions between local people through the cultural capital of beliefs, rituals, and kinship ties.

The research found that there is a positive dependent linkage between civil society, in these case studies, and cultural and social capital. The collective actions in both villages are founded on cultural capital: beliefs, rituals, and social capital of networks of kinship relations which are embedded in the communities. Through collective rituals, local people build up and intensify their social networks and norms of reciprocity, which are the main sources for generating civil society (See Chart 4.2 on page 65).

² 11.86 acres

In this section, I will discuss how culture has important implications for the development of social capital and civil society in the two communities. This section discusses the evidence for this relationship.

My discussion will be divided into two themes. The first theme looks at the role of cultural capital as a source of social capital. The second theme considers how social capital can activate civil society.

Cultural Capital: Beliefs and Rituals

Case study evidence demonstrates that cultural capital includes belief systems, and the religious - cultural rituals are the foundation of social capital. Cultural capital generates social networks between people and establish norms of mutual assistance and trustworthiness.

Belief System

By following Buddhist principles and animistic beliefs, significant foundations for creating the norms of trustworthiness, faithfulness, virtuosity and reciprocity in these two villages are established. The strong belief in Buddhist principles influences local people's behavior in moral matters. For example, the Buddhist doctrinal belief in generosity instructs people to help others without requiring a 'pay back'. Villagers thus cultivate goodness and communal attitudes as well as norms of reciprocity through religious belief. These practices can be seen clearly in Nong Phue village, where the villagers continue to practice Buddhist doctrine and precepts, and have followed the village taboos for generations. These social norms work well as informal processes for social regulation by controlling people's behavior and can be much more effective than formal regulations or laws. As Etzioni (2000: 26) proposed, 'moral culture can serve to significantly enhance social order while reducing the need for state intervention in social behavior'. A form of moral culture exists in Nong Phue village and generates norms of trust and morality which are important components of social capital.

In terms of their belief in animism, the villagers in Nong Phue and Wungwern villages undertake particular practices and rituals, to pay respect to the spirits they believe in. In

Nong Phue village, the local people believe in a guardian spirit called the 'Iilone' and in Wungwern village, the villagers believe in the guardian spirit of 'Putu', whom they believe protects them and their property from disasters. Through this belief, the villagers have created a mechanism to direct and control individual and community ecological behaviour, as can be seen in the way they utilize their natural resources, such as the Chi River, the water swamps, and the forests.

In addition, the similarity of belief also creates social networks among all the people in the same locality. The belief in the guardian spirit of Iilone in Nong Phue and the nearby villages and the belief in the spirit in the Chi River in Wungwern and its neighboring villages link the inhabitants of different communities together. The close relationships, or 'fictional kinships', this similarity of belief creates builds up community identity. This kind of linkage binds people together in a way that Putnam (2000) and Woolcock (2001) called the 'bonding types of social capital'. The villagers mobilized this bonding social capital to assist their collective action movement when they organized groups to solve problems such as flooding in Wungwern and the nearby villages. Such movements are a form of civil society.

The belief in Buddhism and animism thus are the cultural foundation for forming social networks and norms of trust and reciprocity, which are important elements of social capital in the two communities. This conclusion mirrors the study by Candland (2001), who claims that the influence of religious faith-based associations in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Pakistan generates social capital, grounded in beliefs, customs, habits, and obligations generates cultural capital. A common faith may allow believers to trust in each other and therefore, faith can be a basic form of social capital. Fukuyama (2000) supported this assumption, revealing that the relationship between cultural and social capital is that cultural capital in the form of moral values creates social capital in the form of relations between people. Loyalty, trust, and honesty are the basic foundations of social capital.

Ritual Ceremonies

Belief influences, and characterizes people's behaviour, as well as the way they undertake rituals. This research found that rituals were a significant cultural mechanism

for establishing and developing social capital in the two communities. The villagers in Wungwern and Nong Phue organized particular ceremonies based on their own cultural standing. In Nong Phue village, the rituals 'Bun Sungkatan' and 'Bun Huay Num Khem' and in Wungwern village 'Bun Tarahut' are carried out on a yearly cycle. In addition, a 'Tree ordination' ritual occurred when the PAR process was undertaken in Wungwern village. These ritual ceremonies are revealing examples of how local people mobilized their beliefs and values, through rituals to establish social capital and civil society. In the following sections I discuss the prominent evidence derived from these ritual ceremonies for each village.

Nong Phue Village

The Bun Sungkatan ritual ceremony is a specific practice that only takes place in Nong Phue. This ritual is a scenario of participation and collectivism³ of local people. It works through ritual tasks being allocated for all families during the Buddhist Lent Rituals through a participatory decision making process and collective action. The social structure of the cluster or clum in Thai, is used as a mechanism for delegating responsibility to households for physical assistance, donations and organizations of the ritual itself. In a wider sense, the clum develops from its role as a cultural and social mechanism for the Bun Sungkatan ritual and features in many roles in the social, economic, and political spheres of community.

The clum, which is created through the ritual of Bun Sungkatan, facilitates close relationships and performs many functions in the community which support villagers' basic needs, and their social-well being, and is thus a source of social capital and civil society.

Another ceremony is 'Bun Huay Num Khem' which is a ritual ceremony among the communities who believe in the guardian spirit of Iilone. This ceremony brings together people from different villages in the locality (13 villages in 3 sub-districts) to engage in collective action by paying respect to the guardian spirit. This ritual is a mechanism that

³ Collectivism is defined as a syndrome of attitudes and behaviors based on the belief that the basic unit of survival lies within a group, not the individual.

local people invented to protect the Iilone reservoir, which is essential for their livelihoods. The status of the belief in the spirit of Iilone was enhanced by the villagers into an ideology and a symbol of nature resource conservation. This ritual connects people from this locality together through the ritual activity, and it generates bonding social capital which I have mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Other aspects of a ritual community can be seen from the high level of involvement in religious groups. Most middle-aged and elderly people engage in the practice of keeping Buddhist precepts on holy days, staying at the temple to observe the precepts. This is another public space where the villagers congregate and discuss not only religious issues, but also common community issues such as changes in families and village problems. This congregation thus provides not only a space for generating the villagers' virtues but also for creating social networks and mutual assistance. It assists the villagers to connect and support each other and helps to create a sense of responsibility for the individuals in their community and the common issues within the community. Goffman and Durkheim (cited in Bellah, 2003) suggest that the foundation of ritual interaction, involving a physical assembly of people who have the same interests and share a common emotion, generates a sense of membership in a community through their shared experiences and the setting up of boundaries that delineate outsiders. These members feel some sense of moral obligation to each other, symbolized by whatever they focused on during the interaction.

Wungwern Village

Bun Tarahut is a ritual which has been organized every year for more than two centuries by people from Wungwern village and the nearby villages. The ritual is arranged so that people can pay respect to and ask for forgiveness and blessings from the spirits of the Chi River. This ritual is a mechanism for local people to protect their natural resource. The ritual was believed to have been established as a strategy used by the leaders of the nearby town of Chonnabot to increase local power in resistances to the control of central government. Originally the collective action of the ritual demonstrated the autonomy and solidarity of local people. Throughout its history, this ritual has brought people from neighbouring villages together and in doing so created social networks. The

Wungwern villagers mobilized this social network to support their social movement during and after the flooding.

The 'Tree Ordination' ceremony was organized by Wungwern village in order to protect their community forest from exploitation. The villagers applied two strategies to conserve the forest. First there was the traditional belief and religious concepts through the practice of the Tree Ordination ritual, which sanctified the trees in the forest. The second strategy was a constitution for local management of the community forest which set up formal regulations to prevent exploitation of the community forest. The local people used the symbolic relationship between the supernatural spirit (Putu) and his power, along with the Buddhist image of the trees bound in yellow robes, as social and cultural mechanism, to regulate and protect their natural resource. The ritual was also a tool for raising the villagers' awareness of the natural environment and the issue of deforestation.

This analysis suggests that cultural capital including beliefs in religion, the supernatural, and related rituals, have shaped social capital in these rural communities throughout the norms of morality, trust, and reciprocity and social networks. The cultural capital manifests its features in many forms in these two communities.

Cultural capital grounded in communities, according to Bourdieu (1986 cited in Verter, 2003, p. 159), is separated into three forms. Firstly, the 'embodied state' is manifested in people beliefs, knowledge, and ritual practice. The second form is 'objectified state' and views sacred objects as symbols of the belief that villagers used in the rituals, such as the trees bound in yellow robes in the tree ordination, the Putu cottage, and shrines. The last form is 'institutionalized state', which is demonstrated by the clum and the temple in its role of organizing the rituals.

The cultural capital discussed above cultivated the emergence, maintenance and strengthening of social capital, including social networks. The collective action encompassed not only religious activities, but also secular activities, such as the organization of activities aimed at solving problems together. This evidence mirrors Witten-Hannah's (1999, p. 25) idea that building social capital involves the key element of having a shared ideology of religion and collective memory. Rhys H. Williams (2003)

believed that rituals assist local people to produce solidarity and emotional connection to others, even if there is not complete agreement on every issue or how they should be addressed. Rituals combine the cognitive and the moral action of people. Fukuyama (2001, p. 19) suggested that religion is one of the most important sources of social capital. This point of view is supported by Narayan and Pritchett (1999), who claimed in their studies on indigenous traditional communities that civil associations, including 'traditional' institutions, were primary sources of social capital.

The other important finding is that social networks, the main element of social capital, were, in this context founded on informal organizations of cultural associations rather than formal organizations. This contrasts with Putnam's assumption that social networks are generated solely from associations in formal organizations (1993).

Kinships Generating Social Capital

My discussion in this section argues that a community based on kinship ties generates social capital, including social networks, norms of reciprocity and trust.

The kinship models of kin that ties in Nong Phue and Wungwern villages followed three patterns. The first is through marriage: most villagers have a pattern of marriage within the community, and with the villagers from nearby communities. The second is from the connection created by a common historical background, such as the linking between a pioneer settlement and the original group and place where they used to live. For example, villagers in Wungwern feel they are the relatives of other nearby villagers because they all moved out of the town of Chonnabot. The third is fictive kinship, which relates people to one another though sharing a belief of the same guardian or ancestor spirits and taking part in common rituals. This 'fictive kinship' is reinforced through the collective traditional ceremonies of 'Bun Tarahut' and 'Bun Huay Num Khem'.

These three models of kinship bind people in these local areas together. The kinship ties bring about intensive relationships and generate norms of reciprocity within the community and among the neighboring communities. The ties serve as a base for

cooperation and mutual assistance between the villagers, which can be used in activity, aimed at improving their livelihoods.

This evidence from the case studies shows that kinship ties can generate norms of mutual assistance. Norms of reciprocity are formed through the obligation of the villagers to help each other in the economic sphere and with public issues, such as in harvesting, sharing food, lending money for career investments, the construction of roads and temples, and in canal irrigation pipe cleaning, and repair. However, the reciprocity in Nong Phue village was much more vigorous than in Wungwern village where many people had to work outside the village as laborers. Another reason was that in Nong Phue village dense social networks and interrelationships were formed through daily congregational cultural rituals, such as, offering food to monks.

All types of kinship helped to develop emotional closeness and spiritual bonds. They mobilized trust, expectation, and integrity in local people. These spiritual connections signify a group and create community feeling, as well as cohesiveness and homogeneity between people in these local communities.

Norm of Trust

The research found that trust arises from two different sources: kinship and personal charisma. Kinship based communities, such as those in my case studies, work well in mobilizing the norms of trust and reciprocity in local communities. Trust is generated through respect for informal leaders whose morality and reliability villagers trust, such as the Abbot, elderly people, and development activity leaders. Trust brought people to join in both cultural and secular activities. The sources of trust generated in this research were different from Putnam's concept of trust in that it arose from norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement in formal organizations (Putnam 1993, p. 171).

Community-based Organizations (CBOs) Generating Social Capital

Community groups generated social networks through people's involvement in development activities. The villagers participated and had overlapping membership in many groups. The interrelationship of group members created social capital, particularly

by creating social networks through the CBOs work processes. The CBOs generated internal cohesion, and therefore collective action. In Nong Phue village, the CBOs working with the rice mill, cooperative store, cows, mushrooms, garbage collectors and the collective groups of youth and the elders, contributed to the creation of strong social networks. In the same vein, social networks of mutual assistance contributed to the management and the operation of CBOs which made most of the CBOs in Nong Phue village successful. In contrast most of the CBOs in Wungwern village were not sustainable because the level of household poverty stopped them from joining groups such as the rice barn, and the savings group. However, the evidence from Nong Phue village confirmed that the collaborative process in group activities, helped to build and strengthen social capital, and thereafter civic engagement, which in turn can contribute to poverty reduction. The CBOs in Nong Phue village provided a web of group networks, creating a strong foundation through inside factors, and fostering civil society activities in the organic agriculture group. People who engaged in the organic project already knew each other from working together in the CBOs, whereas in Wungwern village, the CBOs networks were weak, and civic engagement came from outside factors rather inside.

The idea of CBOs fostering social capital and civil society is supported by many theorists. For example, Robinson (1999) has claimed that CBOs act as a catalyst for the formation of social capital. They provide the impetus that brings people together and they create opportunities for the development of social relationships, as well as helping to create the conditions that foster the growth of social capital. Fine and Harrington (2004, p.343) analysed micro-level phenomena, arguing that small groups created civil society by providing networks. Small groups are the outcome of participation and civic engagement which strengthen the social and political spheres and in turn provide public space for civic engagement. Walzer (1992) has suggested that small groups create interaction between people leading to friendships, connectedness, and taking responsibility for each other. In this way, CBOs can sustain civil society.

In summary, the core beliefs and values of Buddhist principles and animism not only give moral guidance for the everyday lives of the villagers, but also shape the norms of morality and reciprocity. The rituals, which are based on these beliefs, also create social networks through the villagers' participation in the rituals. Kinship ties are another

source of social networks and norms of trust, and reciprocity in these local communities. The community-based organizations (CBOs) also increase social interaction, and so support social networks. These sources of social capital, which are generated in the village context, can mobilize to activate civil society in the two communities. I will demonstrate how this is done in the following section.

How Social Capital Activates Grounded Civil Society in the Case Studies

The research found that there is a positive dependent linkage between social capital and civil society in these case studies. In this section I will discuss social networks, reciprocity and trust as significant elements of social capital, which is a major force for facilitating, and shaping civil society in my case studies.

A grounded civil society, through which the villagers in the two communities collectively acted, to deal with the issues they faced, occurred because of the incentive from social capital that already existed in the communities. Social capital, which is generated from peoples' beliefs and their interrelationship, in both rituals and kinships, helped the villagers to promote effective collective action. This can be seen from the evidence of people getting together when they needed to solve the problems connected with flooding, deforestation, and chemical-based agricultural production. The connectedness from their social networks was utilized when they needed cooperation from other people to solve their problems, which were identified during the PAR process. For example, the villagers in Wungwern mobilized social networks they had already established with nearby villages, in order to cooperatively solve the flood problems. They could organize groups and ask for assistance very easily because people already had connectedness from the interrelationship through the rituals and kinship ties.

When a new project for organic agriculture was initiated in Nong Phue village, the networks of kinship ties were one factor influencing members' decision to join the project. In addition, the delegation of their duties for the rituals led many villagers to become involved in voluntary activities, on public issues in the community.

One clear feature of the way social capital activates civil society can be seen in clums which are the foundation of social network units in Nong Phue village. Clums perform

many functions in the community including supporting villagers' basic needs and their social-well being, which in turn facilitates the grounded civil society.

In the social sphere, clum is a basic communal unit which functions as a resource manager for community activities. In the economic sphere, a clum is also a communal unit, for example to manage the use of labor in the cooperative store. In the political sphere, a clum is the nuclear unit of local administration in the village which the government uses as a tool to undertake development policies. In terms of leadership selection, although clums are currently used in a variety of ways by the government, the clums' leaders are still selected by applying the criteria of traditional leaders. The criteria for choosing morality and expertise in religious ceremony are the first main concerns in the selection process. The villagers select leaders who are respected and trusted in virtue practices. The leader in Nong Phue village thus tends to be a moral leader rather than a government representative. In terms of its territory, clums are a public space for village interactions in the cultural, social and economic spheres. In the villagers' view, clums are different from the political arena, where clums are based on geographical area and population.

Clums in this context therefore serve as a generator of civil society in that they play a crucial role in mobilizing individuals to respond to their obligations on common issues in the culture, social and political spheres. In this, clums represent a feature of social networks within the structural model. Clums are also a form within the cognitive model, which comprises cooperation and norms of trust and reciprocity which bind and harmonize communities without conflict and violence. In addition, clum is a form within the public sphere where local people participate and deliberate to work on common issues for their social well-being. The role of Clum in Nong Phue village thus contributes to the creation of social cohesion and civic engagement for local people, generating 'grounded civil society'.

These findings suggest that social capital generated from the cultural capital has nurtured people to actively participate in voluntary activity and public issues. This was the incentive for the collective action which shaped a 'grounded civil society' in Nong Phue and Wungwern villages. Social capital and civil society are in this way generated from below rather than from above. The form of civil society in the villages mirrors

Varshney's idea (2002) that civil society is characterized by civic engagement, civic community and a strong associational life. It consists of informal group activities where people have trust, engage in reciprocity, and which facilitate the exchange of views on matters of public concern. This perspective is a communitarian view of civil society because it centers on family, community values, and traditional cultural roots.

Social capital, which underlines the features of a range of values, norms, cultural identity, and kinships, fosters the formation of civil society. This perspective supports Putnam's concept that the density of social capital in civic communities can bring about a vibrant civil society (Putnam 1993, 1995).

In sum, the grounded civil society in the case studies is facilitated by the inside factors of economic conditions and cultural matters, which comprises beliefs, rituals, and kinship ties.

The Outside Factors Which Activate Civil Society

The research found that outside forces including government development projects, and the participatory action research process, have also stimulated the rise of civil society in the two communities.

The Government Development Projects

The research found that government development projects were the main outside factor, which forced local people to aggregate and mobilize social movements, particularly in Wungwern village. These outside forces were dam and dyke construction projects which led to environmental problems in Wungwern village. In accordance with the central government developmental policy of promoting economic growth and commercial cropping in the Northeast region, the government constructed dams and the irrigation systems, with the intention that they would support the expansion of agriculture. The main project which significantly affected the villagers' lives, was the Kong–Chi–Mun Water Diversion. This project involved the construction of seven dams in the Chi Rivers and six dams in the Mun River. An irrigation system of canal networks was also built with the aim of creating a water supply from the dams to the

irrigation areas for agricultural production. Two dams, the Maharakham Dam which is about 7 kilometres from Nong Phue and the Chonnabot Dam which is about 10 kilometers from Wungwern village, were constructed under the Kong–Chi–Mun project in the Chi River near Wungwern and Nong Phu villages.

These outside factors brought many changes to the villagers' way of life along the Chi River. Essentially, these changes involved a shift from subsistence farming to more commercial farming. In Nong Phue and Wungwern villages, the irrigation canals have been used to obtain water from the Chi River to irrigate rice farms and vegetable gardens, which has stimulated farmers to grow rice and vegetables under a more productive system. This spurred the change from subsistence to commodity farming, particularly after the canal networks were constructed in 1983 in Wungwern village and in 1989 in Nong Phue village. Although the dams and the irrigation system benefited local people in terms of their agricultural production, the irrigated systems also had resulted in a negative impact on the farmers who lived near the rivers. The dams caused flooding in the rainy season because they blocked the flowing of the Chi River, which then overflowed into the rice fields and the villages, causing serious damage. Nong Phue village suffered a lesser impact from the flood than Wungwern village due to its geographical situation. Nong Phue village is surrounded by small natural swamps which drain floodwater out of the rice farms. In Wungwern village there is nowhere for the floodwater to drain. In addition, there was flooding from Nong Kong Kaew Reservoir at the same time. The influx of water from the Chi River merged with the overflow water from the Nong Kong Kaew reservoir and caused serious damage to the rice farms. This phenomenon forced the Wungwern villagers to join together to solve the problem. In 1996 the Wungwern villagers grouped together, and in a civic action cut the Kanglewa Reservoir Dyke to let the water flow easily into the Chi River during the rainy season. They took a risk in destroying the dyke because the dyke was a Royal project and the villagers knew that it was illegal to destroy government property. The local people in the neighbouring villages supported this action.

There were a number of civic actions where local people tried to resolve public issues. For example, in 1975, when confronted with drought, they contributed cash and labour in order to get a water pump installed in their village. The other effort occurred when the villagers worked together to construct a dyke in the Chi River to store water in the

dry season. They also constructed a dyke around the village to blockade the overflow of the Chi River into the village and repaired roads in the village that had been damaged in the floods.

Although the dam and the dyke construction projects brought about the growth of agricultural production, they also had a negative impact on the local communities. The government policy gave priority to urban areas and economic development and caused inequity for the rural people. The projects were designed without the peoples' participation and local people were excluded from the scope of the project. This promoted civic action against the government projects. These phenomena of civic actions occurred when the villagers felt oppressed and could not endure the difficulties created by the flooding and the drought. These problems mobilized civic movements in an attempt to resolve the public issues.

These examples support the assumption that people will take collective action when they are faced with serious issues which affect their lives. The villagers knew that if they did not solve the problems, it could lead to bigger problems. They felt excluded from the government development projects and the project in fact caused a feeling of oppression. Such a movement is described as a 'civic movement' which is grounded in local struggle. This model of civil society demonstrates a Marxist perspective where the villagers used coercive collective strategies, to resist the government project in defence of their own interests.

One feature of this form of civil society is that it is a temporary civic group. The civic movement occurs when the villagers need cooperative power to solve their problems. The villagers join together when faced with problems and they disband when the problems have been solved. Although the civic group declines, the 'civic spirit' still resides in the individual and the community and they will regroup if other problems occur, which affect their daily life and social well being. This form of civil society is more applicable and practical to the villagers' way of lives. In other words, the civic groups and civic spirit generated by the villagers' problems is a form of civil society.

How the Participatory Action Research Process (PAR process) Activates Civil Society

My focal point in this section is the question of how civil society itself can be proactive in generating further civil society in the rural community in the Northeast Region of Thailand. The theoretical framework that I outlined in Chapter Four provided an understanding of the concept of civil society. It also guided the methodology of the research intervention in the community. Therefore, the participatory action research process was the methodology that I used to answer the research inquiry.

My research found that a PAR approach can both generate grounded civil society and make it proactive. The intervention of the PAR process encouraged the villagers to get involved in common issues with a focus on finding solutions to their common problems. It enabled the villagers to become aware of their oppression and analyze its causes as well as mobilize to find a solution.

In this section I will delineate the role of PAR in generating and transforming a grounded civil society. The process of PAR, the dynamic power roles between the researcher and the participants, and the consequences, and the outcomes of the PAR process will be outlined. The analysis in this section is based on the PAR process which I undertook in the two communities and which is presented in Chapter Nine. It also draws on the general process of the participatory action research approach introduced in Chapter Four.

Preparation

The preparation process involved preparing the researcher's skills in carrying out PAR and collecting community data. The primary data gave the researcher an understanding of the community context, community problems, and local culture and norms. These were important for the conduct of appropriate behaviour in the community. However, having thirteen years work experience in the field of community development and being born in this region helped the researcher to understand the nature of the community and have the confidence to work with the local people appropriately.

Phase 1 Establishing and Building Rapport

This is the crucial phase in dealing with the participants. The relationship has to be set up in such a way that participants trust and accept the researcher enough to include her in their community. I formed relationships with the villagers in different ways. The most useful activities for me to establish relationships with the villagers were participating in the ritual ceremonies in Nong Phue village and joining social activities at the households and rice farms in Wungwern village. The activities I joined were different because in Nong Phue local people are very religious and most of them participated in ritual ceremonies, while in Wungwern village, the economic condition is not good and the villagers have to engage in day to day work to meet their livelihood needs. This step of building rapport did not take a long time because I spoke their language, 'Thai-Lao', with them. This assisted me to communicate and interact with them naturally.

I also collected more community data on the social, economic and cultural aspects of the villagers' lives, including investigating the problems affecting them. Most interviewees in Wungwern village claimed that flooding was the main problem, while Nong Phue villagers complained about the uncertainty of vegetable marketing and the health problems caused by using chemicals for crop production. In the pilot interviews the villagers had diverse perceptions of the issues effecting their livelihoods and lifestyles.

In this phase I took on the role of an outsider data-seeker and informant. The villagers were recipients and interviewees.

Phase 2 Sharing an Understanding of Participatory Action Research (PAR)

This phase was the process of adjusting the expectations on both sides, so that we understood what we expected from each other. This stage involved a lot of time in discussion before villagers understood the character of the research. This was because the villagers were used to traditional research methods, where outsiders did every part of the research project by themselves. However, there were some participants who did

not attend the early meetings or misinterpreted the research project. Therefore, the questions about the research project methodology and aims were occasionally raised by villagers, even after the research process had been launched. After we (the participants and I) had worked on the research project for a period of time, participants understood the process more clearly. They became the core group that explained the research project to the other villagers who joined the process in later phases.

From the villagers' response, it was clear that they were interested in being involved in the project although there was still some hesitancy about the general idea of participating in research projects. Nonetheless, a vanguard group of interested people became involved in this phase in both villages. This group was important because they could explain the research project to the other villagers. In Wungwern village, the vanguard group included community leaders, NGO workers and government officers: school teachers, and the researcher. In Nong Phue village, there were only team leaders and the researcher.

In this phase I primarily took the major role of an outsider learning to understand the village conditions, and was invited to many meetings to explain the research project. In this phase there were some changes in the villagers' attitude to the research. The vanguard groups in both villages initiated informal group discussions with the other villagers on different aspects of the community, the villagers' life struggles and then introduced the research project. They encouraged the other villagers who might be interested in participating in the project.

Phase 3 Data Collection

In the phase of data collection or the 'looking' phase, the researcher and the villagers surveyed and gathered data on the community setting: geography, economy, culture, natural resources, and community problems.

The process of participatory data collection occurred through focus groups, social mapping and transect walks. This enabled the researcher and the participants to identify key issues in the communities such as problems and potentials, including human natural

resources, and infrastructure. The process enabled participants to develop their knowledge about the communities' conditions and resources. They learnt how to visually represent data by mapping and drawing charts. The activity to appraise the forest activities stimulated the villagers to realize the value of their resources. This gave the villagers confidence to collect their own data and analyse their problems.

The researcher's role in this phase was as a stimulator and coordinator. This involved getting the local people to group together, talk about their community and discuss and investigate their problems. This phase gave us a developing and understanding of village conditions and problems. When the villagers needed special skills, such as participatory techniques for collecting data, my role was also as a trainer.

Phase 4 Data Validation and Analysis

The data validation and problem definition work was done through focus groups and brainstorming. In this phase, the development of consciousness, and awareness of issues occurred in two ways. Firstly, the data was transformed into diagrams, and maps showing the relationship between the villages' conditions and resources, and the problems. Secondly, diagrams, maps, and video-tapes about the environment and the natural resources were viewed. This approach helped the villagers to clarify problems, understand the effects of the problems on their community, and consider solutions. It enabled the villagers to develop their own analysis of their issues, and enhanced their understanding of the problems and the community's potential.

There were many themes arising from the discussions. In Nong Phue, the issues of pollution caused by the use of agricultural chemicals and the consequent effects on farmers' health was raised. In Wungwern village the community was concerned with the problems of deforestation, conflict over land use, water contamination, the reduction of fish species in the Chi River, and flooding. It was clear that the problems proposed by the villagers concerned their daily life and affected their social well being. Some problems such as flooding and deforestation had oppressed them for many years. Although the problems were raised by the participants in the research process, these

problems clearly affected whole communities. Through the data analysis process, the villagers realized that they wanted to solve their problems. A result of this phase was also greater local consciousness of the community problems. This influenced their subsequent collective decisions and actions. In both villages, the villagers were enthusiastic about finding solutions.

In this phase, my roles included initiating and facilitating and acting as a catalyst during the meetings and discussions. These discussions encouraged participants to develop a critical consciousness regarding all aspects of their community's conditions. It assisted them to develop their own analysis and understanding of their situations and the oppression that they faced. I was also a consultant and an advisor in assisting villagers to analyse the villages' condition, problems, and solutions.

Phase 5 Analysing Alternatives Solutions

The phase of analyzing alternative solutions or the 'thinking' phase, involved meetings to explore and analyze data and to find solutions for the problems. The problems that oppressed them, and that they could not handle by themselves were raised in the discussions. Participants discussed and debated alternative solutions and made concrete choices about possible solutions.

In Wungwern village, the process of finding solutions for the problems of flooding and deforestation, and the solution itself came out of this phase. In Nong Phue village the problem of overuse of chemicals on their rice farms and gardens was solved with an organic agriculture initiative. Other more far-reaching problems such as conflict of land use and water contamination were left unattended.

This phase was important because participants had to make decisions about what they actually wanted to do. Once they decided on a solution it not only led to individual and group actions, but also promoted accountability. The participants tended to take responsibility for the decisions they made, and developed a collective emotional engagement in their actions. Sometimes participants faced the dilemma of which solutions to choose. For example, in Nong Phue conflict arose around changing to

organic farming as the changeover would affect incomes and involve technical skill they did not have at that time. Participants had to decide whether they wanted to actually carry out this solution. After they gained some skills and knowledge about bio-materials and methods of organic production the villagers confidence in the solution increased. Moreover, they realised that organic agricultural techniques was not solely outside knowledge, but also involved applying their own local and traditional knowledge.

The process involved in this phase raised emotional involvement and generated participants' collective awareness of their problems, as well as their ability to develop alternative solutions, giving the participants greater commitment to making things happen. This launched the subsequent actions in the next phase.

In this phase, my role was a facilitator in group discussions. I also took on the major role of an informant, by providing information to contribute to the analysis of alternative solutions. In addition, I practised the roles of consultant and advisor to the villagers in their analysis of alternative solutions.

Phase 6 Implementation of the Solution and Review

In the implementation of the solution or 'action' phase, the villagers attempted to solve the problems by applying their solutions through collective actions. In Nong Phue, numerous collective initiatives sprung up after the study trip where they undertook training on bio - material production. Sixteen farmers decided to be the pilot group and the trial group making and using bio - materials. Thirty four more farmers joined the group after the project started. In Wungwern village the villagers organized a consultation to solve the flooding issues. They created networks with people living along the Chi River in other provinces, which gave them more confidence in bargaining with the government and attempting to influence government policy. The success of the villagers' movement can be seen from the government project's response to the issues raised: the local government proposed formal solutions, including a project in the fiscal year budget.

In response to the problem of deforestation, the community launched community forest conservation activities which included setting up regulations and the application of a ritual practice to protect the forest from intrusion and exploitation.

The collective actions used to resolve the problems in the two communities were effective at different levels. Firstly, the attempt at forest conservation was highly successful. The villagers subsequently found that their forest was regenerating due to community respect for the common rules that were drawn up. The herbal uses of the forest products was recorded on video and used by the local school to teach their students. The Royal Thai Forestry Department recognized the community forest by providing native saplings for planting. These activities made the villagers realize the importance of their natural resources and they came to recognize this self - initiated forestry project, emerging from the participatory action research process, resulting in village protection of their own resources. The villagers became the guardians of their own forest. In terms of the social movement concerned with the flooding, the problem was eventually acknowledged by the government. The government budget for flood prevention measures, such as building dykes, increased. In terms of the social movement itself, the villagers continued to periodically organize informal meetings with representatives from each village along the Chi River, with the support from NGO workers. The representatives from the communities along the Chi River formalized their grouping as 'The Chi River Basin Conservation Network', with the aim of organizing peaceful civic actions. This committee intended to take part when the government put into place a new policy to manage and plan for the utilization of water resources at local, regional and national levels (Draft Water Resource Act, 2004). To oversee this, the National River Basin manages water use in each basin. The Chi River Basin Conservation Network aims to enhance the bargaining power of the villagers in the Chi River Basin in this context.

In Nong Phue village, the villagers were able to find solutions and sort out their problems by themselves. They only needed help to develop the technical skills for organic agricultural production. The participants increased their skills at producing bio-materials, which led other villagers to increase their awareness of alternative production methods and in turn influenced other farmers in neighboring villages to adopt organic

agriculture. The participants shared their ideas and practical experiences with their neighbors.

In the Implementation Phase the villagers carried out collective action and organized as a group to solve their common problems. They also attempted to develop wider scale participation and to influence higher level policy making, which is a form of 'grounded civil society'.

My major role was as a supporter, assisting the villagers with what they needed, to implement their solutions to the problems by providing resources and materials. In some circumstances, the participants experienced difficulty with the new technical skills and required more information and skills in producing the bio materials. At this time a study trip and workshops were arranged which linked experts and organizations from outside with the community.

In the Implementation Phase, the villagers in the two communities mobilized social capital, including social networks, and norms of reciprocity and trust to increase their capacity, in dealing with the problems. The villagers linked with other people within the community and outside it to assist with organizing and implementing activities more effectively. This is due to the public consultation to solve the problem of flooding in Wungwern village. People from neighboring villages joined in the activities not only because they faced similar problems but also because social networks and norms of mutual assistance were an incentive for them to act collectively. Similarly, the organic agriculture group in Nong Phue village was also initially organized by people who had close relationships, such as relatives and neighbors. These actions demonstrate that social capital was an important element in activating civil society in these two communities. This is similar to Putnam's idea that social capital is a foundation for civic engagement (2000).

In summary, the PAR process was able to generate civil society by providing the opportunity for villagers to get together to solve their problems through discussion and investigation, knowledge sharing, and their common experiences of struggle. They launched collective actions to find solutions and implement them to resolve major community problems by mobilizing social networks to meet their aims more effectively.

The PAR process is therefore a process of helping people to be free from oppression. The outcomes of the PAR process in the two villages assisted the villagers to solve the problems of flooding, deforestation and health problems due to use of agricultural chemicals. Although not all their problems could be solved, the villagers were free to choose their own ways to solve the problems and so could increase their capacity for self-management, in dealing with community problems. PAR thus generated 'grounded civil society' in these rural communities.

This concurs with Greenwood & Levin (1998) and Smith (1997), who have suggested that action research aims to achieve a goal of liberating people from oppression. PAR is thus about personal and social transformation due to liberation. Chambers (2002, p. 99) also claims that PAR provides a democratized public sphere where marginalized groups have the opportunity to participate in sharing and criticizing public opinions. It is a civil society in which everyone can find a voice.

The Consequent Activities of the Research Project

In February 2004, I left the villages with the challenges, which we had undertaken in the research process, to carry on further actions on their own. Indeed, the research projects that I worked on with the villagers were springboards for other initiatives in both villages. In dealing with the flooding issue, the villagers in Wungwern village created a network with other villages who were also struggling with flooding in the five provinces along the Chi River. Called 'The Chi River Basin Conservation Network', this group organized a number of activities to deal with flooding. For example, they organized a traditional ceremony, 'Walking Along and Investigating the Chi River', from February 13-23, 2005, with the support of NGOs. The activity aimed to expose how local community lives depended on the Chi River. About 250 people from five provinces along the Chi River walked from the source to the mouth of the Chi River. They carried out discussions about the history of the people who live near the Chi River and organized a communal ritual ceremony to pay respect to the river. This demonstrated collective action on two issues: oppression from flooding and the desire to restore the ecology of the river. This activity evoked local people's awareness of the value of the Chi River, which has been a source of food for those living along the river for many generations.

Another activity that took place after the research finished was the repair of the rock dyke at Wungwern village. On July 17, 2005, the villagers worked with the committee of the Chi River Basin Conservation Network, the Sri Bun Rueng Sub-District Office and teachers and students from Kudlum Wungwern School to repair a dyke on the Chi River in the northern part of the Wungwern village. They built a dyke that is higher than the previous one and which can then store water in the dry season.

In terms of the school curriculum, after finishing the pilot project for developing a school curriculum for the local school, Wungwern Kudlum School, a larger scale project called 'The Process of Local Wisdom Knowledge for the Local School Curriculum' was launched with wide involvement by villagers, students, and teachers. The issues for community study were extended to cover all aspects of community life, such as the history of the community, the geography, the economy, cultural life, and natural resources such as the species of the fish in the Chi River and the diversity of trees in the forest. This knowledge about the community was put into the school curriculum for students to learn about their community's potential.

In Nong Phue village, a project called 'Organic Agriculture for Health and Ecology' was initiated by the pilot group during the first PAR project. The new project aimed to encourage farmers to realize the dangers of using agricultural chemicals and the effect of this use on health and ecology. The project intends to restore the community environment by promoting the use of bio materials.

The consequent projects 'The Process of Local Wisdom Knowledge for the Local School Curriculum' and 'Organic Agriculture for Health and Ecology' received funding support from the Thailand Research Fund. The research projects emphasized local people doing research by themselves: dealing with the struggles they faced, with trialing solutions, and reflecting on the lessons learnt, as well as reporting through a written document.

It was obvious that the villagers benefited from the first PAR project. They used the issues which emerged from the process of community analysis to launch new projects, and design their own research, with the support of the consultant researcher. In terms of

the villagers' skills, they benefited from doing the research, starting with the process of fact-finding investigations, and then making decisions for subsequent actions based on their own research.

How the PAR Process Facilitate Public Participation and Creates People Power

The process of PAR in this thesis had two key outcomes, participation and power, which empowered people to activate civil society.

People Participation

Participation is an important feature for generating civic engagement. In my research, the problems with flooding, provided very clear evidence, that the non-participative management structure of the government dam and the dyke construction projects, caused problems for the local communities. This led to the formation of civil society so that the local people could oppose the government projects.

In the experiences of PAR in the two communities, the villagers engaged in the process at different levels. At the initial phase of the research process, there were small groups of actual participants in both villages. After the project started, more participants became involved, some of whom were involved in some phases of the research process. The number of participants involved in the implementation phase continued to increase because the villagers could see the advantages of joining the activities. For example, the number of organic farms increased because the biomaterials prevented mice from damaging their rice farms. Participants at the consultation on the flooding problem were not only from Wungwern village but also eight other villages who faced the same problems.

In terms of the degree of involvement, at first the villagers only had a small degree of participation. However, the degree of involvement increased as participants brought up problems in the group discussions, made decisions and took action. As the research process went on, they tended to have a greater sense of belonging to the process and were ready to be involved in implementing their solutions and becoming free from their struggles.

In terms of participants, not all villagers could contribute at every phase of the research process. The leaders of the community contributed more to the creative thinking than the members of the groups who were involved in action phases. That was because the vulnerable families had to engage in their day to day work to earn money for their survival.

People Power

PAR is a process of people empowerment. Experiencing the PAR process can increase people's individual and community power. Power is also a key element for the emergence of 'grounded civil society' where people exercise their inner power to make decisions and implement solutions, in other words to become self-governing. The villagers in the two communities gained power through the PAR process in three ways.

The first way was through personal transformation. The villagers were empowered by developing their competence in analytical thinking and the skills to deal with their struggles. They gained knowledge and skills by doing community data collecting, analysis, decision making, group actions, and technical skill training, such as for organic agriculture. In this way the villagers gained confidence and abilities through the PAR process. As Rowland (1992 cited in Nelson & Wright, 1995, pp. 8-9) claimed, empowerment on a personal level is a means to develop a person's confidence and abilities.

The relationship between the researcher and the power changed, shifting from the researcher to the villagers by the end of the process. In the initial process, the researcher had the main control of the process, which gave the researcher more power than the villagers. In the following phases, the villagers came to have more knowledge and skill through the learning process of PAR, and power shifted to the villagers, who took on a major role in practicing and creating new knowledge. In this way the villagers gained the power necessary for dealing with their own issues.

The second way, the villagers gained power was through the outcomes of their activities. Their individual and community power increased when they succeeded in their goals. In

Wungwern village, the villagers claimed power over their natural resources when they set up the community forest regulations, to protect the forest from intruders. In this way the people gained power by increasing their capacity to manage their problems themselves. This mirrors the idea of Stringer (1996, p.32), who claimed that the process of PAR made the participants feel they empowered themselves. "The task in this circumstance is to provide a climate that gives people the sense that they are in control of their own lives, and that supports them as they take systematic action to improve their circumstance".

The third way was through collaboration with other people in the PAR process. The Wungwern villagers established connections with other villagers who had also faced flooding by setting up 'The Chi River Basin Conservation Network'. This way villagers gained more power by increasing the number of participants and taking the level of social action to a larger scale. Power was shifted beyond the community level to the regional level, so that the villagers could negotiate with the government on policy making at the Subdistrict Administrative Organization (SAO) level to get their problems recognized and policy put in place to solve the problems. This form of power generation is supported by Pretty & Scoones (1995) who claim that local organizations can join together, and up scale to carry greater political influence over state policy, and draw wider expertise than is available locally.

In conclusion, PAR was an important factor for activating civil society in the two communities. The process of PAR provided the villagers with an opportunity to cooperate with others, to share experiences and struggles, and to undertake their own solutions to meet common interests. The researcher needed to be flexible and able to follow the different situations and issues that might arise and develop from the PAR process. In terms of local people power, it is now obvious that the participatory action research empowered villagers to deal with their struggles. The process assisted participants to increase their power by developing their knowledge and understanding of problems and up-skilling them to solve the problems. This process enabled the villagers to address problems such as flooding, deforestation, and use of chemicals in agriculture. Public awareness of these issues also increased through the PAR process.

In addition, the PAR process itself generates an inter-generational transfer of indigenous knowledge and skills, between participants from the elders to the young, through telling life history and the community histories. It in turn creates social networks and norms of trust between them. It also creates community identity and strengthens social cohesiveness in the villages.

The final phase of the process brought about civil society activities, in which the villagers' actively participated collectively to deal with their struggles and defend their common interests. By networking for capacity building when the problem was beyond the community's ability to deal with, civil society shifted from collective action at the community level to a level, reaching beyond the community. In this way, villagers' power increased.

The process of PAR methodology could be the tool to transfer the knowledge and skills of the villagers. It supported the transfer exchange from generation to generation of villagers.

Lessons Learned from Participatory Action Research

I found that the PAR process worked effectively to activate civil society in the two communities. It encouraged people to join in collective action to address their common problems. From this experience, I would suggest that PAR is a suitable methodology for strategic application to promote civil society in Thailand.

In terms of the research methodology, the PAR process had two outcomes. As well as the changes that occurred in the villages, I personally was also able to develop my understanding and skills in doing PAR. The research enabled me to develop a new research paradigm in which the villagers are central to the partnership. It was a process of learning by doing for both the villagers and myself. Although I have lived and worked in the Northeast Region for twenty years, I could not have achieved the outcomes of this research, other than through the PAR process.

The methodology of PAR helped to transform the villagers from individuals to activist actors encountering difficult problems together. Although the process was slow at the

beginning because villagers were unfamiliar with the concept of PAR, the process became clear to them as we worked together through the research and activities.

The researcher found that the PAR method was very flexible. The methods used to mobilize people's participation in the research process were adapted and initiated through actual situations. The PAR process itself was not an orderly, linear, step by step, process, and the researcher's role changed as the research progressed. Therefore, the researcher had to be flexible and the researcher's skills had to be able to respond any unexpected issues that came out of the PAR process.

The probing of villager's interest in participating in the research is an important step before starting. The researcher and the villagers need to decide together whether or not to undertake the PAR process. The research project will be much easier if both sides are committed to working together.

I found that an active and trusting relationship with the villagers was essential to facilitate villager participation. It is a 'research capital'. The achievement of PAR is dependent on a good relationship among all partnerships, including the researcher, NGO workers, and the villagers. I shared language, religion and culture with the participants, and because of that it was easier to build trust and acceptance with the participants. However, it is still possible for researchers who have different linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds to use PAR, as long as they can manage to work with the participants appropriately and understand the participants' situations from the participants' own perspectives. Researchers should hold the basic principle of respect for people's abilities rather than having a superior attitude, as a prerequisite for undertaking PAR.

The constraints in the action research process came from both sides, the researcher and the villagers. In terms of the researcher, I spent intensive periods in working with the villagers and had to adjust myself to working at night, which was the most suitable time for the villagers to participate as they had to engage in their day to day work during the day. In working with PAR, the timing should suit the people whom the researcher works with.

The researcher should not anticipate the results of the PAR process, in terms of both the level of participation and achievements. During this PAR experience, at different times villagers failed to attend meetings and stopped participating altogether during the process. However, all participant involvement however limited or periodic, developed the learning process and created knowledge even when it did not achieve the expected outcome.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the research findings. It reveals the meaning of grounded civil society which was developed from the context of rural communities in the Northeast region. The factors activating civil society are also discussed as the inside and outside factors. The inside factor includes three characteristics: the economic condition, the cultural and the social capitals. Firstly, economic condition of the villages indicates that the good economic condition of the villagers influences the success of civic actions comparing with those in another village where people are poor. The second characteristic is the cultural factor including beliefs and the rituals which is found as the basic foundation to create social networks and norms of reciprocity and trust among people in these communities. The social networks and norms of reciprocity and trust are characterized as the component of social capital. The outside factor is the negative effect of the government development projects: the dam and dyke constructions. These projects created flooding and aroused villagers to mobilize civic movements. Another outside factor is the participatory action research intervention. The participatory action research process facilitated people to understand their situations and problems and find alternative solutions as well as organized collective action to solve the problems. The PAR was also a process for villagers to enhance and exercise their inner power to meet their self-governing. The outcome of the process is regarded as grounded civil society.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter concludes thesis and research findings, presenting the wider implications for theory and public policy, for the frontline community worker, and for the future research.

The introductory chapter explained the background of the research and its crucial contribution to Thai knowledge of civil society. The thesis examined the concept of civil society in the rural communities in the Chi River, Northeast Thailand, focusing on the questions of what civil society means in the Thai rural context, what factors made civil society proactive, and how civil society was activated.

Chapter Two revealed the various concepts of civil society, particular in the Western paradigm, and explored the implications of this, along with the concepts of cultural and social capital. This identified the ambiguity of civil society discourse, and how it was used in various perspectives. There was no consensus on the unitary perspectives of civil society across the literature.

Chapter Three gave more specific implications of civil society in Asian and Thai societies, and the controversies surrounding the concept. It illustrated that civil society in Asian countries tends to be corporatist, with the state standing alongside civil society activity. In Thailand, civil society has been flavoured by Western ideas, but the apparent forms of civil society are diverse. The idea of civil society was transformed from traditional forms of civil society to the classed-based struggle, and then to a new way of pluralist politics after the economic crisis in the 1990s. The present form of corporatist relations of civil society, which might include the government sector as a counterpart, has become the more prominent form of civil society.

The varieties of theoretical viewpoints of emancipatory, critical and postmodernist theories were discussed in Chapter Four. It was clear that the theories contributed to the model of research design for the thesis. These theories provided guidance for the application of participatory action research as the main methodology in the thesis.

Chapter Five concerned the methodology of participatory action research from the two case studies. The PAR process from the thesis practice had six phases: establishing rapport, sharing an understanding of action research, data collection, data validation and analysis, analyzing alternatives solutions, and implementation to pursue solutions. Other methods of qualitative research; focus group discussions, brainstorming, and in depth interviews, were used for collecting data. Participatory techniques were also employed to gain information, including transect walks for a community forest survey to appraise the condition of the forest and its potential, life history interviews for reflection on the significant events of community history from different time periods, and geographical mapping for reviewing the source of flooding, and analyzing the data.

Chapter Six provided the macro perspective of social, political, and cultural contexts of the Northeast Region, and the Chi River Basin communities. The people are of the Thai-Laos ethnic group. They have distinctive beliefs which were inherited from the mixture of Theravada Buddhist, Brahman religion and animism and practised since the sixth and ninth centuries. This belief system influenced their rituals, which were different from those in other parts of the country. The many changes of this region were from outside factors, particular the government development projects of infrastructure, including road, and dam constructions. The centralized administrative and education reforms during the nineteenth century brought changes to people's ways of life. As a result of the National Economic and Social Development Plans from 1963-1981, which emphasized modernization policies, and had the economic-oriented paradigms. Economic conditions transformed from an agrarian society to a commercial agricultural society. This background of the regional setting examined local people's conditions, their culture, norms and beliefs, to understand the community context in which fieldwork took place.

Chapter Seven and Eight highlighted the community background of the two case studies. The villagers in both villages were rice farmers. The economic conditions of Wungwern were poor, compared with Nong Phue, because of the limited of land holdings. Some of the Wungwern villagers migrated to work in the city as labourers to earned supplementary income. In Nong Phue village, there was sufficient land for villagers to grow vegetables for a second income. The economic conditions of Nong Phue influenced the success of civic actions, compared with those in Wungwern where

people were poor. The communities were kinship based. People practiced Buddhism mixed with animism beliefs, which gave rise to the particular rituals. In terms of community problems, the Wungwern village had a crisis with flooding, whereas Nong Phue village had significant problems as a result of the chemical materials used in farming.

Chapter Nine illustrated the PAR process conducted in the two communities. The processes of collecting data, analyzing the problem, considering the findings, and planning and implementing actions were carried out. In Wungwern village, the PAR process brought up the significant community problems of flooding and deforestation. They organized a public consultation with government officers to find solutions for flooding. They set up a network with people who were facing similar problems in the communities along the Chi River. In response to the deforestation, the villagers established community forest regulations, which they enforced with traditional rituals. In Nong Phue village, the issue was agricultural chemical use. The PAR process stimulated villagers to change their farming from chemical agriculture to organic agriculture.

The thesis findings were illustrated in Chapter Ten. Civil society in the two communities was formed by both outside and inside factors. Outside factors included the negative impact of the government development projects: dams and the dyke constructions. The intervention of the participatory action research process activated the villagers in the two communities to be concerned with the communities' problems which confronted them, and to act to solve their common problems.

Participation in these public issues, through the process of PAR, is a form of civil society. The inside factors, which activated civil society, were the economic conditions and the social capital already existing in the community. The social capital was built up around kinship ties, as well as the cultural capital embedded in the social values and norms of the local people. Religious belief was the primary foundation of social capital, and it accrued through the collective performance of ritual ceremonies, and various activities in the social and economic spheres. This social capital was sustained by community development activities and formed the foundation of civil society, whatever the pressures exerted by outside forces.

Having summarized the key findings from the research questions, the implications of these findings are now examined, for their implications in respect of theory, for the Thai central and local government policy, and to front line community workers.

The case study demonstrated how civil society had been developed in the historical social, cultural and geographical contexts in their communities. Civil society thus had dynamic forms and dimensions in the different circumstances which were driven from inside and outside force factors.

The result of the study highlighted the meaning of 'grounded civil society' as the sphere of an autonomous group of local people who actively participated in collective action to deal with their struggles, and to promote their common interests by mobilizing social and cultural capital, in consort with other people, in order to productively solve their problems. Grounded civil society may include traditional forms of mutual assistance, and formal or informal social associations. It seeks to have a significant influence on public policy at any level.

Theoretical Implications

The research illustrated how concepts of civil society and social capital, framed within the Thai rural community, were different from the mainstream Western use of these concepts. The central idea from Western writers focused on civil society as a realm of non-coercive collective action outside the state and economic sectors.

The key findings of civil society in this study interpreted 'grounded civil society' in the domain of community life, where participating citizens took collective action to deal with their hardships and to promote their common interests. Grounded civil society thus encompasses the economic and political spheres of villagers' lives. Grounded civil society, in other words, has no clear sectoral boundaries that differentiate it from the political and economic spheres. This is in contrast with the major strands of thinking about civil society as defined by classical theorists such as Alexis de Tocqueville (1990), and Cohen and Arato (1995), for whom civil society is an arena separate from state and market. In addition, the research findings regard the sphere of family relationship as the main source creating social capital for fostering grounded civil society. This finding

contrasts with that of Cohen and Arato (1995), who claim that civil society arises above all, from the sphere of intimate relationships.

Grounded civil society in the thesis is contrasted with most conventional understandings of civil society, which generally focus on political attitudes and activities which aim to influence the state. Grounded civil society, on the other hand, derives from a basic level of politics, at the level of people involved in day to day activities, that promotes their common interests and social well-being. This is the 'public politics' which David Mathews (1999, p.1) defined as collective group activities which make possible the advancement of their common well-being.

The finding of grounded civil society is a new contribution to the understanding of civil society in the rural Thai context, which was developed through its culture and social structure. The social structure, which is a kinship based society, shows the nature of Thai rural society to be a vertical structure. This conditions people's attitudes and behaviour to respect people of higher 'rank'. People formed relationships based on respect for social status through religious based associations and the social structure administration of the community, where the abbot, the leaders and the elders are of higher rank. The characteristics of grounded civil society found in the thesis are thus generated through a hierarchical structure of cooperation, rather than a horizontal structure. This vertical relationship of respect and trust was able to mobilize collective action effectively.

The research suggests that a particular context shaped different forms and different characteristics of the civil society. Civil society in the rural Thai context built up around social networks which mobilized from kinships and norms of reciprocity. These social networks vary from the conventional Western idea, that social networks in civil society are mainly horizontal and people have equality in society. Social networks as a component of Thai civil society theory, are generated from vertical relationships and based on religion institutions.

This finding is in contrast to Putnam's (1993) idea that civil society arises solely from voluntary associations where people participate on an equal level through horizontal bonds of relationship, rather than through vertical bonds of relationship. This

characteristic is slightly different from Skocpol (Skocpol & Fiorina, 1999), Encarnacion (2003), and Berman (1997), who have articulated that it was not necessarily a fact that horizontal organizations contributed to the formation of civil society. But the hierarchical structures could shape civil society. For them civil society could be generated by outside factors from above, such as state leaders, and elites, political parties, and government structures and institutions. This argument is unlike the origin of the Thai civil society which is generated from the hierarchical structure relationships rooted in community rather than outside forces.

The theory of grounded civil society that derives from the research is characterized by the cultural capital and social capital which bind communities and fosters the formation of civil society. This idea is also supported by many scholars such as Fukuyama (2000, 2001) and Coleman (1990) who have emphasized the role cultural values play in the creation of social capital. They claimed that social capital derives from ethical, community, and family values, while social ties came from informal norms of relationships which promoted co-operation among people. Traditional social groups, such as tribes, clans and village associations, are based on shared norms and use these norms to achieve communal ends.

In terms of the elements of social capital, the research found that social capital identified the characteristics of cultural capital: a shared belief system, norms of reciprocity, the norms and values of practicing virtue, and social networks based on kinship ties. This strong social capital brought strength to civic engagements and the civil society of the communities. This finding is similar to the idea of Putnam (1993) and Ostrom (1998) who claimed that social capital comprises of networks, norms and trust and facilitates collective action for common interests.

The research found that social capital was built up around informal associations where people interacted through cultural associations and kinships. This finding is important because it indicates that social networks, trust and reciprocity are more complex than the assumptions of the Putnam school of social capital theory (1993, 1995), for whom social capital manifests through membership of voluntary associations and formal organizations. Social capital in the rural Thai communities is clearly embedded in the informal structures of cultural groups and kinships ties. Norms of trust and reciprocity

are also largely generated from these sources. This demonstrates that social capital in the rural Thai communities is different from that found in northern Italy, Europe and America, because people commonly engage in a range of local cultural and livelihood activities, not only formal organizations.

Grounded civil society can be found in communities whose social structures are based on traditional culture and forms of mutual assistance, where people are engaged in, and feel an obligation to help others. This relationship is also found in other traditional societies, for example in Samoan and Maori societies, where culture is the foundation of civil society in their communities (Swain, 1999). In the Samoan context, Fa'asamoa provides a sense of identity, social customs, social interactions, and traditional forms of mutual assistance. In Maori society ethnic groups, relationships, and networks are developed around informal associations such as family and community (Williams & Robinson, 2002). In other words grounded civil society in non-western countries, or among indigenous people, is generated by the cultural and social capital upon which their norms, values, and social networks are based.

This perspective of civil society accords with the school of thought of communitarianism which is based respectively on the values of family, community values and traditional cultural roots. The communitarians respect the equality of people participation in decision making and collective action to meet public goals.

The research revealed the relationships of social capital and civil society in the Thai context. The contributions of the theoretical implications include adding to existing classical and contemporary theories of civil society the characteristic of Thai social capital shaping civil society and providing strategies to strengthen the relationship between the two concepts.

It was evident from this study that there was another form and perspective of civil society. The villagers were affected by the top-down government project of the dyke construction which aimed to reserve water for the urban people. But it caused serious flooding and affected the local people. The villagers formed their collective action to deal with their struggle and confronted the government power. It was apparent that the villagers were marginalized by the bureaucratic system. It brought hardship to the

villagers and obstructed them from articulating their interests. The villagers employed an offensive response and challenged the government law by destroying the dyke.

Other phenomena could be seen from the consequence of participatory action research process when the villagers used an assertive approach to confront the government bureaucracy. The process of PAR empowered people, and increased their capacity for self-management to cope with their struggle and oppression. To response to their needs, the villagers set up public consultations aimed at influencing local and central government policies. They set up a Chi River network with people who faced the same struggle in bargaining with government power. This approach was characteristic of the Marxist perspective of civil society, where civil society is oppositional to the state. This approach echoes Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx, and Antonio Gramsci's ideas, where the oppressed take action against bureaucratic authoritarian regimes and the dominant elite class which exercises social and economic power through the state (Howell & Pearce, 2002; Encarnacion, 2003). Civil society in this form also accorded with the New Left theorists, Jurgen Habermas's idea of civil society where civil society acts to protect the autonomous development in the public sphere from being undermined by the state bureaucracy (Baker, 2002). Civil society in this scenario demonstrated the struggle between rural social movements and the state over basic material conditions for consumption rather the traditional Marxist theory of class struggle.

The micro level approach of 'grounded civil society' uncovered and contributed to the theoretical idea of civil society. The research points to the conclusion that civil society in Thailand has no single model. It shows different forms and perspectives. The literature of civil society theory should explained different forms and characteristics, which vary from different historical, economic, social, political, and cultural contexts. It should include foundational theory of people's lives in participatory, public politics, as attributes of Thai civil society theory. The parochial scholars, fast in their views of 'one model fits all', block their proposals with naïve meaning, and exclude other perspectives from the genealogy of civil society, undermining the development of civil society. The concept of civil society in Thailand should be reconceptualised by bringing the variables in the local context into account.

Challenges

The thesis discussion examined different perspectives of civil society and social capital. A number of important action and research implications for further work are highlighted by challenges inherent in the concepts of civil society and social capital.

Implications for Public Policy

The findings of this thesis are a powerful reflection on the grounded civil society and the policy of building civil society in Thailand. In respect of the way cultural and social capital shape grounded civil society, the findings should provide a useful understanding of cultural and social capital and civil society in Thai society, particularly for government policy and others in the front line of policy development for implementation in rural communities.

Traditional associations, including cultural aspects, were demonstrably able to generate social networks, trust and reciprocity and thereafter shape civil society. The traditional ways of organizing and enhancing traditional associations may serve as a development model for civil society policy in Thailand. Civil society in the traditional form should be knowledgeable and legitimated in the National Economic and Social Development Plan document. This study contributes to the recognition of a civil society concept which concerns the traditional and respects values in a particular context, which contribute to the promotion of civil society.

In terms of social networks, and norms of reciprocity and trust, social capital is accumulated through individual interaction and a community-based socialization process. This is a long term process of socializing individual attitudes, values, and beliefs, as well as the transformation of collective behaviour. In order to build social capital in the short term, government policy should focus on enhancing social capital through locally-based educational institutes and programs.

People participation is an important principle for generating civic engagement. In my research, the flooding problem provided very clear evidence of lack of engagement which was manifested in the strong bureaucracy with a non-participative management

structure, as well as the emphasis on the economic growth paradigm. This brought negative effects to local communities. Poor government plans and processes can actually weaken traditional forms of indigenous civil society. Therefore, the government policies, which direct development projects and establish development groups that work to increase economic growth, have to be aware of the possible negative effects of these interventions. Public policy, therefore, should engage people in a participatory process, especially where those issues will affect the lives and livelihoods of those affected, even if they are not the direct beneficiaries of the project.

This thesis clearly points out the ways in which civil society can be actively generated and promoted, or alternatively weakened by the state, through the establishment of funding, skills support, and constitutional legitimacy. Increased funds to promote civil society capacity, given the role civil society can play in making a contribution to social and economic development, would build a robust civil society.

The government should respect civil society roles and decentralize administration by allocating some responsibilities to the civil society associations to contribute to complement of the government tasks.

The Thai Government has a policy of placing civil society structures called 'Prachakom' in the provinces, sub-districts and villages to support local development and local administration. In practice, the role of civil society is really a committee to legitimate the government planning process. The government intends to transform Prachakom into groups which will play roles in the future of their community. This research raises concerns that for this transformation to be effective, serious attention must be paid to other forms of civil society, apart from these imposed organizations. Prachakom should have the genuine characteristics of a cognitive model, comprising attitudes and values such as volunteerism, cooperation, trust, tolerance, non-violence, and public consciousness. They should create a genuine public space for all villagers to exercise their common interests, rather than focus only on issues of structural organization. The policy should encourage the process of building people's consciousness. Recruitment for Prachakom membership should engage people who have appropriate attitudes, rather than making appointments from institutional positions.

The research illustrated the implications and the consequences of how people could be empowered through the exercise of the PAR process. The results of those exercises are a form of civil society. The PAR process, therefore, should be an alternative approach for strategic application for the government to promote civil society in Thailand.

Implications for the Frontline Community Workers

The thesis provides implications relating to the frontline community worker.

The community workers should open their views and pay more attention to all aspects of civil society associations, particular those of the traditional form. The frontline workers should deal with the local communities' with respect to their community cultures. Community workers should pay more attention to traditional forms of civil society, and frontline procedures should take these groups into the consultation process before taking action in communities to promote civil society.

Training programmes for frontline workers should be provided to enhance their knowledge and skills in working in participatory processes. It has been demonstrated in this thesis that participatory processes can activate civil society. The participatory process facilitated social interaction among people with their problems and stimulated them to work to meet their goals. The participatory research benefited participants and assisted civil society formation. The frontline workers should use participatory approaches when working in the community. The community workers should work as facilitators in a partnership, rather than as a director in a hierarchical position with a superior attitude. They should be obliged to promote and open public space for civic actions, which could advance people's self-management, and nurture civil society.

Community workers should promote villagers' knowledge and participatory working skills, to enhance villagers' potential, so that the villagers can deal with particular issues otherwise beyond the community's capacity. This will give grounded civil society more potential to negotiate their relationship to take care of their social well-being. The genuine ideology of civil society, voluntary and tolerance should be promoted among the community members.

Community workers should value local knowledge and facilitate indigenous knowledge to promote or contribute to social and economic development. Traditional forms of civil society and their capacity should be examined and recorded as social mapping, for the possibility of drawing potential for promoting rural development and people well-being.

The skill base of traditional forms of civil society should be enhanced and indigenous forms of civil society should be strengthened, so they can be involved in new public issues arising from outside forces.

The research found that there are relationships between cultural and social capital and civil society. The antecedent culture within society is the foundation of community virtue and builds up social cohesiveness. Culture is thus an important element to foster civil society. The practitioner should recognise these cultural aspects and support their reproduction, as well as strengthening culture in local communities in the forms of knowledge and belief, in physical objects, and in the institution forms.

Implications for Future Research

From the above discussion, the following challenging questions should be considered for further research.

Arguments about civil society and social capital will be strengthened by the examination of particular contexts and outcomes. Therefore, research should examine these areas in a range of Thai contexts: rural and urban areas, rich and poor communities, and different ethnicities, etc, in order to fully understand the specific Thai concepts of civil society and social capital, rather than explaining them in general terms.

Grounded civil society is found in homogenous communities where people have similar ethnicity and interests and are bound by kinship ties. This raises the question of how civil society works in heterogeneous communities made up of different groups of people with diverse interests beyond the community. Civil society research could address heterogeneity of norms, values and social networks within relevant sectors of civil society.

This domain of research could also be concerned with how civil society at a grassroots level could be promoted, and how it would link to the higher levels of government decision making around policy and consultation.

Practical problems may arise when civil society at the grassroots level has to deal with bigger issues at a macro level and attempts to influence government policy. The evidence in the thesis shows that civil society can help rural communities to address hardships; however, when the issues reach beyond the micro-level, civil society needs to collaborate with various partners, such as NGO workers or even government officers, in order to increase capacity and up - scale activities to deal with more difficult processes. Civil society at this level needs to be examined and to explore how transition of civil society can occur to deal with problems at the regional and national levels.

Future research is recommended to inquire into the PAR process best suited for the engagement of grounded civil society at meso and macro levels.

In terms of partnerships, issues beyond a community's capacity should not be taken over by NGOs. They should build the capacity, but not design the strategy. This suggests a challenging research question about how a dynamic people power can be relocated from the outside partnerships to local communities.

There are various features and characteristics of civil society in Thailand, the various forms of civil society should be examined and modified.

In summation, the thesis provides an understanding of civil society and how it is generated in the Thai rural community context. While the research does not offer a model for generating civil society, it does draw lessons from the way consultation and research on cultural, economic and political activities in rural communities activates civil society, and looks at the ever-present obstacles to this process. The researcher anticipates that the study will contribute to the recovery, conservation, strengthening and sustainability of grounded civil society in rural Thai communities.

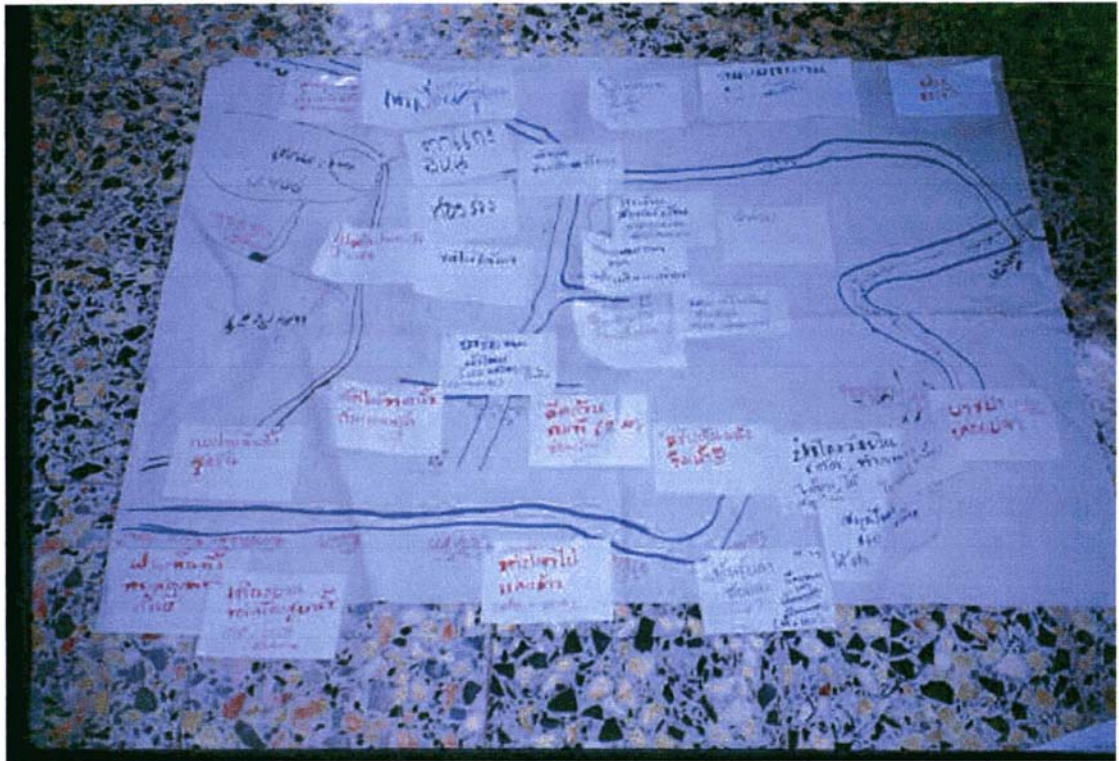
Appendix



Picture 1: The leader's meeting at night at Wung Wern Village



Picture 2: Group discussion at night at Wung Wern village



Picture 3: Participatory tool: social mapping of Wungwern village



Picture 4: Participatory tool: drawing geographical map of Wungwern Village after surveying the village geography



Picture 5: Villagers explain the flooding problems to government officers at a public consultation at Wungwern Village



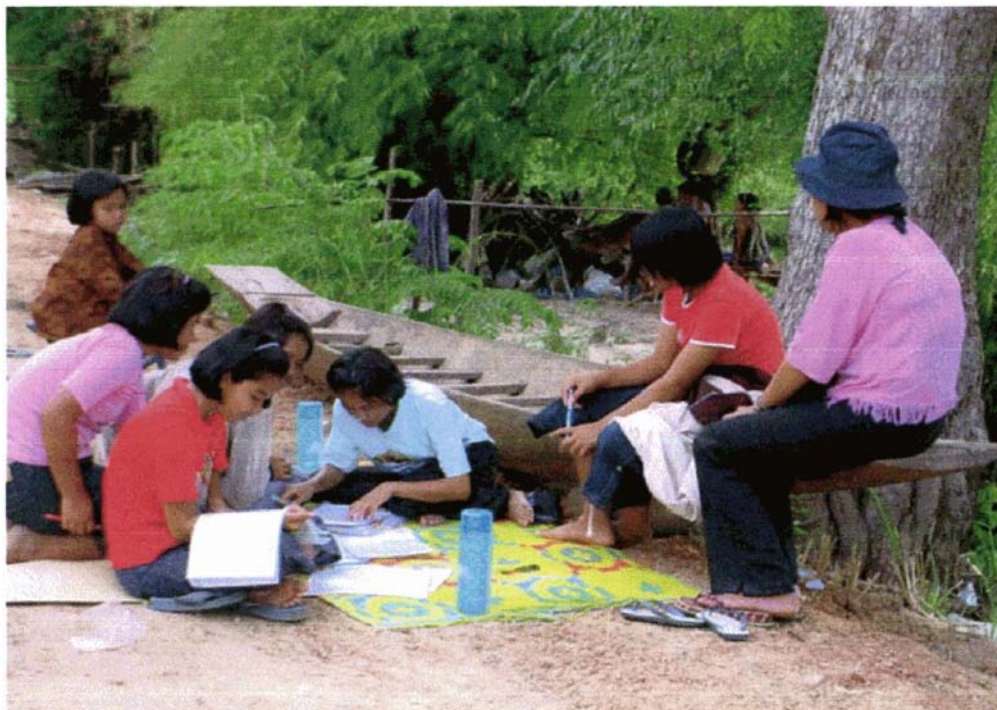
Picture 6: Surveying Kong Wungwern Forest by using a participatory approach, a transect walk technique



Picture 7: Villagers in Wungwern village wrapped large trees with yellow robes to mark their sacredness in the Tree Ordination ritual, to protect their forest from being felled



Picture 8: Students interviewed the elders about their community history in Wungwern village



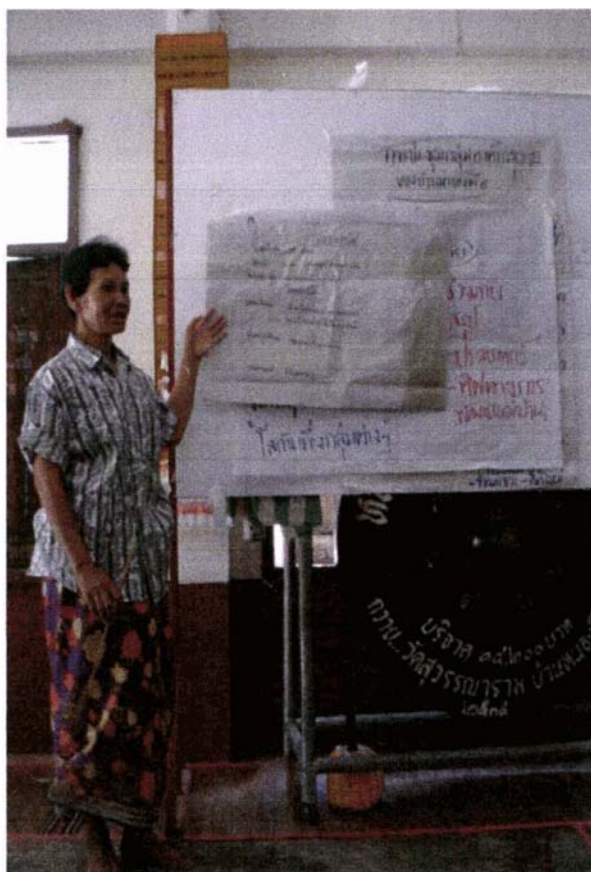
Picture 9: Students from Wungwern Kudlum School discussed community data after they finished the data collecting.



Picture 10: The elders in Nong Phue village told me their life history



Picture 11: Brainstorming about the village problems and community's potential in Nong Phue village



Picture 12: Participants present the village's problems after a brainstorming group discussion in Nong Phue Village



Picture 13: Vegetable plantation in Nong Phue village



Picture 14: Vegetable plantation using various chemical materials



Picture 15: Making organic materials for insecticide in Nong Phue village



Picture 16: Making organic fertilizer with animal manure, rice grain, and black ash from rice grain in Nong Phue village

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