Sustainable Development: Finding a Paradigm Shift in Northern Thailand

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May 2013

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Thesis Proposal:

A number of different development discourses have arisen in Northern Thailand, from NGO's, state-led projects, Royal Projects of His Majesty the King, and international development aid; however the recent push in development to achieve sustainability and incorporate input from local communities has been largely unsuccessful and is in need of revision.

Abstract:

This paper seeks to explore the complex interactions of stakeholders in Northern Thailand's rural development and examines the local, village-level impacts of different development discourses in an attempt to find what within these agendas has proven successful to local communities. Most important in this analysis is the role of local knowledge, villager agendas, and cultural durability in light of these projects. Looking at a variety of case studies from a number of different stakeholders in the conversation I analyze the impacts, both positive and negative, of the current rural development paradigms. Primarily, this paper examines the impacts of agricultural and forest development in ethnic hill tribe villages throughout Thailand. Rural villages in Southeast Asia's Golden Triangle, the area where Laos, Thailand and China converge, still heavily rely on agriculture for their own self-sufficiency and incomes (Bello et al. 1998), although, land transformation and ecological degradation has created land insecurity in many of these Northern regions (UHDP, personal communication, January 26, 2013). [Keywords: sustainable development, indigenous knowledge, Northern Thailand]

Introduction:

Thailand presents a unique case in what is often termed the 'Global North' and 'Global South' divides because of its fairly recent ascent as a developed and powerful presence in Southeast Asia. A country that was once considered a scene of poverty and vast inequality is now driving industrialization in the region. Much of Thailand's development has unfortunately come at a price. The agricultural sector's sudden emergence into the international market jolted rural development, transformed the countryside, and devastated the ecological landscape (Reunglertpanyakul, 1997). In addition, Prime Minister Thaskin's development agenda promoted rapid industrialization schemes and integration into the international economy (Kuhonta, 2008). Within this era Thailand has also benefited from development such as democratic participation, community empowerment and environmental security. In order for this democratization to be implemented in development, a new paradigm must emerge in all development sectors, including NGOs and national and international development agencies.

Development has sought to reverse trends of poverty, drug cultivation and food insecurity in Northern Thailand's land management. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of state-led development projects or locally oriented NGOs, the needs and rights of villagers go unnoticed. Stakeholders behind development policy need to enter into dialogue, most importantly with local villagers to rework the development agenda in Northern Thailand and also to empower local people to make their own decisions regarding development.

Recently, interest has peaked in development discourse to implement a more 'sustainable' development agenda (Fergus & Rowney, 2005). Many development agents introduce 'sustainable development' as a new term, but I argue that this is simply a continuation of old development agendas polished with shiny, new titles. Many stakeholders have indulged in this rich and overly romantic language without any constructive application of it. Government projects often exclude groups without citizenship rights or miscalculate the needs of local communities (Hirsch, 1989). NGOs inhabit a gray area between the state and civil society. It remains unclear whether they are held accountable to local villagers or policies of the state when providing development aid (Kamat, 2004). International aid agencies are unequipped to understand cultural differences and therefore apply catch-all development techniques to different communities (McKinnon, 2008). Royal Projects support self-sufficiency, but still rely heavily on national-level policy reform for land rights and political participation of upland tribes (Chirayu & Kobsak, 2003). The challenge for development agendas lay in creating programs able to mitigate the imminent side effects of development and encourage partnership and cooperation between stakeholders to improve outdated or unsuccessful projects.

New policy initiatives at both the national and international level seek to strengthen local level governance. NGOs are beginning to work in conjunction with villagers in development projects (Forsyth & Johnson, 2002). I suggest using a multitude of development ideologies to promote tangible change in communities where projects are implemented. Stakeholders must resist the urge to implement a single, overarching

development plan across the world. As this transformation in the development paradigm begins to shift toward community management and knowledge, new definitions for common terms such as development, sustainability, and sufficiency that reflect the understanding of local communities and not just development experts and stakeholders are needed. Development discourse must, to poach Fernando's term, resist the *scientific institutionalization* of the term "sustainable development" and "local knowledge." Scientific institutionalization is the defining of terms by experts in development that are not understood or accepted at the local level.

This paper utilizes a number of different development projects throughout Thailand. My aim is not to discredit the importance of development agencies at any level, but argues for the re-structuring of development paradigms to encourage village and community level participation. In addition, this paper incorporates new literature and agendas that acknowledge local viewpoints and community management techniques in Northern Thailand.

I agree with Davis and Ebbe's (1995) image of development when they state, "Until recently, a local culture has been seen as a hindrance to development, where as today we must rather look upon a culture as an asset, as driving forces for self-development." While I argue in defense of local development efforts, I do not wish to over-romanticize indigenous knowledge. Rather I encourage incorporating ecologically sustainable practices and discussion with villagers into development discourse to transform more unsustainable ones so that culture and traditions are not compromised.

Ultimately, sustainable development discourse should not reside in the hands of academics and researchers; but rather should reside with the people and place where change shall occur.

Research Methods:

Research was collected both from academic resources from Thailand, Southeast Asia, and similar agricultural development projects in the rural South. Also, I supplement arguments with personal observations and discoveries made while traversing a handful of Northern Thai villages that will be interwoven into the discussion to expand on the full dynamic of these various stakeholders.

Development Over Time:

Development has undergone a variety of structural adjustments. It has been attempted from almost every level of the political spectrum and even from apolitical bodies. It has been analyzed from different approaches and theories. And it has evolved with the historical trends of imperialism, colonialism, industrialization and now, sustainability. Yet, throughout history intellectuals and academics, agencies and organizations struggle to find development strategies that can shed the negative side effects of their implementation.

A common theme among previous development theories suggests that "development" is a state of being in which there is a concrete and realistic end point. However, there are very real difficulties with viewing development as a destination. Development academics tell local communities that certain universal and technical fixes are needed to induce development, and local communities often accept this inaccurate depiction of development. This idea must be rearticulated. Even as development discussions argue for sustainability, local knowledge, community-based organization and local empowerment they have, in practice, diverged very little from the development paradigm preached by previous theories.

Development paradigms thus far progress to a single end—the apparent conclusion that economic growth is indeed the only means to reach development. The key relics of development theory tend to overlook the value of socially sustainable development in favor of economic or environmental sustainability.

Though the history of development is pertinent to development discourse today, I will focus on the paradigm's shift toward environmental sustainability. It is important to recognize the difference between environmental, economic and social sustainability because while development has sought to tackle these issues individually, it has yet to write an agenda that fully addresses the interconnectedness among these layers of sustainability.

Sustainable Development:

The 1983 Brundtland Commission provided the foundations for the rise of sustainable development and the introduction of environmental concerns in developmental paradigms. This was given further attention by the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development that occurred in Rio de Janeiro (Simon, 1997). As concerns about climate and environmental change began to carry more weight globally, international development discourse began utilizing new language to address these issues. This simple shift in language accomplished very little in altering the theories that economic growth provides the only measurement of development's success.

To quote Frank LeVaness and Patrick Primeaux from the UN's Earth Summit, "governments recognize the need to redirect international and national plans and policies to ensure that all economic decisions fully [take] into account any environmental impact" (2004, pp. 186). They did indeed *recognize* this fact, but the degree to which development discourses actually applied this fundamental aspect of sustainability is questionable. They recognized sustainability as an issue; but the term was superficial and could not be applied to new projects.

In the 2002 Johannesburg Summit, there was a similar vague call for integrating sustainable references to development models that pervaded thus far and noted the need for responses to "sustainable development" (LeVanness & Primeaux, 2004). However, the problem with recognizing the challenges to sustainable development was that none existed because the areas in which "sustainable development" was to occur had not been

articulated and the challenges to enforcing it went unnoted. The term itself had no concrete or measurable definition and therefore existed in name only, a term to impress and elude any attempt at actually constructing a method for marrying environmental concerns and poverty alleviation.

One of the most commonly quoted and recognized definitions of sustainable development is pulled from the Brundtland Commission of 1987 and goes as follows, sustainable development is, "Development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UN World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). The international community praised such a concept, assuming that because the issue of the environment had been raised and accepted that development agendas would radically alter their courses. However, what has occurred thus far in development action reflects very little change from its past trajectory. The Brundtland Commission may have introduced a new term for development, but it did not introduce any new actions.

Sustainability can mean many things. It is used in economics, politics, and societies. It does not relate to any particular field or area of study. The term sustainability is itself not a fixed term, but rather one that is dynamic and ever changing. Fergus and Rowney depict the nature of defining such a term stating, "the notion of Sustainable Development as a conflict resolution tool is likely to lead to a dogmatic cul-de-sac, with debate replacing discourse and progress crashing into the barriers of a dead end" (2005, pp. 19). Fergus and Rowney were very accurate in their description of sustainable

development being an unquantifiable term. Development discourse needs to accept that sustainability is a spectrum. Communities can be more or less sustainable than others, but they will never achieve *complete* sustainability.

Development intellectuals have used this term not only as the crux of many recent debates, but also as a buzz word for enhancing journals, essays and development plans to give these written works an air of legitimacy (Fernando, 2003). The term is enough to legitimize development agendas, making any project look favorable simply because it utilizes the term sustainability. Banerjee argues,

> Discourses of sustainable development are based on a unitary system of knowledge and, despite its claims of accepting plurality, there is a danger of marginalizing or co-opting traditional knowledges to the detriment of communities who depend on the land for their survival. (2003, pp. 144)

This unitary system of knowledge originated with Western colonial thought and has yet to be updated or reevaluated in light of present conditions.

Thus Fernando's scientific institutionalization of language at the top spoils any chance for hope of action funneling down to those at the bottom. Thus, according to Léle (1991), sustainable development failed to produce a "solid conceptual foundation" for initiating polices and criteria for its tangible use. Therefore, despite the waves made in international media, nothing within the actual implementation of development schemes underwent any sort of transformation. Sustainable development aspired to the goals of sustainable growth, but the term represented the Western characteristic that separated the economic from the social (Banerjee, 2003). The term became simply a key political

"supplement to the dominant paradigm of economic development" (Fergus & Rowney, 2005). Ideas of sustainable development were subsumed in discussions of economic advancement.

Wilbanks states that sustainable development is "long-term equitable economic progress with a balanced relationship with our physical environment" (1994, pp. 543). Such a discussion fully recognizes the economic and environmental pillars of sustainability, but leaves out socially sustainable development options. This also highlights the inherent ambiguity tied to such a term that lies within development itself. The term suffers from the duality of both needing to remain ambiguous and malleable and still carry meaning to support applicable and achievable criteria.

If sustainability cannot be defined at the present stage in development, what path should development take? There is no doubt that awareness of the term holds much power and weight in the future of development. Even if its meaning remains wholly inapplicable it nonetheless brings up an important conversation. How can sustainability be discussed without concretely defining the term and thereby compromising its usefulness?

Section I: Development Epistemologies: Challenges to Overcome

I outline the various stakeholders and their agendas for creating development projects in order to understand their motives and the parameters in which they work.

Through such analysis I hope to provide the reader with a better understanding of the forces that shape development. Future paradigms need to depoliticize development discourse in an effort to move away from institutionalized criteria for analyzing success. Such progress might then yield projects that bring local people into the fold.

Northern Thailand has a unique political atmosphere regarding development of upland forest populations. Not only has it expanded its industrial sector in recent years, but it has also reached an apex of development. Discourse is both calling for infrastructure and industrialization, and, simultaneously attempting to democratize development. International aid and NGOs are at work globally. What is unique to Thailand is the work of His Majesty the King relative to the Thai state. Thailand must strike a delicate balance between these bodies of epistemology in developing its rural north.

History of Development in Thailand:

Blanketed in thick, woody forests rich in diversity the mountains of Northern Thailand have always been home to pockets of unbridled beauty and wildness. Tucked deep within their sunken, fog-covered valleys tribal villages exist under the evergreen canopies. Undisturbed and unmanaged by outside forces generations of these nomadic hill tribes have nutured a unique relationship with the forest. Before roads were constructed, hospitals built, and schools established these hill tribes survived in balance with nature. However, as the world began to evolve and technology spread, the forests

passed from hand to hand as each owner attempted to harness its power, exploit its diversity, and extract its valuables. The extraction of lumber, medicinal plants, and illegal animal trading has heavily impacted this area.

The territorialization of the forests is just the beginning of development in Northern Thailand. The value of its natural resources caused cycles of violence and inequality. The history of Thailand's rural development is tangled in a complex web of economic profitability and power dynamics.

The Bowring Treaty of 1855 marked the beginning of the Thai state's control in the North and the initiation of Thailand into the global marketplace. The treaty introduced Thai rice to the international market, exporting the crop to British colonial states (Reunglertpanyakul, 1997). Despite the fact that Thailand was never colonized, surrounding colonial powers nonetheless wielded a great deal of power over the dynasty. With pressure from the British in the west and the French in the east, the dissemination of Western ideas eventually reached Thailand's borders (Anheier & Salamon, 1998). Simultaneously, the Bowring Treaty transformed Thailand's agriculture forcing it into the volatile world of international trade. The Thai state took advantage of the transformation to impose monetary payments of taxes and levies on land and farming activities that exploited the typical small farmer and encouraged the production of a surplus in order to pay appropriate taxes. Many farmers fell into debt.

Additionally, just as the Bowring Treaty opened the door for Thailand's export economy it simultaneously flooded the market with cheap imports (Reunglertpanyakul, 1997). Forested areas also came under the eye of the Thai state. The demise of the absolute monarchy in 1932 effectively transferred forested lands to the jurisdiction of the state. In 1896, Bangkok took control of all forested land in the North under the Royal Forestry Department (RFD). The RFD handed control to Herbert Slade, a British director with experience in Burma. This essentially opened the North up to the British teak concessions that led to rapid deforestation and destroyed natural watersheds (Lohman, 1993). In an attempt to seize control of Northern Thailand the Thai state both extended its power and thrust the country's fate to the whims of the international market.

After World War II, two particular goals drove development in Thailand, one economic the other largely political. The first goal was to spread industrial agriculture with improved technology such as tractors, pesticides, and cheap seed for producing cash crops. The second was to waylay fears of communism in the Northern Mountains by extending the international and the Thai state's military presence in the region. Both of these desired results had a weighty impact on development in the area.

The introduction of cash crops to the Thailand upland areas was largely motivated by the need to replace the illegal farming of opium by Northern hill tribes. While farming opium was not necessarily environmentally sustainable and was sold illegally, it was a valuable economic endeavor for hill tribes. Not every ethnic group farmed opium, but many Chinese migrant tribes found it a profitable enterprise. The Hmong tribes are the

most well known opium growing villages. Because opium was an illegal drug, the Thai government attempted to provide opium-growing communities with an economically viable alternative. This alternative was cash crops produced using commercial farming techniques. The main exports from cash cropping were kenaf, maize, sugar cane, and cassava (Bello et al., 1998). The Green Revolution funded the transfer of pesticides, seeds, fertilizers, and herbicides for cash crop production from developed countries to *underdeveloped* countries (Wilkes & Wilkes 1972). The overproduction of these crops and the effects of the Green Revolution required investment in infrastructure to deal with irrigation restraints, chemical inputs and needed fertilizers.

Cash cropping required improved irrigation infrastructure. A typical upland village in the Northern Mountains farmed only for subsistence, cultivating varieties of rice and vegetables best adapted to handle heavy rains during the wet season followed by a dry period during cold season (November-January). Cash crops were not capable of handling such conditions. In order to farm these new crops, especially at the scale required by commercial farming, villagers needed infrastructure for irrigation. Before irrigation was introduced to upland hill tribes, farmer's fields were irrigated from the flow of natural springs that ran down the mountainsides. Irrigation infrastructure, supported by the government, therefore incentivized the transformation of Northern subsistence farming to commercial agriculture.

Heavily influenced by ideologies of the United States, Thailand responded to development by promoting policies belonging to the United States Agency for

International Development (USAID) under the influence of the World Bank in the

1960's. However, under stipulations from the World Bank, Thailand was forced to

produce a written economic development plan. The First National Economic

Development Plan of 1961-1966 outlined two specific goals for agriculture: 1) continue

to provide goods for the international market to fund industrialization 2) provide cheap

food sources for its increasingly urbanized population (Reunglertpanyakul, 1997). The

result was that by 1976 nearly half of the agricultural budget was allocated toward the

development of irrigation rather than sustainable practices (Bello et al., 1998).

Furthermore, Rigg draws attention to the correspondence of maize production in North-

eastern Thailand with the rapid expansion of road infrastructure between 1961 and 1963

(1987). Not only did road infrastructure drastically alter the agricultural sector, but is also

inextricably linked to the loss of forested land. This only increased with the American-

funded Accelerated Rural Development Program that promoted 17,000 km of road to be

built (Bello et al., 1998). Road and irrigation infrastructure supported deforestation

throughout small upland village communities. For generations, villages relied on local

watersheds encased in vast and lush forest environments for their water. Infrastructure led

to deforestation of these areas, which caused erosion and flooding during the rainy

seasons and dry, nutrient starved soil during the dry season. Today, village land appears

dead and starved in areas where deforestation has not been addressed. The roads leading

into many Northern villages wield deep scars from years of erosion. Hillsides once

covered in dense tropical canopies lay barren except for those dressed in yellowing husks

of corn stalks and read bean fields (Leichliter, observation, October 11, 2012).

Around the 1960's a growing coalition of environmental conservationists organized in developed countries. They called for preservation of tropical forests through the exclusion of humans, including indigenous groups that had long settled these areas. In response to recommendations from various international development agencies the Thai state expanded its control over Northern forested land with the National Forest Reserves Act of 1964 (Lohman, 1993).

The 1980's did little to alter the momentum of international development and its impact on Thailand's rural sector. Modernization, industrialization and incentivizing integration into the world market continued to be the mantra of Thailand's development agenda. By 1990 local governments depended entirely upon the centralized government for their financial needs. This rhetoric didn't begin to really change until the late 1990's and early 2000's when the Eighth National Social and Economic Development Plan formally recognized a need for 'sustainable' alternatives in development.

This new development plan called for alternatives to agricultural development including sustainable practices, organic farming initiatives and participation from a variety of NGOs to encourage the transformation. However, the development plan was just that, a plan with no concrete ideas for implementation. Nor was there agreement at the national level to gain political and economic support for the projects (Reunglertpanyakul, 1997). Even if the development plan had produced a burgeoning organic market in Thailand, this did not account for subsistence farmers. By the 1990's Thailand's rural poverty held steady with 40% of people living at or below the poverty

line (Reunglertpanyakul, 1997). Meanwhile in 1994 more than 50% of farmers in

Northern Thailand had no legal land titles or rights (Bello et al., 1998). Conservation was

introduced in the 1960's to the Royal Forestry Department but didn't really take hold in

Thailand until the 1990's. Government policy shifted from promoting "cash-crops" and

large-scale agriculture (while on the side promoting vast logging concessions) to

advancing conservation. According to Kathleen Gillogly, "Modernization once meant

excluding upland ethnic minorities. Now, it means incorporating them into the Thai

cultural mainstream" (2004, pp. 117). Farmers struggling to find more land now became

"forest encroachers" or so they were called by the RFD and faced heavy fines and even

arrest. This led to the consolidation of government power in the Northern Thailand and

the increased presence of the government in villager subsistence activities and decisions

(Reunglerpanyakul, 1997).

Thus far, development in Thailand was moving toward centralized government

control, and forced exposure to the market economy through international aid schemes

bolstered by the government's rhetoric for industrialization. Even with a general call for

sustainable development and environmental conservation in the international community,

a lack of planning and public participation in development decisions at the local level has

stunted progress in the upland communities of Thailand. While there appears to be a

growing voice amongst local communities impacted by rural development projects,

unless the national and international community begins listening to them little will be

achieved in transforming development discourse. The government must revise its agenda

for industrialization and modernity to one of public participation, democracy and cultural sensitivity; otherwise, any chance at "sustainable" development will remain unattainable.

International Aid Discourse and its affects on local communities in Thailand:

International development discourse falls prey to inefficiency and misunderstanding of local customs and cultures, it is slave to the donor countries that contribute to foreign aid, and throughout its history it has held tightly to a largely economic attempt at development reform. Thus, in attempting to help a world of over 7 billion people, international development agencies preach overarching aid projects and initiatives. These initiatives do not take into account individualism or the complex interactions between local people and their state, environment or spiritual beliefs. The stakes of the donor country inform research and outweigh the needs of the receiving country, creating a political climate in which power is centered far from local communities (Collins & Rhoads, 2010). The role of the international market is privileged over self-sufficiency and tradition. Progression is seen only through eyes that view traditional economies as backward or even primitive (Mansfield, 1996). I attempt to look at these three ill effects of this development discourse; its use of overarching development plans, its overemphasis on generating income, and the power of donor countries in determining projects. I analyze works that support similar claims of this institutionalized framework of development from rural sectors all across the world.

In Northern Thai, to say "How are you?" is "gin khaow laow ru yung?" Literally translated this means, "Have you eaten rice yet?" The phrase, used all over Thailand, proves the cultural importance of rice in this society. Over 50% of all Thailand's farmland is dedicated to rice farming (Reunglerpanyakul, 1997). Rice is the lifeblood of Southeast Asia. It provides the basic human necessity—food. For most of its history, from 1855 when Thailand's rice hit the international market, the country has been the number one exporter (Bello et al., 1998). Only recently has Vietnam and India surpassed it ("Rice Policy", July 23, 2012). Even in the upland, mountainous regions of Thailand, specific varieties are cultivated to survive on hillsides with dry rice production. What does all of this have to do with international aid and the topic of development?

Cultural differences can build a very distinct wall between international development agencies and the communities they profess to help. Projects aimed at income generation, political structural reforms, industrial farming methods, or product substitution may aim to allow new avenues of development for specific countries, but if they don't fit the local culture and their traditions these proposals can do more harm than good. I point out the importance of rice in Thailand because it's difficult, especially for powers in the Global North, that are often the ones behind loans and assistance in the Global South, to understand just how important one crop can be to the sufficiency and livelihoods of Thai people. Moreover, the traditions related to rice production and consumption is deeply rooted in the lineage of Southeast Asia's history. Rice is the typical offering in Buddhism. Villagers also spend the entire year growing rice,

harvesting it in October and November and storing it for the next year's subsistence

(Leichliter, personal communication, November 12, 2012).

In Huay Tong Koh Village of Mae HongSon Province, when villagers were asked

if money or rice was of more importance they nearly always replied, "Rice. You can't eat

money" (Leichliter, personal communication, October 13, 2012). This is just one

example of the inadequacies provided by frameworks of international lending

institutions. The focus on economic development may have its benefits for market-driven

activities, but in these villages the bulk of their livelihoods are based on self-sufficiency.

Introducing marketization, profitability and entrepreneurship is often lost in such a

culture that will always value rice above money.

A parallel can be drawn between this development agenda and the one

broadcasted by the World Bank in Lesotho, Africa. Ferguson discusses an example of a

similar issue with the World Bank as he notes the importance of livestock to the Lesotho

peoples. The World Bank initially planned for individuals in Lesotho to raise livestock to

sell on the international market. However, in Lesotho culture livestock is a status symbol.

The more livestock a community member has the higher his status and power in the

community. Instead of raising the animals for meat, families kept their livestock to ensure

a higher position in the community. Men in Lesotho hesitated to raise animals for sale

because it went against age-old traditions regarding the cultural and symbolic

significance of livestock. Ferguson argues:

> The very idea of raising animals for sale, too, is a direct challenge to the "one-
> way barrier" which protects livestock from being converted into cash. The effect

of the project's efforts to promote improved stock and fodder production was thus to enter into and intensify a dispute that was already ongoing within rural mountain society. (1994, pp. 188-189)

Men would rather have more cattle in their fields than money in their pockets. He also notes later on that even if commercial practices of selling livestock for meat were adopted there is little evidence to support that these practices would be of any financial benefit (Ferguson, 1994). In constructing a project that failed to account for the cultural climate surrounding implementation, the World Bank created an unsuccessful program that had no hope of further "developing" Lesotho's economy. Similar issues have shown up in areas of Thailand as well.

The Second Economic Development Plan, aided by the UN, encouraged coffee production in the upland hill tribes of Huay Poo Ling sub-district (Gillogly, 2004). Many were unsuccessful because villagers did not want to substitute cropland for coffee production. Villagers don't like the taste of coffee and therefore didn't understand why they should cultivate it and were unwilling to siphon off important rice field production for the alternative coffee plants (Leichliter, personal communication, November 13, 2012). There is a very large gulf that often separates international project theories and the execution of such projects at the development site.

The World Bank's policy on indigenous peoples has been historically analyzed. Andrew Gray sums up the biggest problem with many of its policies toward indigenous peoples:

> Although the document [Operational Manual Statement 2.34 of *Tribal People in Bank-Financed Projects*] advocates self-determination, it also assumes that integration of indigenous peoples into the wider society is inevitable. Policy should therefore aim to mitigate the effects of development, rather than provide alternatives. (Gray, 1998,)

This policy details the extent to which the World Bank acknowledged development's possibly negative role in indigenous communities, but provided no means for countering such effects. Gray's description of World Bank policies as being 'inevitable' virtually washed the institution's hands of any liability to the communities where projects were preformed. The development goals of the institution were given more value than the encroachment by international projects on indigenous territories and resources. Gray argues that the integration of indigenous peoples into wider society does not have to be inevitable, and even if it is, ways to mitigate the affects of this integration exist.

The World Bank's World Development Report of 2009 further addresses the way institutional language skates over potential outcomes in an effort to implant specific, technical solutions. Critiques of the World Development Report of 2009 describe it as, "mechanical in its depiction of the links between space, economic activity and welfare" (Agergaard et al., 2009, 130). The report failed to consider the "politics of spatial processes" and "dehumanized" economic activity. The report contains economically technical language that is convoluted and inaccessible to many readers, particularly social or environmental theorists that have a stake in framing development's paradigm. Furthermore, it remains completely out of reach for local participants who undoubtedly have no voice in constructing the conversation.

In a report published in 1998 and titled "The World Bank on the Social Impact of the Indonesian Crisis," the World Bank outlined three areas of public sector improvement in response to the crisis. The problem, however, is that even in a report of social relevance the report's conclusion stuck to areas of economic stress and improvement. The three areas for public sector action were as follows: "1) Availability and affordability of key commodities, 2) Creating employment opportunities; and 3) Preserving social services" (World Bank, 1998). While the crisis may have been economic in nature the report did nothing to address issues of remote poverty, political corruption or informal avenues for economic development.

Easterly shows that loans and adjustment lending have no direct effect on poverty reduction because most of the poor derive their incomes from informal, subsistence-related activities. The poor are often excluded from the benefits of structural adjustment promoted by the World Bank and IMF (International Monetary Fund) (Easterly, 2001). In defining development under the guise of economic proficiency World Bank reports have left out many of the poor they wish to help. Villagers in the upland Thailand, for example, receive little benefit from irrigation projects because they practice rotational farming. Therefore, their farmland shifts every year. Thailand's development of road infrastructure from the 1960's through the beginning of the 1980's provides a clear example.

Road infrastructure promoted by the World Bank in conjunction with the national government was a way to connect rural people to international markets. In the 2009

World Development Report, countries are type-casted by their proximity to world markets. Local culture or traditional economic climates were not considered when the Report created the type-caste system, therefore painting a false picture of development potential for the most remote communities (Rigg et al., 2009). The development of Northern Thailand's road systems were largely built under the assumption that access to the economy was the only cause of poverty, and responses should therefore focus on creating pathways into urban hubs. However, both international and national incentives pointed toward other motives.

Between 1969 and 1979, 516 logging concessions were allowed in Northern Thailand (Lohman, 1993). Roads literally paved the way for large-scale logging companies to exploit the forest. Because ethnic hill tribes garner such an important relationship with the forest this came as a direct affront to their way of life.

Most upland peoples have an intimate and delicate relationship with the forests in which they live. Their livelihood relies on the forest heavily for food, construction materials, medicinal plants and more, but they never feared overexploitation. Upland people tend to have a basic understanding for maintaining forest resources. The way these people live is, in most cases, inherently sustainable. Excess pressures introduced by logging and commercial farming have, however, disrupted this balance.

Additionally, road development may have given local people access to lowland markets for participation in the market economy, but it simultaneously provided Thai

middlemen (pohkakoneglang) opportunities for exploiting upland farmers. These

middlemen create unfair cyclical loans that drain farmers' profits (Rigg, 1987). For

example, in Ban Huay Pong near Chiang Dao farmers grow primarily corn and beans, the

cash crops incentivized by international development agencies. These farmers borrow

money from middlemen that travel the single eroded road to access upland crops. The

interest on these loans is usually extremely high. At the time farmers are ready to sell the

crop back they have to invest in chemical inputs to restore their degraded soil for the next

planting. They enter into another loan for these inputs that only perpetuates the lending

cycle. Each year farmers fall further and further into debt at the hands of these

middlemen (Leichliter, personal communication, October 9, 2012). Many don't access

the markets themselves because of travel restraints or a lack of knowledge about market

prices and profitability. The roads were hardly an incentive for farmers to try their hands

as entrepreneurs, but rather led them deeper into poverty.

Another international incentive for funding Thailand's northern road systems

came from the United States around the 1960's and 1970's. Thailand's road projects were

an attempt by the United States government to reinforce its presence in the region against

communist forces. In the Northeastern provinces the American-funded Rural

Development Program built almost 17,000 km of road (Bello et al., 1998). Development

driven objectives did not originate in local communities, but rather supported a distant

agenda of a powerful country seeking to promote its military plans. Road infrastructure

served primarily to waylay American fears of communism, and only secondly supported

rural eradication of poverty and village improvement in Northern Thailand. The USAID

project to fund road infrastructure is one of several attempts by donor countries to further their own objectives at the expense of recipient communities.

International aid is always packaged and shipped in the complex politics of international and intranational bureaucracy. The World Bank calls this, "stipulations to further developmental goals" (Reunglertpanyakul, 1997). Collins and Rhoads state, "Decision making at the World Bank, for example, is tied to financial contributions of donor countries, with nations that give the most gaining greater control over loan programs and their conditions" (2010, pp. 184). Collins and Rhoads articulate the ability of donor countries to attach certain stipulations to development agendas that make the giving of loans by donor countries more valuable for the donor. Ironically, the stipulations often work against what proves most useful to recipient communities. The problem rests in the fact that most stipulations require industrialization or expansion of the market economy to fulfill a necessary niche in the global market. Sidhu's (2007) critique addresses the way that markets are inherently tied to countries that wield the most power. Sidhu proposes that, "decisions shaping global markets and free trade are not made in an open 'free' space but instead tied to domestic and international power asymmetries" (2007, pp. 209). Thus no progress made in liberalizing rural markets goes untouched by countries that champion this approach; there is almost always something driving a donor country's investment. I introduce a new term to this idea—collateral development. The term collateral implies that in order to invest in development projects donor countries or international agencies must stand to benefit from it. International lending institutions like the World Bank, the IMF, or the Asian Development Bank must

have a certain influence over recipient countries because it makes development useful to international politics. There exists a layer of bureaucratic red tape that development projects must abide by in order to be put into effect.

Moreover, a focus on economic progress for evaluating success in development puts a misguided amount of faith in the ability for markets to self-correct areas that largely rely on subsistence living. In other words, an overwhelming faith in capitalism often reproduces the results of theories in international development that use integration into the world market as a development tool. In responding to the 2009 World Development Report, authors point to the Report's misrepresentation of market abilities and charge this theory with attempting economic idealism. The Report suggests "liberalis[ing] rural land markets in lagging areas in order to help people sell their out-migration to centers of agglomeration" (Rigg et al., 2009, pp. 133). However, this sort of migration to urban centers creates city slums and doesn't provide for any real job opportunities or financial success.

Despite the Bank's recent dialogue articulating concerns about sustainability, particularly with regards to developmental loans, the economic narrative has changed little. The Bank remains loyal to donor countries and their contributions. This means that unless donor countries privilege environmental concerns over the potential payback of a project little will be achieved in the realm of environmentalism. What's more is the Bank's ineptitude at considering the 'whole horse,' to steal a phrase from Wendell Berry, often decreases the project's effectiveness. For example, lending to an authoritarian

government can often end in socially and environmentally costly projects. Yet, the World Bank often avoids responsibility despite the fact they funded these programs. Authoritarian governments that do not adjust to new programs are often used as a convenient excuse for projects that fail.

On the other hand, the lack of success in international aid cannot be attributed to donor countries or bureaucratic red tape alone. Aid has to be passed through the hands of a number of different stakeholders including national governments and NGOs before it reaches recipient communities. By the time aid arrives in local communities it may look nothing like donated money at all. Governmental actors shape aid that is applied to these communities through the creation of more bureaucracies or by designing unsustainable projects. Thus both national governments and lending institutions blame one another for projects that, when finished, don't reflect their stated goals.

International development institutions cannot be expected to account for all the variables that play a role in implementing projects, but a more case-specific approach would achieve better outcomes. To achieve the environmental goals of projects, development institutions should not be satisfied simply with the just ecological impacts, but the social, cultural and political as well. The frame of mind that views people and the environment as separate entities fails to account for the interconnectedness of local people and their ecologies. It assumes that a Western ethos toward nature can be applied around the globe. Thailand's upland people make the case that nature, environment, and sustainability do not have to exclude humanity. A natural world does not have to mean

one untouched by mankind. When a more open dialogue between local communities and loaning institutions exists, institutions can achieve well-rounded development goals that are more likely to ensure long-term success.

State-led Development: Who wins?

Political power is contained within the industrial hub of Bangkok. Governmental bodies and bureaucracies succeed in extending the hands of law over Thailand's rural landscape. Territorialization and industrialization has made land a valuable commodity. Because development projects originate in Bangkok upland peoples are subjected to frequent and unpredictable government changes. The Thai state's development goals hardly reflect the needs of the communities they serve. State-led development has become a way to expand industrialization and government profits, meet the requirements of international conservation activists, and increase political power in Thailand's government. It does not account for negative impacts on the ethnic hill tribes. As McCargo states, "Development in the Thai context was far from a neutral and positive term: it was a synonym for enhancing state power, promoting anti-communism and promoting the elite" (2002, pp. 56).

Mismanaged development schemes are at the heart of rural change and poverty in the region. While upland communities with citizenship rights still face conflict and disputes with the Thai state, those hill tribes without citizenship rights or land live in constant fear of run-ins with government officials. Centralized development schemes

overlook these issues in order to focus on promoting the industrial sector and expanding

international market activity. Philip Hirsch describes state-village relations contending,

> Recent history of Thai state-village relations have been marked by a shift from
> large-scale rural neglect in a context of rapid urban-dominated growth to an
> apparent concern to spread the material fruits of development… (1989, pp. 36)

Development through the eyes of the Thai state has undergone dramatic change.

Previously, villages were viewed as institutionally separate and disconnected from

policies of the Thai state. Today, the institutional mechanisms of the Thai state seek to

include villages. Using political catchwords such as 'development' and 'participation,'

Hirsch highlights how these objectives are "explicitly state inspired facets of rural

change" (1989, pp. 36). There is an obvious contradiction between the rhetoric of

participation or inclusion in state institutions and state-centered rural action. The rhetoric

for village participation through state access calls for an underlying agenda of state

encroachment into village life. In other words, the Thai state includes villages in state-run

activities, but simultaneously secures its own influence in village-level politics.

To accurately understand the Thai state's influence in rural areas, particularly

Northern Thailand, it is first critical to interpret development of these areas historically.

Thailand's rural development priorities are heavily influenced by both economic and

political policies. Development has been less concerned with aid and more concerned

with finding an avenue for exerting control over agricultural production in Northern

Thailand. The RFD blamed deforestation and degradation of Thailand's mountainous

region on environmentally destructive hill tribe farming techniques, despite evidence that

logging concessions under the management of the RFD had severely degraded forests

(Delang, 2002). By promoting commercial crops rather than subsistence the Thai state

enhanced its presence in the international market (Lohman, 1993). In the 1960's and 70's

the RFD, pressured by the international community, reversed its forest policy to promote

conservation, challenging the self-sufficiency of hill tribes by siphoning off land that had

been cultivated for years into national preservation land (Lohman, 1993). This in turn

created a backdoor through which governmental power crept into rural communities. By

the late 1990's support for rural poverty and upland crop substitution became powerful

rhetoric for political elections (Patarapong, 2011). Development and rural aid was more

for show than it was an attempt at actually providing support. Grassroots organization in

the 1990's and 2000's mobilized village groups calling for representation of the poor in

government.

The RFD was delegated substantial power in shaping Thailand's forests and played

an important role in expanding government access to hill tribe villages. Until the 1980's

road construction, funded by the World Bank but implemented by the Thai state, spread

logging concessions and access roads to remote upland villages (Delang, 2002). In 1960

there was just 2.118 km of road connecting upland communities, but by 1988 27, 595 km

of road wound through the mountians (McCargo, 2002). The Thai state's interest in these

areas was prompted by their proximity to international borders, their valuable natural

resources, and the potential power they could wield over ethnic minorities (Hirsch, 1989).

However, the Thai state failed to accommodate for the unique culture surrounding

subsistence agriculture.

Gazing across the mountains of Mae HongSon Province one would not guess the high number of indigenous groups that inhabit this mountainous region. Occasionally a glimpse of light green and hazy yellow interrupts the ocean of lush green revealing the distant rai (2.5 acres of slash and burn farmland) belonging to an ethnic hill tribe community. The Northern Thailand upland people are well known for practicing swidden agriculture. Once a nomadic band of peoples traversing the mountainside, these people lived farming small hillside plots of mostly upland rice and vegetables. However, the 1964 National Reserve Forest Act condemned this practice, contending that it was to blame for much of the ecological forest destruction. Forced into permanent settlements and pressured by the Thai state, many tribes slowly incorporated the farming of commercial field crops. Soil deterioration led to a complete transformation into commercial production and chemical inputs like herbicides, pesticides, and chemical fertilizers (Hirsch, 1989). Farmers eventually sold their land to pay off debt and began working as wage laborers. As rural communities continued to shift and transform due to agricultural modernization, environmental degradation and social conversion, rural peoples also flocked to cities to become urban laborers (Rigg, 2009).

For the Hmong tribe particularly, wage labor increased poverty because the Hmong don't like working for wages. In their language *thai yai*, the word for employee, also means slave or servant (Delang, 2002). Due to geographic and lingual barriers the Hmong were unsuccessful in working with the government. Hmong tribes typically farm plots of land in the most remote and highest mountains in Northern Thailand. They

originally emigrated from Southern China and are known historically throughout

Thailand for their unsustainable production of opium. Two characteristics that targeted

them for increased government oversight and intervention. A derogatory and inaccurate

depiction of many hill tribes over time has influenced the way national and international

communities look at forest conservation and agriculture. When the RFD began to

emphasize conservation, hill tribes faced even greater government oversight. The RFD

boasted, "Since 1961, the government has created 87 national parks, 65 forest parks, 46

wildlife conservation areas, 44 no-hunting areas, 15 botanical gardens, and 53

arboretums" (Royal Forest Department, 2000, pp. 2). The RFD failed to address the

future of local peoples in these newly designated areas. Protected forests and

conservation had little meaning to upland hill tribe communities. In their eyes, they were

simply living and working the same land they had been for generations. Forest protection,

therefore, caused new problems to arise in communities that inhabited protected areas.

Despite the government's presence in forest preservation not much had changed in

forest policy. RFD officials were paid so little they had more incentive to engage in

corrupt (ghong) practices. They assisted big businessmen with the extraction of lumber,

plants, and animals. Villagers wielded little power against the RFD and lived in constant

fear of run-ins with officals.

In Ban Dang Nok, a small Palong village near Chiang Rai, villagers were forced off

their land at Bang Glang because of encroachment charges by the RFD. 56 of them were

arrested for farming on preservation land (Leichliter, personal communication, October 8,

2012). In Nam Hu village of Mae Hongson Province, the small Karen tribe moved onto the land before it was designated a National Park. About nine years ago villagers were arrested for expanding their farmland (Leichliter, personal communication, November 4, 2012).

Illegal logging concessions did not officially cease until 1980. Therefore causing deforestation in the uplands that changed the technical efficiency of agriculture. Logging results in less dependable rainfall and delays the planting of maize by a few months. This has to be accommodated by faster harvesting periods that are only achieved by adopting wage labor (Hirsch, 1989, pp. 40). Not only does this risk the self-sufficiency of a farmer and his land, but it also puts small, poor farmers at risk because they can't afford the wage labor required. Small farmers are forced to sell their land to large-scale production and big businessmen to escape debt.

Reforestation initiated by the RFD also had its affects on agriculture and the daily practices of local people. The RFD's reforestation plan used *Eucalyptus* and two species of pine because of their potential for logging profitability. However, lower shrub plants shaded by these pine forest canopies cannot grow in the understory. This takes away valuable grazing land for herds of cattle and buffalo that upland villagers raise for protein and occasionally income (Delang, 2002). Unlike naturally reforested areas these forests look full from above, but scanning the landscape below these canopies appears a wasteland of dried pine needles and dehydrated soil. This was a government "quick-fix"

that detracted from the overall health of the ecosystem and ironically threatens economic

profits of locals.

Projects aimed at re-building forest areas and connecting villagers to the national

economy proved to only marginalize these communities further. Infrastructure

developments targeted to introduce rural villages to the market economy left them

susceptible to bullying by government officials and private sector businessmen. In

attempting to exploit resources and profits from the uplands, the Thai state did not extend

political rights and participation to these communities. Hirsch claims,

> Settlement of forest areas is such as to produce a rapid evolution from isolated
> subsistence communities to villages whose internal differentiation is increasingly
> determined by capitalist relations of production and that are subject to a high level of
> state attention. (1989, pp. 39)

Hirsh examines the role of ALRO (Agricultural Land Reform Office) and their rural

development through land reallocation and associated infrastructure projects in the

village of Ban Mai. ALRO's development discourse candy-coated village projects in

language designed to market increased rights and participation in development for

villagers. The office implied that the village is an "integral part of the state, and villagers

[were] subjects rather than objects of state policy" (Hirsch, 1989, pp. 41). However,

Hirsch highlights five forms of the rural development paradigm that increased the Thai

state's control in the village: land reform, Tambon Council and Village Committee,

institutional credit, Community Development Department and paramilitary forces.

In Ban Mai these institutional and geographical adjustments were thought to benefit local people by linking them to political, economic and military endeavors of the Thai state, but such projects failed to account for the social interactions governing village life. For example, land reform resettled village houses closer together to make the modern necessities such as electricity, running water, and roads more accessible. In Ban Mai, Hirsch (1989) describes how many villagers refused to move their households because doing so distanced them from the farms they worked daily. Resettlement also concentrated village conflict and eased the government's ability to watch over the community, known in Thai as *duu lae thua theung* (watch over everyone).

The Tambon Council and Village Committee is a district level government office constructed in the 1980 wave of democratization. It was meant to allow political participation by villagers, but local people viewed the Tambon as a puppet of the Thai state because all of its funding came from a portion of the national budget. This system also upset the balance of village politics, handing higher positions in the Tambon to village elite and concentrating power not only within the Thai state's hands, but also the few upper class village members (Hirsch, 1989).

The issue with the Tambon Council in Ban Mai is replayed in many upland districts across Northern Thailand. District level governments are notorious for attempting to encourage village input. However, Huay Tong Koh villagers in Huay Poo Ling district mention how sometimes the Orbortaw (Tambon head) and the village headman can have different policies when it comes to forest management (Leichliter, personal

communication, November 10, 2012). The village headman is a respected position in the

hill tribe community. Misunderstanding and miscommunication between these two

authority figures confuses and undermines the influence of these positions in villages.

While the Tambon Council is known for facilitating infrastructure improvements and

helping villagers to gain access to the political process, not nearly enough forums and

village-level discussions are considered before planning occurs (Leichliter, personal

communication, November 13, 2012).

Institutional credit systems have also attracted criticism. The Bank for Agriculture

and Agricultural Cooperatives helped to hasten the adoption of commercial agriculture in

remote areas by providing low interest credit to farmers for purchasing seeds and input.

This credit scheme was inefficient at reversing the trend of indebtedness among farmers.

Henery Declore contends,

> [The] availability of credit failed to turn the tide for most farmers, and many were
> left with both high debts and exhausted fields. By the late 1980s, labor migration
> showed itself as a possible solution to cash-short farmers in Sanamchai. (2003,
> pp. 65)

Farmers became too dependent on agricultural inputs and credit provided by the Thai

state and international credit institutions. They invested in new technologies and

machinery to industrialize farming practices but often had nothing left to spend in

fertilizers and pesticides rendering the technological improvements useless

(Chaovanapoonphol et al., 2009). They then compensated for increasing declines in soil

fertility by expanding their productive lands illegally, risking further retribution by the government.

Jonathan Rigg (1985) points out the risks of government-led development on communities' economic sustainability using examples of agricultural substitution and credit schemes. The District Agricultural Extension Office's support of 'Green Revolution' technology encouraged farmers in Noon Tae and Tha Song Korn to replace some of their glutinous varieties of rice (sticky rice) land with a more commercially viable RD variety of rice (which stands for Rice Division or Rice Department) and sold chemical fertilizers to farmers on credit to accommodate the switch. The substitution resulted in increased debt for poor farmers, deteriorated land due to higher chemical inputs, and a loss of farmers' own self-sufficiency. Before the project, rice was mainly cultivated for subsistence, with only 14% of total rice production in 1982/1983 being marketed (1985, pp. 484). Rigg concluded:

> In this sense, the recommendations put forward by the Agricultural Extension Office, formulated as they are on the basis of the technology of the 'Green Revolution', have ignored the special problems of growing wet-rice in a marginal rain-fed environment. (1985, pp. 492)

Thus in promoting new varieties of rice for increased economic production the government simultaneously challenged the food security and sufficiency of farmers from these communities.

Rural development projects proved to be very politically popular among urban voters. As long as the reality of implementing development agendas remained out of the

public eye, voters supported such populist policies. The most cunning and successful of all public figures in constructing this agenda was Prime Minister Thaksin.

Since Thaksin's reign and subsequent flee from Thailand in 2008, much literature has been published on the criminality of his administration. Kuhonta claims Thaksin bought out public faction when coming into power and exploited Senator ties to his party (2008). Encouraged by Thaksin, the failure of the Senate to screen those for independent agencies landed more power into the hands of the TRT (Thai Rak Thai, Thaskin's political party). Before he was ousted, Thaksin left a substantial legacy on rural development. Despite his current unpopularity today, at the time, he boosted Thailand into a new age of innovation and international industrial strength (Patarapong, 2011).

When it came ethnic and rural communities Thaksin's broad development goals were often tied to empty rhetoric of political falsity. Patarapong characterizes Taksin's motives stating, "[his] populist policies were aimed at winning votes from the rural poor" (2011). His initiative for building solar panels in ethnic hill tribe villages illustrates this point.

Propped against bamboo houses or left shattered amidst animal pens government issued solar panels were scattered through villages like remains of modernity in a post-apocalypse world. Solar panels were a means to provide villages with the necessity of electricity while promoting sustainable energy technology. However, as the villagers of Ban Huay Pong described, within a year most of the solar panels had broken and no one

in the villages had the expertise to fix them. The village, today, runs without electricity (Leichliter, personal communication, October 9, 2012).

Most government aid promoted under Thaksin threw fancy products and money at villages with no hope of product durability. Loyalty to larger energy projects and industrial strength consumed many of his attempts at micro-level initiatives. Patarapong described Thaksin's policies as inconsistent and ineffective, largely failing to provide the necessary oversight to see projects through to their completion (2011). Had villagers been educated and equipped with the knowledge to use and maintain the products and funds given to them, Thaksin might have been more successful in curbing poverty and promoting innovation.

Thaksin's policies were met with substantial criticism. The poor implementation of his projects drew attention to the structural problems with state-led development discourse. After a turbulent history with the Thai state, villages in Northern Thailand found voices in new grass-roots campaigns. Aiding significantly in such progress was the attention given by both local and international NGOs. However, this alternative discourse on development brought its own challenges. Unable to fully disentangle nonprofit work from the webs of government policy, NGOs struggle to replace state-led and international discourse with a more participatory development paradigm.

Non-governmental Organizations in Development: non-governmental but are they non-political?

Non-governmental organizations' potential has been idealized by a number of academics and participants in international development circles. NGOs were a sign of restructuring conventional agendas to support apolitical strategies for reaching humanitarian objectives. NGOs claim to be wholly separate from governmental or international agendas, although very few can honestly be defined this way. These organizations act at different spatial scales and this affects their missions and messages. Blanketing the term has caused confusion and inaccurate credit among people outside of the development spectrum. The acronym NGO is romanticized by the current development paradigms, and thereby misinforms the public about the benefits of nonprofit and non-governmental action. While these organizations may be non-governmental in strategy they are not apolitical. They have stipulations set by donors and bias towards their own motives, whether or not those goals account for the needs of communities where they work.

Stakeholders working behind the scenes, such as donors or political actors wield extreme power over NGOs working abroad. The government, private donors, local communities, and NGO staff are all important in producing and implementing an organization's mission and methods. In analyzing problems and constructing solutions NGOs must find a way to communicate and 'sell' their message to an audience capable of funding such ideas. Direct investment in NGOs from outside funders is the main avenue in which outside actors affect interventions abroad.

NGOs, like most development discourse, use terms such as sustainability, local knowledge, community participation, and empowerment without considering how these ideas will translate in practice. Yet, recent development literature has triumphed NGOs as powerful means for engaging local communities in the conversation (Simon, 1997).

Even local nonprofits derive a majority of their funds from abroad. The Global North has become a beast of necessity in rebuilding the Global South because the Global North provides the political and financial means for distributing aid. For example, the Project for Recovery of Life and Culture in Mae HongSon Province, Thailand receives funding from the Thai government itself and a United States faith-based organization, Bread for the World (Leichliter, personal communication, October 30, 2012). The extent to which such organizations are indebted to their donors is unclear and varies with each gift, but there is no doubt they command a voice in the process.

Fernando describes the reality of donor involvement for most NGO projects. The donor agency asks for certain stipulations to be met by the project. These can include empowerment of the local people, but is then measured by their relative increase in income. Another may highlight self-sufficiency for local communities, but is then defined as self-involvement in the market economy (Fernando, 2003). A project that targets specific goals such as community empowerment through participation in politics is then morphed into a project that focuses specifically on capitalist endeavors. Donor consultants rarely set foot in the villages where projects are implemented. Fernando interjects, "As one moves down the ladder of institutional hierarchy to the local level, the

goals of [projects] are reduced to the simple increase of income levels of the poor" (2003, pp. 64). Economically minded development is often the greatest concern to donors. That is linking local communities to the global market through foreign companies and elite businessmen. Even in projects designed to empower indigenous knowledge of farming techniques often lead to farmers making the switch to commercial agriculture technology. After consultation with donors, NGO projects can become obsolete given the transformation of project aims (Fernando, 2003).

National governments also command a lot of power in defining NGO projects. Thus, NGOs must toe the line of a precarious position between the poor they seek to help and the needs or demands of the state (Mercer, 1999). Literature has heralded NGOs by their ability to mediate society through the public sphere (Kamat, 2004). However, NGOs are very much so at the whim of governmental laws. Mercer states,

> While NGOs are essentially non-governmental actors, national governments set the context within which they must work and be effective, while local governments are far better placed to liaise with, and coordinate, local government initiatives. (1999, pp. 248)

NGOs must therefore inhabit the space between these two agents of development.

In Thailand's case, a tenuous relationship must be managed between ethnic minority groups and Thailand's central bureaucracy. Ethnic communities in the North of Thailand often suffer from a lack of citizenship and land rights. Because so many of them migrated to the mountains of Thailand from Southern China, Burma and even Laos they

inhabit a grey area of *Thai-ness*, in which they are neither a remaining citizen of their home countries nor a member of the Thai state (Leichliter, personal communication, October 30, 2012). Therefore, NGOs, like the Upland Holistic Development Project in Fang, Thailand steps in as supporters in negotiating land claims and citizenship for ethnic minorities (UHDP, January 26, 2013). As such UHDP and organizations like it face a duality of accountability. They must gain access to such rights for local ethnic people, while maintaining political relationships to make this goal achievable in the volatile government sphere.

During the 1980's there was a rise in NGOs established in Thailand, but government fears that these organizations supported communist ideas devalued their legitimacy (Anheier & Salamon, 309). These organizations were often depicted as antagonists of the government. This has caused an overall weakness in NGOs ability to access centralized authority in Thailand (Mercer, 1999). The 1997 Constitution has led to some decentralization, opening new corridors through which NGOs can negotiate with the Thai bureaucracy. Nonetheless, the government counters such progress by handing stipulated funds to NGOs. This funding essentially buys their silence and keeps them removed from the process. To distance the system even further international NGOs interest in local-level development has widened the communication gap between policy and action. This has added another area in which NGOs must negotiate their power. Not only are NGOs working within the unpredictable climate of the national sphere, but they are also steering the unknown channels of international politics and economics.

The recent agenda set by the United States acknowledges the complications for

NGOs working with and in developed countries. Many nonprofit organizations have roots

in the United States. Therefore, recent economic events in the United States have

dramatically impacted the amount of aid going abroad for development. Even before the

2008 financial crisis, government support for international aid began to wane. Today,

financial situations in the developed world have changed how aid is allocated. The

Advisory Committee's Annual Report on U.S. foreign aid indicated:

> 'Commercial objectives increasingly dominate the formation and conduct of U.S.
> foreign policy,' and that the 'protection of technological advantage and control of
> global markets share,' and the 'cultivation of expected export markets' for U.S.
> goods are becoming paramount in the definition of U.S. interests abroad. (Smith,
> 1993, pp. 331)

In a time of austerity, when most of the Global North is tightening wallets, international

NGOs are taking a dramatic hit. The programs that do receive support are usually in

strategically useful areas for military or economic power.

NGOs have a difficult enough time navigating the roadblocks of the public sphere

needless to say the private. It is often overlooked that many NGOs are rooted in religious

doctrine. The degree to which this influences development objectives deserves attention.

I look at religious NGOs to determine how religion shapes assistance in communities that

do not share similar religious beliefs.

When Catholic Protestants arrived in Thailand early in the sixteenth century,

missionaries and nonprofits began by targeting those at the fringes of Thai society—the

ethnic minorities that had migrated into Thailand's Northern hills (Anheier & Salamon,

295). Because many of these Northern minorities migrated from China and Burma many

of them had yet to adopt Buddhism. Occupying a space that was neither Thai nor their

native nationality these groups of people provided the best opportunities for missionary

development.

Religious NGOs played an important role in constructing schools, hospitals, and

other social services. At first inception they sought to spread the word of God to the

Animist village tribes, but later religion took a backseat to community development. This

nonetheless overlooks the degree to which spirituality plays a role in development

agendas today.

In Ban Dang Nok, among spirit houses and peoples dressed in elaborate woven

pasins stands a small church. Unlike the rest of the bamboo houses mounted along the

steep hillside this building sits directly on the ground. It wouldn't look like much if not

for the small cross hanging just above the doorway. Here you can see the hands of

UHDP's Christian origins at work. Ban Dang Nok is located along a steep degraded

hillside. The hill is split between a Palong and Lahu tribe. Neither one is primarily

Christian, in fact only about 30% of the people in these two tribes would identify with

Christianity (Leichliter, personal communication, October 9, 2012). The church was built

by UHDP with the help of these few Christian villagers. I argue was a clear attempt by

UHDP to promote spiritual inspiration on this hillside, one of their pillars of rural

development.

Ban Dang Nok is not the only village that UHDP has helped over the years. In fact a handful of villages dotting Northern Thailand, from all different tribal backgrounds, receive support from this NGO. Ban Dang Nok is, however, one of the few that hosts a church despite their largely non-Christian origins (Leichliter, personal communication, October 9, 2012). One of UHDP's pillars of rural development states the need for "spiritual inspiration," among both "environmental restoration" and "economic empowerment" (http://www.uhdp.org). To what degree this "spiritual inspiration" influences UHDP's development objectives remains ambiguous. Nonetheless, Christian churches and religious organizations in the United States are the largest funders of UHDP's projects. The full staff of 15 Thais employed by UHDP are Christian (Leichliter, personal communication, October 1, 2012). This is in direct contrast to the dominance of Animism and Buddhism in the villages where they work. Since the early 1900's, evangelism is no longer the main motive of NGOs in Thailand. Yet, the dogmas of Western religious worldviews still influence how they interact with villagers. It is unclear whether misunderstanding because of these disparate worldviews will or can cause problems in development objectives.

While UHDP and organizations like it, such as the PRLC located in Mae HongSon, show a greater commitment to community empowerment and local betterment than simply preaching the word of God. Missionary-like nonprofits should be careful when constructing their message. An ulterior motive might challenge the existing social structures of local people similar to economically oriented discourse.

Another burgeoning branch of NGOs has gained influence in the rural development debate, particularly in Thailand. International conservation NGOs are active and influential voices in Thailand's forest communities. After World War II, conservationists championed protected areas such as preservation forests and national parks as a way to maintain biodiversity and healthy ecosystems (Adams & Hutton, 2007, pp. 150). This 'conservationist thinking' originated from western theories that Adams and Hutton described as being, "founded on a conception of nature as something pristine that could be distinguished and physically separated from human-transformed lands" (2007, pp.153). This theory has proved problematic for indigenous groups, like the hill tribes of Northern Thailand. These groups inhabited the forest areas where Thailand would designate the majority of its protected areas. In articulating this phenomenon in the Philippines, Bryant (2002) concluded,

> Largely external perceptions of biodiversity led to a process of strategic conservation planning by international conservation NGOs. This used expert knowledge of the distribution of species and ecosystems to frame and focus government policy. Local uses of nature had little or no place in this analysis, and local people played little or no part in the planning process itself. (Cited in Adams & Hutton, 2007, pp. 156)

Thus even at the hands of non-governmental groups, local communities found themselves largely excluded from discussions of conservation, biodiversity, and sustainable ecosystems. While international conservation NGOs draw attention to the issues of sustainability they often deny or even ignore the role of people in protected areas. Thus as Alcorn (1993) articulates,

> Attempts to broker partnerships, however need to start from the recognition of indigenous people at 'equals at the discussion table', not (as so often in the past)

as subaltern groups to whom rights might be conditionally ceded by pragmatic conservation proprietors. (cited by Adams & Hutton, 2007, pp. 162)

Development and conservation approaches from NGOs, whether they are international or local, cannot exclude the voices of local population anymore than can international funding banks or government development projects. They are credited as a superior coalition legitimized by their environmental consciousness and morals, but these organizations effectively overlook the presence of indigenous groups in areas where they are calling for preservation.

NGOs lack the capability to fundamentally challenge or change development discourse in favor of bottom-up processes alone. But that does not mean that NGOs are not integral vehicles to produce a paradigm shift. The presence of NGOs at the local, national and international levels command a great deal of attention and political space for advocacy. However, these institutions must remain open to structural adjustments that let local people help decide development agendas. Without such achievements the nonprofit sector will forever remain under the reins of the politicians above them. That is, what Mercer terms the "vehicle for the reproduction of inequality" (1999, pp. 255).

Sufficiency Economy and His Majesty the King:

Alongside NGOs, development banks, and bureaucratic development agencies of the Thai state, Thailand introduces a unique fourth voice to the conversation. As a constitutional monarchy, the relationship between the central government and the royal

family creates an interesting dynamic for Thailand's rural development. Particularly,

King Bhumibol Adulyadej, has become a powerful voice for the development of hill tribe

communities. However, despite his participatory approach, sufficiency economy has

become more of a tag line for development than a tangible project at work.

Sufficiency economy originated in the eyes of His Majesty the King after

recognizing the influence of unsustainable cash cropping and the production of opium by

many upland hill tribes. His Majesty developed a program that would withstand the

economic transformation the country, while also promoting more sustainable practices

for these groups (Medhi, 2013). According to His Majesty himself, sufficiency economy

is:

> A philosophy that stresses the middle path as the overriding principle for
> appropriate conduct by the populace at all levels. This applies to conduct at the
> level of the individual, families, and communities, as well as to the choice of a
> balanced development strategy for the nation so as to modernize in line with the
> forces of globalization while shielding against inevitable shocks and excesses that
> arise. "Sufficiency" means moderation and due consideration in all modes of
> conduct, as well as the need for sufficient protection from internal and external
> shocks. (Royal Speech, 1974, cited in Medhi, 2013)

This rhetoric accounts for much of the recent development discourse in Thailand. The

King's image and reputation is one of the key factors for the power and popularity of this

theory. His Majesty's legacy provided the stable foundations for which sufficiency

economy could take hold of the nation.

The King's philosophy of "sufficiency economy" in theory is a culturally appropriate paradigm for upland hill tribes today. The philosophy is tailored toward the livelihoods of Thailand's majority population. Between its inception and implementation a gap has occurred between the King's demands for "sufficiency economics" and the projects that have emerged from the philosophy. While this agenda attempts to provide communities with basic self-sufficiency it has undergone changes imposed by the government. Government intervention spoiled "sufficiency economy's" objectives with political and economic development plans. In addition, it largely excludes communities that don't have the proper land and political rights to achieve such self-sufficiency. While it challenges the current development paradigm it also struggles to redefine what development has become and write a new agenda. Theoretically it poses a revision of development, but in practice it hasn't achieved such progress.

Extending the 'holistic' paradigm of moderation and reasonableness into rural development, sufficiency economy preaches three pillars to achieving sustainable, sufficient agriculture. This was called the "New Theory." The three parts to the "New Theory" include:

"1) Sufficiency at the household level.
 2) Sufficiency at the community level.
 3) Sufficiency at the national level." (Sathirathai & Piboolsravut, 2004)

His Majesty's vision for development conflicted with that of Thailand's Prime Ministers or the international field. He strove to bring rural farmers back under the wings of moderation and the Buddhist "middle path." Working against a number of alternative

paradigms, sufficiency economy attempts to rewrite history in favor of moderation

without accounting for the agenda of the national government. His Majesty's economic

agenda was set forth in 1974 stating:

> Economic development must be pursued sequentially step by step. It should begin
> with the strengthening of our economic foundation, by assuring that the majority
> of our population has enough to live on. ... Once reasonable progress has been
> achieved, we should then embark on the next steps, by pursuing more advanced
> levels of economic development. Here, if one focuses only on rapid economic
> expansion without making sure that such plan is appropriate for our people and
> the conditions of our country, it will inevitably result in various imbalances and
> eventually end up as failure or crisis as found in other countries. (Royal Speech,
> 1974, cited in Medhi, 2013)

The government, on the other hand, sought rapid economic power. After all, Thailand

joined the economic market over a century ago. In terms of innovation projects, energy

projects, and industrialization the wheels had been set in motion many years prior to His

Majesty's 1974 Royal Speech.

Projects posed by His Majesty the King suffer because of the sheer power the

Thai state commands over development. For example, the chairman of the National

Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), a bureaucratic construction under

Parliament (Piboolsravut, 2004), appoints the sub-committee on sufficiency economy.

Despite the theory's roots with His Majesty the King, sufficiency economy nevertheless

had to go through the hands of the Thai state where it went through immense changes.

Ban Dang Nai is a village that sits just outside Chiang Dao in Northern Thailand.

It's a community from the Palong tribe, a group that very recently migrated from Burma.

Here, the Royal Project has set up one of its Agricultural Research Sites, in which different sustainable farming techniques and crops can be tested, experimented with and eventually handed over to local farmers (Royal Project Site). A number of different projects have been set up in the village to support farmers to earn higher profits through crop substitution such as coffee and passion fruit. Crop substitution replaces their typical crops of corn, red beans, and mango with more profitable crops. While these techniques have supported villagers' efforts to maintain a certain amount of self-sufficiency the project has significant loopholes in which the market still takes advantage of villagers. Local people still sell the bulk of their product to "middle men" who often take advantage of the villagers by offering unfair and inadequate monetary compensation. While the majority of inhabitants in Ban Dang Nai have sufficient lands in which to grow their own crops, despite the fact they don't carry a full land title (sah-ta-goh), they are one of the lucky Palong communities (Leichliter, personal communication, October 8, 2012). Just down the road in Ban Dang Nok, villagers are primarily day laborers with insufficient land in which to grow much of anything. NGOs, primarily UHDP has helped them to make use of what they can, but their hope for achieving self-sufficiency demands settling somewhere with more land for villagers to farm (Leichliter, personal communication, October 8, 2012). These two villages show that sufficiency seems to be a legitimate alternative to economic development, but when applied practically other actors muddle the goals of sufficiency. Working in a sphere that has undergone so much transition into industrialization already and that cannot address the varying positions of different communities in the national government poses a threat to making such discourse a reality.

The Royal Project is also taking part in infrastructure projects within villages to help farmers with their basic necessities of running water and electricity. The Royal Project works under the principles of sufficiency economy but overlooks the need for local communities to participate in discussing development projects.

In Ban Dang Nai, water is a precious resource. In April and May the primary stream coming down from the mountain runs dry and villagers lack sufficient water to irrigate their field crops. The Royal Project set out to correct this issue by constructing a ground water system. When the project insisted on building a reservoir many of the villagers spoke against it. The project proceeded to build the dam, despite the local community's reservations and ignored many village elders who suggested a different location for the reservoir. After spending a large portion of the budget on this project, water still runs dry in April and May and the reservoir sits empty (Leichliter, personal communication, October 8, 2012). The project proved to be a waste of valuable money. Projects, like the reservoir in Ban Dang Nai, illustrate how in attempting to achieve local self-sufficiency development inhibits valid input from local people. Self-sufficiency in this regard is seen as an end goal rather than a constantly developing process. Local sufficiency must occur amidst these projects, not simply at the completion of them.

Sufficiency economy lacks adequate input from villagers in designating the projects of most importance and designing ones that will support the community. Sufficiency is seen as an end goal rather than a constantly shifting spectrum. In order to truly take on a self-sufficient community, local villagers need to feel empowered in new

projects, and only through this participation will villagers move toward a sufficient sphere. Projects cannot be developed and initiated by Royal Project staff and then handed over to the villagers for maintenance, they have to work in concert with villagers so that sufficiency starts from the outset.

Sufficiency economy theory is subject to the governmentality of Thailand's constitution. The measurements and goals implied by His Majesty the King stand in conflict with those of the rapidly urbanizing and industrializing Thai state. Sufficiency economy goes to show how even dramatic shifts in development discourse must navigate a climate that severely muddles the initial goals. It takes more than theory to make development work. It takes initiative, cooperation, and the power of multiple stakeholders.

Sufficiency economy nonetheless reflects a valuable shift in the mindset of development. It brings together key components of Thai society such as moderation and the interdependency between humans and nature. It starts small, with household and village-level independence before tackling the national or world economic conditions. Its holistic approach toward human improvement and conservation of the natural world represents a necessary step in sustainable development. The power of His Majesty the King as cultivator of this theory is also important to recognize in promoting projects around the nation.

The Royal Project has fallen prey to many of the same ills that overtake other ideas of its kind. The Thai state often works against the monarchy's goals by pushing for more product and cheaper food, throwing money at the problems of poverty and deforestation. Similarly, while the King himself addressed how sufficiency was to be a step-by-step process, villagers and the Royal Project opted for quick turns of profit. In Ban Dang Nai, the Royal Project promoted substituting typical crops with those that hold more market value, such as passion fruit (Leichliter, personal communication, October 8, 2012). At the same time it overlooked the day laborers and migrants living without citizenship, land, or the means to farm.

To achieve improvements toward development that His Majesty the King spoke of in his 1974 address to the people of Thailand requires the cooperation of national and international political bodies. Intimate knowledge of and dialogue with communities impacted by development is the only way to turn empty rhetoric into plausible action.

Part II: Alternative Development

Development has been attempted at different levels of the political and geographic hierarchy through four different development discourses. While stakeholders have introduced new language and terms for analyzing development the outcome has rarely reflected the rhetoric. Development is such that any one attempt by a single group of stakeholders often has to pass through several chambers of a much larger and more intricate machine. Development is not systematic inputs and outputs. Humans are

dynamic, complex and varied individuals. They have different motives, unrelated histories, different spiritual beings, and their worldviews reflects the consequences of all these different impacts. Development is not a simple fix.

This is not to say that development discourse has not had its victories. There have been a number of initiatives in Thailand's rural history where development has shifted towards a new paradigm. But in order for these projects to succeed, discussion and action among actors at every level, representing every agenda; including international agencies, national politicians, NGO aid workers and funders, His Majesty the King, and local people is needed.

The second half of this paper will analyze key moments in this paradigm shift and discuss why these moments occurred and what conditions allowed them to be successful. I expand on a new development discourse aimed at strengthening the interplay between locals and the larger development field. I argue that by encouraging local peoples to join the conversation perhaps development discourse can incorporate differing definitions of terms such as sustainability, effectiveness, economic profitability, and development that might encourage a specialized agenda for supporting villages with what they need to be successful.

In Buddhist traditions, the people of Huay Nam Mae Hong Son believe that spirits hold the power to the natural world. Twice a year, once before planting and once after harvesting, the village spiritual doctor conducts a ceremony to call the spirits (win yaan)

back to the people. The ceremony is both a tribute to the spirits of the land for a good harvest and a sign of respect that the spirits will return again to give them another successful year (Leichliter, personal communication, November 2, 2012).

To hear these practices from the villagers themselves says more about their culture than just their investment in Buddhist religion. It reveals a relationship to the land and the harvest that dictates the everyday life of many of these upland villages. Farming is not just an economic activity it is a livelihood, one that goes back generations, and one that cannot be supplemented or substituted. Development needs to awaken the idea that not all traditional methods are antiquated. There is something to be taken from these methods. Perhaps they can both preserve the environment while also uplifting and empowering local groups.

Indigenous Knowledge and Development

Indigenous knowledge must shape an alternative paradigm. However, first, a working definition needs to be untangled from the web of development rhetoric. After unpacking the definition of indigenous knowledge, I will apply its realistic value toward a new theory of development. In other words the fundamental usefulness of indigenous knowledge, that refrains from over-romanticized ideals.

There is much contention in the dialogue about indigenous knowledge because the term conjures so many distinct definitions. McCorkle defines it as "the theories,

beliefs, practices, and technologies that all peoples in all times and places have elaborated

without direct inputs from modern, formal, scientific establishment" (1989, pp. 4). A

series of definitions utilized by Mauro suggest the multiple viewpoints of the word

"indigenous" alone:

> self-identification as indigenous; descent from the occupants of a territory prior to
> an act of conquest; possession of a common history, language, and culture
> regulated by customary laws that are distinct from national cultures; possession of
> a common land; exclusion or marginalization from political decision-making; and
> claims for collective and sovereign rights that are unrecognized by the dominating
> and governing group(s) of the state. (2000, pp. 1264)

Fernando proposes indigenous knowledge is a, "body of knowledge associated with a

fixed territorial space for a considerably long period of time" (2003, pp. 56).

The common and recurrent theory of these definitions rests on a systemic transfer

of unique cultural patterns without input from outside governing bodies or peoples.

Therefore, in creating a framework that seeks to marry indigenous knowledge to the

larger discourse and stakeholders in development strategy, I've already hit a significant

wall. How does something that is wholly separated from the influence of outsiders work

with such peoples to ensure its longevity and vitality in the future?

In order to incorporate indigenous knowledge into development discourse such

that it provides a beneficial vehicle for local empowerment and human as well as

environmental success, depends on the construction of this dialogue. Much of

development's historical record with indigenous knowledge systems has largely focused

on the "what" that local populations want to see done. However, all levels of

development must explore the "why" as well (Thrupp, 1989). Local knowledge is a direct

response to everyday experimentation, in which locals directly benefit or falter based on

their everyday decisions and modes for making those decisions. Briggs summarizes this

idea stating, "indigenous knowledge becomes something very much driven by the

pragmatic, utilitarian and everyday demands of life" (2005, pp. 10).

Briggs highlights the variability that accompanies investing in local knowledge.

Local knowledge is not static. It's a dynamic, constantly shifting body of knowledge that

is not grounded in antiquity. Local knowledge is developed everyday, amongst farmers,

laborers, men and women of all trades and all eras (Thrupp, 1989). For this reason much

development discourse does not respect this body of knowledge. Development scientists

see the experimentation that accompanies local knowledge as uncontrolled and lacking

analysis. They argue that the skills and production of indigenous knowledge are too

intimately intertwined, inseparable and therefore ineffective. This is precisely the mindset

that must be abolished if development is to accept a new framework. Briggs argues that

Western science and indigenous knowledge will never find a common dialogue because

one is looking for knowledge of universal significance, while the other is looking for

context-specific solutions (2005). Banerjee contends,

> The power of science and the scientific method in everyday discourse is an
> example of how science normalizes social and cultural realms, not because of the
> superior rationality of science but because of its procedures of normalization
> arising from its disciplinary power. (2003, pp. 147)

Power within these disciplines (hard science versus social sciences) needs to be redistributed to combat procedures that normalize the social and cultural distinctiveness necessary to use indigenous knowledge in development. Western science needs to shed its infatuation with universal significance and accept that development, in practice, will vary with location, groups and people.

In looking for both cultural and ecological specific solutions to developing, especially within agriculture, the chances that these practices will sustain the material necessary for success in the future increases. The beauty of local knowledge in the context of sustainable development is, as McCorkle states, "Local knowledge tends to be pre-adapted to its physical and human ecology" (1989, pp. 8). I do not over-generalize to say that all indigenous knowledge is sustainable, but simply that local knowledge tends to know the local environment to a degree that development experts never could hope to learn it. Locals therefore have a better chance at achieving their own sustainability.

There are significant ways in which community development has gained a foothold in larger political and economic circles, but it has yet to fully challenge past development paradigms. Through strengthening the rhetoric of indigenous knowledge and providing support for what little progress has been made, Thailand could take a necessary next step into the future of development discourse. Development must create a network amongst government, monarchy, nonprofits, international officials and local peoples that allows stakeholders at all steps in the ladder of hierarchy to engage in an open and constant dialogue. If these groups can work together, recognizing common

goals rather than dwelling on their political divisions, there is hope a new paradigm might still emerge. This proposal requires that the agents of development accept that the process is long and arduous, but if done right, better equipped to endure the passage of time. Key local movements and participatory inclusions in Thailand's development agenda support promoting local peoples place in structuring development.

Community Forestry Bill in Thailand:

The Community Forestry Bill was introduced in the 1990's in reaction to the 1989 logging ban. It was a way to delegate the management of forests out to local governance and community-driven management schemes (Forsyth & Johnson, 2002). The debate surrounding the Community Forestry Bill was one of the first direct legislative challenges initiated by local communities. Key players in the policymaking body included "representatives from government, NGOs, academics, and grassroots communities" (Johnson & Forsyth, 2002, pp. 1596). The debate proved to be a launching pad for further discussions regarding the "democratization" of the Thai state. Democratization gained momentum with the 1997 People's Constitution (Contreras, 2004). While neither of these events fully transformed the centralization of Thailand they nonetheless propelled Thailand's recent politics. The RFD's era of management had failed to truly enact agrarian reform and the bill came as a welcome change to the uplands' history of deforestation and poverty.

The Community Forestry Bill handed local people rights to manage the forests surrounding them. Even though local people had been managing natural resources in the area long before the Thai state inserted itself into these villages. These people have been managing, protecting, and using these forests for centuries. They have a common knowledge of their own soft laws regarding forest extraction. They also have their own political processes and ways for persecuting anyone that does not follow such rules. Villagers that disrespect the land, extracting valuable resources in abundance or irreversibly causing damage to the forest are given a warning on the first attempt. Most villages were unclear about what might happen with subsequent attempts because most villagers are too frightened of karma to try such extractions again (Leichliter, personal communication, November 10, 2012).

The bill served more as a reminder to the government that upland hill tribes had the right and the proper management structures for protecting these lands (Hares, 2009). Observation suggests that local communities use the land sustainably and support these localized management schemes. Before National Parks were declared preservation land in 1961, the North was the largest area covered by forest in Thailand, with over 115,000 km^2 of forested area (McKinnon, 1989). The first step toward community management required upland hill tribes, in congregation with several NGOs, to demarcate the land by its specific uses. Hill tribe people have recognized these ancient forest designations for centuries, but with outside help villagers created recognizable GPS maps with boundaries to serve as proof to the government that forestry management is being taken seriously (Leichliter, personal communication, October 30, 2012).

In the upland hills of Mae Hong Son Province, Karen hill tribe villages have designated a number of specific forest areas including: community forest (pba choom-chone), community-use forest (pba chai soy), umbilical forests (in Buddhist villages), cemetery forests (in Christian villages), conservation forest (pba anurak), National Parks (oohtayan), and watershed forests. Each of these demarcations holds specific meaning to the villagers. For example, the community-use forests are designated for collecting small amounts of vegetables and herbal medicinal plants. Hunting is not permitted and cutting down trees is limited to lumber for building houses (Leichliter, personal communication, November 2, 2012). In preservation land or RFD land, the community doesn't have much power. The RFD restricts use of this part of the forest except in certain areas where the government allows hunting. Typically the designation of these areas varies from village to village depending on how much land is designated to rotational farming. Communities that have gained more prominence and power with the national government are more successful in negotiating their management jurisdiction.

While this bill finally ignited participation of local hill tribes in national arenas, it was not without its faults. The bill failed to acknowledge the status concerning hill tribe peoples that are unrecognized by the Thai state. Groups that had migrated from Burma escaping political repression by the military regime are not considered "Thais" and have struggled to gain even citizenship rights, let alone land rights and political power. Among these are the Hmong tribe, often inhabiting spaces deep within the Northern Mountains. The Palong tribe is the most recent migrant to Thailand and mostly work as day laborers

not far from urban centers. The Lahu tribe is spread all throughout Northern Thailand and range from commercial farmers and day laborers to small-scale organic and sustainable farmers (Hares, 2009).

The Community Forestry Bill is also susceptible to the volatility of the central Thai government. During its conception the bill was drawn out between three separate government regimes before gaining any traction (Buergin & Kessler, 2000). In order to be recognized under the Community Forestry Bill, villages have to participate in a strict and rigorous step-by-step process. The process can take years before a community's management is recognized by the Thai state. The Upland Holistic Development Project worked for three years aiding a small Lahu village with the process. At step twelve of the fourteen to become recognized by the Thai state there was a regime change. The village has been waiting for approval ever since (Leichliter, personal communication, January 26, 2013). Years of trials and close communication with government agencies can be stripped clean in the precariousness of Thai politics.

Although the bill has a number of weak points it's conception drives home the power of local participation and the importance of community management in protecting Northern Thailand's forests. Upland communities have nurtured an intimate relationship with natural resources that hardly parallels the actions of the political elite in Bangkok. Upland villages have direct ties to forested areas. They depend on forest resources for their everyday lives. Particularly the necessity of the forest for cultural traditions, the crucial role of non-timber forest products, and the spiritual connection they have with the

forest (Noguchi et al., 2006). Community forestry management is the optimum alternative for protection in which the national government and local communities can both benefit. In areas where budget restrictions and vast forested territory in Northern Thailand undermines successful protection by the national government, not to mention the threats of corruption among government officials, community management can become a happy medium for communities to regulate their own territorial space. Community management can be used as a foundational tool for future discussions of participation and involvement of local communities in providing for sustainability.

The Work of NGOs, Local Groups brings a New Era for Agriculture:

The work of forest management and political participation is not the only sector where development has seen positive side affects of empowering local communities. Agriculture in the upland mountains has also begun to explore a development paradigm shift toward bottom-up processes.

The Upland Holistic Development Project is a local agricultural nonprofit attempting to help local communities make sustainable use of their lands. The reservations toward UHDP in development discourse represents the general concern that NGOs are too constricted by stipulations that come from receiving funding abroad. Even still, UHDP is an organization looking to cater to bottom-up development projects, despite being limited by donor stipulations.

UHDP has nurtured an important relationship with the communities they help. They work from the "sufficiency economics" theory, attempting to bring Thailand's hill tribes self-sufficiency first and economic development only where local communities stand to benefit. The center works from a small experimental farm where they've cultivated the idea of agroforestry, integrated livestock management, backyard gardening, and small-scale livestock production. They've transformed their research into actual practice in a number of communities. Engaging in a dialogue with local farmers UHDP focuses on what villagers need from agricultural development and what indigenous knowledge can be utilized to achieve sustainable, self-sufficient farming. In these projects UHDP serves mostly as a support system for local ideas.

Agroforestry is UHDP's ideal endeavor for many of these upland hill tribes. Agroforestry seeks to marry farming for self-sufficiency, economic profit and reforestation. It tries to satisfy both the needs of local farmers and environmental conservation activists by promoting re-usable forest products. Many of the forest species UHDP encourages farmers to cultivate provide multiple purposes. Rattan, for example, is a cultural symbol for the Palong tribes who wear them as decorative waistbands, bracelets, and woven baskets. It also serves as an important food item for upland hill tribes and can be used for construction purposes. Fan palm is one of the most important plants for building roofs in upland villages and black sugar palm can be sold in the city for making a rich Thai dessert that provides a generous income. The agroforest, itself, requires little maintenance. Once farmers have established their own forest they have

been able to sell seedling and saplings to the Royal Project or the RFD for replanting and

reforestation purposes (Leichliter, personal communication, October 8, 2012).

Two farmers in Ban Dang Nai have invested in the agroforestry method and with

UHDP's help transformed about three rai (2.5 acres=1 rai) each into developed,

economically profitable forestland. The farmer's mentioned that in a year they spend

about 5,000 baht. Meanwhile, from their agroforests alone they will make about 3,000

baht each. Before agroforestry farmers suffered from large debt loads, but now they have

repaid debt and are making steady incomes (Leichliter, personal communication, October

8, 2012). Nonetheless, agroforestry has two substantial obstacles. First, it usually takes

five-years before any of the products can actually become economically profitable.

Although farmers can invest in smaller, faster growing species to feed their families in

the meantime it still requires financial support. Second, communities and farmers must

first have some rights to the land they transform.

In response to a lack of land, UHDP has also helped to spread backyard gardening

to communities that do not have rights to cultivate significant plots of land. Backyard

gardening is a practice many Thais are familiar with, but UHDP helps communities grow

plants that can feed their families sufficiently and require less care and water. Small-scale

livestock production, from backyard chicken coops to small pigpens also helps to bring in

some additional income for these villages at the fringes of sprawling urban districts.

Members at UHDP have worked delicately with government officials to help some

villagers obtain identification cards and citizenship where possible. They are also helping

local communities converse with the government about possible problems and solutions regarding agricultural policies (Leichliter, personal communication, January 26, 2013).

Empowerment is UHDP's most striking goal for development. UHDP has, despite its foreign roots, become students to many local practices. They've become an ear and support system for local knowledge. This year they've established a project in which they collect local knowledge about herbal medicine in the different hill tribe communities where they work. This research stores indigenous knowledge about herbal medicine to remind villages of their own self-sufficiency while also helping to preserve this unique reservoir of information (Leichliter, personal communication, November 25, 2012). Due to poor roads that are easily eroded by heavy rains during the wet season access to hospitals is difficult for hill tribe villagers. Even in circumstances where access to hospitals is possible, villagers don't have the financial means or experience with Western medicine to make it a viable option for many of them. Most villages don't have clocks to monitor specific times for taking medicine. Rather than encouraging capitalist markets as a means to generate income for purchasing Western medicine, UHDP is trying to restore the value of herbal medicine. They are encouraging the sharing of such medicinal knowledge among hill tribe groups and act as facilitators for discussion to bridge linguistic gaps between tribes.

The organization utilizes local staff, employing both *kone Thai* (native Thai's that are not part of an ethnic group) and many of the *choaw khow*, or those from the upland ethnic communities. This important step recognizes the need for a personal account of

local processes. While these employees might not originate from the same villages, they bridge the cultural and lingual gap between the different ethnic groups. They can view development through the eyes of each particular ethnic community's traditions and culture. This unique vision is otherwise inaccessible to those unfamiliar with specific tribal customs. Such small structural adjustments throughout NGO organizations can have effects for on-the-ground success. This is especially true in hill tribes where directing development through language barriers and cultural misunderstanding poses a challenge for encouraging local communities.

With the creation of the TAO (Tambon Administration Organization), or sub-district level governmental agency in 1994, hill tribe villagers working in this sector of the government are increasingly common (Hares, 2008). This gives another dimension to community participation. Working at this level of government offers the educated, younger generation a viable place in the political sphere without disconnecting them from their tribal roots. While the political process is far from perfect, increasing the number of hill tribe peoples employed by higher tiers of government might ensure a more fair participation for ethnic hill tribes. As ethnic groups continue to press into new spheres of involvement and participation, development discourse opens the doors to a more holistic conversation.

Religion and the King: Unlikely Conductors for Development

Faith and religion has been an uncontrollable and distinct presence in development paradigms even before colonialism affected developing countries. While Thailand was never fully colonized, it nonetheless did not escape the influences of missionaries and faith-based organizations. Even today, these agencies are an important stakeholder in Thailand's future development. Faith-based organizations tread a fine line between evangelism and volunteer aid. They inhabit a unique space in development discourse because of this precarious position, but that does not mean that faith-based organizations cannot do their fair share of good. Especially in Northern Thailand, a number of faith-based organizations (UHDP, mentioned above, is one of them) can have powerful impacts in micro-based community organizing. Faith and spirituality has actually become a rather common and influential presence in conservation and village management of natural resources when implemented responsibly.

Science often offers technical solutions, especially when it comes to environmental conservation, but this effectively marginalizes the rather strong, substantial connection that so many hill tribes have with their local environment. This connection can only be described as *spiritual*. It's both the result of ancient, time-old practices and religiosity. While not all upland hill tribes practice the same religion (they vary from Buddhist to Animist to Christian), many have converted to Buddhism while maintaining a number of their Animist beliefs. 95% of Thailand is Buddhist (U.S. Department of State, 2011). Therefore, Buddhism's special concern for environmentalism and the middle-path is a rather new tool in promoting sustainable development and encouraging environmental management.

In the 1990's Buddhist monks, given the name "ecology monks" joined the environmental debate (Darlington, 1998). Buddhism believes in the preservation of *all* life. The doctrine preaches appreciation for moderation and sustainability. Ecology monks therefore simply began re-examining scripture in the light of environmentalism. While the debate is inherently political as much as it is environmental, the goal of ecology monks was not a political rhetoric, but rather the belief that humans have a responsibility to the natural environment (Darlington, 1998). One environmental approach used by Buddhist monks is the ordaining of specific trees with the orange robe of temple monks. Climbing through the forests of Thailand it is not unlikely to spot the orange fabric through the dense underbrush. Ordaining trees signifies that such a tree nurtures a spirit. If a Buddhist were to cut down the tree this would anger the spirit and cause unfortunate consequences. Temples will also host planting days, where Buddhists can plant trees and in doing so ensure themselves good karma.

Another strong recognition of spirituality and religious belief is portrayed through Thailand's King. Development projects initiated by his Majesty the King often gain the most attention among Thais. Love for the King is deeply embedded in Thai culture, and his dedication to Buddhist tradition is further reflected in his development agenda. While sufficiency economy is impacted by Thailand's central government, it nonetheless holds a great deal of value among the Thai people.

Even in the most remote villages most households, if not all, ordain a picture of the King. The King is a great symbol of fatherly guidance for many people and their trust towards him is undeniable. Thai's call the King *paw leuang*. Literally translated this means "father of yellow." The Thai belief in Buddhism is often related to this undying connection to their King, making his voice and agendas powerful mechanisms to fueling development's transformation.

"Sufficiency economy" is a way of life that many Thais can relate to because of its foundations in Buddhist methodology. The theory pairs the science of development with the social or spiritual realities of local villages. Buddhism is not the only religion that has been positively channeled and related back to rural development. Many other religions have been able to take the qualities most beneficial for responding to global challenges and sustained similar positive results. However, Buddhism has been particularly useful in Thailand because of the religious homogenization of the country.

As a Christian organization UHDP believes in ideals of care for others, equality, and humanity. While the presence of evangelism and distinctly "western" patterns of thought in development remains unclear, by engaging spirituality into development discourse, NGOs, like UHDP, promote a holistic approach toward local communities' needs.

Spirituality comes in a number of different forms, especially in the diversity of Thailand's upland hill tribes. Most hill tribes construct their beliefs around the forest,

rivers, and wildlife that surround them. The spiritual nature of conservation methods in

hill tribe villages often disguises local management techniques or methods for

transferring knowledge. In a Western society where nature is not only wholly separate

from the people that enjoy it, but also discussed scientifically, such methods for

encouraging conservation or sustainability seem strange and are even mistaken as non-

existent.

> In Huay Tong Koh villagers sing:
>
> *Nuh mae oh tuh baht zuh doh lah lah baht zuh doh lah lah dteet toh kay zuh baht
> toh goht lala*
> *Noh toh kay jah mae toh goht lala mae toh goht lala bray dohnt loht leuu keuu
> doh lala*

The song tells of a playful flirtation between a man and a woman falling in love. It tells

of the need to love and support one another and then compares this to the same way

villagers must love and protect the forest like their ancestors before them (Leichliter,

personal communication, November 11, 2012). This is just one example of how forest

spirituality is passed on to future generations through a number of different educational

mediums. Villagers have even discussed the need for adding traditional songs, like this

one, to children's formal educational curriculum.

In Huay Nam Mae HongSon, villagers still practice ancient spiritual ceremonies

from Buddhist tradition that incorporate conservation theories. Typically such ceremonies

occur around the most important seasons in hill tribe culture. Villagers will celebrate the

"Feeding of the River Spirit" at pivotal agricultural seasons, primarily planting and

harvesting. Villagers believe that respecting the natural spirits of the earth brings them good harvests and healthy, successful rice crops. Their dependency on farming reinforces this important respect for natural resources, thereby indirectly encouraging important conservation and management practices. However, as commercial agriculture spreads throughout the Northern mountains, these once purely subsistence farmers begin to rely on outside market products that sever traditional ties to the land, spirits, and resources.

Spirituality must not be overlooked as a medium for encouraging sustainable development. Often times the word sustainability is intimately intertwined with such important social customs. Therefore, religious, spiritual, or cultural beliefs can be utilized as a means for discussing sustainability in connection to hill tribes traditional practices. Simply encouraging discussion amongst villagers about their definition of sustainability and development offers insight into a culture's distinctive qualities. In asking such questions villagers are encouraged to reflect on age-old beliefs, reigniting village life.

Re-defining Sustainability:

At the crux of transforming development discourse is the question regarding sustainability. How can the field redefine sustainability or recognize the variability of the term as it pertains to different localities? Scientific institutionalization of the term "sustainability" has hindered much on-the-ground progress in development locations. In order to revolutionize development, sustainability must become a topic of conversation at the village level. Stakeholders in development can no longer afford to export the term

across a broad range of communities. Rather development discourse must start encouraging an open dialogue with villagers to ensure the term has applicability across cultural boundaries.

Despite popular belief, local communities are not blind to global environmental challenges. While villagers don't see climate change on the global spectrum they nonetheless have their own local experiences with climate change. Locals refer to certain fruits and vegetables that bloom earlier in the growing season (Leichliter, personal communication, November 11, 2012). The fact that these changes can be identified on a local scale shows the immediacy of incorporating sustainability to development initiatives. When the global community talks of sustainability it often encourages environmental and ecological protections to ensure the longevity of the natural world, ignoring social sustainability. In Huay Nam Mae HonSon, a small Karen village in Mae HonSon Province, I asked villagers to define sustainability (yong yuun). Villagers responded highlighting cultural preservation. Sustainability for them meant keeping their cultural traditions including religious ceremonies, swidden farming (rai leu'an loi) and producing their own handicrafts. It also meant transferring this knowledge to the next generation and protecting the accessibility of their current lifestyle for their children (Leichliter, personal communication, November 2, 2012). In denying locals the chance to participate in formal debates that use the term sustainability, development theory is missing an important recognition for the cultural component of the term.

Bruno Latour (1987) introduced the "immutable mobiles" phenomenon. He defines this as, "socially identified objects, representations, or processes that are considered the same in different locations of cultural settings." Latour asserts that "immutable mobiles" are problematic in that the social and political networks that establish and adopt these definitions do not take into account how the risk is actually experienced by people in different locations.

Sustainable development as it stands now makes predictions of risk based upon projections of biophysical change alone. In doing so, development agendas remove discussion from the public domain and confine it to those with identified "expert status," failing to take into account that risk is valued differently depending on the stakeholder (Forsyth, 2003). I do not assert that so-called "expert" opinions are not of value to development, but only that they are not the only position that holds worth. Opening discussions to new definitions of these commonplace terms will enhance the applicability of development discourse for future projects.

Conclusion:

Thus far development works as a series of separate sectors, attempting to move independently from one another and yet inevitably, systematically dependent on other various levels at which they work. Both the problem and importance of sustainability is that at every level of development's spectrum everyone has a stake in it. From local villagers to whole nations, the realities of changing social and ecological environments

are of utmost importance. Therefore, development must find a way to work in concert with one another. There must be equality in the voices of change. The problem—where do we start?

As Escobar (1995, 98) suggests: "[t]he remaking of development must start by examining local constructions, to the extent that they are the life and history of the people, that is, the conditions for and of change." A slow and powerful revolution can only grow from the origins of the problem itself. Development should focus on empowering local individuals rather than challenging the values and motives of local populations.

The Karen tribes of Northern Thailand (Bak-en-yah in Karen) have a saying:

Ta koon chai tdon mai, koon tdong roo jak tdon mai. Ta koon chai naam, koon tdong roo jak naam.

"If you are going to use the trees, you must know the trees. If you are going to use the water, you must know the water" (Leichliter, personal communication, November 4, 2012). For centuries the forest has been a self-regulating ecosystem. The people that use the forest know the forest. They know what they can use from it, they know how much they can take from it, and they respect what it offers them. Progress must be made in channeling this valuable reservoir of knowledge to enhance both the lives of rural communities and the ecosystems in which they live.

Development discourse, today, often presents communities like the ethnic hill tribes in Northern Thailand as devoid of knowledge or as impoverished communities. It is important not to become overly concerned with these classifications. Communities may not have overwhelming incomes, electricity, running water, or the amenities that make daily life more 'productive' or 'easier,' but they are rich in different facets of life. In non-capitalist communities money isn't everything. Oil, tractors, and plows these are not always necessary for a farmer's lifestyle in Northern Thailand. Stakeholders in development must recognize this worldview and use it to help communities adjust to the larger global environment.

Poverty, climate change, education, health, food security—these are the big problems the world faces today, and they can't be solved by one party, one stakeholder. Rather there needs to be a significant shift in the paradigm of development. International aid, NGOs, and states need to find a way to work together to accomplish this feat. If Thailand's Northern hill tribes are going to preserve their culture, their environment, and their everyday life they are going to need the support of *all* levels of development's hierarchy. They are going to need the ears of every stakeholder. They are going to need to be the driving force for change. Development has reached a critical impasse in which stakeholders cannot move forward unless local communities get a chance to shape the debate.

This is happening slowly across Thailand. In responding to localized needs, development has seen victories among even the most marginalized of Thailand's

Northern communities. However, if such victories are to continue development must seek to work in conjunction with its various discourses and attempt a transformation of not just theory, but also praxis.

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