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The Formation Process for Civil Society in Northeast Thailand: A Social Research Case Study of Two Villages

Noriyuki Suzuki[*]

Abstract: *»Der Entstehungsprozess von Zivilgesellschaften in Nordost Thailand: Eine empirische Fallstudie für zwei Dörfer«.* Using a process-oriented methodology, this paper examines the ongoing interdependent processes of both macro and micro civil society using a case-study undertaken in two villages in Northern Thailand. Two forms of civil society are theoretically defined and examined in this paper. The first form, 'grass-roots' civil society, was formed in Thoongpong of the villager's own initiative. The second form, 'top-down' civil society, was created in the village of Phandon through government initiative. Survey data collected shows that following the government instability and subsequent lack of continuous support for village civil society groups and projects, the politically autonomous and independently formed 'grass-roots' civil society of Thoongpong has continued to thrive in contrast to the 'top-down' civil society of Phandon, which has dried up without continued government support. While further research into this subject is necessary, it is the author's opinion that given the current Thai political climate, 'grass-roots' civil society is more sustainable in rural Thailand and should thus be promoted more than 'top-down' civil society projects at present.

Keywords: Civil society, process-oriented methodology, Thailand, Prachakhom, grass-roots, top-down.

1. Conceptual and Historical Background

1.1 Personal Perspective on the Research Topic

This paper follows the framework for a process-oriented methodology inspired by Norbert Elias (Baur and Ernst 2011, 134). Process-oriented methodology is effective because, much like Kelle's method for integrating quantitative and qualitative data, it generates an "understanding of social structure as both stable over long periods of time and in unpredictable ways still capable of change due to being the product of social action, which although oriented by structures is

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not determined by them" (Kelle 2008, via Baur and Ernst 2011, 135). This is an appropriate framework, as the focus of this research, civil society, is itself the product of social action and as a consequence is subject to unpredictable changes in both macro and micro levels of political, community, and individual actors.

This research examines the processes of civil society formed in two Thai villages. In one village, Phandon, in the subdistrict Tambon, a top-down form of village civil society emerged only after Thaksin Shinawatra, prime minister of Thailand (February 9, 2001 - September 19, 2006) distributed governmental financial assistance through populist policies to all Thai villages. In another village, Thoongpong, grass-roots civil society emerged prior to receiving governmental financial assistance, in order to serve the villagers' own needs and make their voices heard. The author criticizes the policies that force the formation of a top-down civil society encompassed by and dependent on the political structure as opposed to a politically autonomous and independent grass-roots village civil society that has continued to be sustainable despite the recent political turbulence of governments and policies in Thailand.

1.2 Civil Society as a Multi-Faceted Process

Since the initial conception of the term 'civil society' as Aristotle's *koinōnía politikḗ*, in which it was a 'community' that shared a set of norms and ethos and in which citizens abided by laws (Aristotle: *Pol*, I.1252a, trans. Rackham), the concept has had radically different meanings throughout history, and even in the present day scholars cannot settle on a single definition. However, as Helmut K. Anheier, director of the Centre for Civil Society at the London School of Economics states,

> ultimately, it may not be possible to develop a standard definition of civil society that would apply equally well to different settings. By contrast, an approach that views any conceptual definition as part, and indeed the outcome, of ongoing empirical efforts to understand civil society appears as the more fruitful strategy. In this sense, any definition of civil society will evolve over time, and it neither can be regarded as given nor seen as something that can be imposed. (Anheier n.d.)

Viengrat Nethipo, a Thai political scientist, argued that in the Thai context, civil society is thought to have emerged around the period of the student uprising that restored democracy in 1973. Civil society did not gain significant attention until after the 1992 Bloody May incident (Nethipo 2015, 164).

However, in the eyes of Thai scholars, distinctions between the concepts of village civil society and the civil society movement are not clear. This is because the latter has been influenced by the West while the former is homegrown. Thai society has its own form of village civil society (*prachakhom*), which consists of communities. Within a community, villagers' groups or organizations may link the villagers together through group activities, potentially leading to what is called a "strong community." The strength of the subsequent

civil society in the community is dependent upon the extent of member cooperation, and the extent to which different interest groups, aimed at public interests, can be united. The concept of civil society in Thailand is widely debated, with different opinions within Thai academia. Teerayut Bunmee argues that the concept of civil society comes from the West but that its form has been adapted to the historical, economic, political, and social conditions of each country. In Thailand, its historical, economic, political, and social development provides the basis for the formation process of the concept of the civil society movement (Bunmee 2004). Prawase Wasi supports the idea with an emphasis on the grass-roots (Wasi 1999).

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives

Regarding civil society as a concept that is an ongoing process, is therefore key to this research, particularly when utilizing the contrasting perspectives of civil society proposed by Antonio Gramsci, in which civil society is a "political superstructure" (Bobbio 1979, 30-4), within

> the capitalist state […] made up of two overlapping spheres, a 'political society' (which rules through force) and a 'civil society' (which rules through consent) […] where trade unions and political parties gained concessions from the bourgeois state, and the sphere in which ideas and beliefs were shaped, where bourgeois 'hegemony' was reproduced in cultural life through the media, universities and religious institutions to 'manufacture consent' and legitimacy (Heywood 1994, 100-1),

and the subsequent influence of repeated coup d'états, and of Jürgen Habermas's perspective, in which civil society is an aspect of the public sphere that encourages rational will formation:

> Civil society is made up of more or less spontaneously created associations, organisations and movements, which find, take up, condense and amplify the resonance of social problems in private life, and pass it on to the political realm or public sphere. (Habermas 1992, 443)

As Jillian Schwelder argues, this emerges when individuals and groups challenge permissible behavior and demand government response to societal needs (Schwelder 1995). As a consequence of these two theories regarding civil society, two dominant forms of civil society building initiative exist. The first belongs to the Habermas school of thought, and is known as 'grass-roots' civil society. There are a variety of possible definitions for 'grass-roots,' a phrase first used by Senator Albert Jeremiah Beveridge (Safire 2008, 289), who saw it as voluntary action and group participation that emerges "from the soil of people's hard necessities." It is thus necessary to give the definition utilized in this article as opposed to the others used in political policy. 'Grass-roots' civil society in this article is defined as a process of individual and group villager action on a micro level, with the formation of *prachakhom* and groups without any financial or other incentives by government or NGOs. This is opposed to

top-down civil society building policies, which involve the utilization of outside resources to incentivize civil society formation in local communities. In this 'grass-roots' civil society, it is the poor villagers who are responsible for shaping programs to change their conditions.

The second form is known as 'top-down' civil society. This is a form of civil society that is both incentivized and directed by government policy (in this case Thaksin's populist policies directed towards his supporters for specific development support). 'Top-down' civil society in this case gives financial support to specific areas of civil society it deems necessary, but is government controlled and therefore suffers from a potential bias to support areas and civil society groups that will continue to keep the current political party in power, and oppose any civil society action that will fight against the current political hegemony, even if this would be in the best interests of the community. Even when top-down policies are carried out by the villagers themselves rather than government agents, further criticism of 'top-down' civil society building incentives is that "they will often look for people who can act as their proxies in carrying forward the funders' agendas – people who can be counted on, in other words, to share their values and behave accordingly" (Ruesga 2011, 461).

With all of this criticism of top-down civil society building policies, it must be said that they do create civil society and benefit certain villagers, even if this research shows that it is not sustainable. As Ruesga describes such policy outcomes, "while they may not have achieved large-scale gains in empowerment or poverty reduction, they have certainly brought concrete benefits to some communities and brought others into the public policy process" (ibid., 460).

1.4 Situation for Civil Society Research in Thailand

This article, "The Formation Process for Civil Society in Northeast Thailand: from the Social Research of Two Villages" is a result of the research, supported by Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research, of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan from 2008 to 2010, on village civil society (*prachakhom*) as the basis for the emergence of civil society and development in Thailand's northeastern region. It is also a related outcome of the research on "Regional Development in Northeast Thailand and the Formation of Civil Society" (Sakurai and Somsak 2003), "Civil Society Movement and Development in Northeast Thailand" (Suzuki and Somsak 2008), and "Dynamics of Civil Society Movement in Northeast Thailand" (Suzuki and Somsak 2012).

Thaksin Shinawatra was prime minister of Thailand from February 2001 to September 2006 when he was overthrown in a military coup. Much of the rural Thai population appreciated his populist policies, which distributed budget to "*Tambon*" (subdistricts) and "*Mooban*" (villages). The *Yellow Shirts* is the nickname of The People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), a Thai political

movement and pressure group against Thaksin Shinawatra. The *Red Shirts* is the nickname of The United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD), which is opposed to both the PAD and the 2006 Thai military coup.

Economic growth has generally been the primary focus of previous development strategies in Thailand, often at the expense of the social aspects. This has created many issues, ranging from societal inequality and environmental degradation, to the decline of folk culture and rise of consumerism. This has in turn led to an increasing awareness of the importance of considering social development and human resource development simultaneously.

Although Thailand's Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001) acknowledged the importance of human resources as the focus of national development, the period in which it was implemented was a turbulent time for Thailand: the economic crisis, and problems such as the rapid fluctuation of the Baht, led the country to mainly concentrate on solving economic problems while down-playing human-centric development. However, the subsequent Ninth Plan (2002-2006) again brought up the concept, and building a society of kindness and sharing has become a core strategy to develop Thai society. The following Tenth Plan (2007-2011) aimed to create "a society of happy coexistence," while the subsequent Eleventh Plan (2012-2016) furthered its human-centric aims, stating the creation of a "Happiness Society" as its objective.

In the twenty-first century, the discussion of the idea of civil society and people's participation began to develop. In many forums, Thai scholars widely proposed ideas and opinions that directly link development with the civil society. There has also been an increase of research on development and the possibilities for shaping civil society movement.

In our past projects, we have also discussed the possibilities of the formation of a civil society movement in Thailand. In order to further elucidate the issue, Thai scholars presented the outcome of their research under the topic "What is Civil Society?" in the First National Academic Conference (Sociology Section) in 2000, and, subsequently, "The Possibilities of the Formation of Civil Society" in the Second Conference in 2003. The Third Conference in 2006 occurred just after former Prime Minister Thaksin's ousting, and also discussed "Succeeding Villages in Civil Society." In their perspective, village civil society or *prachakhom* is the foundation of the formation process, and, therefore, the approaches to foster *prachakhom* are studied, as I will discuss in more detail in the following paragraph. In the Fourth Conference in 2012, "Same Land, but Different Worlds: Future Research Agenda," both subnational Thai issues, such as civil unrest and the subsequent challenges (social conflict, political violence, lack of stable governance, and differences in norms and ethics), as well as national issues, such as border relations with neighboring countries, were focused upon.

Prachakhom as a gathering of people has been an integral part of Thai society, while the civil society movement is a new idea, derived from the West. The principal focus of the study of the civil society movement in Thailand, therefore, lies with the study of *prachakhom*. Arguably, village civil society can be divided into two types: one is truly born out of the grass-roots as expounded in the alternative development paradigm while the other arises in response to government policies. The research shows that the village civil societies which emerged during the implementation of Prime Minister Thaksin's projects, were of the second type of *prachakhom*, which lacked the true participation of the people in the communities. Therefore, the objective of the research is to study networks, educational institutions, factors and motives which engender the village civil society from the grass-roots that will lead to the sustainable formation of civil society movement in the future.

While the former research project was being carried out, the Council for National Security (CNS) staged a coup d'état on September 19, 2006, taking over the state power from the then Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was abroad. The coup raises questions on the meaning of the research on civil society in Thailand, where coup d'état is not uncommon. Such political conflict and unrest after the coup influenced not only rural people's daily life, but also the process of village civil society (*prachakhom*) in Northeast Thailand. Therefore, the research on the "Civil Society Movement" in the project has adapted itself to these new perspectives, as well as balancing the new directions of the research, which will be examined and contrasted now in this case study of two Thai villages with the following aims:

1) To ascertain how the *prachakhom* was the foundation of the formation process for Civil Society.
2) To analyze the two types of *prachakhom*, both a grass-roots type and a top-down type in response to government policies, using quantitative and qualitative data.

2. Methodology

2.1 A Case Study of Two Villages

The first target group in this research is the Thoongpong subdistrict (*Tambon*), which is located in Khon Kaen province in Northeastern Thailand. This village has been less influenced by the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD), colloquially known as the Red Shirts. Doctor Abhisit Thamrongwarangkul and Doctor Thantip Thamrongwarangkul from Ubonrat Hospital centralized coordination and organized meetings. Working together with the villagers, the community began to take concrete shape: meetings, talks, discussions, and participation in community activities generated a sense of belonging

among the villagers. Follow-up observations and a survey of the outcome of the meetings by staff of the hospital, as well as the continual networking and coordination by the Sustainable Community Development for Good Quality of Life Foundation, Khon Kaen Province, helped strengthen the community. Additionally, communication within the network, by way of bulletins and newsletters, increased the villagers' knowledge and brought them up to date on the development of the *prachakhom*. This was also a channel for sharing information with outsiders (Suzuki and Sritayarat 2008, 9-10). This form of grassroots civil society provided a foundation to be built upon with governmental financial assistance, but could just as well continue to exist when such financial assistance was withdrawn due to government instability.

The second target group was the Phandon subdistrict (*Tambon*), located in the Udon Thani province. This group is located approximately 100 km from the first one. It has been strongly influenced by the Red Shirts. In the past, Phandon was a village where a large number of the villagers left to find work in other provinces or abroad. This movement abroad was particularly promoted by a member of parliament from the Phandon constituency, Prachuab Chaiyasarn, a prominent supporter of Thaksin Shinawatra, who facilitated the job search and documentation process. However, when the global economy stagnated, the emigrated workers were affected and began to return to live in the village. The return of the workers coincided with Thaksin's financial aid through his populist policies, further supported by Prachuab Chaiyasarn, and resulted in the emergence of top-down civil society in the village. Unlike in Thoongpong, where the two doctors had already made efforts to create grassroots civil society infrastructure to be built upon, there was no significant group organizing until the government introduced the Village Fund Project in 2001, which required the villagers to form groups if they wished to acquire loans. Many groups were founded as a result, and there were discussions of the problems and needs of the community; thus the origin of civil society in Phandon was top-down (ibid., 14).

2.2 Research Period and Methods[1]

According to the data base of Thai Ministry of Interior, the population of Tambon Phandon in June 2006 was of 18,585 people in 4,393 households, divided

[1] This research was supported by MEXT/JSPS Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (B) (Grant Number 17402031) titled "The Study of Village Civil Society (*Prachakhom*) as the Foundation for the Emergence of Civil Society Movement and Development in Northeastern Thailand" during 2005-2007 (Noriyuki Suzuki, Project Leader), and MEXT/JSPS Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (B) (Grant Number 20402038) titled "Dynamic of *Prachakhom* (Village Civil Society) and Civil Society Movement in Northeast Thailand after a Coup d'etat in 2006" during 2008-2010 (Noriyuki Suzuki, Project Leader).

into 20 villages (*Mooban*). The population of Tambon Thoongpong in June 2006 was of 5,013 people, 1,105 households, divided into 10 villages (*Mooban*).

Qualitative research was conducted between August 2000 and January 2014. Quantitative research was conducted in August to September 2004 (before the coup d'état 2006) and February to March 2007 (after the coup d'état 2006), with aid from Keeratiporn Sritanyarat, Khon Kaen University.

Data collection began in Thoongpong. The population of Thoongpong was of 1,105 households divided into 10 villages. The average village size was of 100 households. I chose the village Mooban No. 5 as it is cited as typical of Tambon, with the aim of collecting 100 participants (50 males and 50 females.)

Phandon's population was of 4,393 households divided into 20 villages. I aimed to get the same sample size as in Thoongpong, and selected three villages cited as typical of Tambon. Originally, these three villages were one.

A combination of quota sampling and snowball sampling methodologies were used. The village leader was the single seed. The village leader then asked other villagers to participate in the survey, and these participants then did the same after completing the survey. An attempt to control the participants as a representative sample was used during the survey, and gender and age were kept to be representative of the population. This was done by asking participants who had completed the survey to ask a specific gender and age if possible in order to best represent the actual age and gender range of the village. The survey spread to 108 participants in Thoongpong and 106 participants in Phandon. Research surveys were conducted orally by ten Khon Kaen University students trained in survey practice and surveys took roughly 30 minutes. Representative snowball sampling was chosen as the best methodology because of the rural nature and extremely limited infrastructure and literacy in the villages that prevented other statistical methods to be used effectively.

Participants were aged 18 years and older and had given oral consent to participate in this research. A consent form and plain language statement were read out to villagers due to limited literacy. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. No rewards were offered for participation. In order for the survey to be as easy to understand as possible for all villagers, including those with little or no schooling, difficult terms were kept out of the questions. The questionnaire was originally written in Thai by the researcher, and checked with a native Thai sociologist to make sure that questions were to be understood as intended.

Local ethics approval was obtained after a meeting and discussion of research and contents with the local Tambon administrative committee, including the local doctors and nurses in February 2007. Qualitative research was conducted as ten in-depth interviews of village leaders taking 30 minutes to one hour.

The survey was undertaken in the daytime. Because men in the villages are predominantly farmers, most respondents were elderly and women, and it took significant effort to create as representative a sample as possible.

2.3 Summary of 2004 Survey

In the 2004 survey, a total of 208 people who were members of the Thoongpong subdistrict (102 people) and the Phandon subdistrict (106 people) participated. The questionnaire respondents in the Thoongpong subdistrict were composed of 50 men (49.0 percent) and 52 women (51.0 percent), while in the Phandon subdistrict, there were 47 men (44.3 percent) and 59 women (55.7 percent) (ibid., 17). This survey served as a pilot study for the subsequent 2007 survey.

The Thoongpong subdistrict has an internal readiness to respond to government policies and adopt them with care and prudence; this quality is lacking in the Phandon subdistrict, where the potential to establish a sustainable village civil society is still low. There is also a desire to establish groups for cooperation in other subdistricts in a similar fashion to the Thoongpong subdistrict. However, that village civil society should take heed of the way that groups were formed in Phandon, which was less a result of a true need from within the community than of an outside influence. If a *prachakhom* is established on the basis of the intrinsic efforts of the members of the community, the possibility to become a civil society movement is very high. Moreover, it should be noted that the existence of a healthy community is a good basis for the development towards a sustainable *prachakhom* and a civil society movement (ibid., 42).

3. Results and Conceptual Analysis

3.1 Results

Data used herein is collected from surveys in the Phandon subdistrict of Udon Thani Province and the Thoongpong subdistrict of Khon Kaen Province from February - March 2007. The method of study was by questionnaire.

The method of sampling was a combination of quota sampling and snowball sampling. However, it was extremely difficult to find male respondents because in Phandon people depend on migration work in Bangkok in the dry season. Therefore, subjects of the questionnaire survey are classified as follows:

Firstly, general demographic data of the two communities is discussed. There were 108 samples (52 male, 56 female) in Thoongpong, and 106 samples (37 male, 69 female) in Phandon. In Thoongpong, the average age of respondents was 50.1 years old. The average age of respondents was 52.8 years old in Phandon (Table 1).

In terms of community participation, one person participated in 5.2 groups in the community on average in Thoongpong. In Phandon one person participated in 2.6 groups on average. In Thoongpong, most respondents joined the following 5 groups: the advanced agriculture group, the water users co-

operative group, the capital-saving group, the cow and buffalo bank group, and the village fund group. In Phandon, in contrast, most respondents joined the village fund group, capital-saving group and about half of the respondents joined the funeral group (Table 2).

Table 1: Participants' Data of the Thoongpong Subdistrict and the Phandon Subdistrict

Community	Gender	Number	Percent
Thoongpong	male	52	48.1
	female	56	51.9
	total	108	100.0
Phandon	male	37	34.9
	female	69	65.1
	total	106	100.0

Source: Suzuki and Sritanyarat 2009, 20.

Table 2: Membership in Groups in the Community and the Status of the Membership (Multiple Answers) (Thoongpong N=108, Phandon N=106)

Group	Thoongpong		Total	Percent	Phandon		Total	Percent
	Leaders	Members			Leaders	Members		
Advanced Agriculture Group (Multi-cropping Method)	3	104	107	99.1	0	0	0	0.0
Water Users Co-operative Group	2	104	106	98.1	0	0	0	0.0
Housewives Group/Women's Group	0	6	6	5.6	2	9	11	10.4
Youth Group	0	3	3	2.8	0	0	0	0.0
Senior Citizens Group	0	3	3	2.8	2	3	5	4.7
Capital-Savings Group	0	105	105	97.2	2	90	92	86.8
Health Volunteers Group	0	0	0	0.0	1	6	7	6.6
Debt Moratorium from the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC) Group	0	15	15	13.9	2	18	20	18.9
Village Fund Group (One-Million Baht Fund)	1	90	91	84.3	8	97	105	99.1
Cow and Buffalo Bank Group	0	101	101	93.5	0	6	6	5.7
Farmers Group	0	4	4	3.7	0	2	2	1.9
Helping Village Group	0	0	0	0.0	0	3	3	2.8
Funeral Group	0	18	18	16.7	2	46	48	45.3
BAAC Group	0	0	0	0.0	0	12	12	11.3
Development Group	0	0	0	0.0	0	1	1	0.1
Sewing Group	0	0	0	0.0	1	0	1	0.1
Retail Shops Group	0	2	2	1.9	0	0	0	0.0

Source: Ibid., 21-2.

The advanced agriculture group and water users co-operative group have been established for a long time in Thoongpong, which increased their members rapidly in the last decade. The cow and buffalo bank group and capital-saving group have been formed in the last decade. In Phandon the funeral group has existed for a long time and members of the capital-saving group increased in relation to the village fund group established by the government.

Table 3 is obtained by questions about group activity and expanding networks in Phandon and Thoongpong. Villagers were found to have significantly higher levels of participation in groups intended to expand and develop networks in Thoongpong than in Phandon. In Thoongpong more than 70% of participants responded "very much" to items 1 and 3 compared to only 4% in Phandon. Villagers can therefore be seen to be more willing to form networks and communicate outside of their respective community groups in Thoongpong. On the other hand, the number of people who participate in group activities is small in the case of Phandon, and network formation and communication beyond the bounds of the community groups is not strongly formed.

Table 3: Group Activity and Expanding Networks (Thoongpong N=108, Phandon N=106)

	Community	Very much (%)	Mostly (%)	Average (%)	Not so much (%)	Very little (%)	Total (%)
1. Participating in groups to expand network for community development	Thoongpong	70.4	24.1	2.8	1.9	0.9	100.0
	Phandon	3.8	23.6	36.8	34.9	6.9	100.0
2. Making and expanding group networks	Thoongpong	19.4	66.7	12.0	0.9	0.9	100.0
	Phandon	2.8	19.8	39.6	23.6	14.2	100.0
3. Transmitting information both inside and outside group	Thoongpong	77.8	16.7	3.7	0.9	0.9	100.0
	Phandon	4.7	25.5	45.3	23.6	0.9	100.0
4. Continuing activity for expanding network	Thoongpong	25.9	64.8	6.5	2.8	0.0	100.0
	Phandon	0.9	17.9	41.5	27.4	12.3	100.0

Source: Ibid., 24.

Table 4 shows data relating to the opportunity to participate in activities and exchange opinions in the two communities. In Thoongpong, more than two-thirds answered "very much" to items 1, 2, and 4. There is space for the exchange of opinions and opportunities among villagers to participate in various activities in Thoongpong. Interactions among villagers is sufficient because good communication is established through the *prachakhom* in Thoongpong. There is, however, little opportunity for communication in Phandon, showing a reverse trend.

Table 5 shows the results of the question "if they have heard the term 'civil society.'" The purpose of this question is to measure the interest in civil society

of village people. The people of Thoongpong have a higher interest in "civil society" compared to the Phandon.

Table 4: Opportunity to Participate in Activity and Exchange Opinions (Thoongpong N=108, Phandon N=106)

	Community	Very much (%)	Mostly (%)	Average (%)	Not so much (%)	Very little (%)	Total (%)
1. Opportunity to participate in activities	Thoongpong	71.3	19.4	7.4	1.9	0.0	100.0
	Phandon	1.9	24.5	35.8	34.9	2.8	100.0
2. Opportunity to talk in the group	Thoongpong	71.3	21.3	4.6	1.9	0.9	100.0
	Phandon	0.9	25.5	34.0	37.7	1.9	100.0
3. Opportunity to exchange opinions	Thoongpong	29.6	60.2	7.4	1.9	0.9	100.0
	Phandon	3.8	23.6	34.9	36.8	0.9	100.0
4. Opportunity to visit group member's house	Thoongpong	68.5	19.4	6.5	4.6	0.9	100.0
	Phandon	1.9	22.6	27.4	46.2	1.9	100.0
5. Opportunity to express your opinion to the community	Thoongpong	21.3	67.6	7.4	2.8	0.9	100.0
	Phandon	1.9	15.1	30.2	50.9	1.9	100.0
6. Making and expanding the space to exchange opinions	Thoongpong	53.7	34.3	7.4	4.6	0.0	100.0
	Phandon	0.9	16.0	34.9	47.2	0.9	100.0
7. Space to exchange information both inside and outside	Thoongpong	22.2	59.3	11.1	5.6	1.9	100.0
	Phandon	4.7	18.9	40.6	34.9	0.9	100.0

Source: Ibid., 25.

Table 5: "Have you ever heard about 'Civil Society'?"

	Thoongpong		Phandon	
		Percent		Percent
Have heard	90	83.3	48	45.3
Never heard	18	16.7	58	54.7
Total	108	100.0	106	100.0

Source: Ibid., 28.

Table 6 shows awareness about the term "civil society." Although 44.4% in Thoongpong responded that they heard "from group activities," in Phandon 23.6% knew "from TV and radio." It is considered that in Thoongpong people knew the term "civil society" from participation in group activities in many cases.

Table 7 is obtained by questions about the factors to generate motivation and to be a strong village. More than two-thirds answered "very much" to all with the exception of items 5 and 7 in Thoongpong. Cooperation of government staff and local populace, cooperation of all those who are involved in the community, establishment of a community space for open communication, and

the level of villagers' community awareness, can be noted as factors that drive motivation to strengthen the village in Thoongpong.

Table 6: "How do you know about 'Civil Society'?"

	Thoongpong	Percent	Phandon	Percent
Never heard	18	16.7	58	54.7
TV, Radio	15	13.9	25	23.6
Newspaper, magazine	3	2.8	1	0.9
Group Activity	48	44.4	1	0.9
Workshop	10	9.3	8	7.5
Friend or Family member	0	0.0	1	0.9
Leader in the Community	8	7.4	12	11.3
Poster or Newsletter	6	5.6	0	0.0
Total	108	100.0	106	100.0

Source: Ibid., 28.

Table 7: Factors to Generate Motivation and to be Strong Village (Thoongpong N=108, Phandon N=106)

	Community	Very much (%)	Mostly (%)	Aver-age (%)	Not so much (%)	Very little (%)	Total (%)
1. Cooperation with villagers	Thoongpong	68.5	15.7	5.6	6.5	3.7	100.0
	Phandon	6.6	48.1	24.5	17.0	3.8	100.0
2. Cooperation with government officers	Thoongpong	72.2	16.7	4.6	4.6	1.9	100.0
	Phandon	2.8	50.9	19.8	22.6	2.8	100.0
3. Cooperation between villagers and government officers	Thoongpong	78.7	13.9	1.9	3.7	1.9	100.0
	Phandon	5.7	49.1	26.4	15.1	3.8	100.0
4. Cooperation with every person in the society	Thoongpong	82.4	13.0	1.9	1.9	0.9	100.0
	Phandon	23.6	32.1	26.4	12.3	5.7	100.0
5. Establishment of a community space for open communication	Thoongpong	21.3	69.4	7.4	1.9	0.0	100.0
	Phandon	7.5	36.8	40.6	14.2	0.9	100.0
6. Villagers' level of positive community awareness	Thoongpong	77.8	18.5	0.9	1.9	0.9	100.0
	Phandon	3.8	46.2	34.9	12.3	2.8	100.0
7. Adequate standard of living relative to community	Thoongpong	21.3	68.5	6.5	2.8	0.9	100.0
	Phandon	1.9	39.6	44.3	11.3	2.8	100.0

Source: Ibid., 27.

Table 8 is obtained from questions about the villagers' motivation for participating in groups of the community. In Thoongpong, members have knowledge

of regional development through the group activities, and as a result, they have much more motivation to participate in the activities of the group.

Table 8: Motivation for Participating in a Group of the Community (Thoongpong N=108, Phandon N=106)

	Community	Very much (%)	Mostly (%)	Average (%)	Not so much (%)	Very little (%)	Total (%)
1. Groups give you motivation to participate in activity on community development	Thoongpong	84.3	12.0	1.9	1.9	0.0	100.0
	Phandon	2.8	34.0	34.9	22.6	5.7	100.0
2. Groups give you motivation to be a strong community	Thoongpong	63.9	24.1	7.4	2.8	1.9	100.0
	Phandon	2.8	35.8	36.8	20.8	3.8	100.0
3. Groups give you motivation to study (learn) about development	Thoongpong	30.6	53.7	12.0	1.9	1.9	100.0
	Phandon	0.9	35.8	37.7	21.7	3.8	100.0
4. No change despite establishing group in the community	Thoongpong	0.0	0.0	2.8	10.2	87.0	100.0
	Phandon	0.0	9.4	31.1	43.4	16.0	100.0

Source: Ibid., 26.

3.2 Conceptual Analysis

From the survey results above, it is evident that the villagers participated in a variety of local activities in the Thoongpong subdistrict, with a clear tendency towards local action. There is a "variety of collaboration," "consciousness," and "voluntary participation" by local inhabitants, and they are strongly motivated to contribute to community development.

At first, the two doctors, as members of the elite with influence, urged the villagers to participate, but in later years in the Thoongpong subdistrict, the villagers came to participate voluntarily without elite advocacy. Some villagers who participated became the leaders of the *prachakhom*. If villagers' independent voluntary action increases through participation, and an increase in villagers' independence is the basis of social activation, villagers' participation becomes the most important element of the equation (Ito 2006, 288). In order to promote villagers' participation, it is therefore necessary to search for the most effective and opportune methods. Furthermore, it is clear that the network of *prachakhom* has expanded in the Thoongpong subdistrict. On the other hand, regional activities and villagers' participation has almost disappeared in the Phandon subdistrict since the coup d'état, and the awareness of residents has

remained as prior to the top-down intervention. It can therefore be said that top-down *prachakhom* by the government has not been sustainable.

Additionally, not only has grass-roots civil society in Thoongpong been found to be sustainable regardless of the political situation, there has also been significant international criticism of top-down civil society building initiatives:

> Most types of international support cause civil society actors to adapt their agendas to external priorities, and exclude alternative, less professionalized and critical voices. Local peace actors who resist liberal governmentality have access neither to the monetary support needed to sustain their peace work, nor to international protection for their cause. (Vogel 2016)

This could also be seen in Thailand, as the villages that supported Thaksin received support for civil society and *prachakhom* building initiatives, whereas for those villages and subdistricts that opposed him, such grants were out of the question.

4. Conclusion

The 1992 Bloody May incident was the turning point when the focus of civil society in Thailand changed from the class struggle against the production and reproduction of the hegemony of the dominant class through institutions and social relations in both the political and ideological superstructure, into "spontaneously created associations, organisations and movements, which find, take up, condense and amplify the resonance of social problems in private life, and pass it on to the political realm or public sphere" (Habermas 1992, 443). However, the movement of the PAD after 2006 returned to a struggle against the political and cultural hegemony of Thaksin's dominant government. Chaiyan Chaiyaporn, the political scientist from Chulalongkorn University, who was a supporter of the PAD, told the author, "the Gramsci type of civil society is still necessary for the present Thai political situation" in 2006, but Surichai Wangeao, a well-known Thai sociologist from Chulalongkorn University, was negative and spoke of "outdatedness," and Teerayuth Bunmee, who had previously led a Gramsci type student revolution in 1973, held the same opinion as Surichai.

In the case of Prime Minister Thaksin being ousted on September 9, 2008, Surichai said, "in this situation Thailand is ruined" and called for a peaceful resolution through discussion and that members of all groups meet through mass media (the Habermas type of civil society).

It may be said that the study of the "development and the formation of civil society in Thailand" entered a new stage after the coup d'état of September 2006. Macro level civil society was predominantly dependent upon whether Thaksin's macro level policies for incentivizing village civil society would continue to be followed, and what the anti-Thaksin party policies would be

like. Micro level civil society consisted of the actions and thoughts of the villagers affected by these changing policies.

In this research it was found that regardless of the macro level policies for inducing village civil society, the movement toward civil society formation continued to exist in the Thoongpong subdistrict. Therefore, it is the opinion of the author that this form of grass-roots civil society will become increasingly important for research regarding the "development and the civil society formation" in the future.

However, while this paper and the author regard civil society as a process for positive change, this is not necessarily the case, particularly with Thailand's current political climate. According to Omar G. Emcarnacion,

> under deteriorating political conditions, civil society can emerge as a foe rather than as a friend of democracy, most likely by being hijacked by antidemocratic forces. In supporting civil society development at the expense of political institutionalization […] promotion may harm rather than advance the cause of democratization. (Emcarnacion 2011, 469)

5. Further Research

On May 22, 2014, the Royal Thai Armed Forces, led by General Prayuth Chan-ocha, Commander of the Royal Thai Army (RTA), launched a coup d'état against the caretaker government of Thailand, following six months of political crisis. The military established a junta called National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) to govern the nation. It is necessary to consider this influence in the formation process of village civil society (*prachakhom*).

General Prayuth Chan-ocha was the head of the NCPO and became Prime Minister on the August 24, 2014 and then retired from his military position on September 30 in the same year. However, he is continuing to govern Thailand as Prime Minister at this time (November 2016). NCPO appointed members of the National Legislative Assembly to establish a temporary constitution. The new constitution is required in order to hold a general election for democratization related to macro level civil society. The first draft of the constitution was denied by the National Reform Steering Assembly in September 2015, and the second draft was passed by public referendum by the Thai People on August 7. Martial Law was revoked on May 20, 2005. However, in spite of the Thai people's demands, Thailand is still under control of the NCPO at present.

The civil society movement in Thailand has two levels. One is the national level which can be explained as the struggle for political and cultural hegemony with a conceptual basis in Gramsci. The other is the local level Village Civil Society which can be explained as spontaneously created associations, organisations, and movements, which take up social problems in private life, and pass them to the political realm or public sphere with a conceptual basis in Haber-

mas. How are these two levels linked? More quantitative data in the two villages is necessary for future research and we are therefore now conducting new research.

After the coup d'état in 2014, civil society movements with a conceptual basis in Gramsci were halted by the NCPO temporarily, hence the author's new research project aims at furthering our understanding of the roles of public sphere, social capital and *Prachakhom* in the formation of not 'top-down,' but 'grass-roots' village civil society with a conceptual basis in Habermas.

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