

Environmental Actors in Thailand

ตัวแสดงทางสิ่งแวดล้อมในประเทศไทย

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บทความนี้มุ่งที่จะศึกษาและวิเคราะห์บทบาทของตัวแสดงทางสิ่งแวดล้อมที่อยู่นอกเหนือจากภาครัฐในประเทศไทย ได้แก่ สถาบันพระมหากษัตริย์ และองค์กรพัฒนาเอกชน

สถาบันพระมหากษัตริย์มีสถานภาพที่อยู่ทั้งในภาครัฐและนอกภาครัฐ โครงการพัฒนาอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริทางด้านการพัฒนาและการอนุรักษ์สิ่งแวดล้อมนั้นมีอยู่มากมาย ซึ่งในมุมมองของนักอนุรักษ์ที่มีความคิดสุดขั้วนั้น บางโครงการด้านสิ่งแวดล้อมมีวัตถุประสงค์ทางด้านการพัฒนา มากกว่าด้านการอนุรักษ์ มุมมองนี้ไม่เข้าใจแนวคิดของพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัวซึ่งอยู่ในแนวปรัชญาทางสิ่งแวดล้อมที่พิจารณาความเหมาะสมของสถานการณ์และความเป็นไปได้ในแต่ละกรณี (Environmental Pragmatism) อย่างไรก็ตาม มีเหตุผลและหลักฐานที่หนักแน่นว่า โครงการเหล่านี้เป็นประโยชน์อย่างใหญ่หลวงต่อสิ่งแวดล้อมและประชาชนชาวไทย พระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัวทรงงานเพื่อความเจริญของประเทศชาติและประโยชน์สุขของประชาชนทั้งหมดอย่างแท้จริง

นักวิชาการบางคนแปลความหมายของ "ประชาสังคม (civil society)" ว่าเป็น องค์กรพัฒนาเอกชน (NGOs) แต่ที่จริงประชาสังคมเป็นกระบวนการทางสังคมที่บ่งชี้ถึงการก้าวขึ้นไปอีกระดับหนึ่งของพัฒนาการทางการเมืองและสังคม และ NGOs คือสิ่งที่ปรากฏเป็นรูปธรรมของประชาสังคม NGOs มีบทบาทอย่างมากทั้งในทางการเมืองและสังคม และมักถูกมองว่าเป็นผู้ที่อยู่ตรงข้ามกับรัฐและต่อต้านรัฐ หากพิจารณาอย่างลึกซึ้งแล้ว จะเห็นได้ว่าแนวความคิดของทั้งสองมีความแตกต่างกันอย่างมาก กล่าวคือ ภาครัฐให้ความสำคัญกับแนวความคิดการพัฒนาแบบดั้งเดิมและแนวคิด ecological modernization ในขณะที่ NGOs ในประเทศไทยเป็นตัวแทนของแนวคิดนิเวศวิทยาเชิงลึกที่อ่อนลง (softer version of deep ecology) ที่ให้ความสำคัญกับสิ่งแวดล้อมและธรรมชาติ สิทธิของชุมชนท้องถิ่น การมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมืองของประชาชนและการกระจายอำนาจ ดังนั้นความขัดแย้งระหว่างทั้งสองฝ่ายจึงเป็นสิ่งที่หลีกเลี่ยงไม่ได้

การเปลี่ยนแปลงของสังคมไทยในปัจจุบันส่งผลกระทบต่อระบบรัฐอย่างเห็นได้ชัดแล้วคือ ฝ่ายรัฐได้ยอมรับปรากฏการณ์ขององค์กรพัฒนาเอกชนทางสิ่งแวดล้อม ความขัดแย้งระหว่างทั้งสองฝ่ายคงจะไม่สามารถแก้ไขได้ในอนาคตอันใกล้ แต่ทั้งสองฝ่ายจะต้องประนีประนอมกันบ้างเป็นครั้ง ๆ ไป

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Abstract

This article aims to study and analyse roles of two environmental actors in Thailand, apart from the state: the monarchy and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The monarchical institution has the status of being inside and being outside the state system. There are many royally-initiated projects and royal projects concerning development, and environmental conservation and protection. From the viewpoint of extreme conservationists, some of these environmental projects contain developmental goals, rather than objectives of conservation. They do not understand the King's Environmental Pragmatism philosophy. Nevertheless, there are more than sufficient evidences to indicate that these projects have contributed so much to the environment and to the people. The King always works for the benefits of the nation and happiness of the people.

Some scholars even define the term, "civil society," as NGOs. In fact, civil society is a social process which indicates that society has moved to another level of political and social development, and NGOs are the concrete evidences of the civil society. NGOs have increasingly played important political and social roles. They are viewed as an opposition to the State. Taking ideology into consideration, the state and NGOs are totally different: the state represents a conventional concept of development and ecological modernisation philosophy, while NGOs in Thailand represent a softer version of deep ecology which emphasises the importance of nature and environment, local community rights, people's political participation and decentralisation. As a result, conflicts between the two are inevitable.

Present developments of Thai society have clearly affected state system. The state has recognised and acknowledged the existence of environmental NGOs. However, conflicts between the two sides are not likely to be solved in a near future; but they must compromise from time to time.

Introduction

Apart from government and bureaucracy, there are other actors working in the field of environmental conservation and protection, for instance the monarchy and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The latter can be counted as non-state actors, but the former one, the King, is rather a combination of traditional institution with modern roles in modern Thailand. The monarchy stands in the middle between something conservative and something progressive. All of it is due to the role of the present King.

The most significant actor that has played very important roles in promoting environmental conservation and protection is the NGOs. Roles of NGOs are not only important in terms of environmental activities, but also in terms of representing changing milieu of domestic politics in Thailand and influencing changing conditions of international politics.

Some of the roles of these actors are supportive of the government's decisions and activities, some are not. Some actors can even reverse behaviours of the government, from what that threatening the country's environment to the contrary. However, these actors are not always successful in changing decisions of the government. In contrast, they sometimes create disputes between the government and the public, or between the government and both the public and the NGOs.

The monarchy

Influences of the monarchical institution are considerable and powerful, despite the fact that its political roles are limited by constitution. The monarchy of Thailand remains strong, even after the change from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy in 1932. The royal family is excluded from politics, but there were times that the King was asked to intervene, in the crisis, so he could reconcile political differences between groups of people, for example during the students' demonstration against dictatorial regime in 1973 and the people's uprising against an attempt to remain in power of the military in 1992.

Partly, the legitimacy of the monarchy is a result of absolute and divine status of the institution before the change of regime in 1932; people continue to perceive it as a sacred institution. Also, its legitimacy seems to come from the roles in developing the country and helping people of the present King who has earned respect from people all over the country. Currently, the longest reigning monarch in the world, King Rama IX or King Bhumibol Adulyadej, was born in 1927, and succeeded his brother, King Rama VIII, in 1946.

There are more than thousand royally-initiated projects, receiving full support of the government and the people in general. The King is likely to be the only actor that has clear and direct influences over the government. Royal initiatives are always met with the government's immediate

compliance. In fact, no one ever cast any doubt over royal ideas and initiatives. The royal address in the eve of the King's birthday (the Fifth of December) turns out to be something like a lecture giving to gathering well-wishers every year, mostly politicians and government officers. It is the only official occasion that allows the King to talk in public as long as he wishes, and in whatever subject he wants to talk about for the whole year.

The King is praised as the "Father of Natural Resource and Environmental Conservation"¹ of Thailand although he is indisputably well-known as the "Father of (Rural) Development," which relates more directly to his work. The King has worked with and for Thai people, especially for the poor in rural areas. Each year the King and members of his royal family travel extensively to visit people in isolated villages, learning of people's problems and, where possible, suggesting solutions to overcome difficulties. As a result, thousands of royal projects have been established.

From the outset, the King has realised that agricultural development is essential to the livelihood of the population. The King started to concentrate in the field of agricultural and water resource development, stressing the use of modern, but suitable, technologies. This emphasis is partly because of his own background in science and technology.² And partly because of his experimentation with agricultural technologies on the grounds of the Chitralada Palace, his residence in Bangkok.³ His research works have

expanded and multiplied several folds, such as experiments on rice varieties, biogas technology, composting, tissue cultures from plant stock, the use of water hyacinth for waste water treatment, the cultivation of medicinal herbs, etc. Furthermore, there are dairy farm for milk and cheese production, manufacturing factory of fuel products, fruit drying plant, alcohol production factory, and candle factory, all in his residence. The results of these researches and projects have already proliferated beyond the King's residence and have expanded on a larger scale.

"As his (the King's) research has progressed, His Majesty's work in the field of rural development has taken on the character of a specific approach, incorporating many of the elements considered vital to successful rural development programmes usually far in advance of their adoption in the country as a whole.... At home the Royal Thai Government has come to see His Majesty's projects as a complement to those of the government and has established within the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) a Coordinating Centre for Royal Development Projects (CCRDP), as a means of integrating these into national rural development strategy. Internationally, in 1987, His Majesty's work was recognised by the Asian Institute of Technology, which awarded him its gold medal 'for outstanding leadership in rural development.'"⁴

Since 1979, the area-specific Royal Development Study Centres have been established with an aim to coordinate much of existing information and research

concerning problems of specific areas in which the centres are located. The centres seek to develop an integrated approach to the area's development through a careful study of low-cost and practical possibilities. All have demonstration plots, which farmers from the surrounding areas can come to seek advice and view feasible techniques. Therefore, the farmers almost have a one-stop shop for seeking agricultural improvement informations.⁵

More importantly, the centres conduct researches in various fields, making themselves a meeting point where various government agencies can be brought together in an environment which facilitates the coordination of efforts. The King's view on importance of the centres in terms of coordination and integration is as follows:

"Every department or division with a role in the lives of the people in whatever way can interchange ideas, come to agreements and coordinate their work. Normally, each agency has its own centre and regards the work there as its own, of no interest to others. The Royal Development Study Centre brings together the efforts of the officers of all departments and divisions, whether in agriculture or social services, whether in research or extension, into a single place. It means that the people who need to have access to the various technologies can come to see them all and officials will be able to serve the people in a single location. So, both sides – people and government officials – will gain benefit,"⁶

Currently, there are six centres being established although there are

several other centres within the royal projects for the development of the hill tribes of the north, for example Doi Ang Khang and Doi Inthnon, may be regarded in the same light. The six officially designated centres are:

1. Khao Hin Son in Phanom Sarakham district, Chachoengsao province, serving the sandy upland areas of the Eastern region;

2. Huai Hong Krai in Doi Saket district, Chiangmai province, located in and serving the upland watershed areas of the Northern region;

3. Huai Sai in Cha-am district, Phetchburi province, serving the dry areas at the top of southern peninsula where forest has been extremely depleted and rapidly cleared;

4. Phuphan in Muang district, Sakon Nakhon province, serving the upper part of the Northeastern region identified by its poor and sandy soils;

5. Phikunthong in Muang district, Narathiwat province, acting as a model for particular area of swamplands in the far south of the country;

6. Ao⁷ Kung Kraben in Tha Mai district, Chantaburi province, emphasising the problem of inshore fisheries along mangrove coasts.

It can be seen that the King is interested in finding development strategies, and rural development strategies in particular. However, the King has also paid great attention to environmental conservation and protection. His projects integrate development issues and environmental principles by maintaining environmental stability and using natural resources in a sustainable way without

prejudices to the livelihood of future generations.⁸ Most of the King's projects involve integrated framework of land and water conservation and management. In terms of land development, his earlier development projects in Cha-am district of Phetchaburi province included the conservation measures from the start; they were aimed to guard against further land degradation caused by uncontrolled agricultural exploitation and poor land use practices. Quick-growing fruit trees were introduced in order to fight soil erosion. In all projects, the King seeks to make the most efficient and proper use of land in accordance to its physical characteristics; farmers are encouraged to experiment with various low-cost and natural means in order to conserve and improve their soils, and maintain a balance of the environment. People participating in Thung Lui Lai land development project in Khon San district of Chaiyaphum province were urged to collect surface stones and rocks for constructing embankments to control soil erosion, whereas the products of forest clearance were used as fuelwood. In terms of water resource development, the King suggests methods to maximise efficiency of water usage by using drip irrigation techniques and by collecting surface runoff, so the water can be used to its full advantage.⁹

With regard to forest issues, the King recommends the combination of trees of different qualities in cultivation, "three types of trees for four uses," which does not only help in land conservation, but it also help decrease pressure on forest areas. The three types are trees for timber, fruit, and charcoal. The first three of the four

uses are for timber, food, and fuel; the last one helps conserve soil and watershed.¹⁰ His recognition of the importance of people's need in re-forestation policy can be seen in this thought. To him, the reforestation is not just an exercise in replanting for watershed conservation, it can loosely be defined as being the provision of timber trees, fruit trees and trees for charcoal. And it does not matter what type of forest it is, just let there be a forest of trees which can perform their role as natural resource capable of giving benefit to the population.¹¹

Furthermore, the King recognises the need to conserve and restore natural forest resources; he view that the development of forests in watershed areas and higher land is crucial for the development and preservation of water resources downstream. It is perceived as a means by which agriculture can be intensified, living conditions can be improved and, thus, further forest clearances can be reduced. The development of water resources in the King's projects are supported by the maintenance and redevelopment of forests. The efforts attempt to sustain those forests at the same time. Also, the King has introduced the idea that water resources should be developed within existing and newly restored forest areas. His suggestion is to channel water through the forest to build up moisture levels because he is concerned with increasing dryness of many forests which are vulnerable to forest fire.¹²

It is clear that the concept of sustainable development has echoed in the work of the King. The idea in the context of the royal projects is to maximise the use of resources, wherever it is possible, without causing negative environmental consequences. Centre to his integrated approach is the principle that agricultural and rural development policies and strategies varies from region to region, to reflect regional needs. The King does not only see the project environment in terms of physical environmental factors, but he also refers to the socio-cultural environment in terms of the traditions and mores of the local population:

*"Development must take account of the local environment in terms of physical environment, sociological environment and cultural environment. By local sociological environment, we mean certain characteristics and ways of thinking which we cannot force people to change. We can only suggest. We cannot go in to help people by trying to make them the same as us. However, if we go in and find out what people really want and then fully explain how they can best achieve their aims, the principles of development can be successfully applied."*¹³

The principle of respecting rights of the local people by consulting them and understanding their needs and problems is clearly mentioned above. The King emphasises that any conservation efforts should not only bear those people's needs in mind, but it should also directly benefit those affected by the effort. Hence, those

who bear adverse impacts from water resource development should be given land in the area directly receiving benefit.¹⁴ This concept comes through most clearly in the issue of forestation and reforestation. Conservation of forest resource starts with people; the King pinpoints forests as a source for timber, food and fuelwood, as well as a means to improve the management of other resources.

It is this concern which has led to the establishment of Royal Development Study Centres because there are specific development problems in each region, and solutions for the problems are, too, different. Most of the royal projects are small in scale, but they cover a micro region in which he has drawn up a specific land and water utilization plan for the whole area. The plan of Phikunthong Centre in Narathiwat province was set out for the whole Phru Toh Dang region in terms of development, conservation and preservation. However, the same concept was applied to the integrated coastal zone management plan for Kungkraben Bay area on a wider and more intermediate scale, while the plan for other royal project sites is on the micro scale.¹⁵

The King's development strategies makes the villagers feel confident in implementing the programmes due to low risk and cost, and fitting in with their available resources. Moreover, the research for royal projects have been conducted continuously. This may be because the King does not want to put the

rural poor at further risk. This is another reason that led to the King's establishment of the Royal Development Study Centres.

Additionally, most of the royal projects integrate development and environmental issues, but there are also projects which are purely environmental. The most striking instance is the Makkasan Swamp development project in Bangkok, which its objective is to improve water quality in the swamp. It also shows that the King is not exclusively concerned with the development in rural areas. Over the years, factory and residential houses had discharged waste water into Makkasan Swamp as well as garbage had been thrown into the lake. The lake became shallower, and it was also covered with water hyacinth, which hindered drainage and re-oxygenation. The project to restore Bung¹⁶ Makkasan began in 1985, when the King specified a controlled cultivation of water hyacinth to clean waste water because it can absorb heavy metals. His further suggestion was that slum dwellers living nearby the swamp should be helped to improve their living standards by being employed within the project to harvest water hyacinth. Consequently, the Chai Pattana water turbine was installed to help increase oxygen level in the swamp. The invention and construction of this water turbine was registered by the King, and the turbines are now used widely in many areas of Thailand.

It is obvious that the King has used the principle of sustainable development

long before there were talks about the concept. The principle have already been applied in the study centres and in royal projects. Even though the King's projects have mainly emphasised development for the well-being of people, they underline the basis that natural resources and the environment are the profound factor for development and well-being; the environment is considered to be important for people's quality of life. His emphasis is on water because water is life and human beings cannot live without it.¹⁷ It can be said that natural resources and the environment are managed to benefit and to increase the standards of living and the quality of life of the people. At the same time, they are to be protected from decreasing their volume and quality in the long run. There should be encouragement and promotion for their sustainability, so they can benefit the future generations.

An important question is that: how far can the concept and application of this integrated framework of sustainable development go and be implemented outside the royal projects? It is a question of spatial perspective. Further assessment is needed to evaluate whether the royal initiatives can be fitted into the larger development framework for the whole areas. Furthermore, there must be a research in field of agricultural economics for feasibility and market opportunity of businesses resulted from the royal projects. There is also question of temporal dimension. Although the King has initially subsidized those businesses, he cannot

support them financially forever. Throughout the last 54 years, the King has been pillar of the country by his own rights. The people love and respect him for his tireless effort to improve the people's well-being. It is debatable whether his projects will continue to prosper after his reign. However, there is no doubt that his successor and other family members will keep on supporting his initiatives, but most responsibility is much likely to depend on the government officers whose capacity and sincerity are naturally doubtful.

Concerning the study centres, it was admitted that there have been problems in integrating research or bringing together the efforts of all government agencies concerning with rural development activities.¹⁸ Also, many officers in the projects are seconded from various agencies' research and demonstration stations. It is likely that there are competitions within the teams at the projects. In terms of budget, although there is CCRDP provided capitals at first, budget for works at the centres subsequently depend on individual agencies, which has to compete with other agencies, and with other priorities within the agencies. Therefore, success in coordination at the centres relies on individual initiatives of local and national level officers; and even integrated reporting is difficult to achieve.¹⁹

More importantly, since the King is very high well-respected, it is rare that

the King's ideas are reviewed in critical perspectives. Most people avoid to criticise the royal projects.²⁰ For environmentalists, royal projects or any development projects cannot satisfy them because they view that the environment should not be touched or changed by any means, no matter the projects are established with good or bad intention. Rerouting waterways, reforestation, or planting quick growing trees do not help restore or conserve natural environment in particular areas. "Different kinds of trees function differently at different time."²¹ For example, environmental condition is changed by cutting the trees down and different kinds of trees are planted. Also, as time passes, certain conditions of the environment in certain areas alters. Furthermore, the King is surrounded by many people, who may or may not understand his initiatives. Some take the King's words too literally. Therefore, some royal projects were implemented without clear understanding of the initial concept or intention.²²

Civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

Peter Willetts defines NGOs as groups that try to influence politics, either national, world, or both. However, there is no standard name for them. The terms, "interest groups" and "pressure groups," are unsatisfactory because the former tends to imply groups only with substantial economic resources, while the latter is more sound, but carries political overtones.

Moreover, the term, "private voluntary organisations," used by the Americans means charitable organisations and excludes meaning of interest groups and campaigning groups. The American term, "new social movement," is suggested, but it largely covers peace groups, women's groups, minority ethnic groups and the environmental movement. It seems Peter Willetts face difficulty in defining the NGOs. He simply concludes that the study of NGOs should include all types of the said groups because the prime question is "what groups influence decision-making?"²³

In Thailand, the term NGOs has been used for some time. However, the term, "civil society" has become more popular recently. Many Thailand scholars describe the definition of civil society similar to that of NGOs although some argue that civil society is not only NGOs, but it is a larger social process, which includes people's organizations and grassroots movements.²⁴ Civic groups or civic movements are within the same vein with NGOs, if the latter definition is accepted.

Chatchai Na Chiangmai suggests that civil society is organised groups, which are forces outside the state system, with aims to participate with the government in administration, regulation and development. They can be either profit or non-profit groups. However, the origin of NGOs in Thailand are different from those in Western countries due to historical background. Thai people have

been ruled by kingdom-like state, which is a form of authoritarianism. They always try to stay away from the government. Thai NGOs are a result of the ineffectiveness of the government in administration and development, for which the middle-class and businessmen cannot stand. Consequently, they try to create movements to improve the government's capacity.²⁵

Suchit Bunbongkarn contrasts the opinion of Na Chiangmai. He suggests that most of civic groups in Thailand are urban-based, but they do not work for the interests of the urban middle-class. Therefore, they lack relationships between the middle-class and NGOs. There are only few NGOs, which can get support from the middle-class, whereas the rest of them are narrowly based and their policy is too progressive for the middle-class people. He exemplifies "Magic Eyes" as the NGOs which can draw support from the urban middle-class.²⁶ The Thai Environmental and Community Development Association, commonly known as the Magic Eyes, was established by Khunying Chodchoy Sophonpanich, daughter of the founder of Bangkok Bank – the largest bank in Thailand and, probably, in the Southeast Asia region. She has used one floor of the Bank Headquarter building as office. It is not surprising that this NGO has never had financial difficulty. Its main focus is cleanliness of Bangkok. With concentration on problems in Bangkok and status of the founder, even senior staff of the Magic

Eyes accepts that the Association has widely been popular among the urban middle-class group.²⁷

Furthermore, Bunbongkarn asserts that the main objective of the NGOs is to reduce government's power and authority and to give more power to the community. Many NGOs have supported community rights on environmental and natural resource issues over state rights. He also claims that NGOs have played important roles in voicing expression of rural people over their livelihood problems and they have helped encourage and organise the people to fight for their cause.²⁸ However, intentions of the NGOs for organizing demonstrations sometimes are not clear. There are several occasions that NGOs are accused of staging protests against the government for their own political purposes.²⁹ Some are used by opposition political parties to stage demonstration against the government although there is no formal link between them. The normal accusation of the NGOs from the government and government officers is that they are financed by other countries or NGOs in other countries to create confusion in Thailand.³⁰ NGOs unanimously reject this accusation. They counter-attack the government by acknowledging that they have to receive foreign financial assistances because the government does not support them and they cannot continue to work by depending solely on donation from the people. Thai government does not encourage the general public to pay attention to, and participate

in, politics in contrast to other countries, such as the USA. The governments of those countries financially support the NGOs and encourage people to participate in political issues, which directly relate to their life and well-being.³¹

Both Na Chiangmai and Bunbongkarn seem to suggest that civil society, civic groups and NGOs are the same. There have always been confusion and arguments over one issue concerning the civil society. Where is the place of civil society in society? There are questions whether the civil society is part of the bureaucratic system and whether the business sector is also civil society. Some researchers go further to assume that civil society is NGOs. Anuchat Pongsomlee and his colleagues divide society into three sectors, namely public sector, business sector, and the third sector or civil society. The civil society balances, regulates and evaluates works of public sector and business sector in order to create equity. Also, it encourages citizens to participate in social development for better quality of public life.³² There are three types of civil society organization. First, mutual benefit organisations stress benefits of the organisation members, for instance religious groups and organisations, political parties, trade unions and associations, and cooperatives. Second, public benefit organisations aim to serve the public, for example charity organisations and foundations, religious institutions, and NGOs and their networks. Third, private benefit organizations pursue

personal benefits, such as crime organisations, illegal groups and organisations, government-established NGOs (to achieve government's objectives), and business-established NGOs (to achieve government's objectives) and business-established private organizations (for business benefits).³³

The point of view of Pongsoomlee and colleagues is further clarified by the renown Thai scholar, Anek Laothamatas, that civic movement is a network of various groups or organisations which link state with the individual. Civil society refuses domineering role of state although it may accept assistance from the government or work with the government. It emphasises cooperation rather than conflicts. At the same time, it must reject extreme individualism, which promote selfishness of the people. In this regard, movement of civil society is not taken through the state, in order to limit the state's power and duties. It will lead to a smaller and more efficient state. The civic movement aims to take away some policy-making responsibilities and some benefits from the state. The civic group comprises strangers and acquaintances and it is on voluntary basis. In Laothamatas's opinion, society is composed of three parts; that is state, civil society and individual. These parts must be independent, but link together. There are both conflicts and cooperations at the same time.³⁴

Larry Diamond, whose meaning of civil society is widely referred to, defines the civil society as:

*"the realm of organised social life that is voluntary, self-generating, self-supporting autonomous from state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules.... Citizens act collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passions, and ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable."*³⁵

In a sense, it covers all sectors of society except government sectors. He separates government sector from civil society. However, another well-known Thai scholar and Constitutional Court Judge, Chai-anan Samudavanija, has different opinion. He explains that Western term of civil society and the Thai one are different. In Western definition, civil society is every part of the society except public sector because private sector grew up after the state had firmly been established. Other parts of the society outside the public sector are not the general public, but people gather together, particularly in commerce and agriculture sectors. If there is organisation, it must be set up without an involvement of the state power. On the contrary, Thai society has developed differently. There are two types of government-supported organisations; the first group is established to help the government in regulating and enforcing, and another group is for other purposes, for example providing social services. Moreover, there are private businesses and voluntary associations. Therefore, unlike civil society in Western countries, civil society in Thailand includes people's organisations in which the government is

involved. Samudavanija defines Thai civil society as every part of society, including public sector, private sector and people's sector. They work together in partnership.³⁶

From diverse opinions on definition of civil society, it can clearly be seen that NGOs are part of civil society, but the civil society is not only NGOs. It includes a broad realm of organizations and groups. In broad sense, NGOs are organisations outside the government sector, they do not seek profit for many particular interests or particular groups of people. They are therefore non-partisan. The definition of NGOs in the context of Thai society is organizations that are independent from government influence. The groups are formed by like-minded people who may be in the same professions, are interested in the same issues, and/or share the same goals.³⁷ NGOs work to help solve problems in society, service society, develop society and create stability in society, without seeking profits or interests from Thai society. They can be in forms of foundations, associations, clubs, committees, which may or may not officially be registered as foundations or associations. Foundations and associations are only two legally available forms of organisation that NGOs can register with the government. Additionally, they work on their activities on various issues continuously.

Roles of NGOs are very important in developing countries. The countries face

many problems in the development process, for example livelihood problems, environmental problems, drugs problems, prostitution and child labour problems. The governments of various countries cannot catch up with growing problems, but NGOs can help solve, or at least lessen, these problems. NGOs are more flexible and versatile in responding to needs of the people and understanding natures of the problems without being bound by stiff bureaucratic rules and regulations. They can reach out to spheres where the government can hardly work or cannot cover. They are also to cooperate and coordinate with people at grassroots level, such as farmers, labourers and slum dwellers.

There have been many civic groups coming into existence in Thailand for the last fifteen years. They can be classified into various types of interests. Nowadays, there are approximately 17,000 registered NGOs in forms of foundations and associations.³⁸ However, most of them are inactive and considered "dead." Some more active ones are student associations, women and human rights groups, rural development organisations, and environmental organisations. These active groups are all working for social justice and economic equality, improving standards of living of those who are poor and live in rural areas. Most of them are Bangkok-based since Bangkok is the capital and political and economic centre of the country.

Since the 1980's, the roles of NGOs in Thailand have been increasing dramatically due to the seriousness of political and economic situations and conditions of the country in general. There were NGOs created in response to such shortcomings. First, a large number of Thai people still suffered due to poverty. There were problems concerning unfair income distribution, natural resource exploitation and social injustice. The gap between the rich and the poor, and urban area and rural area, continued to widen. As a result, those who were concerned had joined together and formed NGOs. Second, there were movements of social development organizations at the international level established to deal with problems of development in the Third World countries. Many seminars and conferences were held in various parts of the world, for instance the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in Rome in 1979. The Report of the conference promoted establishment of people's organizations and public participation.³⁹ Third, an impetus also came from development-related government agencies, especially the Office of National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB). In the fifth National Plan, the NESDB reviewed the country's development process; it found that the country still had many development problems and agreed that roles of private sector and people's sector should be promoted.⁴⁰ Public participation has been emphasized in the following

National Plans ever since. In addition, the already-existed NGOs in Thailand at that time tried to collaborate and push for further remedial activities.

In the late 1980s, Thailand's economy boomed. Rural areas were affected by export-oriented economic policy, extraction of natural resources, tourism, industrial development and land speculation. Many people who sold or lost their land moved into the forests. This partly contributed to deforestation. Logging licences in forests were also granted to commercial interests. The people found it hard to depend on only products from forests. Moreover, dams were built for electricity production serving mostly industry and urban interests. The construction of dams forced people to be resettled in less fertile lands and with inadequate compensation.⁴¹ Environmental issues caught public attention because of a series of disasters and struggles, which catapulted environmental concerns into national agenda.⁴² In 1986, the government proposed the construction of the Nam Choan Dam project in Thung Yai Naresuan Wildlife Sanctuary in Kanchanaburi Province. The NGOs were able to draw support against the project from academicians and officers of the Royal Forestry Department (RFD). The campaign against the dam was successful because of the mobilisation, rather than the utilisation of technical knowledge and good counter-arguments. In 1988, a disaster occurred in the south of Thailand.

Heavy rain caused floods and mudslides together with "sea of logs" coming down from the mountain. It led to increasing fear concerning environmental degradation caused by human activities, mostly illegal ones. As a consequence, logging ban was imposed in 1989. However, the government's economic policy at that time contradicted its own environmental attempts. Double-digit growth enlarged demands of resources for more industrial development. Prudhisan Jumbala and Maneerat Mitprasert observed that there was a trend of NGOs adopting environmentalism as ideology for their works because many livelihoods problems related to environmental deterioration, and environmentalism became global trend.⁴³

NGOs have transformed into social and environmental movements that the government cannot overlook. Joint forces among NGOs increase their strength. At the international level, there was an incident that domestic NGOs had embarrassed the Thai government by passing information on environmental degradation due to shrimp farming practices in Thailand to international NGOs to be used to attack the country in international conference in New York and to call for a ban on exports of frozen shrimps from Thailand. The situation prompted Thai government to react by sending a team to New York to promote frozen products in the following year.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the government at times has to allow the NGOs to participate in decision- and policy-making process. Most

of the NGOs are less seen as trouble-makers as some of them were viewed in the past. NGOs were asked to participate in drafting the seventh and eighth National Plans. Some staffs of the NGOs have been appointed to various government committees.

According to the 1992 Environmental Act, the NGOs can register themselves as environmental NGOs with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (MOSTE).⁴⁵ There are now approximately 80 NGOs that registered with MOSTE.⁴⁶ On one hand, it is a good opportunity for the government and NGOs to work closely and the government can gain wider perspectives and change its heart to support NGOs. On the other hand, the registration can be seen as an effort of the government to manage the NGOs through legal regulation and financial manipulation.

There are some environmental NGOs which have yet registered with MOSTE. These NGOs are not certain of advantages they could gain from the registration. Also, being registered environmental NGOs would increase paper works since they have to submit reports about their activities to the Department of Environmental Quality Promotion (DEQP), MOSTE, which has a duty to look after environmental NGOs. Moreover, there are NGOs in Thailand, which do not register themselves to be juristic persons under the law. Their activities are simple and not complex, but they have certain goals in their activities and have clear pictures of their concerned issues and

activities. As a result, their organisational structures can vary from club, project, committee to centre.⁴⁷ They look like temporary organisations, which can be dissolved after they have completed their tasks. In addition, some have particular characteristics or activities, for example hill tribe development. Although these NGOs do not registered as environmental NGOs, environmental perspective is inserted in their activities. Environmental NGOs in Thailand seem to have many kinds of activities. Some do more than one type of activities whereas others focus on only certain activities. For instance, the Green World Foundation concentrates on environmental education, producing teaching aids, publishing magazines and organising environmental activities for children. It is not activist NGOs.⁴⁸ The Magic Eyes focuses on anti-littering campaign and garbage problem in Bangkok. The Thailand Environment Institute (TEI) is purely academic and conducting researches. It has close relations with the government because most of its board members are academicians and former senior government officers. For example Mr. Anand Panyarachun is a former Prime Minister, former Permanent-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and former Thailand's Permanent Representative to the United Nations. He is now Chairman of the Council of Trustees of TEI. Mr. Kasem Sanidvongs na Ayudhya is a former Permanent-Secretary of MOSTE. He is now Acting President of TEI and Vice-chairman of TEI Board of Directors.

Some NGOs in Thailand carry out their activities through nationwide networking, for instance Thai Network on Community Rights and Biodiversity (BIOTHAI). The BIOTHAI was founded because of Thailand's involvement with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It was intended to draw people's attention towards problems concerning biodiversity in the country, with cooperation from several NGOs both in urban and rural areas.⁴⁹ In 1990, another network, Environmental NGOs Network, was formed; it organised Thailand's Environmental Forum in 1990 with cooperation from 18 NGOs. The Network with cooperation from the government, the public, NGOs, academicians and private sector, later developed and became Thai Environment and Development Network. About 200 registered and non-registered NGOs have now joined in the Network.⁵⁰

Furthermore, the 1992 Environmental Act states that the government can provide assistances to support registered environmental NGOs if they face difficulties in doing their activities and request assistance. Also, the Act sets up Environmental Fund, which can be used to support NGOs' projects. NGOs can propose projects for financial support from the government.

In Articles 7 and 8 of the Environmental Act, NGOs can play their roles indirectly through the National Environmental Board (NEB). NGOs are allowed to nominate their representatives to the NEB who can serve on a three-year term, but the

cabinet has to deliberate and give approval. Within the NEB, NGOs can participate at the policy level and in law-making process, because NEB is the highest authority in controlling, managing, supervising and determining all environmentally-related policies and plans of the country. However, there is one important problem; there has been no precedence, rule or method of selection process available, even though NEB members have already been changed three times. Theoretically, nominees should be selected among NGOs by the registered NGOs. Nevertheless, nominees were practically picked by officers of the Office of Environmental Policy and Planning (OEPP).⁵¹ Some NGOs complain that the present selection procedure is strange and it should have been more democratic. They also claim that most of the representatives are from NGOs which have intimate relationships with the government. It turns out that OEPP officers select those who work at certain NGOs and are widely known among circle of environmental experts. As a result, the selected nominees may not represent all environmental NGOs.⁵² Additionally, NEB has not been very active. Meetings of the NEB are hardly held, no more than a few times per year. Important and urgent issues, such as environmental standards, have not been tabled for consideration and promulgation.

Moreover, there are several limitations for NGOs, which obstruct them from participating in the government's environmental activities. First, the

government accepts and supports only NGOs which have already registered as juristic persons. However, there are some environmentally related grassroots NGOs or working groups which cannot register themselves because they do not meet requirements of the law in registration; for example the law states that the organisations must have sufficient fund, not less than 500,000 baht. Moreover, there are two levels of registered NGOs, the MOSTE-registered NGOs and the non-MOSTE-registered NGOs.

Second, the government has negative perception of NGOs. They frequently oppose the government's projects. Their behaviours are sometimes considered aggressive and acrimonious by bureaucrats and politicians. Furthermore, they do not suggest alternatives to the government. They simply keep on opposing. As a consequence, the NGOs are frequently blamed for obstructing the government's works and development efforts of the country.⁵³ At the same time, NGOs do not appreciate government efforts. The government's rules and regulations sometimes prevent officers from responding to problems quickly. They accuse the government officers of being corrupted, disdainful of the people, and paying more attention to economic and industrial development than to environmental conservation and promotion.⁵⁴

The government does not easily accept the NGOs because NGOs lack experts who specialise in the issues in which NGOs are interested, and who can

support them with reliable academic and research information. Many government officers accuse the NGOs of lacking understanding and knowledge in what they are arguing or opposing. Some officers further address that some environmental NGOs do not at all have knowledge in field of environmental conservation.⁵⁵ This could be true because some NGOs change from social and developmental orientations to environmental focus without proper preparations. At the same time, some environmental NGOs shift their attention to social and developmental issues as well. However, it is not always necessary that those who work in environmental NGOs have to be graduates of ecology or natural conservation since such knowledges can be self-educated and gained through experiences.

Third, one of the serious doubts casted by the government on NGOs is the question of representation.⁵⁶ How can the government and the people know that NGOs represent the people? It is clear that politicians are elected to sit in the parliament, but Thailand is famous for vote-buyings and fraud elections. In this connection, NGOs can counter-argue the politicians, too, although it seems to be a lame attack, because those politicians at least get through the election, which is a formal democratic process. Therefore, the only way NGOs can represent the people is that they have to draw people's attention on, and support for, their concerns and activities. The media has played essential roles in drawing public attention to environmental

issues. It is the best alliance for NGOs and it is the best medium that links NGOs to the general public, transmitting influences and opinions of NGOs on various issues. Since NGOs do not have power to control the media as much as the government, they still can communicate with the people through the media. There have been many cases that joint forces between NGOs and the media, especially the press, have placed some environmental issues on the national agendas. It can sometimes be perceived that the media obviously sides with NGOs by presenting negative perspectives of environmental issues and of the government. Most of the times, either it sides with NGOs or it remains neutral; it hardly sides with the government. Some government officers complain that the media is not impartial and it seems to be the media's duty to keep criticising the government and its works, but they continue to accept the roles of the press as being very important.⁵⁷ However, staffs of the press defend themselves by stating that they are neutral and it is their judgement to decide which issues should be presented to the public in whichever way to catch public attention, and if they are worth becoming public issues.⁵⁸ They seem to select only certain controversial aspects, not the entire issues, to present to the public; for instance, they concentrate their attention on genetically-modified organisms (GMOs) rather than the entire biosafety issue, or they prefer news on the Cobalt 60 radiation leakage over the problem of hazardous waste management.

The Sueb Nakhasathien Foundation (SNF), one of the most famous environmental NGOs in Thailand, claims that it represents the people, because the foundation was established by donations from people from all walks of life. This donated money cannot be spent, it is kept in the bank and the Foundation uses only the interest. As a consequence, the SNF can continue and increase their activities by more donations and foreign assistances.⁵⁹ Even though SNF was founded by financial contributions from the people, it could not well represent all people when it discusses about the sources of funding for its activities. At the moment, many environmental NGOs in Thailand receive major grants from DANCED (Danish Cooperation on Environment and Development). Nonetheless, the allegation made by the government that NGOs receive and represent foreign moneys cannot be seriously taken into consideration. The government also receives financial assistances from DANCED for projects concerning environmental conservation operated by MOSTE and the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MAC), not to mention about assistance from the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and Japan when the country was facing economic crisis between 1997 and 1999.

Fourth, NEB determines the country's environmental policy and plan. Although there are representatives of NGOs being appointed to the Board, they are not true NGO representatives. It simply means that environmental policy is

formulated and determined without people's participation.

With these limitations, even though the law may not clearly encourage NGOs to play roles in environmental conservation and protection, and may not enhance capacity of NGOs to a greater degree than the present, NGOs should realise and acknowledge the situation, and find ways to improve themselves. Such improvement can lead to success for their activities and accomplishment of their goals in environmental conservation and protection.

Additionally, the NGOs themselves have already had their own problems. They lack resources and funds to support their activities. Many NGOs depend on foreign financial assistances. Due to financial difficulty, it causes insecurity among NGOs and leads to personnel problem. NGOs cannot continue their works at length. Most NGO staff members sacrifice by joining NGOs although they know beforehand that they would receive low salary when compared to that of business enterprises. Some NGO staff members may start the works in good spirit for a while, but they soon have to find other means to survive and continue to work at the same time. As a result many NGO staffs quit their works and join other organisations and earn higher salary. NGOs also face other difficulty; NGOs do not have systematic compilation of information and experiences, these valuable assets are gone with NGO staffs when they quit the jobs. Consequently, the

public know individual persons more than the organisations. Thus, activities of NGOs do not progress as much as they want.⁶⁰

In short, there have been considerable adaptations for, and transformations of, NGOs in Thailand and its society. In the past, the government had sole duty and responsibility for environmental and natural resource management; it was a top-down style of management. It has now changed gradually to bottom-up participation. Although NGOs have participated in government's activities, their roles are not well accepted by some government officers and politicians.⁶¹ There were cases that activities of the government and those of NGOs were going in opposite directions. Each side sometimes did its own activities separately. In the worst cases, there were confrontations because of ideological and methodological differences. Most of the time, the confrontations arose from arguments concerning development directions of the country. The government wanted to develop the country, and use or manage natural resources for development purpose, for instance dam construction. In contrast, the NGOs viewed that dam construction would destroy natural resources, forests and mountains would be destroyed, many plants and animals could be killed, and people living in the areas of the construction or nearby would have to be resettled.

At the same time, the government alone cannot fully take care of the environment because it has some difficulties, such

as personnel problem, to function properly. Environmental deterioration does not have good impact on the people's well-being, on the environment itself, and on the country's development process. Therefore, the government has to allow the NGOs to participate in environmental and natural resource management with the government. NGOs are closer to the people than the government, it would be easier for them to motivate the people to participate in environmental activities. Since the 1980s, national policies and plans relating to environmental conservation and protection have acknowledged the importance of having private sector and people's sector participated in environmental activities. It indicates the acknowledgement that the government cannot have the job done alone and effectively, it needs help from the private sector and the people's sector.

In addition, it also shows a possibility of the government and NGOs moving closer towards each other. Sunee Mallikamal stresses the importance of NGOs for the government as follows:

"...More than two decades of works and experiences of NGOs in the fields are valuable, and the government should listen to them. However, works of NGOs cannot be extended and successful if there is no positive response from the government. NGOs have to set policies, plans and budgets in line with the direction, which the government holds on. At the same time, since the National Plans have been introduced as frameworks for the country's development. The government has

tried to solve many problems; but there are some difficulties and the government alone cannot act effectively. Therefore, learning from experiences, opinions and policies suggested by NGOs is what the government should consider doing"⁶²

In the 1990s, there have been several developments that provide opportunity for and at the same time obstruct activities of, the NGOs.⁶³ First, a globalisation process with fast communication and capital movement at the global level, and high technology, has brought about economic and social changes in every country in the world. Furthermore, the globalization process has weakened the government's capacity in protecting interests of the country and of the people. In turn, it has stirred movements in the people's sector. There are thoughts about self-sufficiency, individual and human rights, community rights and cultures, local wisdom and democracy, etc. Local NGOs and international NGOs have played important parts in pushing these ideas. It is an opportunity for local NGOs to seek cooperations with NGOs in other countries and international NGOs. While the world capitalism seeks control through state mechanisms, businesses and capitals, the movements of NGOs are of parallel process and seem to balance the influence of the world capitalism. However, globalisation has also led to the obstruction of the NGOs' works because changes are at high speed and have deep impacts on society. Problems have become more complicated and intense, and come

faster than the NGOs can handle, not to mention the government which has already lagged behind. Thai people feel more alienated from the fast-moving society.

Second, after Thailand's economy had expanded dramatically and unevenly, it eventually melted down in 1997. The event was very devastated because it has spread to other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Financial institutions collapsed; a large number of firms have gone out of business and many individuals have been in debt ever since. The government had to ask for help from the IMF. This provided chances for NGOs to present their ideas of self-sufficiency and of strengthening the community. Nevertheless, the economic crisis has also presented hard time to NGOs, the government, the media and the environment itself. People have become poorer and part of income of the NGOs which comes from donation has decreased. The government has to cut down its budget, especially that of environmental conservation and protection, which was already less than other sectors in the past, has become even lesser at the present. The media also dissolves environment news section while keeping others, and lays off and/or re-assigns environment reporters to work in other sections.⁶⁴ Ironically, there have been times that the media accuses the government of neglecting or even destroying the environment, but it looks like the media itself does not give priority to environmental news by dissolving the section in order to cut down company's

budget and keep itself in business while facing the economic crisis. So, the government and the media are somewhat similar; both of them choose to abandon activities concerning environmental conservation and protection in time of crisis, rather than other activities. Exploitation of the nature, however, has slowed down in fields of industry and business. Nonetheless people exploit more from nature, they tend to encroach on forest areas more than before because they need lands and products from the forests.

Third, a new Constitution was promulgated in 1997. Political reforms have provided the people with opportunities to participate in the political process. Rights of the community, voters and citizens are guaranteed. It would be a good opportunity for NGOs, and civil society as a whole, to push for more government's acceptance of their opinions and have them become policies and laws. Such political development can help increase bargaining power of NGOs and the people vis-a-vis the government.

Conclusion

This paper mentions about very important changes in Thailand's politics and society. There is at least one change in each decade of Thai political history. It was in the 1970s that the people stood up to drive military dictators out of power, and it was in the 1980s that electoral politics reached its peak in Thailand. For the last ten years, people have witnessed another structural change in Thai politics

and society. The advents of NGOs, democratic movements, and political reform are reinforced by the media. A new Constitution promulgated in 1997 is one of the final concrete outcomes of the development of the 1990s. A call for civil society coincides with political situation in Thailand. It seemed the people would not tolerate poor performances of the government and bureaucracy. Many scholars have turned their focus to the concepts of civil society, community right and local wisdom, which in return marks the significance of the 1990s as "a decade of the decline of the state" It seems quite a large number of scholars, especially those who are interested in Thailand, have completely ignored the role of the government.⁶⁵ Many books are written and researches are conducted concerning those issues. Leading Thai politics scholar, Chai-anan Samudavanija, once says, "While the military and bureaucratic elites remain important and will continue to safeguard their diminishing role in society, they will not be replaced; they will be bypassed."⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Pasuk Phongpaichit argues that role of the state in regulating may be shrinking, but one should not ignore the function of the state as an instrument of social control, and it is too optimistic to think that Thai state will stand aside to be easily bypassed. She later points out that the state (government and bureaucracy) is building a fence to defend its old power.⁶⁷ Also, Phongpaichit claims in her Wertheim Lecture 1999 that there has been declining faith in democracy.⁶⁸ Most of

new political concepts in Thailand including civil society and good governance do not very much refer to formal democratic institutions of government: parliament, political parties, local councils. Thirayuth Boonmee, a Thai social critic, gives definition of "national good governance" as power of the movements of local organisations, peoples, and communities to understand problems, to be self-reliant, and to help and reform themselves. At the same time, they have to be energetic in monitoring and preventing whatever is bad and ugly in Thai society.⁶⁹

Furthermore, apart from concentrating on people's sector and neglecting the roles of the government and bureaucracy should play in a new political climate of Thailand, there is another institution which has never been discussed in the very popular concept of civil society, the monarchy. The present monarch has been the most important pillar for Thailand for nearly 60 years. The King's tireless effort in thousands of development projects for improving the people's well-being has put the institution in the hearts and minds of the people. It is his development endeavour that increases legitimacy of the institution. The people accept the King, not only because of his traditional divine rights, but also because of his works. However, some may think that there are contradictions among his projects which go unnoticed, for instance some of the royally-initiated development projects may collide with his own environmentally-related projects. To some

observers, projects may not have linkages between them; each project functions in its own ways. One project aims to reroute water passage whereas another project may focus on conserving water sources. More importantly, some environmental projects are also development projects. The King's strategy not only bases on ecological modernisation approach, but also on environmental pragmatism which advocates pluralism, holism, non-anthropocentrism, dynamism, intrinsic values of nature, and human well-being. The King seems to know that pragmatism can help solve the difficulty in determining the correct interpretation of ecology, and the "from the pragmatist perspective, the proper strategy will be the one most effective in the specific situation."⁷⁰ There are enough evidences to believe that, in each project, the King has considered the projects carefully and that he has done for the benefits of the people. He must have already weighed and balanced the two contesting modalities: development and environment. With people's much respect for the King, there is no doubt that royal projects concerning environmental conservation and protection will continue to be significant as long as the King lives and, perhaps, afterwards.

In term of environmental politics, NGOs in Thailand base their thought on the concept of deep ecology. As a result, the government, which has different concept and backs the King's idea of environmental pragmatism, does not understand them. NGOs are regularly

projected as aggressive groups. The rise of NGOs and civil society has affected social structure of Thailand vertically and horizontally. Its effect on the government and the bureaucracy is evident, but one might wonder if it would reach the monarchical institution at the zenith of the structure. If the concept of civil society has fully flourished in Thailand, which means all people participate in politics with clear consciousness and participatory democracy is totally introduced and fully operational, the monarchy may purely function as traditional and cultural institution of the society. On various development projects, the King can rely on the government, the civil society and the people themselves to carry them out efficiently and responsively:

Moreover, it is possible that NGOs may not be necessary because a senior NGOs staff states that if normal [political] system of the society functions effectively and completely, NGOs would have not occurred in the first place.⁷¹ However, it is too idealistic to consider the said possibility because if Thailand is in full form of civil society, then if one carries to

the extreme, none of the political institution is necessary. Environmental NGOs might become organisations, working only on environmental consciousness promotion and helping people to conserve and protect the nature.

Nonetheless, considering present development of NGOs in Thailand, it is quite positive that NGOs may soon become institution accepted by the people in general, politicians, and bureaucrats in the country. What the people have seen and will continue to witness is the conflict between two concepts: traditional economic development and ecological modernisation led by the government, and deep ecology or the promotion of environmental conservation and protection supported by NGOs and those who sympathise with them. There is no absolute winner in the conflict. Compromise between two sides is needed from time to time; the government sometimes have to give in and the NGOs and their sympathisers must occasionally back down. The present stalemate must be broken.

Footnote

- 1 Office of National Environment Committee (ONEC), Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (MOSTE). (1991) **Father of Natural Resource and Environmental Conservation**. Bangkok: Karn Sasana. (in Thai)
- 2 The King has studied in the field of science in Switzerland. However, after the death of King Rama VIII and he became the new King of Thailand, he changed to politics and law.
- 3 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). (1988) **Sustainable Development of Natural Resources: A Study of the Concepts and Applications of His Majesty the King of Thailand**. Bangkok: UNEP, p. 19.
- 4 Ibid., p. 25-26. The King was also awarded the Philae Medal by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for his work of rural development and raising people's standards of living in 1991, the Gold Medal of Distinction by UNEP for his work of natural resource and environmental conservation in 1992, and the Agricola Medal by food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for his work on sustainable rural development in 1995.
- 5 ONEC. op. cit., p. 68-77.
- 6 His Majesty the King's speech of 11th November 1983, quoted in National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB). (1977) **The Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1977-1981)**. Bangkok: Office of the Prime Minister. (in Thai)
- 7 "Ao" in Thai means a bay.
- 8 UNEP. op. cit., p. 33.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Department of Environmental Quality Promotion (DEQP, MOSTE). (1997) **The King and Thai Environment**. Bangkok: Yuvaporn Printing., p. 49. (in Thai)
- 11 Coordinating Committee for Royal Development Projects (CCRDP) **His Majesty King Bhumibhol Adulyadej and His Development Work**. Bangkok: CCRDP. No. date.
- 12 UNEP. op. cit.
- 13 CCRDP. op. cit.
- 14 UNEP. op. cit., p. 134.
- 15 See, Sub-committee for the Master plan of the Phikunthong Development Study Centre, CCRDP. (1985) **Master plan for the Project for the Phikunthong Royal Development Study Centre, Narathiwat Province**. Bangkok: CCRDP. (in Thai) And, CCRDP. (1987) **Summary Report on Activities of the Khung Kraben Bay Royal Development Study Centre**. Bangkok : CCRDP. (in Thai)
- 16 "Bung" in Thai means a swamp.
- 17 United Nations Association of Thailand. (1997) **His Majesty the King and the United Nations**. Bangkok: Technique 19, p. 38. (in Thai)
- 18 UNEP. op. cit.
- 19 Ibid., p. 135.
- 20 Interviews. Bangkok, November 1999.

- 21 Interview. Bangkok, November 1999.
- 22 Interview. Bangkok, November 1999.
- 23 Willetts, P. (1996) "Introduction." In Willetts, P. (ed.) **The Conscience of the World: The Influence of Non-Governmental Organisations in the UN System**. London: Hurst and Company, p. 2.
- 24 Hassarangsi, R. (1999) "Roles of NGOs and Civil Society in Transition Period." In Petchprasert, N. (ed.) **NGOs 2000**. Bangkok: Centre of Political Economic Studies. p. 173-190. (in Thai)
- 25 "Interview with professor Dr. Chatchai Na Chiangmai by Dr. Chuchai Supavong on 20 March 1996 at National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) in Bangkok, Thailand." In Supavong, C. and Kardkarnpaisarn, Y. (eds.) (1997) **Civil Society : Visions of Thinkers in Thai Society**. Bangkok: Matichon, p. 91-118. (in Thai)
- 26 Bunbongkarn, S. (1996) **State of the Nation : Thailand**. Singapore : Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), p. 99-100.
- 27 Interview. Bangkok. October 1999.
- 28 Bunbongkarn, S. op. cit., p. 100-101.
- 29 Interviews. Bangkok. November – December 1999.
- 30 Interviews. Bangkok. October 1999 – March 2000.
- 31 Interviews. Bangkok. October 1999 – March 2000.
- 32 Pongsomlee, A. et al. (1999) "Synthesis on Movements of Diverse Parties of Thai Civic Movement." In Pongsomlee, A. and Archavanitkul, K. (eds.) **Thai Civil Society: The Making of Thai Citizens**. Bangkok: Research and Development Project on Civil Society, Mahidol University, p. 285-314. (in Thai)
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