The 'De' of Development

Ecosystem Services, Societal System State Shifts, and Our Transmuting Human Condition in Context with Northern Thailand's Top-Down Highlands Development

Master of Humanity and Environmental Science Thesis

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Thank you all.

The ‘De’ of Development – Cover Image Explained

These ethnic Lahu boys are perched beneath this satellite dish: one is using his hand to create a focused glimpse into his environment, and the other is peering through a manufactured object. Synthetic blue pipes are wrapped around their bamboo-constructed homes. What is the significance of the looming satellite dish, as it is channeling in messages from “the outside” world? What is really being piped in? Metaphorically speaking, how much longer before these children (and their village community) become entirely plugged into and engulfed by the global market matrix system?

At this scene’s center-point, there is a fire-like boundary line. On one side is imagery of handmade textiles, representing remnants of indigenous people’s traditional cultural socio-fabric. Indigenous (and perhaps all) societies do, for a while longer anyway, still harness the voices that can reveal about their traditional ways. But is a form of ethnocide ensuing?

Amid the right side of this collage, we observe that the modern world (i.e., economic “development”) is relentlessly approaching. Like a candle lit on both ends, there is a smoldering fire-riddled edge where the contrast between two worlds, two paradigms, of human existence exists. One realm may represent the machine world—a death of sorts. What about the other?

Setting aside any romantically naïve that indigenous communities are ideal, that they do not have social-ecological issues like human communities worldwide, it can perhaps be stated that indigenous peoples *are* humanity’s knowledge-keepers of nature. Their communities are, in ways, representatives of what it means to live as humans respecting of and regulated by nature’s natural ecosystems. If their traditional knowledge becomes entirely lost to the trappings of modern world materialism, what hope is there for all our survival?

Indigenous peoples, perhaps all of humanity, are positioned precariously amid an ever-expanding global market system. What is the ‘de’ of development? What is being environmentally and societally taken away? What are the replacements? What does this mean for us all? The time window through which we can glimpse into and ponder this is closing.

"We need to devise a way to address the social impact of globalization, which is neither the mechanical expansion of welfare programs nor the fatalistic acceptance that the divide will grow wider between the beneficiaries of globalization and those unable to muster the skills and meet the requirements of integration into the global system" (Schwab and Smadja, 1999).

Synopsis

This thesis-monograph is essentially about peacebuilding. As a global community, we are perhaps at a pivotal point in our history. The economic market-related decisions that humans have been making for generations are rendering notable effects on our natural environment and overall social functioning. Micro-scale "development" impacts are evermore conglomerating and generating tangible macro-scale global footprints and vice versa. Our human condition is changing in form, nature, and substance. This is perhaps an alchemical transmutation, as we interact with a globalized world to the extent that humanity has never experienced. If we are going to cultivate creative solutions to global challenges, is it prudent to consider the roots of prominent global issues?

This mixed methods study inquires into this by focusing primarily on the 'de' of development. This notion is linked with how capitalism's tenets of land, labor, capital, and the global market system impact relationships among ourselves and with life-sustaining 'natural' ecosystems. What are development- and modernity-related processes essentially taking away from human cultures and traditional ways of life? What are the societal replacements? What are the short- and long-term environmental and social-ecological impacts of this supposedly glorious capitalism-linked, seemingly with no destination march toward "progress?"

As a context for investigating how perhaps all of humanity is being affected by such phenomena, we journey to the mountainous areas of northern Thailand. There, ethnic people who are indigenous to these highland areas have for generations been living fairly traditional lives. Many of these communities use millennia-old knowledge to maintain what could be considered a natural interaction with their surrounding environments and with one another. However, this is rapidly changing with the encroachment of the globalized, modern world. Traditional cultures are literally vanishing as capitalism-driven development and technology-centered modernity are perforating communities' socio-fabrics and shifting centuries of learning and indigenous knowledge aside. For at least a while longer, though, both what could be considered 'modern' and 'traditional' lifestyles can still be observed.

This is not an isolated phenomenon. Many researchers have articulated this. This study, however, aimed to acquire further knowledge about the deeper impacts that development has had on these communities. Villagers of an age range and communities at different points on a development continuum inform us about this. We explore what this may mean for Us all.

While people predominantly perceive ‘nature’ as something external to humans, I am convinced that humanity, like all sentient beings, is inextricably connected with nature’s laws and cycles. This multi-disciplinary study aimed to further articulate these notions by conjoining social capital-building civil documentary journalism and storytelling with the academic lenses of environmental and social science. As tools for illustrating how changes in our environments impact relationships among ourselves and with our natural world, I primarily employed two theoretical frameworks: ecosystem services, and panarchy.

Ecosystem services pertain to the necessities that nature — plants, microorganisms, and animal communities interacting as a living-unit ecosystem — provides for human benefit and well-being. This includes the food, water, wood, medicine, fibers, and other natural resources required for our survival. Our societal environments are also part of this dynamic. Likewise, panarchy is about the four-phase life cycle of birth, growth and maturation, death, and renewal. This process transpires simultaneously throughout our natural environments and societal ecosystems.

I congeal these concepts by holistically illustrating how an agrarian, indigenous ethnic community, having been largely dominated by international imperialization, domestic colonization, and rural development policies governing the land under villagers’ feet, is linked with the urban and modernity-driven global-market matrix. How has this dynamic resulted in notable transformations in their environmental and socio-ecological systems?

Utilizing an array of methodologies, I longitudinally overlay social-ecological change-related phenomena in ways that bond notions of humans’ inextricable connections with each other and our environments and how changes in one aspect resultantly impact other aspects. This empirical case study reveals that nation-state, top-down, development policies are, in many ways, actually most useful for controlling resources (including people) and bolstering the capitalism-driven money-market economy. This is rather than development’s supposed purpose of solving problems and nourishing civil society by providing people with more choices (Pieterse, 2001).

This monograph-thesis involves, among many aspects, a case-study community’s replanting of an encompassing forest, an area previously outside the state’s gaze. The replanting appears as a successful top-down government initiative. However, in reality, aspects of villagers’ livelihoods—from biodiversity and access to sufficient and clean water and food, sense of life security, to their overall cultural and hence societal and personal health—are consistently degrading. A form of ethnocide is ensuing, which contradicts what the UN development goals are meant to cultivate. This study suggests that even rural agrarian communities intertwined with the natural ecosystems that regulate them are experiencing, now more than ever, a blatant and arguably precarious social degradation phenomenon. Considering this context, we can only contemplate the magnitude of environmental and societal degradation ensuing within the realms of supposedly more ‘advanced’ and ‘civilized’ societies synonymous with notions of ‘progress.’ Acquiring more money, collecting more stuff, and having more choices—more ‘development’—does not necessarily equate to human well-being. This is perhaps because while organic goods can be distributed to materialism-driven societies, synthetics and their symbiotically linked modern livelihoods cannot be abruptly introduced into the sociofabric of an inherently agrarian society; they are, perhaps, simply not compatible.

This research project is about our human condition. Its goals are rooted in illustrating how we, communally sharing Earth as a global village, are being affected by our collective actions. This societally unifying research initiative, if applied to various contexts, has the potential for cultivating intercultural understanding, nourishing human healing, and building social capital.

Humankind, as it always has, can determine its destiny. May we choose wisely.

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This thesis-monograph is organized as follows:

Introduction: During an era of increasing political tension and societal unrest, we begin this monograph-thesis and quest to understand our human condition with an ethnographic overview story that encapsulates the dense details of this longitudinal study. This is about taking a moment's pause to ponder the vital importance of our varying cultures and the intrinsic value of our heritages. We consider this global phenomenon in the context of northern Thailand's hilltribe people ('highlanders') and an ethnic Karen community striving to maintain its cultural traditions and vital indigenous knowledge. What does this mean for Us all?

Chapter one introduces the 'de' of development concept and the rationale for this intellectual endeavor. We consider notions of modernity: While its technologies and related lifestyles have become commonplace in modern-day 'developed' societies, some populations still function on the margins of globalization and related modernization phenomena. Both 'modern' and 'traditional' lifestyles can still be observed. But for how much longer?

Chapter two builds a framework for deeper digging by revealing the methodology for this mixed methods research. I unveil where my fieldwork was conducted, what I was seeking to learn about, and who contributed to cultivating answers. I also articulate the theoretical foundations used for a focused lens pointed toward considering how changes in environment impact relationships among ourselves and with our 'natural' world.

Chapter three further establishes this study with notions that if one wants to understand more deeply about where people are at, especially their societal trajectory, then what is required is historical insight into how they arrived at their situation. This chapter, for overarching policy context, perhaps boldly delves into a geopolitical taboo-topic of what I maintain is a politically constructed and widely communicated fairytale that Siam was never colonized by countries such as England and France during the Western colonial development era. It was rather imperialized, first by socio-political and territorial takeovers and natural resource extraction. Later ensued Thailand's domestic "development" via the Thai Royal Project. Thailand is amid a return to quasi-absolute monarchal/central-state rule.

Chapter four investigates the more detrimental societal impacts of "development" via an empirical case study I deem a template for the 'de' of 'development. This study ethnographically illustrates three distinct phases of development-related changes that over the past 140 years have transpired there in relation to how heavy-handed top-down central government-directed policies have affected villagers' geographical environment, socio-ecological conditions, and psycho-social functioning.

Chapter five transforms a 'development timeline' of the case-study area into a qualitative and quantitative examination of ecosystem services (ESS). This is so we, while considering the 'de' of development, can measure how the case-study community's socio-culture and livelihoods have transformed (arguably not for the better) and how this has affected villagers' overall well-being. A qualitative analysis presents ESS factors, while a quantitative presentation graphically displays the ESS-change trends, opening space for a focused discussion on this overall topic.

Chapter six concludes this thesis-monograph with considerations of direct and indirect drivers of ecosystem services changes. I offer a critique of the United Nations Ecosystem Services Millennium Assessment, which states that cultural services and good social relations are not strongly linked with human well-being! Finally, we contemplate: Can we humans choose our destiny?

Introduction: Back to the Basics: Can't Buy This Way of Life

A moment's pause with an indigenous ethnic Karen community in northern Thailand striving to maintain its cultural traditions

We begin this study and quest to understand our human condition with a regional overview and ethnographic story that encapsulates the dense details of this thesis-monograph. We contemplate a global phenomenon in the context of northern Thailand's hilltribe people ('highlanders') by traveling to a quaint, ethnic indigenous *Pakagayor* (i.e., '*Karen*') village community. While those living in *Baan Nam Bor Noi* ("village with the little well") had long-ago been tugged down from their highland forest homes and settled amid this lowland urban area, they are still attempting to maintain fairly traditional lives.

The intergenerational voices of *Tior* and *Kabuwa* offer a personalized glimpse into their overall cultural situation. We become exposed to how some top-down rural development policies, especially land use regulations, have rendered a form of ethnocide for them—the 'de' of development. Their cultural socio-fabric is being ever more overturned and replaced with the societal ills bonded with homogenizing modern world culture. Hence, this rapidly modernizing country's most marginalized peoples are analogously placed into capitalism's global development saga.

Tior and *Kabuwa* have a message for Us all that encapsulates what this thesis monograph is really about, which is our shared human condition and nature-based commonalities.

Sitting on the well-worn floor of an airy bamboo-constructed Buddhist temple house, *Tior*, 49, pointed to a separate room behind him that shelters the village's sacred well. While the mouth of this spring had barely enough water to scoop into a ladle, he told us it symbolically serves as the cultural heart-center of Baan Nam Bor Noi (in the Thai language means 'village with the little well').

"This is sacred land," said *Tior*, who has resided in *Nam Bor Noi* since it was established decades ago. "This land belongs to *Kru Ba Wong*, the great monk whom we villagers worship from our core. He taught us to follow Buddhist principles, be good people, eat vegetarian, not modernize, and maintain our culture. I want to preserve this."

Nam Bor Noi, a 53-household 200-person ethnic *Pakagayor* (a.k.a. *Karen*) village community located in northern Thailand's *Lamphun* Province, is a one-of-a-kind place. It is a community of devout Buddhists and strict vegetarians who exist essentially apart from the modern world. Those who live here use no electricity. Villagers utilize a hand-crank-operated bucket to draw water from holes they had manually tunneled through the volcanic lava bedrock beneath their feet.

This community outwardly appears to function smoothly and naturally. A distinctive odor permeates the village; perhaps it's the lava rock mixed with the sweet scent of woodfire smoke. The village is almost eerily peaceful. Many of the adults sit around while doing embroidery and crafts, while children play games; they use the simple wonders of their natural environment as the playground. Gentle laughter, while the young and the old interact with one another, is pleasing to the ear, heart, and soul.

The feeling one might get while in this village is that of being in the present moment. It at least appears evident that everyone here is actually living, here — not wishing so much that they were somewhere else. Perhaps one reason for this is that the machine world is absent in *Nam Bor Noi*. What is moving here is largely only the machinery of the human body.

Like many human communities, even those with peaceful and natural environments, there are social problems in this village. However, there is far less apparent stress than life in the city, which involves fighting with the madness of traffic jams or an office clock. None of this exists in *Nam Bor Noi.* Or, perhaps it is just in different forms from that of the urban realm.

Still, there is a noticeable difference between this village and the modern city hub, such as the lack of noise-racket! There are no airplanes soaring overhead; there is no clattering construction equipment or industrial factories; there is nobody in cars or on motorcycles competing for the roadways; there are no sounds of television or attention-sucking internet distractions, and there are no bars with karaoke machines or other riff-raff.

There is occasional cackling of a battery-powered radio. There is the sound of wood being chopped. There are hammering and grinding sounds from handicrafts being forged. There are the footsteps of villagers as they lug buckets of sloshing water across their shoulders.

Muffled conversations coming from thatched bamboo homes capped with teakwood leaf roofs can also be heard. Peeping birds flutter overhead; at day's end, the birds' songs are replaced with the chirping of jungle bugs.

"This village is very special," said *Tior*. "It's not just foreigners who want to observe our way of life. Other *Karen* villages need to see this as well. We want to teach others how to live like this. We want to preserve our ways of life. This way of life is healthy. It's something that money cannot buy."

The Non-Romantic Reality for Thailand's Hilltribe People...

As utopian as this all may sound, life can be damn hard for villagers, as there are few avenues by which to earn a living. Many, versus living sustainably with and from their surrounding environment, as their ethnic group had done for generations, now must work paying jobs, none of which are highly desirable. This includes in urban areas, or by doing hard labor for private landowners and corporate agrocompanies, for a pittance.

From January until March, they hand-harvest corn and maize, collect leaves and grass for roofing materials, and dig lava rock largely used for construction purposes. April through June is Thailand's dry season, so there is little to no agriculture; villagers clear land or do any work they can find.

The off-season is also time to create handicrafts, such as necklaces and utensils made from coconut shells and other materials. They will sometimes work on a dress, a shirt, or other types of craftwork for a week or more and then sell this product for whatever small amount of money "the market rate" allows.

From July to November, villagers harvest *longan* fruit, prune trees, tend gardens, dig lava rock, or plant rice. December is the rice harvesting time. All hands on deck, on land that does not belong to them!

Nowadays, there are expenses, such as the purchase of rice and other food staples, lamp oil, clothing, toiletries, school uniforms, and shoes. For a five-person family, total monthly expenditures average about US$80. Some households can save between US$30 and US$150 per year, which they generally reserve for medical expenses. They live simply, to say the least.

While they do exist in a form of socio-economic poverty, their wealth is that *Nam Bor Noi*, like most of Thailand's hilltribe people communities, is one of the few places remaining that if the electricity grid or the material supply chain feeding the modern industrialized world were to collapse, its community members, at least those equipped with their culture's traditional indigenous knowledge, could survive.

What is noticeably absent in this village are older youths, most of whom have left for larger towns and cities. Garbage has also become a new problem and can be seen along the village pathways and nearby roadways that used to be pristine and clean. Some *Nam Bor Noi* villagers exhibit signs of malnutrition.

"We are not suffering," said *Tior*. "Living like this is fine. It is a quiet and peaceful life…Other people feel like they need material things to be satisfied in life. I think the most important thing for a happy life is to have my own space and food; I can survive. Having a car is a small thing compared to this.

"Eighty percent of the villagers living here in *Nam Bor Noi* don't need (or want) electricity or running water," added *Tior*. "If someone in this community has money and needs these, or if they don't follow the rules (that prohibit modernization), they can buy land elsewhere, build a house, and do whatever they want."

An ethnic Palong woman and her grandson in Pang Daeng Nai village near Chiang Dao, Thailand, share precious time together. The Palong is one of many of Thailand's hilltribe people groups.

Tior said that when all of us humans were born, we had nothing; life was fine. But if we are greedy and selfish, it ruins our life and our relationships. "Our culture is becoming like this," added *Tior*. "Actually, the natural world around us is just fine; people ruin themselves. … Everyone should be a good person. I don't know if I'm a good person. I'd like to know how to be one. I do know that I'm not greedy or selfish."

He said the Thai government offered utilities and even solar cell technology to this community, but the villagers rejected electricity as a fire hazard.

"We asked the government about who would pay for the electricity, water, and infrastructure repairs," said *Tior*. "For me, I would like to have more light when I'm eating. But I am okay. A major challenge I face nowadays is finding roofing materials for my house. The climate has changed, and the grass is now hard to find. The leaves used as an alternative last only a couple of years.

"I worry most about land ownership," added *Tior*. "I don't have any rights to this land; the government owns it. … If I don't have land for growing rice, for eating, this is a big problem. Sometimes, there is no work. I worry about this too, and getting sick, but not too much...

"I want to transfer to my children what it feels like to live in the traditional way," he added. "We (in *Nam Bor Noi*) support preserving this way of life…We want to keep it special."

The Sacred Land and Vital Rituals of Thailand's Hilltribe People

Every evening, many *Nam Bor Noi* residents, including most of the children, congregate at the sacred well while dressed in their traditional clothing. They place offerings from nature and incense sticks to their revered late monk who founded this settlement area forty-five years ago. The congregation then turns around to face the temple located one kilometer away, where Kru Ba Wong's embalmed body is displayed, before meditating en masse for fifteen minutes.

"There are many things with development that are surrounding us now," said *Tior*. "This nightly tradition is very important for our cultural protection."

The Seismic Societal Shift of 'Development'

'Development,' with its tenet of 'giving people more choices,' is predominantly heralded as a positive thing. It is commonly linked with notions of 'progress,' particularly in the forms of modern necessities such as healthcare, financial security, mainstream education, and other aspects perceived as good for human well-being. This is coupled with technological innovations that make life easier and more physically comfortable, also facilitating access to the globalized world (i.e., the Internet). Sounds good, yes?

Dr. Jan Nederveen Pieterse, a prominent scholar of global political economy, development studies, and cultural studies, offers in his book *Development Theory: Deconstructions/Reconstructions*, another perspective on development's root motivations. Pieterse defines 'development' as "an organized intervention in collective affairs based on a standard of improvement."

In other words, 'development' is about enacting top-down government policies that interrupt, even decimate, a society's culture. This is to install institutions (i.e., enmeshed with Western democratic capitalism) that facilitate access to and participation in the global market system.

Pieterse writes, "In the age of globalization, local culture represents the treasure trove of the Golden Fleece – perhaps the world's last. The world's indigenous peoples are the last custodians of paradises lost to late capitalism, ecological devastation, McDonaldization, Disneyfication, and Barbiefication. With ecological pressures mounting worldwide, this ethos is gaining ground as if queuing up for the last exit."

'Ethos,' according to the Oxford Dictionary of English, is the 'characteristic spirit of a culture, or era, or community as manifested in its attitudes and aspirations.' The Cambridge Dictionary refers to 'ethos' as 'the set of beliefs, ideas, etc. about the social behavior and relationships of a person or group.'

It could be perceived that Pieterse's reference to ethos and "custodians of paradises lost" is inferring that rural indigenous communities are, or once were, paradises free from environmental and socio-ecological ills. It required years of my own fieldwork to realize (and accept) that while many of northern Thailand's indigenous communities, for example, may dwell in 'nature' abundant areas that appear social-ecologically idyllic, this utopia is simply not a common reality.

Elements of this are inherent to, and still palpable in, at least the indigenous communities I have visited. But this is, and northern Thailand's hilltribe people are, under threat. For capitalism 'development,' as 'an organized intervention in collective affairs based on a standard of improvement,' erodes these vital facets of human society. Whether systematically or by semi-unintended default, 'development' retrofits people and our communities into some means-to-an-end combination of capitalism's tenets of land, labor, capital, and market. It is actually anti-human.

The forest is their Life. Yet, they are labeled as "forest destroyers." As a waterfall tucked away in the forest sang its water song, I fully realized that this entire mountain is their playground. Without it, what do they have? And they will fight for this way of life, for this livelihood is who they really are. … Isn't this what all living creatures on this planet are about? Are we all not powered by the same energy? Is the 'natural' not our nature?

That said, what about the 'de' of the word 'development?' What is development taking away from our cultures and traditional ways of life? What are the societal replacements? What are the short-and potential long-term impacts? What does this mean for all us humans? Really, what is the end-game of this unsustainable 'natural resources' extractive global market system?

A Regional Dilemma for Lowlands and Highlands Dwelling Folks

For further context into this topic, let us consider the region amid which Thailand's hilltribe people reside and how they are part of this saga.

The rapid development of Chiang Mai city, located about four hours from *Nam Bor Noi* and considered Thailand's second capital over the past few decades has dramatically altered its traditionally slow-paced and conservative culture into a mini-Bangkok metropolis. This is particularly evident with worsening traffic congestion, pollution, and increasing social tensions.

Farmers are selling generations-old properties. Rice paddies are being filled with concrete, making space for condominium complexes and shopping malls. These phenomena are drastically altering the geographical and social-ecological composition of the Thai north. This is having a profound effect on how families and individuals interact with each other and with their natural environment.

What can also be observed is shifting demographics, including regional migration issues, societal homogenization involving the national acculturation of indigenous ethnic peoples, expanding income inequality and additional societal stratification, competition for space, and other unplanned changes.

Some rural populations here still function in a similar fashion to before the prominent onset of urbanization. However, this is rapidly changing. The global market system, and various lifestyles associated with the modern world, is perforating their social fabric. Homogenizing 'modern world' culture is replacing ethnically traditional lifestyles. This is affecting everyone, including those living in remote rural areas.

Northern Thailand's 'Hilltribe People' ('Highlanders')

Jakhadte, a community member of *Doi Mot* village, an ethnic Black *Lahu* community located about one hour from Chiang Mai, enjoyed a moment's pause. Although northern Thailand's indigenous ethnic communities carry few or no government issued social rights, many display a deep sense of satisfaction related to being well-rooted in and proud of their traditional ways of life.

Thailand's hilltribe people are comprised of ten officially recognized groups. They are the *Karen, Hmong, Akha, Lisu, Lahu, H'tin, Khmu, Lua, Mien, and Mlabri*, totaling over 926,000 people, according to the Asia Pacific Human Rights Information Centre and Network of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand. These ethnic groups are some of Thailand's most marginalized of the marginalized.

Commonly called "hill tribes and “hilltribe people,” another name that has been used is *chao khao* (meaning, “hill/mountain people”). They have also carried the derogatory label of *chao pa* — *chao* meaning ‘people’ and *pa* meaning ‘forest.’ This has the connotation of them being ‘wild people,’ or the opposite of ‘civilized.’ A more recent, politically correct term used for Thailand’s ethnic groups is “highlanders” or “highland Thais” or even “Thai people in the forest.”

Kitthiphum, who is ethnic Black *Lahu*, was proud to have Thai citizenship, although this isn’t the case for many highlanders.

According to the Asia Pacific Human Rights Information Center and Network of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand, “In opposition to these negative connotations of the official designation, *chao khao*, or other commonly used derogatory terms, indigenous organizations and indigenous peoples’ rights advocacy groups began to promote over ten years ago the term, *chonphao phuenmueang,* as the translation of “indigenous peoples.”

The Thai government has been campaigning to reject the term ‘indigenous peoples,’ as an element of its decades-old ‘Thai’ national cultural building campaign (e.g., the “12 Culture Mandates”). The government at least explicitly considers these groups as much ‘Thai’ as other Thai citizens. It is proclaimed that they can experience the fundamental rights of Thai citizens.

The reality is that northern Thailand's hilltribe people continue to endure the same historical stereotyping and systematic discrimination as other indigenous groups worldwide. Although many of these communities have for generations lived in northern Thailand’s mountains, many are still not considered Thai nationals. Therefore, some do not have the Thai citizenship necessary for receiving government social benefits, among a multitude of other (sometimes life-threatening) issues.

Through public policies, these groups have also been forced to become part of a modernizing trend. This is increasing their inescapable dependence on local and world market systems traditionally alien to them for survival. For the most part, villagers can no longer live in their traditional manners. This overall situation is having a profound impact on their ways of life, making their future uncertain.

Zomia

James C. Scott, a distinguished professor of Political Science and Anthropology and author of the book *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (2009), says those living in the highlands are people who have fled State-making projects and have made conscious choices about how and where to do so on the peripheries of the centers of global power. Scott says those living in the highlands are people who have fled state-making projects and have made conscious choices about how and where to do so. His work puts into context northern Thailand rural highland communities, such as *Baan Nam Bor Noi.*

Map of the "Zomia" region.
(Source: http://www.geocurrents.info/cultural-geography/where-is-zomia)

Scott refers to the term "Zomia," coined in 2002 by historian Willem van Schendel in 2002. This word refers to a location in Ne-India called "*Zo*." The word means 'hill' or "a place far from the center." Zomia refers to an area encompassing eight states and is at the center of none.

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The following section refers to an April 2013 lecture that Scott conducted at the University of New England (Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RNkkEU7EoOk).

"Zomia" involves lands above three hundred meters, stretching throughout slivers of China, Vietnam, Ne-India, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, and northern Thailand. It covers about 2.5 million square kilometers and comprises about 100 million people.

Scott says this has involved fleeing conscription, disease, slavery, warfare, and taxes. They are "fugitive runaways" in "non-State spaces" and have been fleeing this oppression for two thousand years. In Se-Asia, for example, they have gone into the mountains. Other places have involved swamps, for example.

"Zomia is the last remaining region of the world where people have not been incorporated into nation states, but its days are numbered." He says they represent "a last frontier" of sorts. They

are humanity's living ancestors, what we were like before civilization. Scott says that their choice not to have a written tradition, for example, is about strategic life choices. Likewise, their traditions related to kinship structures, social organizations, physical dispersion, cropping strategies, etc. are solely to keep the State at arm's length.

Scott asserts that highlanders have mainly been running from the Han Chinese state. Ming and Chin dynasties' military campaigns, especially in the mid-1800s, forced them to seek refuge. This notion supports the ethnic Lahu, who comprise my thesis's primary case study area. Scott says they are part of a history of "deliberate reactive statelessness," those who got away. Zomia is hence the last great enclosure of non-State peoples. He says that throughout the two hundred thousand years that people have been on Planet Earth, any notion of a state is fairly recent. For example, the small states of Se-Asia arose about three thousand years ago. Life has generally been lived outside the state. Agriculture is required for states to exist.

All areas outside of the early states involved a dispersed and nomadic population. This was the "barbarian sovereignty," which means they were not under the state's tax regime. They had relationships comprised of trade between the barbarians and their lowland trade partners. It was a relationship of exchange that could be withdrawn. The other relationship was that of slavery, particularly involving people without state citizenship. *Most trade in Se-Asia involved slave trading to sweep in a population and make them state subjects for labor* and grain tax. This in Se-Asia became a reality about four hundred to five hundred years ago. Hill people were even caught by each other, and for these purposes sold to the valley kingdoms.

After 1945, two things changed. One is the ideology of the nation-state as it projected its powers to the peripheries of the nation-state. Previously, states controlled small portions of the state. Infrastructure and technologies involving roads, land vehicles, helicopters, and telephones allowed the central state to project itself all the way to the borders. The second change is that after 1945, it came to be that the State further realized these peripheral peoples reside on natural resources that could be used for foreign exchange (e.g., timber, hydroelectric sites, precious minerals, etc.). Suddenly, these areas became interesting and important to control for advanced capitalism.

Scott says that in some Zomia areas, the state exists in the higher elevations. However, in Se-Asia, it is not like this. In Se-Asia, the valleys are the locations of States — of social hierarchy, taxes, kings, and permanent clergies, large-scale warfare, self-described civilizations, and above

all, wet rice agriculture. Rather, the hills involve swidden/shifting (slash and burn) cultivation. There are no permanent states, and the population is dispersed. It is relatively egalitarian, involving zones of cultural and linguistic variety (i.e., "shatter zones" involving many cultures), and there are no taxes paid to kings or permanent clergy.

He says that most people in Se-Asia think of these different people living in different zones almost as though they are a different species from themselves. However, for a long time, people have been transferring themselves between the lowlands and highlands as "regions of refuge." People have moved for many reasons, including famines linked to the accumulation of grains. Some people even believe that people in the mountains have no civilization and that this is purely a lowland achievement.

Scott argues that the "tribes" in the hills made themselves over time. The idea was to concentrate grain and people within a reasonable distance from the state center. Wet rice cultivation concentrates on populations because it grows above the ground, so the state can relatively easily take or destroy it. Wet rice stores well, have high value, and can be carried quite far. However, this is not the case in the highlands, where it is mostly upland rice.

In 1700, the Zomia-related population was five people per square km. Therefore, people could not be controlled by controlling land. So they had to be roped in and confined. Navigation by water was vital in Se-Asia when it came to the states. Thus, the states in Se-Asia are created around river systems (e.g., the Irrawaddy in Burma/Myanmar). States stopped at the mountains and the marshes, where it was difficult to extend power beyond. This power would vary with the weather season, nearly stopping during the wet season.

Scott says that villagers in some areas, if they can, choose the best forms of agriculture. He says that root crops, such as tarot, yam, sweet potatoes, and cassava, are the best because in this way the government cannot easily destroy these life-sustaining crops. These crops are likewise a "State resisting" forms of livelihood … "agriculture of evasion" and "escape crops." I will add that in northern Thailand, there is no cassava; however, there are potatoes.

Scott says that historically speaking, cultivation where people cut the brush, burn, plant crops in the ashes, grow for some years, and then prepare another spot means that the fields (and the people) move over time. This creates a situation in which people cannot be taxed. These fields can sometimes grow 20–30 kinds of crops, with only some crops mature at any given time. The state cannot appropriate this. Scott says it is a form of agriculture that keeps them out of the "clutches of the State" and is politically chosen for its advantages in state evasion.

Speaking about oral tradition, or lack thereof, Scott says that the hill peoples in Se-Asia most have a story about a book they had that was stolen or lost. I have heard this story when learning from the ethnic Karen, who have been deeply infiltrated by Christian missionaries.

Scott says that texts are permanent. Oral tradition can easily be changed, especially if you are a weakened people and need to adapt to the times. Scott says that some people in the hills have erased their histories or retained as much as they want to retain. Physical dispersal, no permanent rulers, oral traditions, simplified social organization, shifting cultivation, remote inaccessible places, and religious practices are always different from valley people. This makes them "barbarians" to the valley people but very advantageous to them, says Scott.

While not all of Scott's research applies to the current status of the northern Thai indigenous folks from whom I had the privilege to learn, this information is relevant to northern Thai villagers' long-term history. It may even reveal what the root motivations of rural 'development in Thailand have been and remains really about.

It was the 2016 ethnic *Lisu* new year celebration in northern Thailand's *Doi Lan* village. ... This community's headman took a break from leading the traditional dancing, while watching others continue with this sacred multi-day cultural celebration. … Scenes such as this, which have endured for generations, are becoming ever rarer. As this traditional music and dancing, as well as the community cohesion it cultivates, are being replaced with karaoke machines and smart phone obsession.

Territorialization of Land and Culture

The Thai government implemented land-use regulations in the 1950s, by officially considering, therefore placing, ethnic communities inside national park and ‘reserved forest’ territory. This rural development scheme essentially corralled previously independent mountain-dwelling villagers into a top-down state control system that determines how they earn a living.

Traditional slash and burn shift cultivation practices, central to villagers’ sustainable livelihoods, were banned. Essentially, they were force-converted to farmers of sedentary orchard agriculture. Forest products, regarded by some village communities as common pool resources, are no longer legally theirs for harvesting.

This may appear to some as a minor inconvenience; however, if viewed through a social-ecological lens, the entirety of villagers’ lives (e.g., livelihood, textiles, language, music, oral traditions, etc.) traditionally revolves around the harvest cycle. If these socio-cultural systems become altered, as they were in northern Thailand, a situation ensues whereby people are rendered essentially in an identity crisis of sorts until another system can be structured and implemented (if at all).

King *Bhumibol Adulyadej* (Rama IX) had for decades worked with highland ethnic groups, primarily as part of the revered Royal Project. This development project had, and still has, the explicit purpose of solving problems associated with highland deforestation, as well as poverty and opium production by promoting and growing alternative cash crops such as tea, fruit, flowers, and vegetables. This policy initiative also results in detrimental cultural impacts. Here in this photo, Rama IX is with members of the *Pumuen* villages area, comprised of ethnic Black and Red *Lahu* people.

The policy scheme used for perpetuating this is the Thai Royal Project, pioneered by the revered late King *Bhumibol Adulyadej* (Rama IX). For decades, he worked closely with Thailand's hilltribe people. This development project had, and still has, the explicit purpose of solving problems associated with highland deforestation, and poverty and opium production by promoting and growing alternative cash crops such as tea, fruit, flowers, and vegetables. What is predominantly not discussed is how this top-down rural development initiative has also resulted in detrimental socio-cultural impacts for the Project's subjects.

Farlae, of ethnic Black *Lahu* ethnicity, ventured deep into the forest with her friend and sons, in order to scour the river for fish and other aquatic creatures. It was vitally necessary. For a hail storm (a fairly new climate change related phenomenon here) had temporarily destroyed her family's tea trees; this means they had no cash crop-derived money for purchasing food. … *Farlae*, born and raised in the Thai highlands and with no electricity or other modern amenities, is adamant about passing forward indigenous knowledge to her children, in order to bolster their resilience during tough times.

In 1961, the Thai State Park Act was ratified. This policy instituted the further establishment of national parks and other forest conservation areas, all managed by the strict authority of the Thai Royal Forestry Department. This brought with it a plethora of major changes for rural highland communities. This includes stringent land-use regulations for Thailand's hilltribe people, which greatly affected their culturally traditional practices, including hunting and fishing, and their collection of wood, medicine, and forest food, among other ecosystem services-related aspects.

For agrarian societies, particularly those with animist spiritual beliefs, these traditional practices are vitally linked to their overall survival mechanisms. If these societal systems are drastically altered or severed, a form of irreversible ethnocide ensues.

This photograph above depicts Jabate, an ethnic Black Lahu, and his village's last living traditional medicine man, who on that day taught young villagers about the plants and herbs they would harvested from the jungle on that day. He first shared his knowledge with the older youth, as they placed clippings into a folder and wrote the related information; then, these youths taught the younger ones. This was a cultural insurance policy. The pool of youth who would normally step forward to absorb his cultural knowledge are for the most part no longer interested. Villagers now have electronics and motorcycles. They go to the city and also depend on 'modern medicine' to treat their illnesses. The last I heard is that the scrapbook the youth were using on this day, containing millennia of indigenous knowledge, had become lost.

A Social-Ecological Transformation for Thailand's Hilltribe People

In the village, alcohol and methamphetamine addiction is an ever-growing socio-cultural by-product of this brave new world that co-exists with those villagers still attempting to live a quiet village life and struggling to maintain the norms and values associated with their traditional culture.

Overall, the villagers appear to be in shock, desperately trying to maintain their traditions while adapting to the encroachment of a modern lifestyle, pulling them in, particularly the youth, one television program at a time. For many villagers, it's as though they are simultaneously living fundamentally different ways of life — a mixture between their cultural heritage and that of the mainstream modern world.

Many villagers, much like in what people may consider supposedly 'civilized' or 'advanced' cultures, now want to keep up with their modernizing neighbors but do not know how to cope with their rapidly changing environment.

The younger generations are looking to the outside world for examples of how to survive in modern society. They have little to no clue which world existence paradigm they should identify with nor which one they belong to.

For example, one can witness the stark contrast of a young Thai-speaking villager clad in his or her traditional ethnic clothing while also wearing caked-on makeup or a hairstyle mirroring modern Korean hip-hop culture. The middle-aged villagers want to preserve their culture for which they feel responsible; however, they do not know how, and are also being enticed by modernity-related conveniences. Many elders cannot identify with this ‘modern world.’ What is ensuing for many of Thailand's hilltribe people is a very real and tangible identity crisis.

Ethnic Black *Lahu* youth at, and not participating in, their village’s annual New Year festival.

The Looming Matrix for Thailand's Highlanders

I metaphorically compare this ‘development’ phenomenon to a scene in the movie, “The Matrix.” The machines (i.e., ‘development’ and ‘modernity’) had taken over Planet Earth. The remaining members of the human species, who were the resistance, had retreated to a domed and fortified room located at the Earth’s core. This could be symbolic of returning to nature, our inherent roots.

The violent machines programmed to destroy them bored through the Earth’s mantle and entered the pod via the ceiling. The humans, despite their valiant efforts, could not stop them from entering. Once they did, the machines duplicated and spread everywhere, destroying everything in their path.

This is how I perceive these phenomena in these indigenous villages. For once the high power electricity — the satellite dishes, the programming, etc. — and the top-down government policies (such as land-use regulations) arrive, then the culture's socio-fabric becomes affected from the inside-out. This essentially creates ethnocidal entropy. And I am not saying that advances in technology and modernity are inherently bad. I merely suggest that what is considered "traditional" and what is deemed "modern" cannot entirely co-exist.

That said, I maintain that there are socially binding commonalities that all humans share. These are our intrinsic needs to be loved and accepted, to be accepting and loving, and to have a nourishing natural environment that includes familial and community connections. This is a form of 'paradise.' Perhaps all humans, deep down, are seeking this. For is not what all living creatures on this planet are about? Are we all not powered by the same energy? Is the 'natural' not our nature?

Roots of Societal Transformation


Placing these phenomena even further into the context of *Nam Bor Noi* village, Tior's community is encompassed by nine other *Karen* villages. They all constitute a lowland *Karen* settlement area called *Phabat Huaytom*, which has a population of about 13,000 people. Like its surrounding Thai lowland counterparts, it is also underway to succumbing traditional culture to a modernizing trend. This is transforming the ways they interact with each other and with their surrounding environment.

Tior said that in the early 1970s, there were four *Karen* elders seeking "a healthier way of life" away from hardship and opium addiction. They held *Kru Ba Wong*'s Buddhist teachings in high esteem and pioneered a new path by pilgrimaging from the highlands to *Phabat Huaytom* to learn from the sage.

"Nearly fifty years ago, I lived high in the mountains," said *Kabuwa*, 84, from a hut-like structure placed in the middle of a watery and verdant rice field. He is one of the first four pioneers to come to this area. "My life wasn't comfortable (up in the mountains). The transportation wasn't good. I had to walk on the steep and mountainous slopes and go up and down. It wasn't good. But it was easy to hunt and find wild food.

"I was inspired to change my lifestyle for *Kru Ba Wong*, the great Buddhist monk who visited my village many times," added *Kabuwa*. "He brought with him many wise teachings. He taught about the Buddhist code of ethics and the five precepts (i.e., do not steal, commit adultery, lie, drink alcohol, or harm animals)."

Kabuwa

Kabuwa explained that when *Kru Ba Wong* invited him, and those in other villagers, to come live in *Phabat Huaytom*, “I left my highland home and followed him. The only criterion for living here was that I had to accept and maintain the regulation of strictly following Buddhist principles. I also had to become a vegetarian. Despite these lifestyle changes, my life here remains much more comfortable than it was while I was living in the jungle forest.”

When *Kabuwa* arrived at *Phabat Huaytom, only* two houses were built. Soon after his arrival, however, many *Karen* migrated here. Infrastructural development also expanded.

“We all came here to follow *Kru Ba Wong*, to make merit, to follow his teachings,” said *Kabuwa*. “When I moved here, there was abundant shading from large trees, unlike nowadays,” he said. “The houses were constructed of bamboo and grass, *Karen* style…Everyone lived in harmony. We were sharing, not selling things like we do today."

Kabuwa revealed that the most significant limitation at that time was water scarcity. There was only one water source, the sacred well located at the Buddhist temple that *Kru Ba Wong* had initiated. "The water well was a small pot, but it could support all of us villagers, as a community," said *Kabuwa*. "This is why we call it a sacred well.”

Kabuwa recalled that there wasn’t enough water available to grow the number of vegetables required for the expanding community, so they (perhaps for the first time in their life) had to buy food from the local markets being established.

“To pay for this, I worked in the fields for two to five Thai baht (less than US$.15) per day,” said *Kabuwa*. “I became firmer about my working rate and eventually received ten baht per day for my labor. I gave half of it to the temple for making merit to *Kru Ba Wong*.”

Kabuwa shared that *Kru Ba Wang* was a wise man with a good plan and created a residential zoning system. “The roads here were made from dirt and lava rock,” said *Kabuwa*. “We (*Karen*) hand-built the roads, while the Thai people watched us construct them.

Back to Humanity’s Basics

Just thirty years ago, all villagers in *Phabat Huaytom* still lived traditionally like those in *Nam Bor Noi, and* as Thailand's hilltribe people have for generations. This has nearly totally vanished.

“In the past, we had no modern technology,” said *Kabuwa*. “We handwashed our clothing. We used organic materials, such as roots and charcoal, to clean our teeth. All our food was cooked using a wood-fueled fire, and we used candles for lighting our homes. We walked everywhere. Only the wealthier people could afford a bicycle. Still, everyone was in-harmony, unlike nowadays…Everything has to be purchased now. People are more selfish, and they buy more things.”

“Thirty years ago, many outsiders, tourists from within Thailand and from other parts of the world, came here to observe our traditional ways of life,” said *Kabuwa*. “They brought foreign objects and ideas. This changed us. It transformed our traditional ways of life.”

Kabuwa revealed that things really began to change here about 10 years ago when the road was changed from dirt to tar. “This brought the outside world to us even more,” explained *Kabuwa*. “In some ways, things did change for the better after *Kru Ba Wong* asked King Rama IX to bring academics here to teach us what plants were best suited for here.”

The King also agreed to Kru Ba Wong’s request to have all villagers abstain from being drafted into the military due to their strict Buddhist beliefs. His Majesty also helped develop reservoir and irrigation projects, which, for the past twelve years, have allowed the village to grow rice.

“There used to be one man here who could teach *Karen* writing, but now he is blind,” said *Kabuwa*. “We proposed these teachings be part of the curriculum offered in the local Thai school. However, this idea was rejected. We were told that if we are to be Thai, then we must learn Thai. We are not Thai!”

What Can Be Done to Preserve These Ways of Life?

“Nowadays, we can and do maintain the traditional *Karen* ways of life,” said *Kabuwa*. “We still, for the most part, keep the Buddhist precepts. We still speak *Karen* with each other. We still weave and often wear our traditional clothing. Our houses still have no fences around them; we welcome our neighbors.

"We aren't forcing anyone living here to do this," he added. "Everyone is doing it by himself or herself. I believe that by people staying together like this, we can keep ourselves together through community connection.”

Kabuwa is concerned about younger generations. He said that middle-aged adults and the elderly understand the importance of the village’s cultural and religious beliefs and convictions; however, he fears that such customs are not being taught or passed on to the young.

Tior admitted that he also does not expect that newer generations will preserve this culture. “However, once you’ve been in this environment, it will be with you forever,” said *Tior*. “Because the younger generations here have lived like this, it will be with them forever…If we take care of our children, equip them, then we will protect our culture.”

Kabuwa was asked if he had a specific message he wanted to share with Thailand's hilltribe people and with the world overall.

“I don’t know how much longer I will be alive,” said *Kabuwa*. “I don’t know what will happen here once I am gone. I don’t know if their lives will have more suffering, how much they will be so busy. It’s not like in the past. I know I feel sad if they don’t keep a simple life like in the past.

“I want the *Karen* to come back and keep our traditional ways of life,” he added. “Don’t leave it! Don’t see capitalism, the outside world, as more important than our traditional ways of life! Our way of life is simple, not busy, like those people in the city. Keep the good relationships that we have with each other…

“I want to say to the *Karen* people that if you have lost your way, please come back.”

———

They are the bearers of indigenous technologies that often reflect a worldview and an understanding of our relationship to the natural world that is more realistic and sustainable than those of western European heritage and provide the basis for ‘revalorizing rural cultural-ecology as a global good” (McMichael. 2006).

Chapter 1: Glimpses into the Societal Margins of 'Development'

1.1. Concept

Modernity: While its technologies and related lifestyles have become commonplace in modern-day 'developed' societies, there are people located in the Asia-Pacific region, and globally for this matter, who remain functioning on the margins of globalization and related modernization phenomena. Both 'modern' and 'traditional' lifestyles can still be observed.

Communities living amid these 'developing' world areas — which I consider 'the periphery of globalization' — although modernizing are, at least in part, using millennia-old 'traditional' (indigenous) knowledge to maintain what could be considered a more 'natural' interaction with their surrounding environment and also with each other. This is rapidly changing, however, as industrialization and related capitalist expansionism perforate their societal fabrics.

These 'traditional' cultures, their rooted ways of life at least, are literally vanishing as development-driven modernity is further shifting centuries of learning and indigenous knowledge aside. People are departing from their inherent connections with nature (also with each other) and for survival are depending ever more upon capitalist global market-linked systems. Ethnically traditional lifestyles are being dissolved and replaced by homogenizing modern world culture.

What could this unfolding (worldwide) scenario potentially mean for all of us humans?

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

1.2. Rationale: A Study of Our Modern-Day Human Condition

We, as a global community, are perhaps at a pivotal point in our history. The economic market-related decisions that humans have been making for generations are rendering like never before notably tangible effects on our geographical environments and overall societal functioning.

Micro-scale development impacts are increasingly conglomerating to generate tangible macro-scale global footprints. Our human condition is transmuting, changing in form, nature, and substance. This is because we are interacting with a globalized world to the extent that humanity has never seen. If we are going to find creative solutions to global challenges, should we focus on the roots of prominent global issues?

What is transpiring in 'developing' parts of the world, for example, has long-since happened in what is considered as "First World" developed, supposedly more advanced, societies. This pertains to urbanization-related issues such as natural resource depletion, materialism, and social stratification, leading to poverty and societal degradation. Generation by generation, people worldwide are losing the intricacies of their 'traditional' cultures and what facilitates the behavioral norms essential for maintaining the social fabric associated with a cohesive society. While what is transpiring globally in these regards is not an entirely new phenomenon, we must choose how we will respond to what appears to be a somewhat precarious forecast of our future.

Although this 'de' of development-related thesis study comprises many related aspects, its root and ultimate goal is to illustrate how we are all on Planet Earth together and being effected by our collective actions.

In my opinion, we must metaphorically dissolve these nationalistic borders and bridge prominent understanding gaps between people. This can be accomplished by first looking at human culture — our human condition. Then, the micro-details of group culture can be best shared and understood. This has great potential for cultivating intra-and intercultural understanding, nourishing human healing, and building social capital.

1.3. Hypothesis

I hypothesize that what could be considered "traditional" societies, particularly those of rural indigenous) peoples — knowledge-keeper stewards of nature, whose communities I maintain represent a nature intrinsic to us all — can serve as a micro-scale social-scientific measurement of how societies globally have been and are being core-impacted by macro-scale "development" related phenomena.

This thesis — as a context for considering the 'de' of 'development' — therefore investigates and longitudinally illustrates some development-related changes that have ensued throughout some of these rural agrarian communities. They have been subjected to mega-development-related stressors (e.g., central government policies, modernization impacts, climate change, etc.). Analyzing how the rural village is connected to urban areas (i.e., the global market system) via the road (and information technologies) and how this globalized connectivity results in root societal transformations can reveal some root realities about our human condition.

1.4. Objectives

This multidisciplinary study conjoins social capital building civil documentary journalism and storytelling with the academic lenses of environmental and social science. This is to investigate how changes in a physical landscape (i.e., natural, and infrastructural) affect relationships among ourselves and with our natural world.

Using this methodology for shifting the global "development"-related conversation to being about our overall human condition — by revealing modern-day realities about our global-wide environmental and societal commonalities — has great potential for providing community-centered solutions regarding the issues that humanity overall is facing. This insight can be tangibly utilized for hindsight-mitigating development-related societally detrimental phenomena, particularly in the early stages of community development planning.

That said, a core motivation of this research project is to gain a more in-depth understanding of the human condition. An objective is to further develop research and theory as to how rural, urban, and regional planning worldwide can co-exist with at least relatively maintaining natural resources and the integrity of communities' cultural makeup. The goal is to cultivate collaboration across cultures and throughout government and non-government sectors, with the mission of ultimately improving quality of life for current and future generations in a rapidly changing world. This information could be channeled to world areas (such as the "developed" West) that could ironically learn a lot from communities too often overlooked, especially nowadays.

This thesis, with some of rural northern Thailand's indigenous communities offering a societal context for observing and understanding the societal 'de' of 'development,' is not meant for being an anthropological study of group culture per se. While this study looks at ideas, customs,

and social behavior, this is about human culture overall. How, over time, have we been psycho-socially affected, at the roots level, by global economic 'development' phenomena?

This is actually an exploration and articulation of humans' inherent nature. I want to provide a story that links people who are not familiar at all anymore with these "traditional" ways. If I can cultivate in folks anywhere around the world an empathetic realization of the human condition, then the barriers created by people believing we are so different can be collapsed.

1.5. Taking a Moment's Pause

I believe that a global revival, or at least an awakening, is happening where humans are becoming reminded of our true connection with "nature" and with each other.

This thesis study aims to explore, and perhaps illustrate, that people of more traditional world cultures, particularly those of indigenous peoples — knowledge-keepers of the natural world, also representing a nature intrinsic to us all — remain the representative core of what it truly means to be a human.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

This notion, and related dialogue, must be placed into a context container that people can relate to, such as the human condition overall. This social research project is likewise a conglomeration of my long-term culture preservation and social capital building initiative that — during a global era of increasing political tension and societal unrest — is tending to this world We all as a global community share.

This is about taking a moment's pause to observe and to become reminded of the socially binding commonalities that all humans share. These are our core needs to be loved and accepted, to be accepting and loving, and to have a nourishing natural environment that includes familial and community connections. This is about momentarily slowing down from our seemingly incessant state of being "busy."

This is about thinking introspectively before we entirely destroy our life-sustaining planet (and each other), and about meditating on the natural goodness that remains.

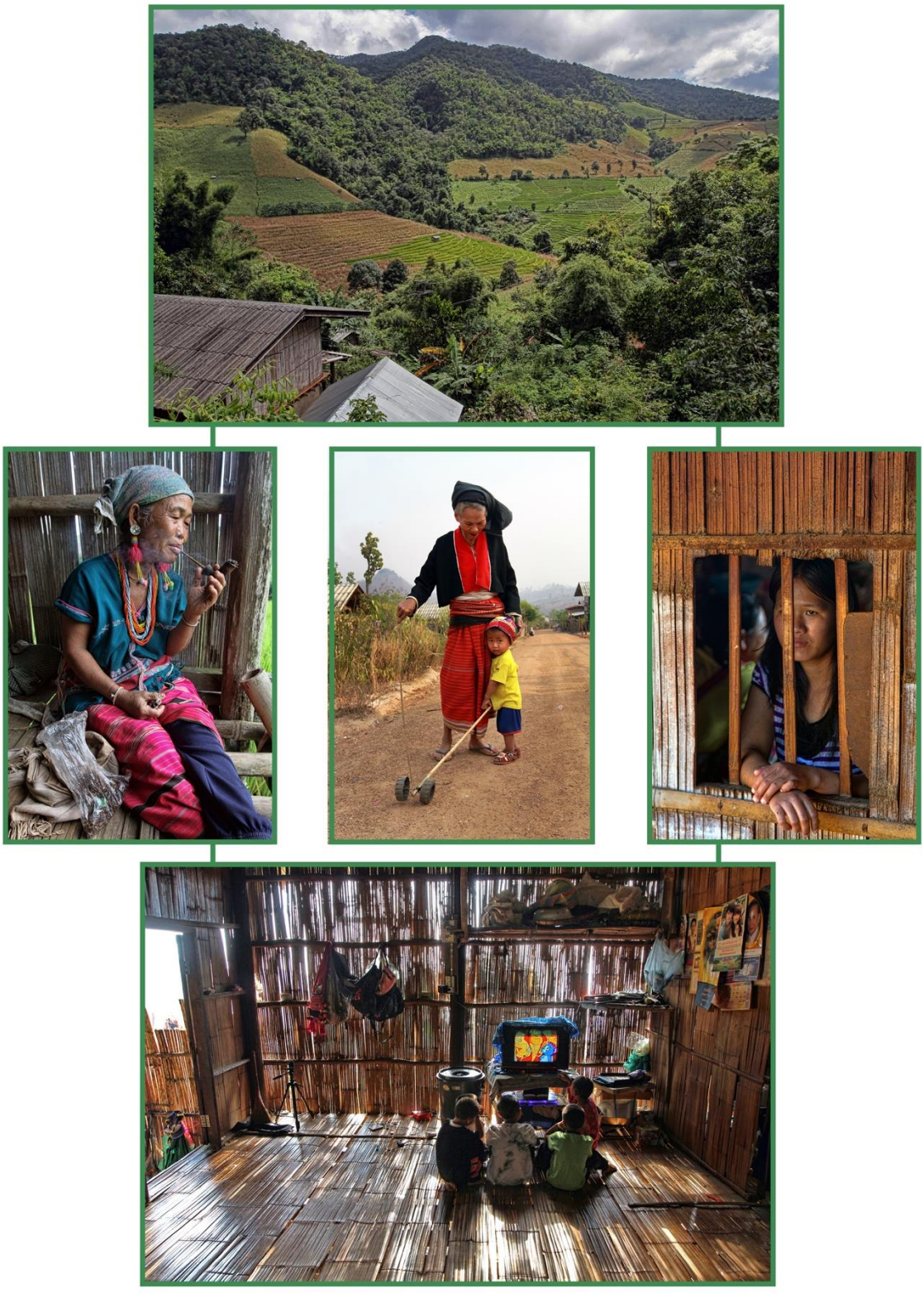
Can we, if even for a brief time, contemplate the importance of our varying cultures and the intrinsic value of our heritages? How about the significance of and capacity for our inclination to live in harmonious community with one another — perhaps (once again) regulated by our

natural environment? Can we observe, listen to, and learn from the voices of people from an age range and from different ethnicities comprised of those who still represent ways of life, and harness vitally essential indigenous knowledge about these aspects, inherent and fundamental to Us all?

For with each older generation that the modern world is losing — their 'traditional' knowledge with them, amid our supposed capitalist 'development progress' and a resulting homogenizing world culture — it is as though monumental segments of an ancient societal iceberg are sliding into the sea.

I am feeling a dire emergence to do what I can to document and reflect upon these 'de' of development-related phenomena — communicating a message about this, before it is too late.

Photographs by Jeffrey Warner



Photographs by Jeffrey Warner

Chapter 2: Digging in: Who, What, Where, When, and How?

2.1. Study Area

Figure 2.1: Thesis study country (Source: freeworldmaps.net)

The Kingdom of Thailand, formerly Siam, is considered the center of the Indochinese peninsula in Se-Asia. Thailand. Formally comprised of about 70 million people, it is the world's fiftieth largest country and the world's twentieth most populous country. This country is bordered to the north by Myanmar and Laos, to the east by Laos and Cambodia, and to the south by Myanmar, Malaysia, and the Gulf of Thailand; to the west is the Andaman Sea. This country, nowadays, comprises 76 provinces (five groups). Bangkok is the provincial-level capital and thus is often counted as a province. Each province is divided into districts, and the districts are further divided into subdistricts (*tambons*).

Thailand in the Thai language means 'land of the free,' which is oddly like the United States' motto. The surrounding countries were officially colonized by either Britain or France. This country is considered a constitutional monarchy. This is a form of monarchy in which the "sovereign," a supreme leader, exercises authority under a written or unwritten constitution. Thailand, before 1932, existed as an "absolute monarchy," which is a system by which the monarch holds absolute power. Modern-day government bodies consist of executive, legislative, and judicial branches. For decades, Thailand, arguably as a pseudo-democracy, has switched between parliamentary democracy and military junta.

A reason for focusing on Thailand as a modern-day context for studying development is because, according to Kelly, Yutthaphonphinit, Seubsman, and Sleigh (2012):

> Thailand has often been deemed a model [for studying planning and development] because it has retained much of its cultural traditions while adopting development practices that have succeeded economically and lifted the nation from its poor agrarian background to become a modern industrialized Southeast Asian state. Moreover, especially since the disruptions caused by the 1997 Asian financial crisis, Thailand is further evolving from post-WWII top-down (industrial) development practices to more bottom-up (participatory) development ideals. Thailand is also further decentralizing its political operations and therefore its planning practices" (p. 1).

While these authors' optimistic outlook of rural 'development' in Siam/Thailand is one relevant perspective, I am inclined to adopt and support Philip Hirsch's viewpoint on the root motivations for Thailand's rural 'development.'

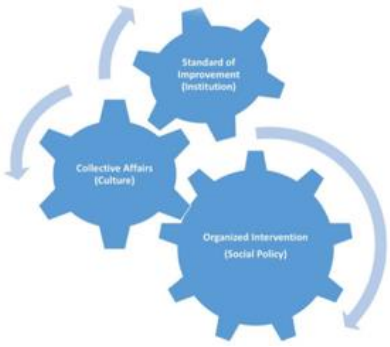
Hirsch (1989) revealed that the Thai language term for 'development,' *kaan phatthana,* covers a broad range of general improvements in the welfare of society. However, there is another layer to this supposedly human-rights-related phenomenon.

> In the discourse of development at the district and village level, it is often equated with 'prosperity.' This concept is associated with the development of communications, material comforts, and the cash economy. It is very much a consumerist, urban-oriented side of development.
>
> State-led rural development programs provide the key to state entry into the village via institutions governing many domains of life, and they do so within the ethos of development as a process by which the village benefits by becoming part of national modernization.
>
> The contradiction inherent in the process stems from unequal power relations between what was state and what was village, a power gap that is being shifted and absorbed into the village itself. A key point is that this contradiction is obscured by a particular development discourse that has emanated from these programs, and aspects of this discourse are now treated briefly in the form of selected lexical items. (p. 50)

My aspiration is that the insights gained from this rapidly "developing" world region can be used for an extrapolated sociological model of development-related impacts on people amid other world areas experiencing similar global market-system fueled phenomena.

2.2. Research Questions

Jan Nederveen Pieterse, in his book *Development Theory: Deconstructions/Reconstructions (2010),* defines 'development' as "an organized intervention in collective affairs according to a standard of improvement."



Model by Jeffrey Warner, with concepts from development theory articulated by Pieterse (2001)

I interpret Pieterse's notions of "organized intervention" as being about social policy (i.e., economic, political, cultural; international, national, and local); "collective affairs" as being about culture (i.e., accepted ideas, customs, and social behaviors, and other aspects that people care about: policies, education, the economy, etc.); and "standard of improvement" as being about the Institution, in terms of state-centered modes of organized law or practice (e.g., Colonialism and other State-centered societal directives). While "development" means different things to different people, this definition articulates the status quo "development" model.

Pieterse (2001) additionally says that "In the age of globalization, 'local culture' represents the last treasure trove. The indigenous peoples are the last custodians of paradise lost to late capitalism, ecological devastation, etc. With ecological pressures gaining worldwide, this phenomenon is gaining ground as it is queuing up for the last exit."

I maintain that this definitional framework can be used as this thesis study's foundation.

***

This research project focuses on the 'de' of development — denoting removal or reversal. To understand deeply and to communicate affectively about how certain changes in our physical environment affect our relationships with our surrounding 'natural' ecosystems and ultimately with each other, I pursue three primary questions: (1) What are development-and modernization-related processes, about capitalism's tenets of land, capital, and labor, essentially taking away from humans' cultures and 'traditional' ways of life? What are the societal replacements? ; 2) What are the short-and potential long-term impacts of status quo 'development' processes? ; and (3) What can be done, particularly in the early stages of community planning, to mitigate development-related, perhaps societally detrimental, phenomena? This third question is particularly concerning bottom-up, 'other development,' or 'alternative development'-related principles that are related to post-modern globalism.

2.3. Fieldwork Methodology

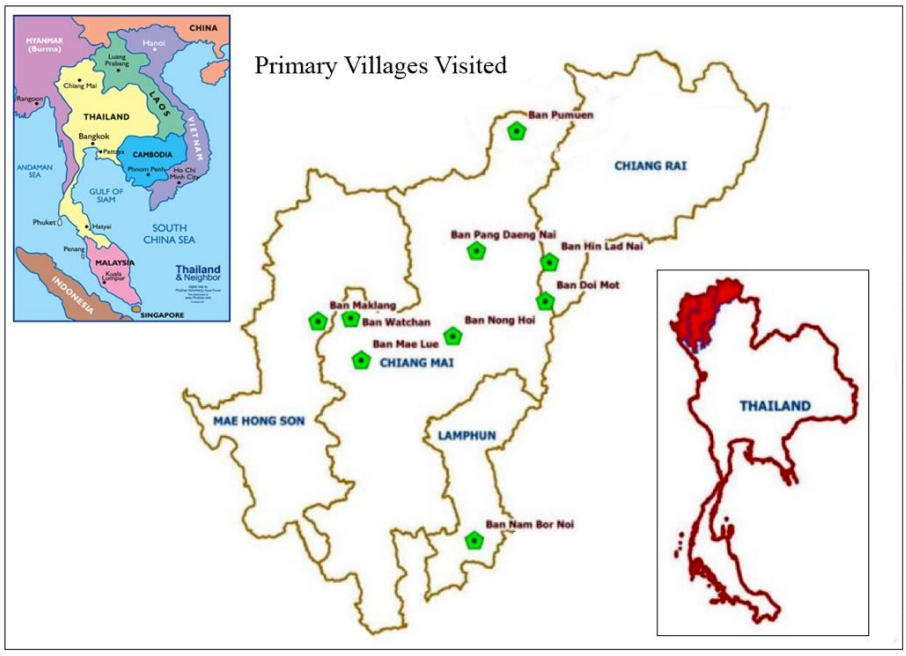


Figure 2.2: Study area (Source: thesis author)

From December 2010 until December 2018, I visited indigenous ethnic "hill tribe" villages scattered throughout the northern Thailand region. They comprise different ethnicities and existing amid three (cline) stages of what I maintain is a societal (and global) 'development' continuum; this is in terms of overall environmental and societal transformations.

Figure 2.3: Development stages of villages visited (Source: thesis author)

Figure 2.4: Age range of primary informants (Source: thesis author)

While media documenting villagers' overall environment and ways of life, I acquired the informing voices of villagers from 14–84 years old (i.e., youth, middle-age, and elder). I utilized qualitative and quantitative data analysis from in-field observations, documentary-style photography, and informal and formal structured (sometimes tri-language) interviews.

The purpose of this approach is to gain holistic insight into the effects that modern economic development has had on their communities. Each age group harnesses a respective mindset about and worldview toward development and their transforming sociological and geographical environments.

Primary case study: Template for the 'de' of development

While this study overall includes a range of villages comprised of different ethnicities, one village area is utilized for what I consider a template for the 'de' of development. I illustrate how this rural community area has transformed over a 140-year period. This is about how global market influences and central top-down government rural development policies have affected this community area's natural environment, socio-economic conditions, and psycho-social functioning.

Qualitatively collected and quantitatively visualized societal factors are used to reveal longitudinal environmental and societal change trends. This village community is perhaps on a trajectory toward socio-ecological collapse and the creation of another socio-system state — one that is arguably not for the better, at least in the short to medium term.

I maintain that by illustrating the effects that development has had, and continues having, on one community area, one society, we can conceptualize, understand, and extrapolate the status quo extractive development's impacts on socio-ecological relationships and hence humanity overall.

2.4. Communities Engagement: How, and with Whom?

The majority of my fieldwork was conducted with the help of Dr. Tanya Promburom. She is a Thai government-level researcher who remains my primary research colleague in Thailand. I began working with Promburom in 2012, when she was employed as head of research at CMU. She holds a master's degree in agricultural systems, with interests in the research areas of socio-economics, gender studies, natural resource management, and community-based tourism. Promburom has 15 years of experience working with rural communities located in northern Thailand's highland and lowland areas. Promburom primarily focuses on community development, with an emphasis on culture preservation through community empowerment. At the time of writing this thesis, she was pursuing a Ph.D in gender studies, with a focus on development impacts.

Methods of information gathering

Most of the data in this thesis derived from interviews was acquired via bilingual (English-Thai) and sometimes trilingual (English-Thai-ethnic tongue) translation. I purposefully maintained this dynamic throughout my fieldwork tenure.

Some people may criticize work involving translation methodology. They may have a viewpoint that information offered by an interviewee via translation becomes diluted through this communication process and that somehow the researcher is not receiving fully the most accurate information. While this calculation may be relevant in some cases, I maintain that this notion is impertinent to my thesis study. My reasoning pertains to: 1) the nature of my work, which has mostly been about the observation of societal patterns, requiring some highly focused ethnography-related information; 2) the historical and modern-day socio-dynamics of my interviewees (i.e., worldview toward "foreigners;" and 3) my and Promburom's combined talents and skillsets.

Over time, Promburom and I constructed customized techniques for effectively working together. I have a developed background in psychology, sociology, and international journalism. Promburom is a well-educated local Thai, experienced researcher, and skilled linguist with a great amount of experience working with northern Thailand's highland ethnic communities. She is highly competent at adapting her language dialect and meeting the mindsets and (often non-proficient) Thai language skills of our rural-dwelling informant-friends. Promburom's level of linguistic proficiency is not accomplishable by just anyone who knows some Thai words; this

especially applies to most foreigners, such as myself, who do not harness the lifelong regional cultural knowledge required to accomplish such a feat.

Most of the village communities I visited are those that Promburom had for years prior invested considerable time building trusting relationships. Many villagers call her "*ajarn*" (teacher). They felt reverently comfortable talking with her. Therefore, the interview conversations and overall social interactions that ensued throughout this research project — including how villagers viewed me within a relationship-centered Asia culture context — were essentially an extension of Promburom's built social capital.

My directing of this research project somewhat from the periphery capacitated Promburom as a conduit — not a filter-barrier — between interviewees and myself. This technique, therefore, most often (not always) nourished their trust and comfort levels enough to often share sensitive information with us, not all of which is contained in this thesis.

2.5. Positionality Statement

> Researcher positionality within ethnographic studies, specifically the position of being an insider or outsider to the culture being studied, is never clearly demarcated and fixed. Neither perspective offers a better or more 'truthful' view than the other (Holmes, 2014, p. 23). "What an insider 'sees' and 'understands' will be different from, but as valid as what an outsider sees" (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey et al. 2001:415).

I am a 45-year-old Caucasian male from the north-central United States. Although my hometown was once a bustling community known for ethnic diversity and industrial advancements, it now exists as a quiet, semi-rural place like many other American communities. This majestic silence, however, is interrupted weekly by earth-rumbling blasts coming from some of the world's largest open pit iron ore mines.

Interviewing villagers. Photograph by Tanya Promburom

Over 40 languages were once spoken there as European immigrants in the 1880s flooded to the area, annexed the indigenous people's lands, reaped fruits of industry, and pioneered a "better life." Yes, I was taught both explicitly and implicitly that 'development' is mostly good.

“Progress” and personal “success” is a societally competitive process measured and determined predominantly via one’s financial income and materialistic possessions.

Parts of my youth involved observing cowboy and “Indian” movies with my grandma, binge-watching National Geographic specials (back when they were actually about “exotic” animals and people), and Indiana Jones movies. “Oriental” Asia was something terrifying. Yet, equipped with one formal language, a small town mentality, a well-developed sense of ethics, and a supportive family — little money, but big dreams and an adventurous spirit — I set off to gain a front row seat to the world. For some reason, I aspired to understand the human condition and my place in this world. This madness somehow brought me to Bosnia and Europe. Eventually, I landed in rapidly developing Se-Asia.

I initially felt so free in northern Thailand, seemingly away from the materialism-driven societal pressures I had spent decades enduring. Eventually, I found myself in a rural indigenous village about one hour’s motorcycle ride from the big-city-small-town of Chiang Mai. In this village, there was no electricity or other facilities. People were wearing colorful clothing and living in bamboo huts. Whoa! I thought: how could this be, this contrast? It seemed as though I was actually living those National Geographic films. I had to learn more.

Initially, this was an analogous quest to reconnect with my natural root system, back to what I perceived as a point of natural innocence. This was an adventure that took place literally on the opposite end of the planet from where I was born and base societally programmed. This journey stemmed from an inner driving force to access what I consider the heart of humanity. I mean the nature intrinsic to us all, which perhaps manifests more in the hearts and lives of indigenous peoples living in their natural environment.

I was exposed generally to rural village life as I at first attempted to detach myself from a modern world environment and relish real Thailand, which is about nature and rural life. I did this while acclimating to and learning from a distance about highland village life and how it is deeply affected by outside influences. All I could do at first was observe, pose questions, and reflect. The experience got ever deeper as I went along.

Naïve to village life, my worldview was forever transformed by those living in the mountains of northern Thailand. In the first part of this journey, I saw villagers forage both for food and medicine from the forest, tasted their way of life, and learned how they stand proud of their heritage. This is their life. I experienced the nuances of village life with its wisps of wood

smoke, early morning rooster crows and clucking chickens, and chilly nights as cold air streamed through the walls of thatched bamboo huts.

This, at least for a time, was what I perceived as a true taste of heaven. I was warmed by open-air fires and the wholesomeness of villagers' families and communities. I labored at picking tea and corn with them and even scoured a mountain stream for fish! We laughed and participated in ceremonies together. I did not understand at first how their lives had been drastically affected by development. Maybe a part of me did not care. Maybe I did not know how to care. All I could do at first was observe from afar and learn more — one step at a time.

Villagers embraced me in various ways, including everything from a respectworthy journalist-researcher to the stupid "foreigner" to "a member of our family." Whichever my role, I listened to their woes as their weekend holidays in the village were followed by a return to the city, how their lives had changed so rapidly, and how their future is uncertain. Each village experience taught me something new. This was my initial exposure and the onset of my education. I had become exposed to many nuances of village life; it certainly wasn't what I had expected or believed it to be.

What was at first an endeavor of personal curiosity evolved into an independent journalism project, which transformed into this academic endeavor. With many semi-informed questions, I wanted to learn more about villagers' ways of life — to hear their voices — and details, the bad and good, about how economic "development" was affecting them and their cultures. How were they adapting?

Perspective, therefore my reflexivity, shifted

A few years later, my experience became ever more as though I was a 'foreigner from the future,' observing the very development-related phenomena that had already transpired in my once culturally vibrant hometown.

I vividly recall, while doing research in an indigenous ethnic Karen village (not my primary case study area), what it felt like there to labor under the relentless Thailand sun. At day's end, I was lying there, exhausted and sweaty, upon the rock-hard floor of a bamboo-constructed house; all I wanted was a soft bed. The air was hot, muggy, and still. There was no electricity available to power a fan. There was no shower for soothing my skin, which was itching because of the ravenous mosquitos that had used me earlier as their pincushions.

Finally, after several years of field research, I came to the point of empathetic realization of why villagers, after generations of living a certain way, would exchange some of their traditional ways of life for more life-easing convenience options available through modernity.

Yes, this positionality statement is a reflexive window into my background and worldview 'bias.' And oh, how our worldviews can and often do change, our sharp-edged opinions smoothened in proportion with travel-linked experiential understanding.

2.6. Theoretical Frameworks and Some Aspects of the Literature Review

This multidisciplinary study conjoins social capital building civil documentary journalism and storytelling with the academic lenses of environmental and social science. As tools for illustrating how changes in our environment impact relationships among ourselves and with our 'natural' world, I employ primarily two theoretical frameworks: 'ecosystem services (ESS)' and 'panarchy' theory.

ESS pertains to the necessities that "nature" — the plants, microorganisms, and animal communities interacting as a living unit ecosystem — provides for human benefit and well-being. This includes the food, water, wood, medicine, fibers, and other 'natural resources' required for our survival. Panarchy is about life: the four-phase cycle of birth, growth and maturation, death, and renewal. Life is initiated. It then grows, is maintained for a period, ends, and becomes further part of Earth's holistic ecosystem; another cycle, perhaps in similar or different form, ensues. This process transpires simultaneously throughout our "natural" and our built environments and societal ecosystems.

By overlaying and hence connecting the societal with the ecological in this way, I probe, unearth, and concretely bond notions of humans' inextricable connection with each other, with our environment, and how changes in one aspect resultantly impact the others.

2.6.1. Ecosystem Services: A Tool for Measuring Socio-Ecological Transformation

The following section primarily references chapter one (Millennium Assessment Conceptual Framework) of the book *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Current State and Trends.* It was authored in 2005 by Rashid M. Hassan, Robert Scholes, and Neville Ash.

***

This thesis primarily employs a qualitative and quantitative utilization of the ecosystem services (ESS) theoretical framework. I further illustrate how changes in environment impact

relationships among ourselves and with our 'natural' world. This ESS framework, which is about 'the benefits that people obtain from ecosystems,' was defined and developed by and for the United Nations 2000 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA). The MA assessed human impacts on the world's environment. It was collaboratively created by governments, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and scientists to analyze possible options related to human needs and ecosystem conservation.

An 'ecosystem' is a dynamic arrangement of non-sentient and plant, microorganism, and animal (including human) communities interacting as a living unit. ESS is about human 'well-being,' which is about the basic things that humans need for a good life. Well-being is at the opposite end of a continuum from poverty, which is 'a pronounced deprivation in well-being.' The ESS conceptual framework places humans at the center of this while acknowledging the intrinsic value of ecosystems and biodiversity. ESS also acknowledges the dynamics between people and ecosystems, and changes in one aspect will directly and indirectly drive changes in the others. Many natural forces are influencing ecosystems and therefore the linked human condition.

The MA mentions that, besides ESS and their economic value-related aspects, there is 'intrinsic value,' the value of something irrespective of its utility for someone or something else, importantly involved when considering human well-being. An example is a spiritual sanctuary positioned on land that could actually be converted to commercial agriculture. The MA stresses that "sound ecosystem management thus involves steps to address the utilitarian links of people to ecosystems as well as processes that allow considerations of the intrinsic value of ecosystems to be factored into decision-making" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 27).

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

The ecosystem services model

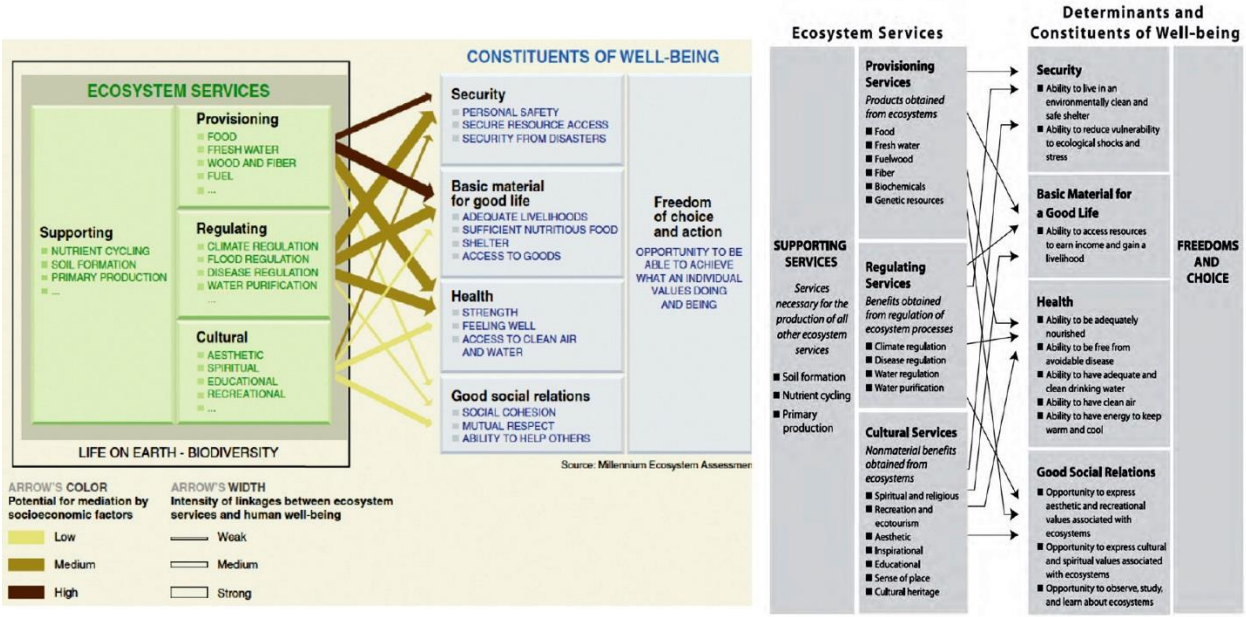


Figure 2.5: Ecosystem services framework (Source: 2000 UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment)

This ESS framework includes four aspects: 1) provisioning (e.g., food, water, wood, fiber, fuel); 2) regulating (e.g., climate, and disease regulation, water purification, etc.); 3) supporting (e.g., soil formation, nutrient recycling, food production); and 4) cultural (e.g., spiritual, education, recreational, aesthetic environment, etc.).

Compiling these ESS into a livelihood body that is nourished and balanced provides someone (or a community) with freedom and choices that cultivate well-being otherwise inaccessible. This includes: 1) a tangible sense of security (e.g., a clean and safe environment, and resilience to ecological (life) shocks); 2) basic materials for a good life (e.g., resources accessibility and ability to have a livelihood); 3) health (e.g., adequate nourishment, being disease-free); and 4) good social relations (e.g., a supporting community that capacitates social cohesion, mutual respect, and personal expression and learning).

Changes in any of these services affect human well-being, which affects the overall natural ecosystem. "This multi-scale assessment framework developed for the MA provides a new approach for analyzing policy options at all scales—from local communities to international conventions" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 26).

According to the MA, the ESS framework can: 1) identify options that can better achieve core human development and sustainability goals, such as those related to meeting growing demands for food, clean water, health, and employment; 2) better understand the trade-offs

involved — across sectors and stakeholders — in decisions concerning the environment; and 3) align response options with the level of governance where they can be most effective; prudent management of ecosystems will require actions at all scales, from the local to the global.

ESS demand will increase ever more with human population and capitalism market growth. The MA reveals that because of supply and demand, people often juggle ESS; however, again, each aspect impacts the others. For example, a forest can be converted to land used for agriculture; however, this will decrease ESS, such as clean water or flood and drought regulations.

Excessive ESS demand degrades the entire ecosystem. This "seriously diminishes the prospects for sustainable development. "In many parts of the world, this degradation of ESS is exacerbated by the associated loss of the knowledge and understanding held by local communities — knowledge that sometimes could help to ensure the sustainable use of the ecosystem" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 27).

The MA reveals that it is not just ESS supply and demand gaps that comprise primary issues. Individuals, communities, and nations together face increased vulnerabilities to strife. Resilience (i.e., the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties) is crucial for withstanding catastrophes and related social upheaval. Good management of ESS decreases risks.

"Ecosystem degradation tends to harm rural populations more directly than urban populations and has its most direct and severe impact on poor people" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 27). Wealthy people often control ESS and are therefore positioned to purchase hardship buffers. Poor people, however, are often vulnerable to ESS changes, especially those resulting from environmental catastrophes, such as floods, droughts, and disease. They often live in areas sensitive to environmental threats and lack the financial and institutional buffers necessary to cope with situations that "affect their very survival" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 27).

I question: Is this wealth privilege mentioned above not a form, if not the root, of the societal injustices that are systemic to the social stratifying capitalist global market system? Perhaps community-managed ESS can truly provide a buffer zone, particularly for socially marginalized peripheral communities.

Roots of ESS degradation

The degradation of ESS has many causes that are mostly rooted in excessive demand. With economic initiatives being a social policy-related motivator and enabler for social change (Pieterse, 2001), this scenario can be linked with economic growth resulting in demographic changes;

personal choices can also be(come) a factor. The MA reveals that market mechanisms do not always exist for cultural and regulatory services. If they do, policies and institutions do not always capacitate benefit to those living within the ecosystem. These markets may even produce undesirable results socially and ecologically. "Markets are often unable to address important intra- and intergenerational equity issues associated with managing ecosystems for this and future generations, given that some changes in ecosystem services are irreversible" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 27).

The MA stresses that recent decades have brought forth "dramatic changes to ecosystems and the opportunities to respond" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 27). This also involves profound changes in the social systems that shape the pressures placed on related ecosystems. Due to advanced globalization, the institutional power capacity for individual nation states to influence global processes has diminished due to "a far more complex array of institutions, including regional governments, multinational companies, the United Nations, and civil society organizations" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 27–28). Fortunately, the frequency of multi-level governance initiatives in both demand and practice has increased; stakeholders have become more involved in ESS-related decision making. This has also surfaced a new challenge: delivering needed ESS management-related information to decision makers and actors.

> At the same time, the new institutional landscape may provide an unprecedented opportunity for information concerning ecosystems to make a major difference. Improvements in ecosystem management to enhance human well-being will require new institutional and policy arrangements and changes in rights and access to resources that may be more possible today under these conditions of rapid social change than they have ever been before (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 28).

The MA states that significant progress toward the sustainable management of biological resources is being made in civil society, in the private sector, and also in indigenous and local communities. Like the benefits of and from education or improved governance, there are "multiple and synergistic benefits" to the enhancement of ESS. Governments on all

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

scales and levels are recognizing and acknowledging the vital importance of effectively managing these "basic life-support systems" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 27).

The MA and ESS frameworks focus on linkages (nodal points) between ecosystem services and the elements required for a holistically healthy human life. Again, an ecosystem is a dynamic mixing of life forms that together create a functioning 'natural' unit, especially when balanced. "Biodiversity and ecosystems are closely related concepts…Products of biodiversity include many of the services produced by ecosystems (such as food and genetic resources), and changes in biodiversity can influence all the other services they provide…This is why ESS is a valuable framework for analyzing and acting on the linkages between people and the environment" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 29).

Further conceptualizing ESS, human well-being, and socio-economics — in the real world

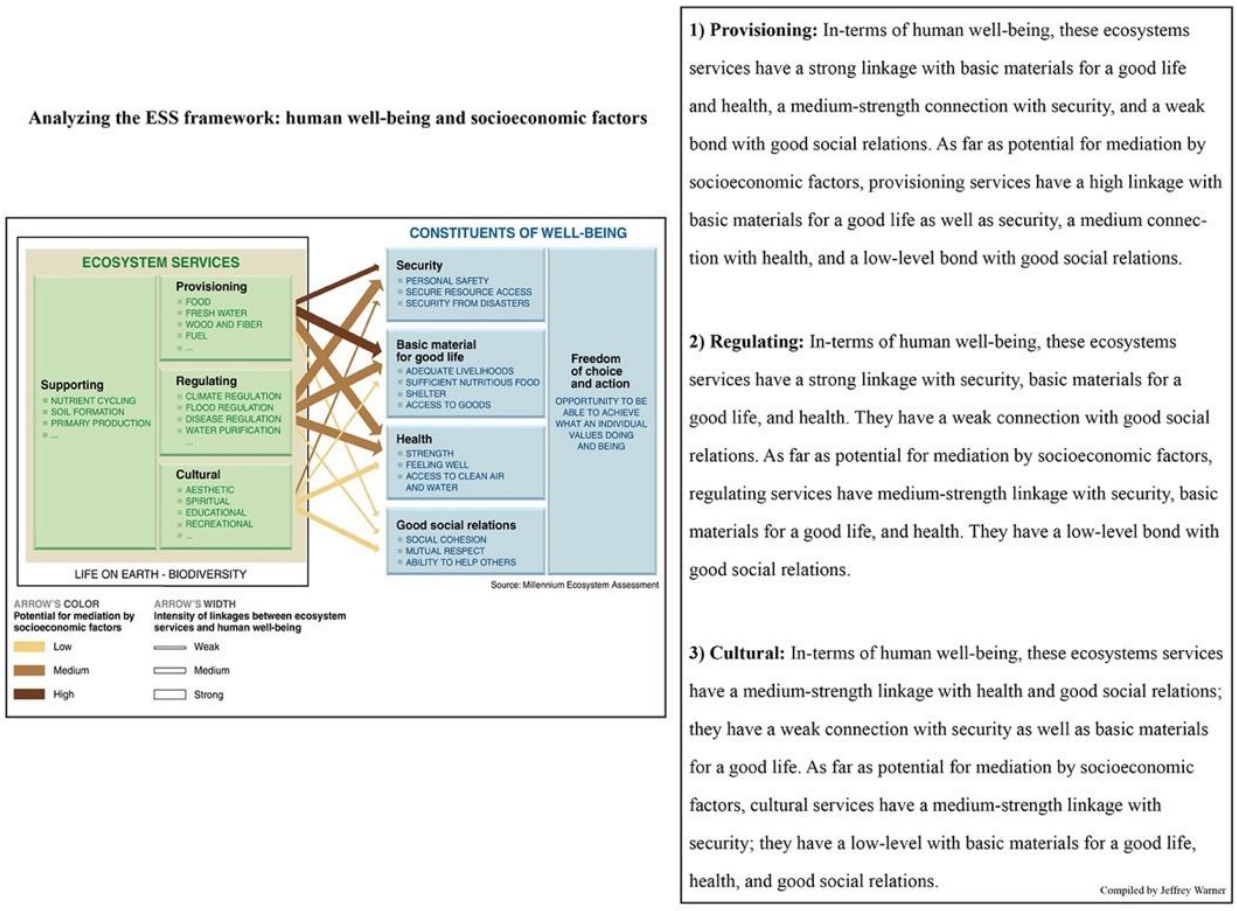


Figure 2.6: I have clarified (above) the ESS framework and well-being models. I articulate this with the text below.

1. Provisioning: If someone lives in an environment where food, water, shelter, and additional basic survival necessities are readily accessible, then it is understandable why he or she

has enhanced opportunities for well-being (including physical health). This is at least more so than someone deprived of basic materials for what is considered ‘a good life.’ This is especially true when the surrounding socio-environment and geographical landscape are adequately fertile for providing these provisioning resources (i.e., primary production). Someone living in a socially marginalized position who does have available these provisioning services also has some enhanced capacity for resilience to ecological (life) shocks.

Considering a small rural agrarian community in context with how the ESS framework determines weak bondage between provisioning services and social relations: While social relations are important, they are not necessarily vitally essential. People *can* maintain a livelihood while living a solitary lifestyle, although not easily, and especially not in most rural communities. Low-quality social relations may affect mental and emotional health, which often filters into other aspects of life. However, social cohesion is not necessarily relevant when considering life or death and the basic materials needed for well-being. Having food, water, and a place to live does not necessarily equate to a non-impoverished situation. People can have basic necessities, including a good community, and still suffer. Just because someone harnesses foundational life supplies does not mean he or she feels (or actually is) fully secure in life — enough to have freedom of choice and action. You will observe this in my case study.

Considering socio-economics, while some people assert that money does not (or cannot) buy happiness, financial resources make a significant difference in quality of life (and duration). This is especially true in the capitalism-driven ‘developed’ and ‘modernized’ world, where cash money is required to purchase things that used to be self-grown or sewn from nature. When someone has enough money (or access to multi-scale and multi-level resources) to acquire the basic materials for a good life (e.g., food, clothing, infrastructure, education, etc.), this instills in someone a sense of life security. He or she will feel less burdened and life-stressed, and this filters into other life and ESS aspects (i.e., psychosocial). However, this does not necessarily mean that he or she will be holistically healthy. Some people do not know how to use money efficiently, or they squander it on temporary goods and pleasures. This is particularly true if someone has been living in a prolonged poverty state. Having ample financial resources merely means he or she could potentially be more personally empowered and secure-feeling and, therefore, able to have more freedom of choice and ability to take independent actions.

Maybe a villager merely needs some cash money to purchase a water pipe that will be used for growing crops for eating and for selling. If this financial resource is available, is this not going to nourish other aspects of this person's life? If a flash flood (i.e., a byproduct of climate change) decimates someone's freshly seeded rice field, for example, having a self-owned place to live, a banked (or readily available) supply of food and water, financial resources, and a supportive community *will* cultivate resilience and may render the difference between life or strife. Again, since survival is essentially a singular motivation, good social relations are not vital for provisioning resources. Money can make things happen. Considering again a small rural agrarian community, people can live independently — community labor exchange could be replaced with hired labor or machinery, for example — or they can depend on each other for survival without having familial quality relationships.

2. Regulating: We humans, like all sentient beings, are environmentally responsive creatures. While having adequate shelter, food, and water supply is among the basic materials needed for a good life and, therefore, holistic health, having well-managed ESS-related provisioning services is also strongly linked with human well-being.

Our food needs to be nutritious and our water clean, padding us from debilitating diseases that would incapacitate someone from having a good life. It is also best if our overall natural environment comprises clean air and other environmental factors that render us feeling (and actually being) healthy and secure overall. Likewise, our home (and overall community) needs to be safe from dangers posed by poorly managed ecosystems (e.g., flooding, landslides, and ecosystems altering environmental warming). Again, while social relations are important for humans, they are not necessarily vital for actual survival. Although I would argue that while someone may be able to independently work the farm, factory, or office while he or she is physically strong, this would not be possible when stricken with physical ailment — hence, poverty. Therefore, ESS factors related to social relations are situation dependent.

Considering socio-economics, while financial resources impact a community or individual's capacity for managing provisioning services (e.g., farmland, or a job position in the labor market), having money does not guarantee that food, fresh water, housing, and other basic needs requiring holistic health and a sense of security will materialize. Knowledge of provisioning services is required to make basic materials for a good life a reality. Even if someone has financial resources, the overall environment must be suitable for providing provisioning services that can

facilitate well-being. This is also considering that both personal decisions and naturally occurring phenomena are part of the ESS regulating dynamic. Sometimes, people are selfish and do self-serving things; at other times, phenomena (including accidents) just happen.

Again, while social relations are important overall, they are not necessarily vital for survival or a sense of life security. Considering all the above, this is especially relevant for wealthier people able to purchase ESS and, hence, position themselves in a situation where they have the basic materials for a good life and safety from precarious circumstances. In this sense, money can actually purchase well-being (at least for a while).

3. Cultural: Our environment impacts (perhaps even dictates) relationships among ourselves and with our natural world. If our overall environment is nourishing — including a supporting community that capacitates social cohesion, mutual respect, and personal (including religious) expression and learning — so will transpire the enhanced quality of other ESS (e.g., supporting, provisioning, and regulating). This is because an ecosystem is a dynamic arrangement of non-sentient and plant, microorganism, and animal (including human) communities interacting as a living unit.

That said, it is important if not essential that, in addition to nourishing our physical body and overall environment, we take care of our inner self; input equals output. While cultural services are essentially non-material — and, at least according to the MA, weakly linked with a person's actual ability (or capacity) to acquire the basic materials for a good life, and hence a tangible sense of security — these services (i.e., aesthetic, spiritual, or educational) are strongly linked with social relations and hence important for cultivating overall environmental and psycho-social health.

Considering socio-economics and cultural services, financial resources have a fairly strong linkage with someone's sense of inner security. If he or she lives amid a supportive and socially cohesive community — perhaps united via an intact religious belief system, which is intangibly supporting of a livelihood that capacitates one's ability to produce the basic materials for a good life — then he or she likelier will experience an overall sense of life security (i.e., even if living in a precarious situation).

However, while good quality cultural services (e.g., spiritual) can impact a community's response to ecological shocks (on both personal and community scales), money regarding cultural services will neither provide for provisioning services and good social relations nor an improvement in cultural services and overall health. Cultural services must perhaps be initiated

and maintained separately from economic motivation; this is likewise more of a primal motivation that requires both intra-individual and interpersonal management.

In conclusion of this section, ESS is about both dialectic and symbiotic relationships, how one phenomenon causes another amid an energetic feedback loop. Most humans nowadays are not living subsistence existences (at least not in the traditional sense); money has become the primary provisioning service. Likewise, many of the above phenomena are situation-dependent.

Scale- and level-related drivers of change

Holistic consideration of ESS and human well-being requires mindful contemplation of how various stakeholders in a post-modern globalized world impact (or are affected) by decisions. There is a long history of issues related to the policy, management, and assessment of human environmental (and socio) ecosystems. This is particularly true when considering scale, cross-scale, level, and multi-level dynamics (Gibson et al., 2000).

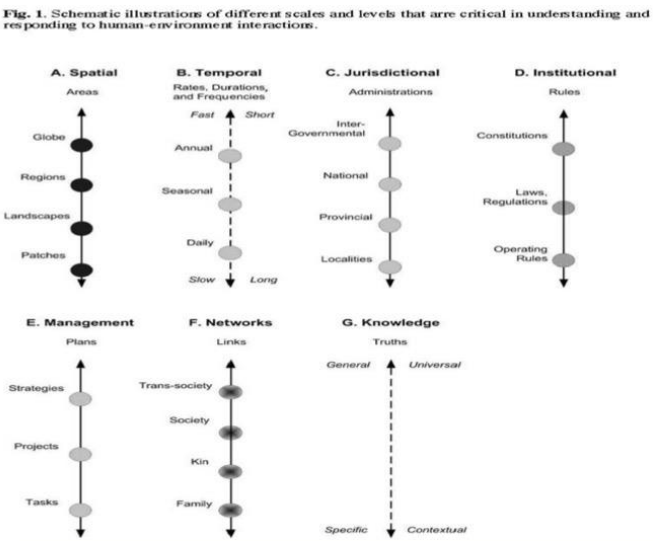


Fig. 1. Schematic illustrations of different scales and levels that are critical in understanding and responding to human-environment interactions.

(Source: Cash et al. (2006). Cash, D. W., W. Adger, F. Berkes, P. Garden, L. Lebel, P. Olsson, L. Pritchard, and O. Young. (2006). Scale and cross-scale dynamics: governance and information in a multilevel world. Ecology and Society 11(2): 8. [online] URL: http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol11/iss2/art8/)

'Scale' is the spatial, temporal, quantitative, or analytical dimensions used to measure and study any phenomenon. There are jurisdictional scales that are bounded and organized political units (e.g., towns, counties, states, or provinces, and nations). Institutional scales not only have specific jurisdictional characteristics but also fall into a hierarchy of rules, ranging from basic operating rules and norms to systems of rules for making rules or constitutions.

'Levels' are the units of analysis that are located at different positions on a scale. Cross-level refers to interactions among levels within a scale. Cross-scale refers to interactions across different scales (e.g., between spatial domains and jurisdictions). Multi-level means the presence of more than one level. Multi-scale is about the presence of more than one scale, but without implying that there are important cross-level or cross-scale interactions.

Cross-scale and cross-level interactions may change in strength and direction over time. We refer to this changing interaction as the dynamics of cross-scale or cross-level linkages. Changes may arise from the consequences of those interactions or may be caused by other variables. Scale challenges also arise when a situation in which the current combination of cross-scale and cross-level interactions threatens to undermine the resilience of a human–environment system.

This can involve: 1) ignorance: failing to recognize important scale and level interactions altogether; 2) mismatch: the persistence of mismatches between levels and scales in human–environment systems; and 3) plurality: failing to recognize heterogeneity in the way that scales are perceived and valued by different actors, even at the same level.

***

In practice, decision makers must holistically consider the potential impacts of their decisions. “In order to implement the ecosystem approach, decision-makers need to understand the multiple effects on an ecosystem of any management or policy change” (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 29). Likewise, a holistic analysis of a country’s entire economic system before deciding about financial policy is essential before making single-sector policy decisions. The MA provides an example. For instance, a government subsidies fertilizer, but this may cause water quality degradation and impact downstream fisheries. “A well-defined ecosystem has strong interactions among its components and weak interactions across its boundaries” (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 29). Decision makers in this case must decide which ecosystems/industry is more beneficial: the one bolstered by fertilizer subsidies or the harvests of downstream fisheries.

Again, the fabric of human well-being has many threads. Poverty is essentially the opposite of well-being, and how poverty is experienced or even perceived is subjective and situational. Humans’ proper management of ecosystems can nourish benefits to human society. Considering this and ESS-related analysis and management, “human impacts on ecological systems worldwide raise concerns about the spatial and temporal consequences of ecosystem changes detrimental to human well-being” (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 29).

The importance of an intimate connection between various components of ESS can be illustrated in the following ways. Security is affected both by changes in provisioning services (e.g., food, and other life-sustaining goods) and by regulating services. Declining resources can initiate and perpetuate conflicts (e.g., war). A decline in regulating service quality can cause a greater frequency and magnitude of floods, droughts, landslides, or other catastrophes, which

impacts people's sense of security. Reductions in cultural services, such as spiritual ceremonies, can reduce community cohesion, resilience to ecosystem shocks, and, therefore, overall well-being. Access to basic materials for a good life is largely state-dependent on all aspects of provisioning services. These changes affect material well-being, health, freedom and choice, security, and good social relations (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005).

Human well-being can be enhanced via transparent ESS-supporting instruments, institutions, organizations, and technology. This can cultivate more freedom and choices supported by economic, social, and ecological security. "By ecological security, we mean the minimum level of ecological stock needed to ensure a sustainable flow of ecosystem services" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 31–32).

According to the MA, "a full assessment of the interactions between people and ecosystems requires a multi-scale approach because it better reflects the multi-scale nature of decision-making" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 29). This capacitates the examination of how external factors can (or do) create different impacts on ecosystem changes. This can assist with policy-related directives, particularly across different regions and groups. People seek multiple services from ecosystems and thus perceive the conditions of given ecosystems in relation to their ability to provide the services desired. Various methods can be used to assess the ability of ecosystems to deliver particular services. With those answers in hand, stakeholders have the information they need to decide on a mix of services best meeting their needs.

The ecosystems framework likewise offers an "integrated" and holistic ecosystems assessment, with each category being assessed somewhat differently. A full assessment of any service requires considerations of stocks, flows, and resilience of the service" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 29).

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Direct and indirect drivers of change

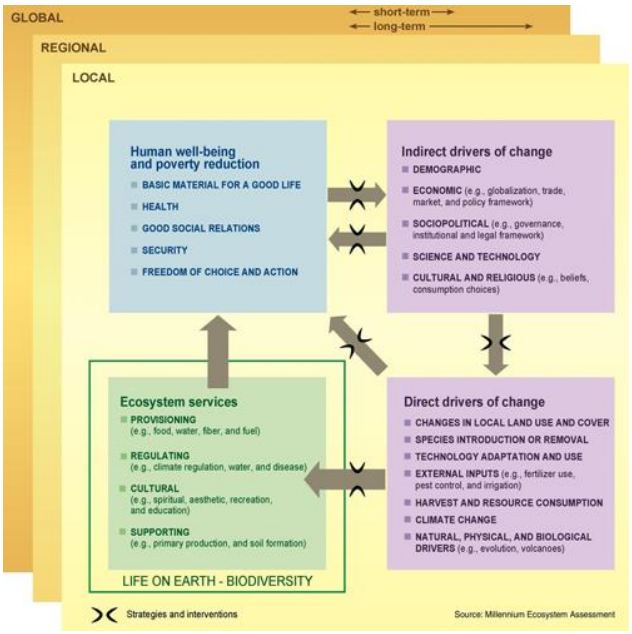


Figure 2.7: Ecosystem services: direct and indirect drivers of change flowchart

Changes in factors that indirectly affect ecosystems, such as population, technology, and lifestyle (upper right corner of figure), can lead to changes in factors directly affecting ecosystems, such as the catch of fisheries or the application of fertilizers to increase food production (lower-right corner). The resulting changes in the ecosystem (lower left corner) cause the ESS to change and affect human well-being.

These interactions can take place on more than one scale and can cross scales. For example, a global market may lead to a regional loss of forest cover, which increases flood magnitude along a local stretch of a river. Similarly, interactions can take place across different time scales. Actions can be taken either to respond to negative changes or to enhance positive changes at almost all points in this framework (black cross bars).

Responsible governance and multi-stakeholder participation are imperative, yet this is difficult to achieve largely due to challenges posed by resource management and overall expense. Perhaps ironically, the MA reveals that rich countries often reap the most benefits from institutions and ESS-related technologies. “Unequal access to ecosystem services has often elevated the well-being of small segments of the population at the expense of others.” Some technologies and institutions even “mask or exacerbate environmental problems.”

Species that have become decimated (or extinct) cannot be replaced. Also, substitutions are situation-dependent, particularly regarding economic, social, and cultural conditions. Again, the most socially marginalized (which can, and often does, mean the most financially poor) often have the most limited choices (if any at all). Of course, “those who are better off, substitution may be possible through trade, investment, and technology.” (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 30–32).

The impact of making drastic ESS changes can take decades to materialize. Therefore, a mindful and comprehensive understanding of the longitudinal (short-, medium-, and long-term) impacts of human activity is required. Some foresight is required to avoid compromising future ESS availability and sustainability. The MA stresses that achieving sustainability requires "effective and efficient institutions" providing human rights-related mechanisms related to freedom justice, fairness, basic capabilities, and equity that capacitate ESS access. Sometimes, conflict mediation is also required.

> The best way to manage ecosystems to enhance human well-being will differ if the focus is on meeting the needs of the poor and weak or the rich and powerful. For both groups, ensuring the long-term supply of ecosystem services is essential. But for the poor, an equally critical need is to provide more equitable and secure access to ecosystem services (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 32).

To create healthy ecosystems that cultivate human well-being and operate in balance with all of nature's ecosystems, a deeper understanding of ESS-related functioning is essential. This is particularly true when it comes to the factors, the 'drivers,' that cause changes in ecosystems and their services. A 'direct driver' is easily identifiable because it is blatantly influencing an ecosystem; it can be identified and measured. A direct driver is something physical, such as climate change, environmental pollution, fertilizer usage, landscape alterations, such as irrigation, harvesting, and introducing alien invasive species, etc.

An 'indirect driver' is more inconspicuous as it often affects multiple direct drivers; it is measured by understanding its influence on the direct driver. "Both indirect and direct drivers often operate synergistically. Changes in land cover, for example, can increase the likelihood of the introduction of alien invasive species. Similarly, technological advances can increase rates of economic growth" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 32).

The MA explicitly recognizes the role of decision makers who affect ecosystems, ESS, and human well-being. Decisions are made at three organizational levels, although the distinction between those levels is often diffuse and difficult to define: 1) by individuals and small groups at the local level (such as a field or forest stand) who directly alter some part of the ecosystem; 2) by public and private decision-makers at the municipal, provincial, and national levels; and 3) by public and private decision-makers at the international level, such as through international conventions and multilateral agreements (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 32).

Spatial and temporal scales determine whether a 'driver' is managed (or caused) by internal or external decision-making processes. A local decision maker can directly influence the choice of technology, changes in land use, and external inputs (such as fertilizers or irrigation), but has little control over prices and markets, property rights, technology development, or the local climate. National or regional decision makers can control property, trade markets, prices, and technology development policies.

> But on the short time scale, that individual has little control over the climate or global population. On the longer time scale, drivers that are exogenous to a decision-maker in the short run, such as population, become endogenous since the decision-maker can influence them through, for instance, education, the advancement of women, and migration policies (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 32).

According to the MA, the indirect drivers of change are primarily: 1) demographic (e.g., population size, age, and gender structure, and spatial distribution); 2) economic (e.g., national, and per capita income, macroeconomic policies, international trade, and capital flows); 3) socio-political (e.g., democratization, the roles of women, of civil society, and of the private sector, and international dispute mechanisms); 4) scientific and technological (e.g., rates of investments in research and development and the rates of adoption of new technologies, including biotechnologies and information technologies); and 5) cultural and religious (e.g., choices individuals make about what and how much to consume and what they value).

These drivers, and their interactions are constantly changing, especially if considering that a globalized post-modern rapidly changing world is changing (i.e., population growth and technological advances). Increased ESS consumption will increase demand, which will impact ecosystems and exacerbate detrimental, unmitigated impacts. "Changes in these indirect drivers are projected to increase the demand for and consumption of food, fiber, clean water, and energy, which will in turn affect the direct drivers." Meanwhile, "the climate is changing, species ranges are shifting, alien species are spreading, and land degradation continues" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 33).

Any ESS-related decision can create impacts that are external, and both beneficial and detrimental, to the decision-making framework. For example, the use of subsidized fertilizers can increase crop production but degrade water quality for downstream stakeholders. However, in another case, perhaps a person's agro-activity creates an ecosystem for another person's agro-business that is beneficial and would not otherwise be possible. This is what is meant by an

ecosystem as a dynamic arrangement of non-sentiment and plant, microorganism, and animal (including human) communities interacting as a living unit.' Likewise, the inter-mingling of direct and indirect drivers of ecosystem services-related changes results in related feedback loops that reveal how "the many processes of globalization lead to new forms of interactions between drivers of changes in ecosystem services" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 33).

ESS scales and assessments: Further rationale for using this framework

An effective ESS and human well-being assessment must be conducted using a nonsingular spatial and temporal analysis. Some ecosystem changes require years or decades before their deeper effects are revealed (e.g., soil erosion or nutrient depletion). Localized ESS changes (e.g., deforesting a land plot) may have little impact on a community's water supply, for example; however, patches of deforested plots combined may significantly impact the regional ecosystem (e.g., downstream flooding, climate change, or food production).

Particular scales (spatial and temporal) can be used to assess ESS processes. This is particularly relevant when seeking observation of when an ESS-related event (or process duration) reveals an impact. Ecosystem processes and services are typically most strongly expressed, are most easily observed, or have their dominant controls or consequences at particular (often closely related) spatial and temporal scales. "For instance, food production is a localized service of an ecosystem and changes on a weekly basis; water regulation is regional and changes on a monthly or seasonal basis; and climate regulation may take place at a global scale over decades" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 33).

An ESS assessment must be congruent with the process being examined, especially regarding the scale. A topographical analysis covering a large land area can overlook phenomena transpiring on a micro (village or household) scale and vice versa. Phenomena and processes that occur on much larger scales, although expressed locally, may go unnoticed in purely local-scale assessments (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 33). My fieldwork has been conducted in a top-down government country. Likewise, I observed this multi-scale and level disconnection phenomenon.

Humans, in terms of ESS time-scale assessment, or life for this matter, tend to think within the realms of their lived experience. For example, generally we in a lifetime have the opportunity to interact with (and perhaps learn from) our grandparents and parents and our children and grandchildren — about two generations. Therefore, assessing highly long-term ecosystem cycles

is challenging. Perhaps this is a true-value component of oral traditions and linked 'indigenous knowledge.' This said, "Slow changes are often harder to measure. … Both ecological and human systems have substantial inertia, and the impact of changes occurring today may not be seen for years or decades" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 33). An example of this is climate change impacts.

Characteristic scales in these regards are also relevant to economic, political, and social processes and are subject to extent and duration. What transpires on a political level does not always match what is actually happening on an ecological level. "Many environmental problems originate from this mismatch between the scale at which the ecological process occurs, the scale at which decisions are made, and the scale of institutions for decision-making" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 33). Focusing on a single scale often results in missing interactions with other scales (e.g., ecological, socio-economic, and political) and the related impact on human well-being. A local-scale assessment may reveal that a national-scale action is needed to stimulate localized societal responses (e.g., the removal of a subsidy). A global- or regional-level assessment, however, may not be able to stimulate changes. This is determined by the relevance and credibility necessary to stimulate and inform changes on either level.

That said, assessing spatial and temporal scales is political in the sense that it can privilege (perhaps wealthier) groups; this is particularly related to knowledge availability and usage. For example, indigenous knowledge is often missed (or purposefully overlooked) when assessing larger scales. "Reflecting on the political consequences of scale and boundary choices is an important prerequisite to exploring what multi- and cross-scale analysis in the MA might contribute to decision-making and public policy processes at various scales" (33). For (at least some) policymakers, the future deterioration of ESS is a primary concern. Conceptually understanding medium-to long-term ESS-related scenarios (and their direct and indirect drivers) is essential. This is so foresight regarding future actions, consequences, and interventions might be holistically considered (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 35).

ESS assessment tools: Further relevance for this thesis study

The MA reveals that "Models can be used to illuminate interactions among systems and drivers, as well as to make up for data deficiencies—for instance, by providing estimates where observations are lacking" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 34). Environmental and human system

models can be used to holistically observe ESS changes (e.g., production, consumption, and investment decisions by households) in a way that allows for the assessment of a singular and related sector (e.g., agriculture). "Integrated models, combining both the environmental and human systems linkages, can increasingly be used at both global and sub-global scales" (34).

The MA aims to synthesize both formal scientific and indigenous knowledge and to consider local regional and global scales — hence, multi-level governance.

> This information is often unknown to science and can be an expression of other relationships between society and nature in general and of sustainable ways of managing natural resources in particular. To be credible and useful to decision-makers, all sources of information, whether scientific, traditional, or practitioner knowledge, must be critically assessed and validated as part of the assessment process through procedures relevant to the form of knowledge (35).

The core message is that human understanding is limited largely to experience and, especially in the past, is particularly blind to the long-term and irreversible impacts of collective decisions. Therefore, "adaptive management, social learning, safe minimum standards, and the precautionary principle" (Hassan, Scholes and Ash, 2005: 35) is essential for navigating our human journey in this rapidly changing world that we have created for ourselves.

2.6.2. 'Nature,' Human Community Ecosystems, and Societal System State Shifts

'Balance of nature,' humans, and a potentially impending storm

It may be reasonable to state that 'nature' — this being 'the animals, plants, events, processes, and other world phenomena that are not made (or caused) by people — functions best when its ecological systems are operating as designed. This is particularly relevant when these 'natural' processes are devoid of most human activity-disturbances (e.g., commodities market-related 'natural resources' exploitation, urbanization, pollution, etc.).

It could also be said that the baseline of human psychology toward 'nature' is that it is a collective whole — paradoxically from which we are separate, and even positioned above (as stewards, somehow…as some religion teaches). This self-prescribed humanistic viewpoint within us transpires even if while we are experiencing a deep-down intuitive knowing this separateness is a fallacy, that without this 'nature' we cannot survive.

So, what about this intuitive connection we share with nature's other sentient beings? Who does not experience a deep, intuitive connection with air, fire, soil, and water? Tangibly speaking,

compared with being amid urban chaos and pollution (i.e., purely human-created phenomena), who does not feel nourished by nature — such as while immersed in the forest or while near the expansive ocean? Can it be logically inferred then that if being within close proximity of this 'nature' generally cultivates humans' inner restoration and reverence, then are we (also) not part of this nature? How, then, can humans, existing as sentient beings like all other living creatures, not also be 'nature?' Can it be said that modern-day humans generally believe 'nature,' as opposed to humans in general, exists in a perpetual state of balance and is therefore somehow perfect? And if an ecosystem is imperfect (e.g., containing pollution), then something is somehow out of balance?

Daniel Simberloff, in his 2014 article, "The 'Balance of Nature'— Evolution of a Panchreston," says that ecologists are actually ever more believing that 'nature' — therefore, from my viewpoint, humans as well — is predominantly imbalanced. While humans, compared with other species, with our monetary commoditization of nature adding a complication to this balanced (or imbalanced) nature dynamic, 'nature' is actually in a constant state of flux — of flowing, of change, of reinvention — that is operating within a range of fluctuations. This does not mean there is no balance, but rather that the averaging of ecosystems' fluctuations is what can be considered as nature's actual equilibrium or 'balanced' state.

Simberloff (2014) articulates how humans' notions of 'nature as balance' have changed temporally, in conjunction with our belief systems, global positionality, and linked worldviews.

> The earliest concept of a balance of nature in Western thought saw it as being provided by gods but requiring human aid or encouragement for its maintenance. With the rise of Greek natural philosophy, emphasis shifted to traits gods endowed species with at the outset, rather than human actions, as key to maintaining the balance. The dominance of a constantly intervening God in the Middle Ages lessened interest in the inherent features of nature that would contribute to balance, but the Reformation led to renewed focus on such features, particularly traits of species that would maintain all of them but permit none to dominate nature. Darwin conceived of nature in-balance, and his emphasis on competition and frequent tales of felicitous species interactions supported the idea of a balance of nature.
>
> But Darwin radically changed its underlying basis, from God to natural selection. Wallace was perhaps the first to challenge the very notion of a balance of nature as an undefined entity whose accuracy could not be tested. His skepticism was taken up again in the 20th century, culminating in a widespread rejection of the idea of a balance of nature by academic ecologists, who focus rather on a dynamic, often chaotic nature buffeted by

> constant disturbances. The balance-of-nature metaphor, however, lives on in large segments of the public, representing a fragile aspect of nature and biodiversity that it is our duty to protect (p. 1).

With this articulated, humans' viewpoint of (and therefore attitude toward) 'nature' has seemingly — in conjunction with the seemingly ever-expanding 'natural resource' extractive global market system — mirrored our evolving need to exploit nature for hedonistic means. Humans likewise justify global commodities market-driven actions, and seemingly without end keep raping this life-sustaining planet of the essential 'resources' and linked ESS needed for sustained survival.

That said, I do not uphold the viewpoint that humans are not part of this nature. While humans may predominantly perceive 'nature' as something external, we, like all sentient beings, are inextricably connected with nature's law and cycles. Life is initiated. It then grows, is maintained for a period, ends, and becomes further part of Earth's holistic ecosystem; another cycle, perhaps in similar or different form, ensues. This transpires throughout our natural and built environments and societal ecosystems.

I do maintain that we humans do things that are not natural (e.g., cities, designed to feed global economic market 'development'), and this results in non-natural environmental and societal phenomena. The longitudinal results of these collective actions create environmental and societal degradation that — considering the modern-day global state of increasing political and societal tensions — is continually leading to environmental societal state shifts that are arguably not necessarily for the better.

This does not mean that development, modernity, and post-modernity phenomena are not leading to newfound innovation. I mean that humanity overall is perhaps likely on the cusp of a devastating shift in our existential reality.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

2.6.3. 'Nature,' Human Community Ecosystems, and Societal Systems State Shifts

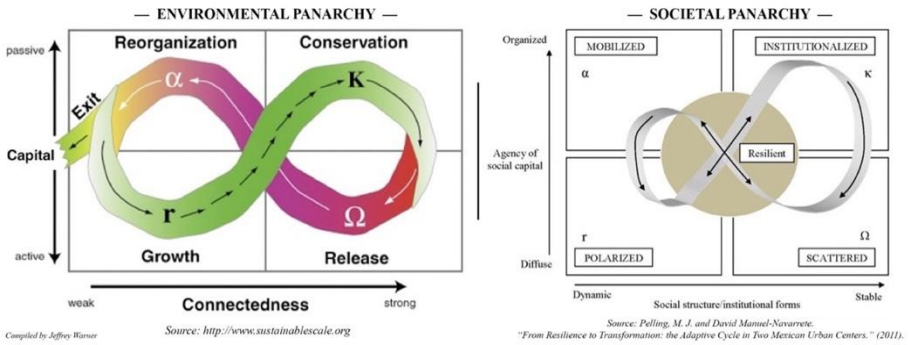


Figure 2.8: 'Environmental panarchy' and 'societal panarchy' models (compiled and titled by the thesis author)

It may appear to many people that 'nature' is in a perpetual state of balance and perfection, perhaps even somewhat static. Actually, Earth's lifeblood ecosystems, including human society, constantly experience a multi-phase 'adaptive cycle' — the cycle of life and death — called, 'panarchy.' Is it peculiar that the above-depicted cycle (Figure 2.8) replicates the DNA strand?

"Panarchy" is a conceptual framework that accounts for the dual, and seemingly contradictory, characteristics of all complex systems – stability and change, and how they interact. This is an integrative framework bringing together ecological, economic, and social models of change and stability to account for the complex interactions among these different areas and within different interacting scale levels.

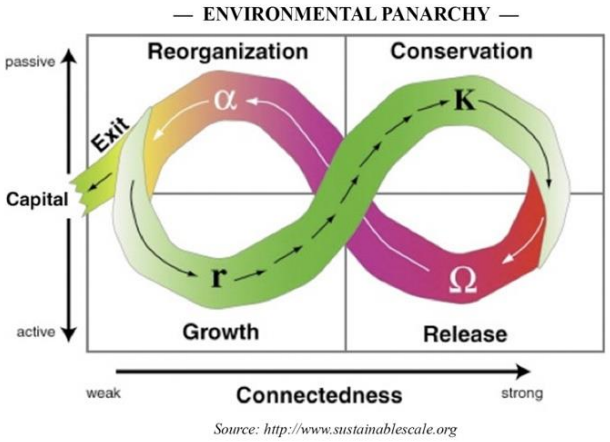
Essentially, this cycle is nature's engine used for generating the ecological (and human socio-ecological) system variances and experimentations that capacitate evolutionary growth. Larger and slower moving levels (e.g., old trees in a forest or human-village elders) stabilize and conserve accumulated memory of system dynamics; this sets the ecosystem's overall operating conditions. Concurrently, smaller and faster moving, nested levels (e.g., a forest's temperature variations, or a human village's youth) test the current system while inventing, experimenting, and testing new possibilities. This adaptive 'panarchy' cycle is hence a periodic process that protects the overall ecosystem by isolating the transpiring socio-ecological experiments (Gunderson and Holling, 2002).

While this ecological theory is generally applied to the natural/Earth sciences — what I am naming, 'environmental panarchy' — it also illustrates complex systems of people (i.e., societal panarchy') and nature as "dynamically organized and structured within and across scales of space

and time" (Allen, Angeler, Garmestani, A.S. et al.: 2014). I maintain that we can articulate the 'human condition' via these 'environmental panarchy' and 'societal panarchy' conceptual models.

Nature, and 'Environmental Panarchy'

The characteristics of the ecological adaptive cycle metaphor include *growth (*i.e., *exploitation), conservation*, *release*, and *reorganization*. This is also known as creative destruction (Schumpeter. 1943). 'Growth' (i.e., 'exploitation') and 'conservation' are rooted in standard ecological theory.



Source: http://www.sustainablescale.org

According to Gotts (2007), an ecosystem's growth/exploitation stage is dominated by some species (or major event), for example, that is tolerant of this environment's ecosystems-related variations and inherent tendency toward conservation (i.e., defense mechanisms). However, two additional processes are required to complete the adaptive cycle. The 'release' phase is much briefer (e.g., a fire or insect outbreak) that frees/reduces nutrients from biomass, leading to a 'reorganization' stage that adaptively involves soil (rebuilding) processes that limit nutrient loss (Holling and Gunderson. 2002).

> The adaptive cycle involves changes in three variables: resilience and potential in the form of accumulated resources in biomass or in physical, human, and social capital; and connectedness, meaning the tightness of coupling among the controlling variables that determine the system's ability to modulate external variability (Gotts, 2007:2).

Gotts (2007) says that in the 'growth' phase "potential and connectedness are low but resilience is high," and in the 'conservation' stage "resilience decreases while the other values increase." At some point, a 'release' transpires and potential further growth collapses. This leads to an ecosystem(s) reorganization stage when "resilience and potential grow, connectedness falls, unpredictability peaks, and new system entrants can establish themselves" (p. 2).

Another (perhaps simpler) way of articulating the above cycle, experienced by all ecosystems and on all scales from cellular to global: 1) *exploitation*: one of rapid expansion, as when a population finds a fertile niche in which to grow; 2) *conservation:* slow accumulation and storage of energy and material is emphasized, as when a population reaches carrying capacity and stabilizes for a time; 3) *release:* occurs rapidly, as when a population declines due to a competitor, or changed conditions; and 4) *reorganization*: can also occur rapidly, as when certain members of

the population are selected for their ability to survive despite the competitor or changed conditions that triggered the release (source: http://www.sustainablescale.org).

This cyclic 'panarchy' process is essentially about 'resilience,' which can be defined as the magnitude of disturbance that can be absorbed before the ecosystem changes its structure by changing the variables and processes that control behavior (Holling and Gunderson; 2002:28). The four stages of the adaptive cycle described above — analogous to birth (growth), life (conservation), death (release), and renewal (energetic reorganization) — have three properties that determine the dynamic characteristics of each cycle:

- *Potential* sets limits to possibility: the number and kinds of future options available (e.g., high levels of biodiversity provide more future options than low levels).
- *Connectedness* determines the degree to which a system can control its own destiny through internal controls as distinct from being influenced by external variables.
- *Resilience* determines how vulnerable a system is to unexpected disturbances and surprises that can exceed or break that control. (Source: http://www.sustainablescale.org)

There is also an interconnectedness of levels — this being the smallest and the largest, and the fastest and the slowest occurring. The large and slow cycles set the operational conditions for the smaller, faster cycles. Each facet can affect the other in various ways.

Regarding ecosystem sustainability, there are several points of particular interest:

1) "Revolt:" This occurs when fast, small events overwhelm large, slow ones, as when a small fire in a forest spreads to the crowns of trees, then to another patch, and eventually to the entire forest; this occurs when the system becomes too rigid (i.e., low diversity).

2) "Remember:" This occurs when the potential accumulated and stored in the larger, slow levels influences the reorganization stage. For example, after a forest fire, the processes and resources accumulated at a larger level slow the leakage of nutrients, and options for renewal draw from the seed bank, physical structures, and surrounding species that form a biotic legacy.

3) Change (i.e., reorganization) is episodic and corresponds with both fast and slow variables. Phenomena transpire on different scales and levels while concentrating resources in different ways. Ecosystems do not harness singular processes with a single threshold point where a collapse and reorganization (and increase in diversity and resilience opportunities) then occur.

Management systems (both ecological and human) must consider these complex dynamics and maintain adaptive flexibility, particularly regarding critical ecosystem functions.

Versus harnessing a humanistic viewpoint, I assert that we humans are social animals that are as much part of nature's ecosystems as any other 'natural' sentient being. *This is our 'human condition.'*

Like a 'natural' ecosystem that reaches a threshold point before transforming into a new existential state, human society (in direct response to environmental factors) also cycles and reaches threshold boundary points, resulting in societal state shifts. Therefore, I maintain that this 'adaptive cycle' analytical framework can also be applied directly to human societal ecosystems.

This said, 'panarchy' theory is essentially about "connecting ecosystems dynamics with economics (i.e., a driver of social change) and how these two components are managed by human institutions. Likewise, "the adaptive cycle [also] offers the possibility of an analytical frame for tracking social systems through sequential stability states and their intervening periods of collapse and reconstruction, but missing is the role of power in determining the character of systems dynamics" (Pelling and Manuel-Navarrete, 2011, p. 2).

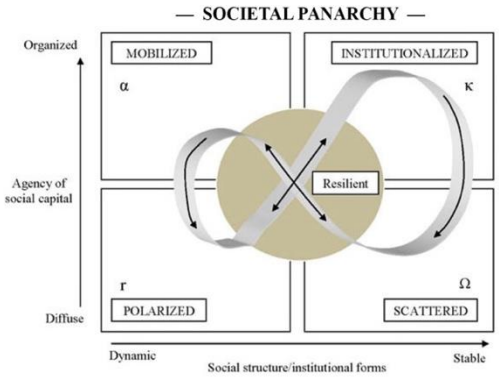
Giddens (1984) addressed power in context with the agency of individuals acting with social structures. There are three kinds of power structures: 1) structures of legitimation, institutions (norms and rules) that regulate social interaction and enforce conformity; 2) structures of domination, revealed through control over mechanisms determining resource distribution in society and symbolized by centers of authority; and 3) structures of signification, which produce interpretations or meanings used to make sense of experience.

Scott (2001) contemplates how the majority of contemporary social systems are unsustainable. Therefore, understanding power dynamics is essential for how transformation is blocked or may be facilitated. Likewise, social systems require a nuanced understanding of these power structures.

Scott's Zomia-related notions relevantly coincide with my thesis study's focus on top-down (government) versus bottom-up (governance) managed community 'development' initiatives. How can rural (particularly indigenous) communities serve as a social-scientific microcosm measurement of how all of humanity has been affected by development-related phenomena?

Nature and 'Societal Panarchy'

Pelling and Manuel-Navarrete, 2011: 2–3:



1) The 'societal panarchy' cycle begins with a state of highly '*institutionalized*' stability (i.e., 'conservation') in which dominant social structures and social agency are well aligned and reinforcing. Change is catalyzed by shock; we are interested in the role played by the identification of novel environmental pressure or its impact caused by emergent hazard, vulnerability, or changes in risk tolerance with underlying dynamics that can be internal to the system or result from contagion across a policy or geographical boundary or governance scale. If the new pressure is large enough to cause shock, then while established social structures of legitimation, domination, and signification formally remain, social behavior may begin to de-link, expressed, for example, through spontaneous acts of solidarity, dissent, or violence, until the affected components of the system are contained and dominant institutions reassert themselves, or become *scattered*;

2) '*Scatter*' (i.e., crisis/collapse) turns into 3) '*mobilization*' (i.e., reorganization) when diffuse social action generates its own internal structure, or is massaged into doing so externally in an act of (potentially exploitative) panarchy. Interest groups form as bonding capital draws the like-minded together (organized social capital). Groups vary in their tolerance of existing structures and may live out alternative forms, such as post-disaster community organization established as a break from centralized governance;

4) '*Polarization*' (i.e., growth) marks a firming up of social capital positions and coalition building such that differences become fewer but more marked. This results in diffuse social capital and dynamic social relations, with contradictory institutions potentially coexisting and an increased likelihood of conflict and backsliding toward scatter. If new institutions are built that better suit the values and risk preferences of emergent, dominant social actors, again under the influence of external/higher scales of power and interest, a new phase of '*institutionalization*' (i.e., conservation) is established, offering a new equilibrium between agency and structure symbolized in a new risk social contract and indicated by changes in the application of technological and social organization, legislation, or policy.

The transition from an 'institutionalized' (conservation) stage to a 'scattered' (release/crisis) stage depends largely on the flexibility/resistance of the established societal structure. If considering a community, for contextual example, this transition involves the level to which people are involved in the development discourse. Are stakeholders, particularly leadership structures, trying to preserve near-term stability, covering up (or denying) risks that could cause overall resistance to change, even at the detriment of long-term sustainability (Handmer and Dovers, 1996). This variable could also relate to whether government-or governance-related pressures are at play.

The movement from 'scatter' to 'mobilization' involves a plethora of what are stakeholders' subjective attributes. Personality traits and hence opinions, religion, personal history, values, etc., become part of the mix and therefore shape decisions that determine (and comprise) future movement. That said, the transition from a mobilized to a polarized society, particularly its rate and cohesiveness, depends on organizational capacity. The history of stakeholders' relationships can greatly influence this critical time. This is particularly true when considering previously established shared interests and power and how this can influence social contracts moving forward (Pelling and Manuel-Navarrete, 2011).

'Societal panarchy' essentially overlays the purely ecology-based adaptive cycle model with four idealized states in human systems' evolution. It abstractly (hence theoretically) refers to actors and the (government or governance) institutions that affect these structural relations and their subsequent social capital. Transition periods between these (cline) stages are neither static nor linear, particularly regarding their overall outcomes. I maintain that this conceptual 'societal panarchy' model, overlaid with the 'natural environmental panarchy' model, can provide a general framework for understanding humans' existential states in conjunction with ESS transformation. This relates to 'development' as an 'organized intervention in collective affairs based on a standard of improvement' (Pieterse, 2001).

Pelling and Manuel-Navarrete (2011) express that human history has always experienced institutional stability, challenge, crisis, and reorganization, "with the possibility for social systems to become locked into any one phase." This occurs at scales from household formation across the life cycle to local communities living with economic or other forms of restructuring and larger political units from municipalities to nation-states. Such patterns echo the adaptive cycle proposed by Holling et al." (p. 2).

2.6.4 Further-Informing Development Researchers

Greatly informing this research project is the work of Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2001; 2010) and his comprehensive book *Development Theory*. Pieterse is a distinguished professor of global studies and sociology. He focuses on global political economy, development studies, and cultural studies. This book deeply informs about trends in development theory, 'development' as 'an organized intervention in collective affairs,' dilemmas, modernity, globalization and globalism, alternative development (if there is such thing), how this relates to the soup of globalizing culture, and introspective ideas related to the past, present, and future.

Peter Vandergeest and Nancy Lee Peluso, via their 1995 article, "Territorialization and State Power in Thailand," build this thesis's development policies-related foundation. This relates to chapter two, which covers the territorialization of Siam/Thailand's land and people.

In this thesis, I also include the work of Philip Hirsch. He is an Australian researcher and professor of human geography. Hirsch specializes in natural resource management, rural change, and the politics of the environment in Southeast Asia. He brings to this thesis's conversation thoughts about Thai state-village relations. Hirsch is critical of the State's development-related motives. He accentuates how rural peoples become subject to "an implied sense of citizen-belonging in the State, and they become subjects versus objects to State policy." The true purpose of rural development is "to establish an increasing monopoly in terms of legitimacy of State institutions." Hirsch's work suggests that the 'penetration' of the state into rural areas is really about capitalist surplus extraction versus the betterment of rural communities.

Ouyyanont (2012) established a foundation for my case study. He talked about Thailand before its fuller engagement in the post-WWII global market system. This is important because around the time that my study area was established (late 1800s Siam), a high percentage of the country's population was living in rural areas, with limited industrialization and urbanization being prominent. This differed greatly from modern-day Thailand.

Preston and Ngah (2012) bring references to their rural development-related work in Malaysia; they, for my study, establish a comparative regional view of a global development continuum. Preston and Ngah say that rural development is a varied series of responses to the formerly dominant model of modernization, which is complex because it takes place at various levels, involves multiple actors, and creates or arises with the emergence of new practices and new

social and economic networks. Preston and Ngah talk about movement from rural to urban, the societal impacts of this, and how communities adapt and create new forms of culture and economy.

Crooker (2005) talks of Thailand's "steadfast commitment" to opium reduction in northern Thailand. He addresses how "hill tribes," like the primary case study area *(Pumuen)*, were for a time a focus of strong interest by the international news media and foreign governments in terms of opium production. However, what was (and remains) hidden largely from view are the poverty-related social problems, such as drug trafficking, heroin addiction, prostitution, and AIDS, that are prominent because of a post-opium rural countryside. In my view, this is a related result of development and related social stratification.

Olsson (2008) says that the popular theory is that road improvement leads to direct community benefits. However, the direct and indirect benefits are determined by context. Olsson says that development implies a structural shift, where a new social and technical environment or a new set of economic opportunities emerges, and the pattern of relationships between the environment and social actors changes. This can be linked to panarchy and societal state shifts.

Bryceson and Bradbury (2008) say that in early modernization theory, roads were considered an important catalyst of economic development, that physical isolation sustains poverty and accentuates vulnerability, and that rural road investment is logically assumed to alleviate the poverty associated with spatial isolation. They address the idea that infrastructural investment, with road projects being exceptionally prominent, is a "double-edged nature of mobility improvement."

Shigetomi (1992), who studied village communities in rural Thailand, says that the impact of the market economy on rural villages has subjected them to significant changes. Shigetomi says that each farming household as an economic unit increases its degree of dependence on the buying and selling of commodities. This has changed the way villagers interact with one another, creating what Shigetomi calls 'market' and 'cooperative' transactions — the former being about profit and the latter being more about long-term benefits of social unity and communal relationships.

Kelly, Yutthaphonphinit, Seubsman, and Sleigh (2012) say that Thailand has often been deemed a model (for studying planning and development) because it has retained much of its cultural traditions while adopting development practices. These authors address the *supposed* changing of the Thai government's status quo top-down development policies to that of being more bottom-up and grass roots. Kelly, Yutthaphonphinit, Seubsman, and Sleigh say that

development experience over many decades in Thailand has revealed that community learning and empowerment is most effective when the process is participatory. Primary challenges with grass roots have been the country's centralized bureaucracy, with the powers at be "reluctant to devolve power over decision-making."

Dominique Van De Walle (2002) brings to the discussion a skeptical view of whether the road to a rural community results in significant social benefits. The general consensus is that with the road comes the eventual flow of important social benefits. Unfortunately, however, there is little convincing empirical evidence that rural roads affect social outcomes beyond what they would have been without the road. Measuring the benefits of rural roads is fraught with difficulty.

James Scott, a distinguished professor of Political Science and Anthropology and author of the book *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia (2009)*, refers to the term "Zomia" — involving parts of China, Vietnam, Ne-India, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, and northern Thailand. Scott, putting into context my thesis study's contextual focus on northern Thailand rural highland communities, says those living in the highlands are people who have fled state-making projects and have made conscious choices about how and where to do so on the peripheries of the centers of global power.

Photographs by Jeffrey Warner

Chapter 3: The Policy-Art of Controlling People with Land

"Thai people tell foreigners that we have never been colonized. But we all know that we have been colonized. We just don't talk about this because we don't want to admit our sadness. We need to conceal our country's mistakes and pretend like we don't know about the hidden evils in our country, deceiving us like we are blind to maintaining peace and security for ourselves. We want to try and preserve, something."

— *Suwanya*, Bangkok resident; interview on June 19, 2018

Introduction

If one aspires to acquire understanding about people, including their potential societal trajectories, historical insight into how their current situation was created can be insightfully helpful. This multi-section chapter, while strictly policy-based and information dense, articulates a historical, wide-angle policy-picture of the Se-Asia region, particularly Siam/Thailand. *While reading this chapter is not essential for understanding this thesis-study*—it could be skipped and read later—*doing so can greatly assist with deeply understanding the how and why the lives of the rural indigenous ethnic communities composing this thesis study (as a context for overall human society) have been affected, if not dictated, by international and state forces.*

The first section reveals how during the western Colonial Era, Siam, then a relatively autonomous region, was socio-politically and geographically disemboweled by Western geopolitical powers. The region's inner workings were systematically substituted with prosthetic parts powered by western capitalism DNA. This section reveals the macro global, regional, and domestic state policies that transformed Siam's land and socio-culture. I debunk a common myth that Siam, which later became the Kingdom of Thailand, was never colonized by Britain. Siam was rather 'imperialized' and then domestically 'developed;' it is now exhibiting another transformation that, from a development studies perspective, reveals a post-colonization process.

I illustrate the linear timeline sequence of momentous dates interwoven with land, socio-political, and cultural policies that forever-transformed this region's geopolitical landscape and societal fabric. This argument is supported by a framework of academic discourse-literature, policy documents, and news articles yoked with the main concepts (e.g., colonization, imperialization, development, etc.) used throughout this thesis monograph.

First, I examine central-government restructuring practices led by policies such as the 1855 Bowring Treaty signed between Britain and Siam. I explore ways this gunboat strategy facilitated

the extraction of Siam's natural resources and prepared this region for becoming a "buffer state" purposed for future Western expansionism.

Second, I delve into Siam's transformation into becoming Thailand, which further catapulted the former region of Siam into the capitalist global market system. This initially involved the tactical construction of culture mandates purposed with uniting people around nationalistic ideals. Later came the perpetuation of fierce devotion to the royal family, and heavy investment in Thailand's infrastructure, economic development, and the further territorialization (and modernization) of peripheral forestry areas and their inhabitants.

Finally, I question whether Thailand's most recent (2014) coup is actually a well-timed socio-political revolution purposed with reverting this country to a quasi-absolute monarchy, post-imperialized nation state operating via a military-dominated quasi-democratic government poised to facilitate the regional expansion of the very forces the West has historically intended to counter.

3.1. Was Thailand *Really* Never Colonized? … How About Imperialized and Then Developed?

Siam/Thailand Overview

The Kingdom of Thailand, formerly known as Siam, has (at least not in its geographic entirety) never *formally* become another nation's colony. However, is this commonly accepted knowledge that this country has never *really* been colonized accurate? Is it plausible that Siam, versus being colonized, was rather *imperialized* by Britain? Is it feasible that this 'has never been colonized' country is a political construct negotiated at least in-part between Siam's monarchy and the Axis Powers? Considering capitalism's tenets of land, labor, capital, and the market, could this agreement have had a greater purpose in terms of long-term western expansionism and global development?

Speculation aside, whatever transpired in the 1800s resulted in a socio-political revolution that forever overturned both this country's soil and its socio-fabric. Grasping a holistic understanding of this region's history—centuries of conquerors, kingdoms, and socio-political overturns—can be as daunting as navigating a complex labyrinth. For simplicity's sake, we will remain within this article's scope, which is illustrating the policy processes that transformed this territory.

Siam was a country-region in Southeast Asia that for centuries had been (and essentially still is) ruled by kingdoms and dynasties. It functioned as an absolute monarchy. This is a system by which a monarch holds absolute power and essentially *is* the government. For example, the Bangkok-centered Chakri dynasty (i.e., King Rama I), which began in the 1780s and still exists in 2021 (i.e., King Rama X), "extended their domain into parts of modern Laos, Cambodia and Malaya. But in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they were forced to surrender their territories there to the French" (Cavedish. *History Today*. June 2014)

Image 1: Siam's first flag

Siam's first unofficial flag, of plain red construction, is said to have been first used under Ayutthaya Kingdom's King Narai the Great, who ruled from 1656 to 1688. France, among other western countries, was attempting to "Christianize" Siam and establish it as a protectorate (i.e., a State controlled and protected by another). However, France (having first entered Siam in the mid-1550s) was expelled from this region following a revolt in 1688. France returned 150 years later to continue its colonizing mission. In 1855, this red flag was officially adopted by King Mongkut (Rama IV). It symbolized Siam's initial integration into the global nation-state system (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France-Thailand_relations).

Siam's flag changed five times until 1917 when it was transformed to include the colors red, white, and blue. The color red represents the nation, metaphorically symbolizing the blood/sacrifice to protect the country's (so-called) independence. White represents Buddhism, the nation's predominant religion. Blue represents the monarchy, which is recognized as the center of Thai people's hearts. It is also believed that the blue color represents when in 1917 King Rama VI entered into WWI as an ally of Br itain and France. Hence, Siam's flag became akin to flags that of the Unites States, France, the Netherlands, Britain, and other western nations and colonies.

Image 2*:* Siam's later flag, which would become that of Thailand

Discourse exists on whether a functional purpose of this new red, white, and blue color composition was (and is) to make the flag, and therefore this country, more distinct. Remember that before Western colonial powers coming to the region, no such flags existed. This national identity could therefore facilitate international relations for a country that prior had been fairly autonomous in terms of the globalizing capitalist "free market" system. Regardless, a country's

flag is arguably the epicenter of its inner socio-political workings. Its transformation symbolizes alterations in a nation's inner workings and vice versa.

Thailand, known as Siam before 1932, is considered the center of the Indochinese peninsula in Se-Asia. A bloodless revolution in 1932 resulted in the creation of this country. "Thai" in the Thai language means, "free" or "free person." Thailand then means, "land of the free person."

With a population of around 69 million, this is the world's fiftieth largest nation. It is bordered to the north by Myanmar and Laos, to the east by Laos and Cambodia, to the south by Malaysia and the Gulf of Thailand, and to the west is the Andaman Sea.

Thailand's governmental system is that of a constitutional monarchy. This is a system whereby the monarchy (i.e., the King and family) is head of state and exercises authorities in accordance with a written or unwritten constitution. Thailand has for decades switched between parliamentary democracy and military junta. Its modern-day government bodies consist of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. This country comprises 76 provinces. Each province is divided into districts, which are further divided into sub-districts. Bangkok is the provincial level capital and is often counted as a province.

Thailand, following a coup in 2014 , came under heavy-handed control of the Thai military. The army general who spearheaded this is now the prime minister. He officially secured this position after a highly controversial election in March 2019. The country is now functioning under a new constitution and a military-dominated parliamentary system.

***

Before walking further down this study path, we will define the main concepts used throughout this chapter.

Colonialism (colonized) Versus Imperialism (imperialized)

Colonialism is 'the policy of a polity seeking to extend or retain its authority over other people or territories, generally with the aim of developing or exploiting them to the benefit of the colonizing country and helping the colonies modernize *in terms defined by the colonizers*. This is especially in economics, religion and health' (Source: *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*) … COBUILD Advanced English Dictionary defines 'colonialism' simply as 'the practice by which a powerful country controls less powerful countries and uses their resources to increase its own power and wealth.'

The Oxford Dictionary reveals that to 'colonize' means 'to send settlers to a place, settle among, and establish political control over it (i.e., such as a country, or a geographical region's indigenous peoples); to appropriate for one's own use: to establish in an area. … To colonize can be 'the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.'

***Imperialism** is defined by Encyclopedia Britannica as 'of, relating to, befitting, or suggestive of an empire or an emperor; of or relating to the Commonwealth of Nations and British Empire.' In other words, *'imperialized' is specific to a country colonized (or taken control over) by Britain.*

Margaret Kohn and Kavita Reddy in their article entitled, "Colonialism," published in the Fall 2017 edition of *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, address* 'colonialism' and 'imperialism.' These authors state that the literature is not consistent regarding these two terms. They are often treated as synonyms, but are actually etymologically different. The term 'colony' comes from the Latin word *colonus,* meaning "farmer." This root reminds us that the practice of colonialism usually involved the transfer of population to a new territory, where the arrivals lived as permanent settlers while maintaining political allegiance to their country of origin.

'Imperialism,' on the other hand, comes from the Latin term imperium, meaning to command. *Thus, the term imperialism draws attention to how one country exercises power over another, whether through settlement, sovereignty, or indirect mechanisms of control.*

In summary, 'colonization' and 'imperialization' both involve political and economic subjugation over a territory. However, to 'colonize' involves socio-political control coupled with permanent (or semi-permanent) physical settlement. To 'imperialize,' while it does not involve significant settlement (e.g., with politics and infrastructure), *rather is for the purpose of teaching the overtaken country about how to adopt Western ideals.*

> One way of reconciling those apparently opposed principles was the argument known as the "civilizing mission," which suggested that a temporary period of political dependence or tutelage (i.e., instruction; tuition) was necessary in order for "uncivilized" societies to advance to the point where they were capable of sustaining liberal institutions and self-government. *The term imperialism often describes cases in which a foreign government administers a territory without significant settlement.* (Kohn and Reddy, 2017)

What this etymological difference meant for Siam and means for modern-day Thailand is further addressed later in this monograph.

State: Max Weber (1978) defines the 'state' as "a political organization that claims and upholds a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force in a given territory" (p. 54). … Jan Nederveen Pieterse, a distinguished professor of Global Studies and Sociology, in his book, *Development Theory: Deconstructions/Reconstructions* (2001; 2010), addresses the nation-State's true purpose. He refers to 'dependency theory.' This is about the flowage of resources from poor and underdeveloped states (or communities) located at the global market system's peripheries to the socio-economic core of wealthy states (hence enriching them). And a State's true purpose is to facilitate land, labor, and capital yoked access to the global market system, and vice versa.

Center(s) of Power: Pieterse (2010) further addresses this center and periphery dynamic in terms of the 'center of power.' He references Havel (1985) in that "the centre of power is identical with the centre of truth' (p. 25). Pieterse says this is linked with the 'diffusionist school of evolutionism,' and is rooted in nineteenth century political geography. "A central issue [with development] is the relationship between knowledge and power. That every truth is a claim to power and every power is a centre of truth is the point of discourse analysis and part of postmodern understandings of knowledge" (Pieterse; 2010: 9). …An example of this "knowledge" or "truth" is academic research (and the institutions that govern it) that informs governments' political policies.

> Developmentalism is the truth from the point of view of the centre of power…The central thesis of developmentalism is that social change occurs according to a pre-established pattern, the logic and direction of which are known. Those who deem themselves furthest advanced along its course claim privileged knowledge of the direction of change. (Pieterse, 2010:19).

Pieterse (2010) reveals that European countries during the Colonial Era viewed themselves as the center of the 'developed' and 'modernized' world, and therefore at the power-center. "Empire, then, was a time machine in which one moved backward or forward along the 'axis of progress.' *This Eurocentric perspective also served as a manual for the imperial management of societies at different evolutionary stages*" (p. 20).

The West's "Civilizing Mission:" We referenced above how France in the mid-1600s was attempting to "Christianize" Siam. This was alike other western powers who worldwide were, and perhaps still are, expanding their socio-political influence.

Pieterse (2001) says that western developmentalism (i.e., colonization, imperialization, development, and modernity) conforms to a Christianity-based format and logic. It views this

history as a salvation process. “Thus it merges Christian and Enlightenment discourses so the momentum of faith corresponds with the logic of reason – reason and rationalization operating toward the fulfilment of the expectations of (Christian) faith” (p.27)

> The basic scenario of the biblical scripture’s Paradise–Fall–Redemption comes replicated in evolutionary schemes: primeval simplicity and innocence (the pastoral past and the good savage), followed by the fall from grace (corruption, decay, capitalism, urbanism, varying according to the discourse), which is in turn to be followed by a redeeming change (modernity, technology or revolution) (p. 27)

In summary, the true purpose of western imperialism colonization has been (and is) to bring ‘uncivilized’ nations and their rural agrarian people into the global capitalism matrix, and vice versa. This is accomplished by top-down central nation-state ‘development’ policies eventually optimized by modern technologies (more on this later).

Development: Pieterse (2001), defines ‘development’ as “an organized intervention in collective affairs according to a standard of improvement” (p. 3).

I interpret Pieterse’s notions of “organized intervention” as being about social policy (i.e., economic, political, cultural; international, national, and local); “collective affairs” as being about culture (i.e., accepted ideas, customs, and social behaviors, and other aspects that people care about: policies, education, the economy, etc.); and “standard of improvement” as being about the Institution, in terms of State-centered modes of organized law or practice (e.g., State-centered societal directives). While “development” means different things to different people, this definition articulates the status quo “development” model.

In other words, ‘development’ involves social policies used for intervening in (if not severing) a society’s established cultural norms (e.g., traditional livelihoods) via the often governmental top-down implementation of ideals deemed superior (e.g., Western ways) and to facilitate national and global economics.

Pieterse (2010) further clarifies this by saying that “Nineteenth century social science was profoundly preoccupied with mapping and conceptualizing Europe’s Great Transition, which was variously associated with the Enlightenment of industrialization, capitalism, urbanization” (p. 20). This Great Transition (i.e., colonization) to which Pieterse is referring is about a then-global shifting away from a pre-modern psyche, which is/was about people’s sense of self and purpose being expressed via staunch faith in a deity.

Boulding (1988) adds to this with the idea that what evolved from this was societal notions of 'modern.' This is about the creation of and belief in using scientific methods (e.g., developments in technology, warfare, politics, etc.) that would lead to knowledge formerly inaccessible via reason and intuitive knowledge. Idealistic elements of this 'modernity' include egalitarian social and ecological values, increased inter-human connectivity, improved quality of life, and a healthy planet. This supposedly includes development goals related with the absence of poverty, war, and environmental destruction.

Territorialization: This refers to an individual or group (e.g., State actors) creating and executing influential control over people by creating an institutionally recognized (and enforced) geographical area. (Sack, 1986). Stein Rokkan (1975) addresses 'territoriality' as about created space subject to variations in political power across institutions. Territorialization is essentially about including (or excluding) people within particular geographic boundaries, and about controlling what people do within this territory. This involves regulating their access to the natural resources within these boundaries (Menzies, 1992).

Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) explain further that territorial sovereignty constructs and defines socio-political identities. It forms the political base upon (and within) which the State can claim control over people and the resources existing under their feet. "All modern political states divide their territories into complex and overlapping political and economic zones, rearrange people and resources within these units, and create regulations delineating how and by whom these areas can be used" (p. 4).

These authors state further that while territorialization was a process spanning centuries in Europe and North America, this is not the case for Southeast Asia. This region, particularly beginning in the mid-1800s, was arguably forced into interfacing with rapidly growing global processes (e.g., 'development,' the 'civilizing mission,' etc.) "The evolving dominance of globalized capitalism resulted in a territorial state consolidation. This is whereby both colonial and non-colonial state agencies in Southeast Asia began to represent and express territorial state sovereignty" (p. 9).

Steinberg (1997) says that pre-colonial countries (like Siam) didn't quality as a state in the Weberian definition of 'a political organization that claims and upholds a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force in a given territory.' This is because they lacked territorial integrity. National boundaries in Se-Asia did not exist until the Nineteenth Century.

> Southeast Asians were not much concerned with the demarcation of frontiers. It is only quite recently that the rulers of the traditionally dominant societies have sought to establish a modern sense of allegiance to the notion of a nation-state identity, with its concomitant demand of loyalty from all citizens living within sharply defined national boundaries (Steinberg; 1987: 5).

With this conceptual foundation established, we move forward to reveal specifically how Siam was 'imperialized' by Britain as a global 'center of power (Part A). We then learn how Siam was morphed into a globally recognized nation 'state,' and 'developed' in ways that emulate western 'civilized' socio-political ideals (Part B). Part C addresses Thailand's resulting current state of socio-political affairs.

3.1.1 (PART A). Commodification of Land and People Through Territorialization: Siam/Thailand's Stages of Externally-Led Internal Takeover

PART A. The Western Territorializing of Siam: A Series of Treaties

It is imperative to illustrate what was Siam's overarching socio-political culture structure during when Se-Asia was essentially being (at least socio-politically) invaded by Western powers. This can facilitate understanding into how West-led colonial policies overturned Siam (and later Thailand's) soil and socio-fabric.

Governmental administrations (e.g., the monarchy) in Siam executed control over labor (e.g., serfs and slaves) and not land. This is with exception of French-colonized Vietnam, where central government powers controlled both land and people. Likewise, Siam consisted of principalities (*muangs*) that were ruled by landlords or minor-monarchs allegiant to the Bangkok-center king. Some were also loyal to the king in Cambodia or Burma (Steinberg et al. 1987).

Populations claimed by these various rulers in Siam were registered with Bangkok as individuals or large extended households. Important to note is that Bangkok-dwelling monarchs and nobles had little or no involvement with the socio-political affairs transpiring amid minor-monarch-serf (i.e., landlord) controlled *muangs*. This is with exception to requiring tax payments for labor and goods, receiving reverent tribute and periodic ritual, and displays of blood in the form of conscripted fighters (Steinberg et al. 1987). Human labor was also controlled by slavery (Reid. 1987). "The exceptions in the nineteenth century included upland hill tribe [ethnic indigenous] people and many recent Chinese immigrants" (Vandergeest and Peluso; 1995; 10). … The 1805 Law of Three Seals articulates in-detail these legal codes related with land people and

land related property rights. International policy agreements, especially the Bowring Treaty, would change this.

Recall here that 'imperialization,' while involving political and economic subjugation (as does colonization), does not involve significant settlement (e.g., with politics and infrastructure) and is for purposes of schooling the overtaken country on adopting Western notions of being 'civilized.'

The Burney Treaty: Telling the linear timeline story of Siam's imperialization must begin from somewhere. It may as well be with The Burney Treaty. This agreement — mostly involving Siam and Great Britain (with its British East India Company) — was signed in Bangkok on June 20, 1826.

Britain was at war with the Kingdom of Ava (a.k.a. Burma, later to become Myanmar), and aspiring to colonize. The Burney Treaty positioned Siam as Britain's ally. The Burney Treaty did not adequately address commerce, which was later covered via the Bowring Treaty.

***Image 3*:** Siam's (Thailand's) territorial losses between 1862 and 1909. // (Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/45/Siam_territoral_losses.gif

The Siamese–American (a.k.a. Roberts) Treaty: The Siamese–American Treaty of Amity and Commerce, also known as the Roberts Treaty of 1833, was the first treaty ever signed between the United States and an Asian nation.

This treaty established peaceful and friendly inter-country relations and commerce. It may have granted Americans more favorable trade partner terms with Siam than the British secured with the Burney Treaty of 1826. (Source: National Archives blog: *Pieces of History*; Sep. 28, 2013). These treaties reveal how Britain and the United States, while technically allies, were (and France and others) vying for territory in Siam and throughout the region.

A Major Turning Point

The Bowring Treaty: This is perhaps the most significant policy that forever-transformed Siam. …This Treaty was signed by five Siamese plenipotentiaries (i.e., diplomats vested with the full power of independent action on behalf of his or her government, typically in a foreign country) and John Bowring. Bowring was an English political economist. Notably, he was the governor of Hong Kong, which Britain officially annexed in August 1842 via the Treaty of Nanking.

Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) reveal that major changes in Siam at the turn of the Nineteenth Century were launched by "economic pressures set off" by the 1855 Bowring Treaty.

> *The Bowring Treaty was signed under military threat*, particularly demonstrations of British military might in the attack on China [e.g., Hong Hong] over trade issues. Treaties with the other imperialist states followed on the model of the Bowring Treaty. These opened up internal markets by making most monopolies illegal, and by limiting import and export duties and internal taxation. External trade increased, with rice from the Central Plains quickly becoming the major export although teak and tin were also significant (Vandergeest and Peluso; 1995: 15).

Barton and Bennett (2010: p. 27) reveal how Nineteenth Century Europeans visiting Southeast and South Asia glorified and coveted the region's ample teak trees. Oak supplies in Britain were dwindling. Britain's elites therefore viewed teak "as a vital component of the country's global naval supremacy in the Nineteenth Century." The British feared that teakwood's increasing demand would precede a rapidly diminished supply. Therefore, they "*encouraged the creation of forestry departments* and laws in British India to preserve the finite amount of teak in the sub-continent." India and Britain, however, could could not suffice the teakwood demand. Therefore, "*Britain would have to look beyond its formal empire in Asia to find more teak*." … Hence ensued Siam's imperialization.

Laohachaiboon and Takeda (2007) offer further evidence. Teak logging conflicts in Siam were ensuing. These authors say that the 1855 Bowring Treaty, "*a British treaty that forced Siam to open up to Western colonialism*" (p.3) rendered Siam highly vulnerable to its raw materials being extracted by foreign powers (e.g., Britain). … "Under the provisions of the Bowring Treaty, *the Siamese government lost the right to stipulate its import and export duties, and was forced to concede extraterritorial rights to the British*" (Lysa 2004, 328).

The Anglo-French Declaration: Establishing Siam as a "Buffer State"

As prior mentioned, France and Britain were vying for Se-Asia territory. Their colonization methods were different, but the goal was the same: bolstering capitalism's tenets of land, labor, capital, and the global market.

Pieterse (2010) maintains that "In terms of the balance of power, the world of colonialism involved multipolar competition among the western powers, that is, among countries that shared the same civilizational framework" (p. 51).

Laohachaiboon and Takeda (2007) remind us that British and French colonial empires in Se-Asia were expanding. Something had to be done to pacify their growing tensions (and likely confrontations) at the geopolitical margins. The Anglo-French Declaration, signed on January 15, 1896, settled British and French rivalry. … "Siam was diplomatically forced by the British to function as a buffer between the French colonies to the east and the British ones to the west…This pact also endorsed the independence of Siam" (p.7-8).

> But Siam was reluctant to cede the east of the Mekong River. Partly at the suggestion of the British, the Siamese government eventually acquiesced to the French ultimatum that Siam not only cede to France the left bank of the Mekong River, including the greater part of Luang Prabang and the islands in the river, but also compensate the French for losses incurred (Laohachaiboon and Takeda; 2007: Pp. 7-8).

This Declaration stipulated that "both Britain and France would observe a mutually agreed limit on the extent to which they could trespass on Siamese territory, and would pledge not to enter into any agreement with any third power to intervene in this area" (Jeshurun; 1970: 116).

A slippery deal?

According to a National Archives of Singapore document called, "Ode to Friendship, Celebrating Singapore-Thailand Relations (2004)," stipulations in the Bowring Treaty shielded Siam's internal affairs from meddling by foreign powers. Also, Siam was to officially remain an independent 'non-colonized' country.

The Bowring Treaty, largely due to its cultivating of a framework for multilateral trade in Se-Asia, is credited for Bangkok's economic development. However, commercialization and an arguably forced dependence on foreign markets ramped up further pressures on the Bangkok

government. Siam had become forced to conjure a great deal of money for infrastructure (e.g., railways and irrigation) in order to compete with exports from nearby British colonies. Newfound military expenditures also became an issue (Vandergeest and Peluso. 1995). "[The Bangkok-centered Siam government] replaced their reliance on serf-derived income as well as slave labor by promoting the immigration of wage laborers from China, whom they hired for state projects and exploited through gambling and opium monopolies" (p. 15).

So, at least on-paper, the Bowring Treaty ensured that foreign powers would not intervene in Siam's internal affairs. It supposedly allowed Siam to evade the fate of colonization to which *all* of its neighbors had fallen victim. This Treaty even liberalized trade rules and regulations by creating a new system of imports and exports.

However, this treaty peculiarly (and somewhat paradoxically) allowed Britain to…

- Embark freely upon foreign trade in all seaports and within four miles from Bangkok's city walls. This was commercial activity that was either prohibited or was previously subject to heavy royal taxes;
- Enjoy the abolishment of measurement duties and fixed import and export duties;
- *Reside permanently in Bangkok and establish a British consulate there — with full extraterritorial powers*. British subjects were under consular jurisdiction. Thus, for the first time, Siam granted extraterritoriality to foreign aliens;
- Allow Englishmen to own land in Siam, with merchants enjoying the right to buy and sell directly with individual Siamese with no interference.

(Source: Encyclopedia Britannica; "Siam")

This said, let's examine what the Bowring Treaty *actually did* to Siam's inner workings. Recall again this Treaty was supposed to ensure Siam's independence and that foreign powers would not meddle with this country's internal affairs.

A Socio-Political Revolution?

Revealing more context of Siam's socio-political culture is necessary. … At the Bowring Treaty's onset: 1) All land (and people) located within a specified distance from Bangkok's center (i.e., the royal palace) was considered the monarchy's territory.; 2) Territorial areas (and people) beyond this realm of direct monarchal control were dictated by feudal minor-monarchs and landowners. Some of these power-players located at the Kingdom's peripheries resisted control from the Bangkok-center.; 3) Land taxes were paid to these overlords, and then to the central monarchy. … This constituted a peasantry system, by which the monarchy (and feudal landlords) *aimed to control the people, not the land*. People were therefore controlled through this land taxation system.; 4) There were no land coding regulations. Land usage was regulated unofficially

by the desires and demands of the monarchy and landlords. Serfs and slaves were therefore subject to this feudal system. (Vandergeest and Peluso, 1995).

The Bowring Treaty (i.e., Britain) overturned this socio-political structure, in stages and through: A) the territorialization of Siam's civil administration; B) attempts by the central State to take over the administration of rights to land through mandatory registration of land titles based on surveys; C) control the use of major portions of national territory by demarcating it and defining it as "forest;" and D) the newly created Thai Forest Department, the State agency given jurisdiction over this territory, claimed exclusive rights to allocate and enforce land use rights (e.g., logging, grazing, or mining rights); this is while setting conditions and refraining from allocating the rights to sell this land (Vandergeest and Peluso; 1995: 3).

A) The territorialization of Siam's civil administration

[Siam's] government system throughout the country was reorganized by functional specialization. This transformed layers of nobles and local lords, among the others, into salaried officials, which through economics placed prior unexperienced power unto their lives. In other words, they became employees, with Bangkok as the boss. There was resistance, but this was quelled by Bangkok's newly bolstered and coercive [British backed] administrative powers.

> The lords of the principalities were displaced by provincial governors who took over local administration. Provinces were subdivided on the basis of territory into districts, and one of the local nobility was transformed into a district officer. Schools were set up in Bangkok and major principalities for training the children of the nobility to become salaried government officials, who during their careers were rotated through a series of positions in different provinces so as to minimize the development of local loyalties. …
>
> All indirect taxes, labor obligations, and tax farms were eliminated or replaced by a direct poll tax collected throughout the territory now claimed by Bangkok. This restructuring further involved serf masters being turned into, or replaced by, village heads and sub-district chiefs (*kamnan*). The newly formed Bangkok-centered Ministry of Interior directed them accordingly (Vandergeest and Peluso; 1995: 15-16).

B) Attempts by the central State to take over the administration of rights to land through mandatory registration of land titles based on surveys

The (elected) *kamnan* were ordered to formulate villages and sub-districts (*tambons*). Peasants formerly operating as serfs attached to a landlord master became "villagers" under jurisdiction of the *kamnan* (also known as the "village headman"). Villages became comprised of houses (i.e., cells). The people living in a house-cell became a "household" and therefore became the measuring unit of the village cell. This cell was filled with mandated information about the village address and about households' gender, age, marriages, births, and deaths. The now-registered "village" became the territorial box that fit inside of the regional box. Everyone, formerly off the grid (for the most part) became a measured unit of and by the central government — essentially, a central State subject. This territorial village and household registration was how persons were fixed in the national territory where they can now be located, identified, counted, characterized, categorized, and mapped (Foucault. 1995*)*.

> When this system was first implemented, [Siam's] Ministry of Interior used it to collect the poll tax and to mobilize people for the military and police draft, which was slowly implemented region by region after 1905. Now they use it to collect information through censuses and surveys, to allot land rights, and administer development projects (Vandergeest and Peluso; 1995: 17)

"All modern states have reorganized local administrations on a territorial basis characterized by spatial boundaries, territorial definitions of communities, and territorial administrative hierarchies (Vandergeest and Peluso; 1995: 18). … These authors add that a century of related land codes in Siam/Thailand has been "aimed toward private property as the inevitable endpoint for modern development" (Vandergeest and Peluso; 1995: 32).

C) Control the use of major portions of national territory by demarcating it and defining it as "forest"

Siam was quickly becoming to function like a western nation-State. This was (and remains) via the West-constructed Torrens System, which is a land registration and transfer system which the State creates and maintains a register of land holdings.

Recall what was mentioned earlier about how Britain feared that teakwood's increasing demand would precede a rapidly diminished supply. Therefore, they were, as part of their colonization agenda, creating forestry departments throughout their colonial territories. Likewise, another significant element of Siam/Thailand's territorialization under the Bowring Treaty was initiated in 1896. All land not considered a "village" was deemed "unoccupied" by the State and placed *under the jurisdiction of the newly formed Royal Forestry Department*.

Siam's 'unoccupied' areas became "forest." While the Thai Ministry of Interior (later to become the Department of Agriculture) and the related registration of villages and households was the means to territorialize people, this Forestry Department was (and remains) the administrative channel through which the land under these newly formed "communities" became territorialized (Vandergeest and Peluso, 1995).

D) The newly created Thai Forest Department claimed exclusive rights to allocate and enforce land use rights

Siam's newly defined "forests" became under heavy-handed control of this newly established forestry and national parks institution. It is notable, even peculiar, that this institution was led by forester, H.A. Slade (from India), who was followed by Englishman, W. F. Lloyd (until 1932).

> The immediate purpose [of the Bowring Treaty] was to take over income generated by local lords from teak concessions to the British, and to head off a possible British takeover of the areas with teak forests. Regardless of the purpose, the most important aspect is that at Slade's recommendation, the control of all forest lands was transferred from local lords to the Forestry Department. … This new "forest" included most of the land area in Siam, probably about 75 percent at this time. A variety of acts created a legal framework for the Forestry Department's claims to forests, the most important of which were the Forest Preservation Act of 1897 and the Forest Conservation Law of 1913. Under the latter law, the Forestry Department could

> declare any forest product to be "reserved." Those who wanted to take reserved forest products had to obtain permits, pay fees, and follow a series of very specific regulations on how the product was to be cut, tapped, or whatever. Local people could still legally use forest resources for domestic needs (Vandergeest and Peluso; 1995: 25)

Recall that the Bowring Treaty (i.e., Britain and France) was supposed to *not* interfere with Siam's internal affairs. However, given the above evidence, the Bowring Treaty dissolved rules and created new ones that were in the best interests of colonial powers. … Likewise, *what actually happened* is the Bowring Treaty allowed Britain-owned concessions companies to legally possess and exploit Siam's land resources. Siam was likewise coerced to sell its natural resource assets (e.g., teakwood) into the global capitalist market system, of which Siam was not part of before the Bowring Treaty (Vandergeest and Peluso, 1995). … This reflects colonization/imperialization phenomena.

We now warp ahead to what ensued after Britain siphoned out Siam's lifeblood (i.e., its socio-political structure, and natural resources) via the Bowring Treaty.

3.1.2 (Part B). Construction of the "Thai" Political State: 'Development' from Within

A military-led revolution in 1932 led to Siam's dissolution. With this ensued the official overthrowing of this country's absolute monarchy system; it was replaced with a constitutional monarchy. Thailand — "land of the free people," yet now comprised of Western socio-political DNA — was born.

This new geopolitical State territory required a national identity. The cultural policy called "Thaification," also known as "Thai-ization," was enacted. This involved twelve culture mandates (i.e., State decrees) — *rathniyom*, which means "state fashion" or "state customs' — that were issued by the new "Thai" government. … Notably, and perhaps peculiarly, this was during an era when Thailand was allied with western "Axis Powers" who were just entering World War II.

Heavily promoted between 1939 and 1942, this national Thai culture creation program was at first aimed toward creating a uniform and 'civilized' Thai culture. This top-down public policy directive drastically altered this supposedly free country's socio-fabric. It accomplished this by essentially forcing the new "Thai" society to look, speak, and even eat in distinct ways. The following is a framework of these 'culture mandates.'

Table I: Thai Culture Mandates. (Source: 2014 Thailand Education System and Policy Handbook. More details at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thai_cultural_mandates#21st_century_cultural_mandates)

1. People are to be called "Thai.	**2.** All interactions with foreigners (personal or business) must never in any way endanger the country.
3. You can no longer use names such as "northern Thais," "southern Thais," or "Muslim Thais"	**4.** The national anthem will be honored at all times. Anyone who is "not paying proper respect" should be admonished.
5. All productions, such as food, clothing, for agriculture, industry, etc. should "Thai" products.	**6.** The national anthem will be comprised only of lyrics submitted by the army;
7. Every Thai person should help build the nation, and anyone without a career is unhelpful to the nation.	**8.** For the national anthem, the original song including the word "Siam" will be replaced by the word "Thai."
9. Thai people must extol (praise), honor, and respect the Thai language. And all "Thai people" have the same Thai blood and speak the same language.	**10.** This mandate mandates a change of dress.
11. Thai people should divide their time between work, personal, and for rest or sleeping.	**12.** People should always protect children, the elderly, and the handicapped.

Image 4. Thai poster from the cultural mandate era demonstrating prohibited dress on the left, and proper (western style) dress on the right. (Source: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thai_cultural_mandates.)

According to the 2014 “Thailand Education System and Policy Handbook,” this Thaification program “was essentially the process by which people of different cultural and ethnic origins living in what became Thailand were systematically assimilated into the dominant culture of Thailand, or more precisely, to the culture of the Central Thais” [i.e., Bangkok]” … Central Thai language dialect became the standard for media and business. “The related values became the national values. Central Thai’s culture’s being the culture of wealth and status made it hugely attractive to those on the end economically and socially” (p. 43).

> Thaification was a step in the creation…of the Thai nation-state where ‘Thai people’ occupy a dominant position, away from the historically multicultural kingdom of Siam. A related term, "Thainess," is held to describe a characteristic that persons and things possess when they are Thai. Thaification is the process by which groups at the fringe of the Thai State become more similar to the Central Thai heartland. To an extent this a natural result of these groups being part of a modern State in which central Thais occupy a dominant geographical, economic, and cultural position. (Thailand Education System and Policy Handbook; 2014: 43).

I share experience from living in Thailand that these culture mandates are one part of a socio-cultural policy program that has successfully permeated every facet of Thai society. For example, images of Bhumibol Adulyadej (i.e., Rama IX, also known as “King Bhumibol the Great”) are prominently positioned everywhere throughout Thailand. Nearly every household and business has depictions of the monarchy pinned to its walls. King Rama IX (who is discussed later in this article) has become revered as a demi-god. Such imagery of the monarchy is spatially placed sometimes even higher than a Buddhist shrine. Also common are images of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), whom many Thai people reverently credit for supposedly saving the country from being colonized by Britain and France.

Another prominent aspect of these mandates, further revealing their socio-cultural power, is evident with the Thai National Anthem, which trumpets twice daily from loudspeakers. It is a profound experience (as someone from the global west) to observe when everyone around you abruptly transitions from being animated with daily life to becoming like statues until this nationalism building song is complete. One becomes reminded that this reverence (some call

"brainwashing") serves as a constant reminder of the top-down authoritarian parenting force really running this nation-state's show.

National Culture of a Post-Subjugated Country

Pieterse (2001) addresses 'national culture.' He says that culture as "an arena of struggle" has instrumental overtones because it is used as a tool for nation-building. What is meant by this 'arena of struggle' is that in Western 'developed' countries, for example, nation-building involved "intense strife." This is largely because of the socio-political processes required for *intervening in the affairs of existing cultures to create a division of labor.* National identity is hence a matter of cultural struggle because it is conducted along lines of geography, language, religion, etc. "The politics of nation-building involves the marginalization of aliens, suppression of minorities, and of indigenous peoples — *a process that is internal colonialism*" (p. 63).

> Nationalism, then, is a step toward cosmopolitanism (cf. Cheah. 1998). Fanon, likewise, devoted a chapter to 'national culture' in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967). This outlines three phases in the cultural development of colonized peoples: (1) assimilation of the nation's culture to that of the colonizer; (2) recollection of original cultural resources, but removed from the masses; and (3) combat, revolution and the formation of a national culture in which the artist rejoins the people (Pieterse (2010: 65)

Pieterse (2001) further reveals that what is often required, particularly true for 'rural development' initiatives, is *there must be a root, central, and societally accepted philosophy that encompasses people's belief systems and a person bestowed with power who personifies this*. In Thailand, this central philosophy is an agricultural and Buddhist "middle-way" lifestyle. And this person became (and remains) King Rama IX.

Miller (1990) supports Pieterse's notions by ideas of how a post-colonized (or imperialized) country can become "culturally free" if it recaptures the essences of its original culture. This involves reclaiming reverence of the country's overall environment, while rejecting "the harmful influences which any kind of subjection to foreign cultures involves. Thus one sees that if imperialist domination necessarily practices cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an act of culture (p. 46).

According to the 2014 Thailand Education System and Policy Handbook, this Thai nationalism program was conducted in strands and through: 1) policies targeted at (and disproportionately affected) fringe groups. This includes mandating Thai language instruction.

This did not impact central Thais so much as it did socially marginalized folks, such as ethnic indigenous communities living in the peripheral (highland) areas; 2) policies promoting Thai nationalism, particularly related with the promotion of King Rama IX as the national development figurehead. As part of Thaification, the twice-daily trumpeting of the national anthem became a ritual. This ritualized nationalism, as with the Bowring Treaty's restructuring of Siam's socio-political system and its engagement with the geographical landscape, discouraged loyalties to anyone other than the King; and 3) increasing school attendance, even by proscription (i.e., the action of forbidding something; banning) and the usage of any minority languages in these schools.

> The main subjects of Thaification have been the ethnic groups on the edges of the Thai state, geographically and culturally: The Lao in Isa, the hill tribes of the north and west, and the Muslim minority in the south. There has also been a Thaification of the immigrant Chinese and Indian populations. However, Thaification has been, to a considerable extent, a byproduct of the nationalist policies consistently followed by the Thai State over the Twentieth Century. The promotion of Thai nationalism in the country as a whole took the form of reinforcing the Thai identity in the heartlands, while creating a Thai identify on the fringes [e.g., indigenous ethnic groups] (p. 43).

More land (and people) territorialization

The Protection and Reservation of Forests Act of 1938 facilitated the demarcation of Thailand's 'reserved' and 'protected' forests. "In areas deemed as protected forest, slash and burn cultivation techniques became prohibited. Throughout 'reserved forest' areas, inhabitants could no longer graze animals, alter the forest in any way, and permits were required for the extractions of any forest products. This includes animal products, soil, rock, gravel, oils, etc." (Vandergeest and Peluso; 1995: 26). Basically, this was the beginning of the end for the traditional cultures of indigenous ethnic folks living in the highlands (some of whom are introduced in this article's second section).

This land demarcation process proceeded slowly until the mid-1960s. This is largely due to the elaborate procedures (now) required for local land consultation and related veto powers. These were new complications resulting from the 1930s-constructed Thai governmental system. … Vandergeest and Peluso mention about Thailand's 1954 Land Code. This was the formal policy that required governmental permission to affect any forest land, such as for residential or livelihood purposes. However, while demarcation laws were in-place, "most forests were in practice

negatively defined as unoccupied land until the 1960s. The territorial boundaries of the forest remained ambiguous, changing, and unenforceable" (Vandergeest and Peluzo; 1995: p. 409). … Basically, it took a human generation before these initial land territorialization laws gained socio-political traction.

> The early 1960s marked an acceleration of the territorial strategies initiated in the 1930s, and legally altered the local-central power nexus. A series of new laws were enacted (e.g., The 1960 Wildlife Conservation and Protection Act, the 1961 National Park Act, and the 1964 National Forest Reserve Act) that committed the government to maintaining 40 percent national land area in reserved forests, and to demarcating the reserve forests rapidly (Vandergeest and Peluso; 1995: 409).

While the creation of 'reserve' and 'permanent' forests was initiated in the 1930s, this territorialization was stepped-up after 1964. For example, the first national park, "Khao Yin," was created in 1961. This came after the ratification of the National Park Act, which was initiated under the leadership of King Rama IX. … It is notable these "national park" lands were set aside in such way that did not allow for logging and other Colonial-led resource extraction, at least not without permission. However, this arguably capacitated future activities relating with both the Thai Royal Forestry Department and particularly the Thai Royal Project (described below).

I am uncertain whether this 'reserved' territory relates to the Thai Crown Property Act of 1936. This Act, which ensued because of the Bowring Treaty (i.e., Siam's colonization/imperialization), addresses land that is the "King's private property."

According to Section 4 of the Crown Property Act:

> This is property that belonged to the King before ascending to the throne, property conferred on the King by the State or property acquired by the King by any means and at any time other than property acquired on account of Kingship, including any fruit accrued therefrom.

This Act also addresses public property, which means "property of the King which is used exclusively for the benefit of the State (e.g. the palace). It also defines "crown property," which is

"property of the King other than the King's private property and public property." … I hypothesize, that this is also linked with Siam's negotiations with Britain during the penning of the Bowring Treaty. The logic for this reasoning is that Act was dissolved 100 years later (more on this in this article's Part C).

Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) reveal that the Thai Forestry Department further ramped up its surveillance of agricultural areas not suitable for commercial agriculture. This included, and still includes, areas (and people) living amid the country's national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and "sensitive watershed areas." … Keep in-mind these territories are where the indigenous ethnic groups reside. The Thai government was attempting to contain their forest cultivation within 2.4 hectare cells and to regulate cultivation practices within these cells. The government, "funded by a World Bank loan, which in effect aided the government in this latest phase of internal territorialization...setup programs for moving people out of these areas, with the help of the military, which were only partially implemented due to resistance by peasants, NGOs, and academics" (p. 30).

> In the context of the way that some theorists believe that increased global integration is weakening the capacity of national states, we should note that direct military aid from foreign sources has been central to the increased capacity of the [Thai] Forestry Department to enforce territorial controls. Beginning in the early 1950s, the Thai military was armed and trained by the United States as a bastion against Indochinese communism. The United States CIA alsoset up a paramilitary police unit, the Border Patrol Police, as a non-military counter insurgency force (Vandergeest and Peluso (1995: 30).

The Royal Project: 'Development' from Within

The Royal Project is another significant land and people transforming policy program. This rural development program was initiated in 1969. Let by King Rama IX, the Royal Project Foundation is listed as a Thai non-profit organization based in northern Thailand. This Project continues to serve the *explicit purposes* of 'improving the lives of hill tribe people' — meaning, indigenous ethnic groups who used to live fairly autonomously amid the mountainous areas — while offering plant and animal stocks such as lychee, plum, chickens and other agricultural

products. Besides providing agriculture related training and a market for agricultural products, this Project's stated purpose is to prevent the destruction of natural resources. This includes forest and water resources, and to increase prevalence of alternative agriculture. The following articulates the Royal's Project inherent purpose.

Much of these agricultural products bolster Thailand's GDP. And, well, a land classification system, and a labor force, was needed. Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) address 'functional territorialization,' which is about "controlling what people do according to detailed land classification criteria. This approach was initiated during early 1960s with legislation for creating Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks. By 1985, nine percent of national territory was in one of these two categories, and demarcation has continued since" (p. 29).

Opium in the hills, and residual Bowring Treaty international politics

Poppy fields used to blanket Siam/Thailand's highland areas. Some indigenous ethnic groups living in these areas (many whom had immigrated from China and Burma/Myanmar) used it as a cash crop. These "hill tribe people" were (and in some ways still are) believed by the Thai national culture to be opium-growing "destroyers of the forest." (This is addressed more in this article's section three.)

Actually, opium was being used by the British around the time of the 1855 Bowring Treaty to suppress China (i.e., the Opium War). Opium, and these rural peoples, were being utilized by the China Army during the China War (1945-1949) for funding war efforts. Likewise, another primary goal of the Royal Project was to expunge opium cultivation from this region. Therefore, it was in the socio-political interests of the Thai government, and international forces (e.g., Britain and the USA) who were still fighting the perpetuation of communism in the region, to engage these rural peoples more systematically — hence, the Royal Project.

Rama IX's royal development program was (and continues) to be heralded as the savior of Thailand's beloved forest areas. Internationally, this Project was essentially helping with the West-led 'drug war,' expunging the region's opium production and market (or perhaps moving it to another location). "By the middle 1980s, however, communism could no longer be presented as a threat. Instead, a series of environmental threats has allowed the military and paramilitary police to frame forest protection as a national security issue" (Vandergeest and Peluso. 1995: 30)

> As technical capacity of the [Thai] government was increased by foreign assistance, government agencies classified land throughout the kingdom according to suitability for agriculture during the 1960s and 1970s. During the early 1980s, the government also developed a watershed classification system, which it used to map the entire country. Beginning in the early 1980s, the forestry department gave out limited land rights in the form of a so-called STK certificate in areas classified suitable for agriculture. In 1985, a new National Forest Policy directed the Forestry Department to reclassify the forest reserves into conservation forest and economic forest (Vandergeest and Peluso (1995: 30).

Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) say that "Although the [Thailand] forest had been defined territorially since the administrative changes [i.e., Bowring Treaty], it was the demarcation of the forest through mapping that shifted state regulation of forest use to a territorial form of control" (p. 27). … These authors claim this initiative had a multitude of purposes. This included (and still entails) using demarcation to encourage permanent settlement (in 'reserved forest areas) and agricultural cultivation (and logging concessions), while enclosing these forest occupants into territorial villages. This way government agencies "could more effectively control people and territory" (p. 27). While the Thai Ministry of Interior was purposed with the administration of people (i.e., through land, village, and people registration), the Thai Forestry Department "by territorializing its jurisdiction, had claimed ownership of reserve forest territory on behalf of the State, and remain the sole agency that could legally allocate land rights in these areas" (p. 28).

Although these central government efforts may seem well-intentioned, Hirsch (1989) maintains that "Recent history of Thai State-village relations have been marked by a shift from large-scale rural neglect in a context of rapid urban-dominated growth to an apparent concern to spread the material fruits of development and involve the rural populace in national affairs by means of an accelerated State-led rural [Royal Project] development program (p. 36). … Hirsch also reveals that this policy had failed by the 1980s. Because the Thai Forestry Department had to attempt the management of millions of forest dwellers, of which twenty to 30 percent live in (and cultivate) and that had now been mapped as reserve forest.

It is important to clarify that Thailand's Royal Project, the Ministry of Interior, and the Royal Forestry Department, although connected, are not officially the same entities. Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) say that while one government arm (e.g., the Ministry of Interior) is tasked with territorializing people, the Forestry Department is about natural resource management. The latter is likely to have a much less accommodating view of forest settlers. Some villages welcome Royal

Project initiatives because villagers utilize the collaborative opportunity as a buffer between them and the often harsh militant actions of the Thai Forestry Department and beyond.

In conclusion of the above two parts: not long ago, Thailand's rural agrarian communities were pretty much left alone. However, the proliferation of top-down State mandated rural 'development' initiatives had by the 1970s come to their social-cultural doorstep, entered, and permeated nearly every thread of their cultural socio-fabric. … This said, it is notable that mainstream Thai society, as part of socio-political discourse, as derogatorily labeled these peripheral areas dwelling folks as *chao khao* ("forest people"), or "hill tribe people" — alike the term 'untamed savages' used in other colonized countries. However, relatively recently, a new name for them has become official. These same peripheral-dwellers are now called, *ratsadon bon puen thi sueng* ("Thai people in the forest").

Is Thailand's 'Thaification,' hence its initial 'development' via 'an organized intervention in collective affairs according to a standard of improvement' (Pieterse; 2010) complete?

3.1.3 (PART C). Modern-Day Thailand; A Post-Imperialized Central-Power Revolution, or Just Timely Socio-Political Coincidences?

Siam was 'imperialized.' The frontiers of this state's territories are mapped, coded, and classified. Thailand has become 'developed.' This nation and its peoples have become assimilated into the capitalism's global development paradigm.

While this country (and the Se-Asia region) in the last two centuries has endured a spectrum of massive changes, Thailand's current socio-politics are amid a peculiar state of affairs. Particularly since the October 13, 2016 passing of the revered King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX) — who for 66 years has served as the socio-cultural centerpiece of modern-day Thailand — it appears this post west-territorialized country has been reverting to a quasi-pre-1932 'absolute monarchy' system. It is looking ever more similar to its encompassing post-colonized authoritarian country-neighbors.

Evidence of this is revealed in yet another series of peculiarly timed policies. While articulating the finite details would require another full article, the following is a longitudinal timeline framework of these phenomena.

Democratic Government Overthrow, and Renewed Military Order

On May 20, 2014, the Thai military declared nationwide martial law. This was supposedly to stop six months of socio-political strife being fueled by alleged corruption schemes connected with the country's governing Pheu Thai political party. A subsequent military coup dissolved Thailand's first (and perhaps last) societally elected democratic government, led by Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra.

The military dictated National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) took over as the country's interim government. The stated objective of this coup (if it was not actually the beginning of a revolution), and the NCPO, was to restore order to Thailand and to enact political reforms.

> Since taking over, the NCPO has made full use of martial law to prosecute opponents, ban political activity, and censor the media. More than 1,000 people, including academics, political bloggers, activists and politicians, have been detained or sent for "attitude adjustment" at military installations. There are allegations of torture. Prosecutions under the country's strict *lèse majesté* laws, which protect the monarchy from insult, have risen sharply. In its annual report in January 2015, Human Rights Watch said military rule had sent human rights in Thailand into "a freefall. (Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Council_for_Peace_and_Order).

It is perhaps a relevant reminder that on May 26, 2014, King Bhumidol Adulyadej (Rama IX) — five months before his death — endorsed this military coup/revolution. … Rama IX formally appointed Army General Prayut Chan-o-cha, who had led the coup, to "*take charge of public administration*…The Royal endorsement was seen as key to legitimizing the coup" (*BBC*; May 5, 2014).

Article 44: Initial Step Toward a Form of Pre-1932 Absolute Power?

On March 31, 2015, Thailand's ad hoc Prime Minister Prayut announced that he had asked King Rama IX's permission to revoke the martial law decree and replace it with Article 44 of the interim Constitution.

This Article authorizes the junta chairman (i.e., Mr. Prayut) to issue "any order to suppress any act that undermines public peace and order or national security, the Monarchy, national economics, or the administration of state affairs, whether that act emerges inside or outside the Kingdom."

The section has no constraint, no oversight, no checks or balances, and no retribution. It says forthrightly that anything done by the NCPO chief is 'legal, constitutional and conclusive.'" Article 44 essentially means Prayut *is* the law...It needs to be added that *the junta leader can also insist on staying on in absolute power indefinitely*." (Source: "What you need." April 7, 2015).

Did this policy serve as the initial top-down directive to revert Thailand to a post-imperialized "absolute monarchy" State, this time with the prime minister as head of state?

A New Constitution

On April 6, 2017, a new Constitution, drafted by the NCPO, was promulgated.

Siam/Thailand has actually had twenty constitutions and charters (and twelve military coups) since 1932, when this country's absolute monarchy system was overthrown and 'Thailand' was initiated.

This Constitution allows for a dual-cabinet Parliament. It consists of a 250-member Senate and a 500-member House of Representatives, of whom 350 are elected from single-member constituencies, and 150 members from party lists. … Importantly, the NCPO appoints a regulatory panel consisting of up to ten Senators. Six of these seats are reserved for the heads of the Royal Thai Army, Navy, Air Force, and Police. Also part of this posse are the military's supreme commander and the defense permanent secretary. The Parliament can also select the Prime Minister, whom in Thailand clearly plays an authoritarian (king-like) role. (Source: "Draft Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand 2016")

The Flag Changed, Again

In September 2017, a new version of Thailand's flag was officiated. The flag's red color (i.e., blood spilled for the country) again deepened, slightly. Notably, this ensued *140 years* after this red-white-blue version of Siam's flag was initially created, when the country had entered into WWI as an 'ally' of the west's Axis Powers.

Maturing of Former Concessions Agreements?

Concessions: In international law, a 'concession' is a territory within a country given by an entity (i.e., an institution, such as a forestry department) other than the State which holds sovereignty over that territory. This is historically related with a colonizing power, or at least demanded by one, in the case of colonial chartered companies (such as the British East India

Company). This territory, its resources, is conceded (or even surrendered) by a weaker State to a stronger power.

Whether the series of arrangements made in the 1800s between Siam and western colonial powers such as the United States, France, and Britain was voluntary or forced (or a mixture of both) is a mystery of sorts. What is true is that a 'concession' is 'a grant of land or property especially by a government in return for services or for a particular use; a right to undertake and profit by a specified activity; a lease of a portion of premises for a particular purpose' (Source: Merriam-Webster).

Note that under historic common civil law, a 99-year lease is the longest possible term for a lease of real estate property. It is still heeded as a matter of business practice and wisdom. Relevant to my argument that Thailand was (at least in ways) imperialized, this 99-year lease concept is most common under civil law particularly in terms of territorial concessions.

New King Seeks Powers Emulating the 'Absolute Monarchy' Era

King *Maha Vajiralongkorn* (Rama X), who officially began his reign on October 13, 2016, has sought to bolster his powers in Thailand's political, military, and economy realms. He has done so in ways that emulate this country's pre-1932 'absolute monarchy' system.

Some of his actions have included: 1) forcing army units to be under his direct control, versus being under the the normal military hierarchy. This essentially capacitates him to launch a coup.; 2) greatly diminishing powers that the "Privy Council of Thailand" has always held. This appointed advisory board to the monarchy was established in 1875, by King Rama V.; 3) intervening in the Constitution's drafting and promulgation process, and in Thailand 2019 political election. This political maneuvering by a monarch, *at least explicitly*, has been forbidden since Thailand's 'constitutional monarchy' system was established.; 4) attempting to recover royal crisis powers, which are normally overseen by the constitutional court; 5) trying to end the need for a countersignature (e.g., from the Prime Minister) on all royal acts; and 6) taking on an official noble consort (i.e., concubine). This cultural practice, while common practice during this country's centuries of absolute monarchal rule, was abolished in 1932 when Thailand and its constitutional monarchy system was established. (Sources:

Kurlantzick, Joshua. Oct. 16, 2019, and Mérieau, Eugénie. February 3, 2017.)

Repealing of the Crown Property Act

In June 2018, the 1936 Crown Property Act (mentioned earlier in this article) was repealed. "The assets previously registered to Thailand's Crown Property Bureau will now be held 'in the name of His Majesty,' the Bureau said on its official website on Saturday, the latest shake-up in royal affairs under King Maha Vajiralongkorn (Rama X)." (Lefevre, Amy. June 16, 2018). … Has this materialized after a matured 99-year Siam-Britain land concession deal? Was the land, or at least the profits from land commodification just returned to the rightful owner(s)?

A remaining related question is whether the "reserved forest" territory established via the 1855 Bowring Treaty was *actually* royal property later used for the Royal Project. … While this is speculative, required for a further investigation into this is (if available) a map of Siam/Thailand's 'reserved forests" overlaid with a map depicting Royal Project (or other Thai Forestry Department) territories.

Thailand Initiates a National Strategy Plan

June 2018 brought forth the NCPO final drafted and endorsed a 20-year "National Strategy" plan. This 72-page document was approved in July 2018, by the National Legislative Assembly. Governed by the 2017 (NCPO concocted) Constitution, this policy plan focuses on tenets of stability, prosperity and sustainability. Its aim is to transform Thailand into a fully modernized country by 2037.

In a country where democracy supposedly exists, all political parties, government agencies, and public organizations must strictly comply with the National Strategy. Senators, most of whom are put into power by the military junta, must draft public policies that support this master plan. If not, he or she may be suspended or expelled from public office by the overseeing National Strategy Committee, in conjunction with the National Anti-Corruption Commission, and possibly serve a jail term. (Source: "20-year National." Oct. 13, 2018)

Another article is needed in order to articulate further details of what is ensuing in modern-day Thailand. This would include information about Thailand's contentious 2019 election, about new forest management laws that are essentially reverting rural people back into tax paying peasants, as well as about the top-down political positioning that has banned NCPO opposition party parties and their leaders.

In conclusion of this section

I illustrated a linear timeline sequence of momentous dates peculiarly interwoven with land, socio-political, and cultural policies that forever-transformed this country's geopolitical landscape and societal fabric. Perhaps most notable is this notion of imperialization (versus colonization). Again, imperialization, while like colonization involves political and economic subjugation over a territory, is specific to the British Empire. It involves indirect mechanisms of control and non-significant settlement, temporarily to teach an overtaken country about how to adopt predominantly western capitalism supporting ideals. This said, Siam — a country with a traditionally agrarian, monarchy-dominated society and economy — was stripped of its ability to manage its raw materials, which were channeled into the capitalist global market system.

I have also articulated the concocting of the Thai political State, which brought with it — for the first time in the country's history — a constitutional monarchy. Under the guise of a pseudo-democracy, a new national identity was formed. Thailand resultantly transformed into an industrialized State. This is all with a 'developed' rural countryside, territorialized and subdued rural peoples, and a homogenizing mainstream society. … This all considered, how can it be, then, that this country was not 'imperialized' by the West?

With this overarching macro-policy foundation built, the next section brings a human heartbeat to the macro-policy analysis. We journey inward and reveal an into-the-village ethnographic perspective. Through in-depth interviews and storyline, we become exposed to how some rural development policies have rendered a form of ethnocide for this country's most marginalized peoples. Their cultural socio-fabric is ever more being replaced with the societal ills yoked with homogenizing modern world culture. They offer us a message to heed.

Chapter 4: Case Study — A Template for the 'De' of Development

4.1. Study-Villages Overview


Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

This chapter, while looking into the 'de' of 'development,' frames, or perhaps reframes, aspects of what researchers, academics, community workers, *and at least some policymakers* know regarding the root problems associated with capitalism-driven "development." By "root problems" I am referring to mega-development's prevalent environmental and societal degradation phenomena, which impact mostly societally marginalized peoples residing.

As mentioned in prior chapters, the societal laboratory I contextually utilize for this study is composed of rural ethnic (indigenous) communities residing throughout northern Thailand. This chapter likewise involves a qualitative and quantitative social and ESS assessment of a primary case study area. My contributive academic goal is to assess how (or whether) enhancements in their environmental and economic situations have actually improved their overall well-being.

The State: 'top-down' versus 'bottom-up' 'development'

The nation-state is 'a territorial political community with an independent and organized government.' "A State's relations with its subjects are to some extent stable and include respective responsibilities…A nation-state is a State whose primary loyalty is to a cultural self-identity, which we call a nation or nationality" (Pick; 2011: 5). For the sake of this thesis study, 'bottom-up' State-led development involves initiatives that stimulate 'comprehensive community participation' that motivates communities to expand their opportunities, improve local resource management, increase communication and engagement and interchange, and localize financial access" (Larrison; 1999: 68).

Northern Thailand indigenous "hill tribe people," ten recognized ethnicities and totaling about one million people, are by all means State subjects. They, particularly due to the 1932 creation of the Thai political state and the 'Thai-fication' phenomenon, have been being systematically assimilated into the national Thai (and global) culture blob with institutional policies and predominantly top-down development planning processes. They have no central government representation, and their capacity to lobby policy-related matters is relatively nil.

While Kelly, Yutthaphonphinit, Seubsman, and Sleigh (2012) make claim that Thailand is supposedly a glorious garden of bottom-up and community supporting societal nourishment, the approach and the extent to which these indigenous communities have experienced 'comprehensive community participation' that is supposed to come along with 'bottom-up' development, or have received 'professional leadership' and 'access to resources' supposedly synonymous with the top-down development initiatives (Larrison; 1999) is, in my opinion, questionable — if not, pretty much null. I have rather seen that, mostly, these marginalized, societally peripheral groups are pretty much on their own, coping with what they are being top-down told to do or else suffer consequences.

In context with *Pumuen* and the others residing amid the peripheries

This thesis's primary case study area is called, *Pumuen*. I consider this two-village area a 'template for the 'de' of 'development.' My study likewise illustrates, somewhat generally, the actual 'development' related changes that over the past 140 years have transpired throughout this geographically and socio-politically sensitive area. This is primarily in relation to how top-down and arguably heavy-handed central government-directed development policies have affected this community area's natural environment, socio-economic conditions, and psycho-social functioning. I also utilize this temporally modeled analysis of socio-culture, government policy, and environmental factors for looking at directly and indirectly driven changes in this community area's ESS (e.g., provisioning, regulating, cultural, and supporting).

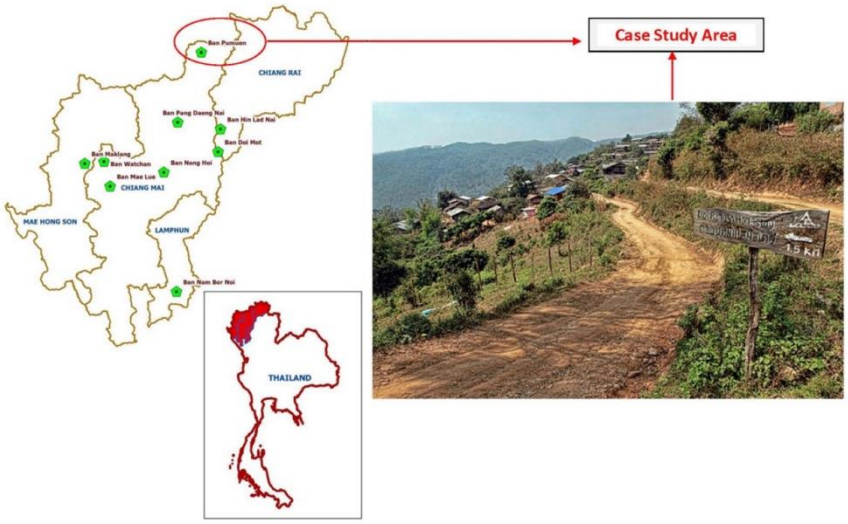


Figure 4.1: GIS map of primary case study area. (Source: thesis author)

While I visited many villages in Thailand from 2010–2018, I focused on this area because, besides its high profile with the Thai government (and Monarchy), this area's development-related transformation can be longitudinally observed and can therefore potentially serve as a planning

and development learning model. The people here are socially marginalized. They are not fully considered "Thai" citizens and therefore have little to no social rights and no central government representation. Many are essentially only permitted to reside in the country and be subject to the political State's will; however, this is gradually changing as a post-imperialized Siam/Thailand becomes further established amid the capitalist global order.

That said, these rural ethnic communities have for decades experienced top-down Thai government-directed development directives and with minuscule involvement in the major decision-making processes that have directly affected them. Changes within these communities' perceptions, behaviors, and ultimately their livelihoods have ensued.

***Pumuen*: A template for the 'de' of development**

Figure 4.1: *Pumuen* villages area. (Source: Google Maps, compiled by thesis author)

The primary case study area is located in far northern Thailand's *Fang* District in Chiang Mai Province. It is amid *Fah Hom Pok* National Park, formerly known as Mae Fang National Park. Within close proximity of the Burma/Myanmar border, this has historically been a politically sensitive area. This is especially true when considering concerns that Western powers had (and perhaps still have) regarding 'natural resource' acquisition and also with what was perceived by the West as a post-WWII communist expansionism threat.

Pumuen Nai village is a 58-household, approximately 300-person community comprised of *Lahu Na* (Black Lahu) peoples. Established in the 1970s, *Pumuen Nai* is positioned near another *Lahu* settlement called *Pumuen Nok*, which is a 54-household approximately 250-person community comprised of *Lahu Nyi* (Red Lahu) peoples. The earliest inhabitants of *Pumuen Nok* (and this upland area) arrived around 1880. They are originally from Tibet and China. Most of the original villagers immigrated to this location from Myanmar.

Villagers' land and natural resource tenure situation, and the linked socio-power dynamics, is complex. This area's initial settlers experienced relatively freestyle land usage. Slash and burn upland rice and opium shift cultivation was central to their 'traditional' livelihoods. They did this relatively autonomously for approximately 70 years, until when this area was arguably government force-converted to that of sedentary orchard agriculture.

Particularly since the 1950s, when the central Thai government enacted land use regulations, the soil underneath villagers' feet is state-owned national park "reserved forest" territory. Likewise, although villagers have no de jure legal rights to this land, they (with the paramilitary Thai Forestry Department never far away) have been granted de facto permission to cultivate this land for both community and private (i.e., household) purposes. Villagers, using informally secure household land plots positioned within what is essentially community-shared territory, nowadays cultivate cash crops primarily that of tea and other orchard produce. Forest products, regarded by villagers as common pool resources, are also collected for personal use and sometimes for financial income purposes.

In terms of central government and local-level power relationship dynamics, both *Pumuen Nai* and *Pumuen Nok* (since the 1990s) are registered villages within the Thai central-state system. This means they are subject to state government regulations, while also experiencing some publicly funded services such as formal education and infrastructure maintenance. Villagers requested projects such as a tarred road and high-power electricity. Therefore, this suggests villagers' in general maintain a favorable viewpoint of government-managed development projects; this is as a means to an end, involving personal gain and also appeasing the government.

The *Pumuen* communities engage this system by and through those who are formal (i.e., village elected) leaders often influenced by informal leaders (e.g.., elders); this dynamic is essentially a conjoining of their traditional cultural socio-fabric and a political State system. This creates a semi-symbiotic, at times turbulent, socio-political situation whereby villagers maintain forms of governance structures utilized for maintaining some civil and civic freedoms while essentially coping with staunch rural development-related top-down central government directives.

While this case study addresses the trend of this entire village area's 140-year history, *Pumuen Nai* (Black Lahu) village is the primary focus.

***Pumuen*'s longitudinal 'development' transformation overview:**

This temporally analyzed study, covering a timeframe spanning from the 1880s until 2018, is not intended as a detailed anthropological analysis. Rather, it indicates societal *trends* about multi-level relationship factors related with socio-composition, infrastructure, some government policies, socio-economics, and villagers' natural environment and socio-culture. This analysis likewise considers how villagers' ways of life have longitudinally transformed according to their actual and perceived needs.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

That said, I am neither romanticizing nor glorifying (anymore) the 'traditional' ways of life that villagers once fully lived. This notion of 'traditional' is at least considering autonomy from national policy directives (e.g., the Thai Department of Interior (people territorialization) and the Thai Forestry Department (land territorialization), as discussed in chapter two, a slash and burn shifting cultivation lifestyle and cultural fabric, usage of oral tradition and related indigenous knowledge, and an intact socially regulating societal structure. … I am rather merely asserting that villagers' culturally 'traditional' values and norms have been essentially dissolved, or at least greatly transformed. This continually results in a form of ethnocide (i.e., the deliberate and systematic destruction of the culture of an ethnic group).

The 'development' related phenomena that have ensued in *Pumuen*, and also throughout the secondary villages in my study, has resultantly surfaced societal transformations that reveal societal phenomena that have long since happened in fully "developed" and 'modernized' world areas. Likewise, I vehemently believe that the trends revealed throughout this case study transpire when humans at least try to unplug from 'nature' and hence perpetuate the onset of societally dictating surplus-driven competitive market systems. This is when considering urbanization phenomena, such as materialism, the hedonistic desire for personal territory, material acquisition, land grabbing, environmental degradation, economic inequality, ethnic gentrification, poverty, and a resulting increase in societal division and conflict.

Looking closer at *Pumuen* and the 'development' model

Considering Pieterse's (2001) definition of 'development' as 'an organized intervention of collective affairs based on a standard of improvement,' figures 4.2 and 4.3 (below) reveal a multi-factored overview of *Pumuen* area's 'development' related transformation. A detailed ethnographic narrative of the *Pumuen* area's 'de' of 'development' is revealed in chapter five, with a qualitative and quantitative analysis of *Pumuen*'s ESS.

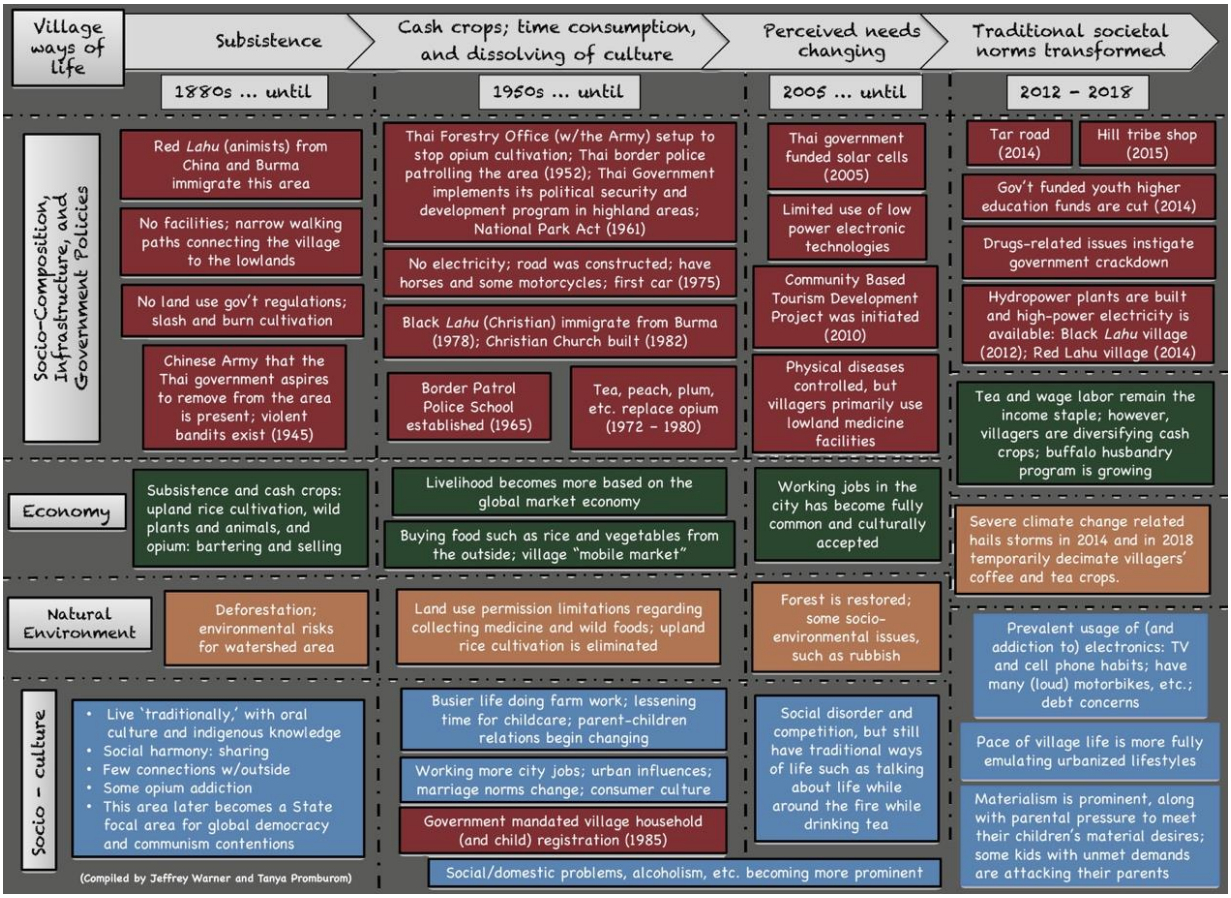


Figure 4.2: 'Development Timeline' of the *Pumuen* case study area. (Source: Tanya Promburom and thesis author)

Reading Figure 4.2 from its upper-left to its lower-right reveals that while villagers' natural environment, physical health, and livelihood means have consistently improved, it is perhaps reasonable to assess that their overall situation in terms of socio-aesthetic composition and overall societal functioning is bleak. I have likewise been observing throughout five years of visiting this community area that their societal scenario has been (and is) drastically worsening. Most recent observations, particularly related to societal degradation (e.g., drug prominence, youth rebellion, domestic abuse, etc.), rendered me pondering what will soon happen there.

When considering panarchy and the adaptive cycle (i.e., growth, *conservation, release, and reorganization),* I assess that the *Pumuen* communities' area throughout this temporal scale has experienced several major societal system states, with multiple minor state changes.

Likewise, I am suggesting that the primary phenomena (i.e., externally induced, direct drivers of change) that have internally affected these peoples and the overall area are: 1) when the Red *Lahu* immigrated to this area, which was a new start for their socio-ecological existence and overall functioning (1880s); this also pertains to the 1978 arrival of the Black *Lahu (*i.e., *Pumuen Nai)*; 2) when post-WWII (1950s and beyond) global politics influenced Thailand's national policies, particularly involving, under the policy justification of "national security," the patrolling (and territorialization) of border and upland areas. This initiated the process of assimilating these rural and peripheral agrarian communities into the modernized global capitalism matrix; and 3) the central government funded and top-down policy-directed implementation of road, electricity, and communications infrastructure (2005, and beyond).

— 'Development' History of *Pumuen* Area (simplified) —

1880s … until	1950s … until	2005 — 2018	
• Red *Lahu* from China and Burma immigrated to here • No government enforced land use regulations • Culturally traditional ways of life: sharing; social harmony • Subsistence lifestyle: slash and burn rice cultivation; hunting and collecting wild plants and opium; bartering and selling • Villagers are fairly autonomous, with few outside connections; have walking trails to lowland urban areas • Deforestation related issues • China Army (communists) occupation, which the government desires to remove	• Thai government begins patrolling this border area for 'national security' reasons; dirt road constructed • 1961 National Park Act: rural 'development' programs ensue in highland areas • Border Patrol Police "school" for village children established (1965) • Land use limitations: upland rice and opium cultivation eliminated: major culture shifts to more cash crops; many traditions disappearing • Urban (market) access; busier lifestyles; social problems begin • Forest becomes restored	• Solar cells installed (2005): low-power technology usage, such as black and white television; villagers still meet in the evenings to talk • Hydropower dam (*Pumuen Nai*) built (2012): satellite TV programming ("outside") • Villagers living and working in the city has become fully accepted as village culture. • Environmental and societal pollution: trash from processed foods; noise pollution (karaoke); alcohol and other drug addictions • Financial debt pressures • Forest buffalo husbandry becomes allowed (2008)	• New hydropower dam built, providing high power to *Pumuen Nok.* Tar road also built (2014) • Unusual hail storms devastate tea and coffee crops (2014 and 2018). Villagers start more to diversify their crops. • "Hill tribe shop" created, supposedly so that villagers can sell their goods (2015) • Increasing prominence of materialism: many (loud) motorbikes; some cars • Pace of village life has greatly increased as villagers emulate urban life • Increasing societal comparisons, social degradation and conflicts (some violent)

Figure 4.3: Simplified version of the *Pumuen* case study area's development transformation. (Source: thesis author)

1) 1880s – 1950: Based on interviews with villagers,' surely the Red Lahu then comprising Pumuen Nok village during the 1880s, and later in the 1970s with the Black Lahu of Pumuen Nai, lived a subsistence 'traditional' agrarian cultural lifestyle involving slash and burn (upland rice, and opium) cultivation. Villagers essentially lived without direct central government control or settlement. They harvested wild plants and animals, while occasionally utilizing walking trails for traveling to the lowland urban areas, where they acquired livelihood essentials by bartering and selling forest goods.

British (and some French) timber firms feeding colonial lust for naval supremacy and global colonization during the 1880s and 1890s literally raked Siam of its teakwood (Barton and Bennett, 2010). During this time (from the late-1940s and well into the 1980s) intensive and extensive logging ensued, resulting in serious deforestation-related issues. This scenario also cultivated a suitable topography for opium cultivation, which funded, among many stakeholders, the communist (and often pillaging and murderous) China Army militia groups that the later-created Thai government desired to flush from this area. The end of this 70-year era is really when the internal national 'development' began.

2) 1950s – 2005: Regional and arguably global West-led pressures ushered the (significantly American-funded) Thai military, under the policy umbrella of the Thai National Park Act, to for "national security" reasons patrol Thailand's upland regions. The 'development' of Thailand's peripheral areas and peoples ensued. Many villagers, non-Thai citizens and arguably under domestic military threat, were for a time also militarized and placed amid the front lines of the anti-communist movement. The Royal Project, a rural development scheme at least outwardly purposed for replacing opium with national GDP-enhancing cash crops, was the fundamental policy program used for these socio-political directives.

Military-led Thai curriculum education schools were initiated in highland villages. Thai language and commercial farming skills were instilled into villagers' socio-fabric. Central government-directed land use limitations for the most part banned villagers' traditional agrarian (shift cultivation) livelihoods, which became replaced with and by money market-dependent cash crop systems. The encompassing forest was becoming ever more restored, with villagers used as the labor force for accomplishing this national development policy initiative. Strict land-use regulations were eased with increasing forest biodiversity and bolstered food security. However, along with rural villages, welcomed road construction villagers became ever more plugged into the urban matrix and its symbiotic global market system. Life became forever changed, for worse or for better.

3) 2005 – 2018: Installation of low-power solar cell technology and subsequent hydropower infrastructure sparked an ever-expanding technological revolution that forever-transformed villagers' worldviews and cultural livelihoods. As communities replace their 'traditional' analog ways with an increasing usage of the electron and intimately linked digital modernity, their pace of life proportionately increases. The urban matrix came to the village.

Energetically charging this phenomenon is materialism-driven media messages and villagers' increasing contact with “the outside world.” This cultivates a dichotomous sociological ecosystem whereby they (somewhat falsely) attribute the urban global capitalist matrix system inherently foreign to them with “development” that is supposedly, or at least marketed to be, holistically beneficial. Likewise, although villagers’ encompassing geographical environment becomes restored via central state-directed reforestation initiatives (hence more ‘natural’ and nourishing) villagers’ socio-fabric has been unraveling, reorganizing, and ever more growing into a new form (i.e., panarchy).

As rural villagers’ ‘traditional’ (perhaps life-sustaining) cultural norms are exported via the newly built tar road, imported through the doorways of modernity has come societal and environmental pollution comprised of synthetic materialism, social stratification, debt pressures, and intra and interpersonal strife to the likes they have never experienced. Nowadays, they are essentially residing sociologically amid a multigenerational cultural identity crisis.

4.2. Pumuen Village: A Socio-Ecological Transformation Ethnography

4.2.1. 1880s - 1950: A Subsistence Based ‘Traditional’ Paradigm

Immigration, subsistence ways of life, beckoning government control, and changes

Again, the *Pumuen* area’s ‘development’ can likely be divided into three periods in terms of villagers’ way of life: 1) subsistence/primitive: freedom of resources usage, before prominent Thai nation-state intervention; 2) transnational (post-WWII) modernization and top-down State intervention in cultural affairs (i.e., internal ‘development’); and 3) capitalism and assimilation.

The *Lahu Nyi* (Red *Lahu*) immigrated to this village area in the early 1880s. It is unclear to me exactly why they came to this upland area. However, it is perhaps prudent to consider the regional conflicts ensuing at that time, including war inside Burma’s borders and the Western powers’ regional colonization transpiring. It is likely that Britain’s actions and also Burma’s internal strife were direct drivers for the Red *Lahu* to emigrate out of Burma (as they had done from China, Tibet, etc.) and to this upland “Zomia” area (Scott, 2009).

In terms of livelihood, villagers from the 1880s (until after the 1950s) lived traditional subsistence ways of life (i.e., the action or state of having what is needed to stay alive, but no extra). They grew upland rice and other vegetables, and hunted and gathered food from the encompassing (reportedly somewhat scarce) jungle forest. They lived a life relatively free of

outside influences or cultural interventions from the central government. It is being assumed here that any community planning at that time was done in culturally traditional manners (i.e., village leadership structures based on the traditional socio-fabric).

There was no electricity or other facilities in *Lahu Nyi* (red Lahu) village. The only roadway connecting villagers to the urban lowland areas was a narrow trail carved through the thick forest that was passable on foot or via horses and donkeys.

Photo courtesy of Dome Chaikor

Opium and maize were eventually grown here and used as cash crops. These goods were traded in the lowland areas and for life necessities (such as chili and salt) that were not available in the highlands. Villagers used the opium being grown in this area as a recreational feel-good drug and for traditional medicine. Pigs, buffalo, and cows (sustained via the surrounding forest) comprised commercial animals. For decades, this way of life supported the village area's primary economic system of bartering. Villagers lived fairly autonomously from central Thai government regulations, and reportedly, social harmony within the village was prominent. However, this would eventually change greatly.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Regarding villagers' encompassing environment, it is likely that they cleared some forest to make space for slash and burn rotational farming practices. I do not know to what extent these traditional livelihood practices at that time resulted in deforestation and environmental degradation. What is certain is that these forests were bordering the Southern Shan states of then-British Burma and hence were an extension of that area both geographically and politically.

Siam (becoming Thailand in 1932) was fairly autonomous in terms of its engagement in the world economy. Thailand's economy before 1940 was marked by remarkably low long-term

real economic growth, unusually high levels of the population living in rural areas, and limited industrialization and urbanization (Ouyyanont. 2012). The Thai government, at least at first, therefore had little desire, need, or means — let alone in a highland forest watershed area — to regulate the lifestyles of the Red *Lahu* villagers living in this area; this is particularly in relation to their use of natural resources. However, "from the mid-Nineteenth Century, Siam's economy was increasingly shaped by international developments and drawn into the world economy through migration, above all through the arrival of many thousands of Chinese after the 1880s" (Ouyyanont; 2012: 44).

While this perhaps had little impact on the upland villagers of *Pumuen Nyi* at that time, this migration would become more prominent in the ensuing years. What is important is to again accentuate the fact that Thailand was becoming ever more engaged in the global market system and its related socio-political affairs. This also resulted in social transformation within the country.

According to Laohachaiboon and Takeda in their 2007 article, "Teak Logging in a Tran-Boundary Watershed: A Historical Case Study of the Ing River Basin in Northern Thailand" (pp. 2–3):

> In British Burma, the British quest for teak timber began in the 1820s, and led to three successive extensions of territorial control, in 1826, 1852, and 1886 (Jorgensen 1980, 81–3). … During these periods, various unsettled disputes about teak logging interests flared up between the British and the Burmese governments, eventually culminating in the third British invasion, into Upper Burma (Bryant 1997, 206). Due to the ensuing warfare and the concomitant decline of teak supplies in British Burma, the British shifted their sources of teak extraction from British Burma to the Lanna kingdom, a tributary state of Siam (Falkus 1989, 137–8).

In 1899, all of Siam's forests were declared government property, and all logging without payment to the Royal Forest Department was prohibited. Keep in mind that in chapter two of this thesis, these forests were under the jurisdiction of an essentially British-led arm of government. This said, "the government of Siam preferred to lease the forests to any British timber firm possessing adequate capital to extract the teak trees" (Laohachaiboon and Takeda, 2007, p. 9). In 1909, Britain's Borneo Company indeed gained the rights to scrape Siam's forests of its teakwood. From 1912–1930, the company did so quite freely and with little to no Siam government oversight. … I deem this historical information essentially important because it is linked with Siam's colonization/imperialization and the actual onset of the territorialization of the people residing amid the peripheral areas, such as the Red *Lahu*.

The Chinese Civil War (1927–1950) ensued during the early 1940s. Allegedly, some communist members of the China Army moved into Thailand's national border areas (including Burma/Myanmar). Opium and whiskey were sold on the black market. Some say these opium cultivators were doing this to fund politically driven military efforts. Another possible story is that the opium being grown in Siam/Thailand's highlands was connected with the First and the the Second Opium War(s) (i.e., mid-1800s) involving engagements between the United Kingdom and Qing dynasty.

These colonization-related phenomena transpired regarding diplomatic relations, trade, and the administration of justice in China (Tsang: 2007); later, this involved legalizing the opium trade, expanding additional trade, exempting British merchants from foreign important and internal transit duties. I mean, considering the 1855 Bowring Treaty that was essentially by the British used to colonize/imperialize/territorialize Siam, is it possible that the British Empire was actually (at least initially) growing the Se-Asia opium and dumping it into China to suppress the domestic silver market and fund the tea trade??

The Red *Lahu* became part of this scheme. I was told that villagers were used as laborers, and the soldiers also purchased goods such as rice and vegetables. Perhaps unfortunately, it is this collaboration with the Chinese that eventually brought to villagers top-down central government control that would forever transform their existence. That said, the Thai government, which did not have a prominent presence in the area, desired to oust the Chinese. In 1945, the Thai military accomplished this by essentially militarizing villagers. The leader of the Red *Lahu* village, Mr. *Taeng Tao*, was granted a soldier status ranking of "*muen*." *Pu* in the Thai language means "old man." *Pumuen* is also a Burmese *Tai Yai* (*Shan*) word used to describe a village or sub-district headman (source: Thailand Department of Social Development and Welfare; 2012: 109).

A Thai Royal Forest Department office was established in the *Pumuen* area. By 1952, border (military) police were patrolling this newly established military and forestry zone. The Thai government needed to further establish and cultivate good relationships with the Red *Lahu*, who were vitally needed as a barrier to chase out the China Army militia groups. Villagers were essentially militarized and placed on the front line of the region's anti-communist front. They

watched for further Chinese presence and further developed plans to eradicate opium from Thailand's highland areas.

Development projects in the northern Thailand highlands effectively replaced opium with alternative cash crops and reduced opium production to a trickle during the final decades of the Twentieth Century.

> When they were cultivating the illicit drug, Thailand's hill tribes were a focus of strong interest by the international news media and foreign governments. To an informed observer visiting a hill tribe village, it is clear that the new "opium-free" economy is barely functioning in Thailand's northern highlands. Additionally, hidden largely from view are poverty-related social problems such as drug trafficking, heroin addiction, prostitution, and AIDS (Crooker, 2005: 289).

This is a key time for the development of the *Pumuen* area. Formerly being considered by Thai government authorities as untamed savage "forest people," some of the *Lahu* villagers stood proudly while being noticed and made useful by the Thai government and military. Additionally, they were merely being used from the top down and had to do whatever the Thai government directed.

Still, for a while anyway, villagers during the 1950s lived without electricity or other modern amenities and with minimal contact with "the outside world," beyond these newfound interactions with the Thai military and the gun barrels armed by central government policies. Villagers, now living amid the onset of a societal system state shift, were being utilized as an extension of the Thai government, and hence the linkage with the upland areas that comprise their homes and urban lowland worlds had more formally ensued.

***

In a February 2013 interview, the then 64-year-old Pumuen *Nyi* (Red *Lahu*) village headman, who was born there in 1949, confirmed for me that his ancestors immigrated to this upland area from Burma about 200 years prior. He recalled his childhood. There were no electricity or other facilities, no written materials. All cultural knowledge was orally transferred, and everyone participated in this lifeline. While no human societal situation is ever idyllic, his fellow community members cooperated while being self-sufficient regarding their primary food sources, clothing, medicine, and additional livelihood aspects. Except some opium addiction issues, villagers were for the most part happy and healthy.

He was 10 years old when "the communists came" from southern China's Yunnan province, which borders Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam. "We grew upland rice and lived a

subsistence way of life, not for selling," he said. "When the Chinese came, we sold our rice to them." He also recalled that the Thai government did not want the Chinese soldiers there, and this was when the Thai soldiers came. With the soldiers came the dirt road. Considering landscape ecology, this road corridor initially plugged the village patch into the global market system. While the road eventually led to the ejection of the Chinese communist militant groups, it also successfully resulted in the injection of outside influences arguably incompatible with villagers' socio-fabric.

"The gods made the *Lahu* to be on the mountain, and we have to preserve the original culture," he said. "Before, we had wood and animals and wild plants and no technologies. But when the government came things changed…The officers told us that we have to do things. We had no choice but to change…Now with so much change, we have to have the technologies and the road to meet the needs of development and modernity. We need these things to sell our cash crops…Life has changed. It's not the same as in the past." Unlike before, they became subject to government-mandated land limitations. This, he said, makes it difficult for them to generate income. "We need money; we need income," he said. "We even used to be able to generate income from opium cultivation...Now we cannot do many things."

A balanced perspective into why the Thai government made heavy-handed forest policy-related decisions is also needed here.

According to a 2015 report by the World Wildlife Fund, between 1945–1975 (perhaps peculiarly after WWII and amid the Vietnam War), Thailand's forests — what remained of them anyway, after Britain and France swept out their share during the Colonial Era — declined 61 percent to include merely 34 percent of the country's land area. Over the ensuing eleven years, Thailand would lose an additional 28 percent. My point is that, considering the massive amount of natural resource depletion Siam/Thailand had endured over the previous 70 years, it is understandable why the government might need to step up its conservation efforts; this is regardless of some potential other motivations related to the full creation of a nation-state and national culture.

Still, per the point of this thesis study, the *Lahu* living in *Pumuen* (and the hundreds of thousands of other indigenous peoples living throughout northern Thailand's upland areas) were becoming ever more under the central government and its military's intensifying watchful eye.

This is particularly true when considering villagers' forest activities and intimately linked ways of life.

4.2.2. 1950s - 2005: Top-Down State Intervention in Collective Affairs

In 1960, a group of villagers was flown by military helicopter to the coastal town of *Hua Hin* in Thailand's South. This was to meet and discuss directly with His Majesty King *Bhumibol Adulyadej* (Rama IX) about the future of the *Pumuen* area. There was a two-pronged strategy related to this communication and partnership with the *Lahu*. One reason was to further put the country's peripheral folk on to the front line of rural-related political operations (e.g., removal of Chinese militants and also the opium serving as their financial lifeblood). I have yet to confirm whether this came as part of Thailand's royally sponsored Village Scout movement, the military National Defense Volunteers, or membership of district or provincial volunteer brigades.

Philip Hirsch, Professor of Human Geography at the School of Geosciences at the University of Sydney, did his rural development-related PhD fieldwork (1984–5) in southern Thailand. Hirsch has also worked extensively in northern Thailand and throughout the Mekong River region.

Hirsch, in his 1989 article, "State in the Village: Interpreting Rural Development in Thailand," writes critically of the Thai State's development-related motives:

> The discourse of rural development contains much that deals with villagers increasing their share of the fruits of development, their rights, duties, and responsibilities as citizens, and the unity of the Thai people. Implied is a sense of belonging, of the village as an integral part of the State, of villagers as *subjects rather than objects* of State policy, of farmers as the 'backbone' of the nation…
>
> Yet by the same token, the official discourse of nation, religion and Monarchy is reinforced by physical and institutional accessibility *afforded by schemes falling under the rural development aegis to establish an increasing monopoly in terms of legitimacy of State institutions and procedures affecting the everyday social and economic life of village and villagers*…
>
> In other words, just as state-led rural development in principle gives village and villagers access to the material and political resources of the State, with all the implications for citizen participation, modernization, and perhaps democratization, so the State is moving into the village. The latter move is through reformed (or co-opted?) village institutions as well as by facilitation of entry by state officials" (p.41).

That said, in 1961, the Thai State Park Act was ratified. This policy, besides the establishment of national parks and other forest conservation areas (all under strict authority of the Royal Forestry Department), came in unison with a countrywide political security and development program throughout all of northern Thailand's highland areas (and beyond). This further brought with it a plethora of major changes for rural highland communities, including *Pumuen Nai*. This included, and in some ways still includes, stringent land use regulations affecting villagers' traditional practices involving hunting, fishing, and wood, medicine, and forest food gathering. Remember always that for spiritually animist agrarian societies like the Red Lahu, these traditional practices are intimately linked with their belief systems. If these societal systems are drastically altered or severed, a form of irreversible ethnocide ensues.

In comes the State, through 'education' and 'development'

By 1965, the *Hieng Thai Thamrong* Border Patrol Police School was operational in *Pumuen Nok* (red *Lahu*) village. Village children absorb a Bangkok-directed mainstream Thai education curriculum. This means there is no Lahu cultural education. Village children can study here until they are sixteen years old, but no high school graduation is offered. They must locate this in the lowlands.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

This government school initiative happened here, and throughout northern Thailand's upland areas, in conjunction with planning for The Royal Project. This highly popular (and arguably successful) non-profit organization was founded in 1969. It was masterminded by *King Bhumibol Adulyadej* (Rama IX) to 'solve the problems of deforestation, poverty, and opium production' by promoting alternative crops in Thailand was underway. The explicitly communicated premise was and remains to replace the opium being grown in Thailand's mountainous regions with alternative cash crops such as cabbage, lettuce, kidney beans, tea, fruits, coffee, peaches, apples, herbs, and decorative flowers.

A Royal Project officer said in a May 21, 2014 interview with me that "The purpose of this Project is to develop the environment, the people and the economics." He stressed this Project's objective is agriculture. "Sometimes the villagers need support from the government," he said. "They need more development and good management…I am happy that along with the development I can help them be healthier."

This officer said that regarding environment, the government had (and still has) intention of replanting deforested areas and cultivating new forests. Regarding the cultures of these rural peoples, he said this project is mostly about "protecting" them from the perils of drug usage (e.g., opium, and methamphetamines). Regarding economics, this project is about promoting orchards and cash crops, including plums, avocados, cabbage, persimmon, strawberries, tea, and coffee. This agro-business system functions via multilayered cooperatives.

He confirmed this project, besides its benefits, has also caused these rural ethnic groups to modernize (e.g., build modern-style buildings, adopt electronics technologies, etc.), which has transformed their cultural socio-fabric. "It's a trade-off," he said, regarding agro-business-related rural development. "Villagers have improved well-being, but they lose some of their culture...It depends on the community. They have to take responsibility for themselves."

The officer said that some communities do not invest properly or know about the risks. They implement too much business perspective. Sometimes, the city people also influence communities and perpetuate detrimental social change. This is especially true when villagers are asked to travel to urban areas and perform cultural performances. The officer said this is not a good way. He said that many communities still practice their New Year traditions, and sometimes other communities come to share about culture and other information.

"Everything has changed…There is more development everywhere. People are at risk," he said. "Children aren't learning in the agricultural schools anymore. They work doing other things or in the city. Communications have changed too...It (the development impacts) all depends on the tribe, the location, their history, and the overall dynamics…"

"The Hmong are business oriented," he added. "The Karen are conservative…It also depends on the village leadership…Villagers may act one way while in the village but act another way when they are outside the village" away from regulating cultural pressures. For example, people cannot be forced to wear traditional dress while living in the city. He said that "One thing creates another thing…What (villagers) have now is essentially not their original culture. Their new costumes are modern. The sewing machines are modern. Everything is their modern culture."

The officer was asked directly if, even though the essential design of the Royal Project may be to "help people," is this Project a means for the government to essentially suck these peripheral communities into a well-marketed 'development' policy scheme, ultimately to socially homogenize the country. Did this Project's founders realize the deep socio-impacts this social

policy was going to eventually have on these tribal cultures? This is because they abandon their traditional ways of life in exchange for development, modernity, and dependence on a globalized capitalism-fueled money market system?

After a thoughtful pause, this officer said that all communities in Thailand's highland areas were surveyed. Villagers' Thai language skills, among other aspects, were assessed, government schools were established, and agriculture-based vocational skills were transferred to the villagers. "The Royal Project was the way to make this happen." So, the answer to my somewhat rhetorical question: Yes. [End of interview]

This 'development' phenomenon was and continues happening throughout northern Thailand's rural lowland Thai and in the highland indigenous ethnic communities. Meanwhile, the popularity of the Royal Project has continually increased both domestically and internationally. Internationally, this Project was essentially helping with the West-led 'drug war,' expunging the region's opium production and market (or perhaps moving it to another location). Thai domestically, the "hill tribe people" were believed to be opium-growing 'destroyers of the forest.' Therefore, Rama IX's royal development program was (and continues) heralded as the savior of Thailand's beloved forest areas. This Thai state-mandated transition from opium to tea production in *Pumuen* was, overall, really the full onset of the area's 'modern development.' The Royal Project, in these regards, is arguably the means for the country's domestic development and hence a societal homogenization into a state of 'Thainess.' These rural folks exist on societal margins. Crooker (2005) talks of Thailand's prior (and continuing) "steadfast commitment" to opium reduction in northern Thailand. Villages like *Pumuen* "no longer sell opium to local warlords or lowland drug traffickers. They live in permanent settlements, grow legitimate cash crops, and have a stake in participating in Thai society. However, their overall environmental deterioration threatens their livelihoods and tribal people constitute the poorest socioeconomic strata" (p.292).

Royalty visits *Pumuen*

In 1970, King *Bhumibol Adulyadej* (Rama IX) visited the Pumuen area for the first time. This was to observe the Royal Project related 'development' progress. Villagers were given plant and animal stocks such as lychee, plum, chickens, and other agricultural products.

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While this central government visit, and many others all over Thailand, may perhaps have been well intended, Hirsch (1989) says:

> Recent history of the central Thai state and rural village relations have been marked by a shift from large-scale rural neglect in the context of rapid urban-dominated growth to an apparent concern to spread the material fruits of development and involve the rural populace in national affairs by means of an accelerated State-led rural development program, particularly under the (1982-6) Fifth Five-Year Plan (36).

Hirsch further maintains that state involvement in and commercial penetration of the countryside have operated in tandem, facilitating or establishing new modes of surplus extraction (Higgott and Robison, 1985).

> Increasing agricultural production and surpluses has mainly been a process of expanding agricultural land area, rather than of generating additional surplus by capitalization of agriculture in existing cultivated areas, and this has been at the expense of forested areas. Such a tendency has led to the common emphasis on the geographical rather than technological frontier in describing change in Thai agriculture in a period of rapid economic and population growth. This has placed penetration of state and capital in rather a different context than in more typical green revolution situations elsewhere (Ingram, 1971; IBRD, 1983; Hirsch, 1989: 37).

Hirsch's work therefore suggests that the 'penetration' of the state into the *Pumuen* area is really about capitalist surplus extraction versus for the supposed betterment of rural communities.

> It is not simply the existence of a large forest land resource that accounts for peculiarities of the Thai case. Expansion into forest areas has also taken place *due to marginalization of populations in older agricultural areas* (for example through debt foreclosure), demands of the world market during the early 1970s for crops suited for upland areas (such as maize, tapioca, and sugar-cane, [or tea]) that provide substantial foreign exchange earnings, and State enterprise exploitation of valuable timber reserves

> under concession. Meanwhile, the nature of settlement of forest areas is such as to *produce a rapid evolution from isolated subsistence communities to villages whose internal differentiation is increasingly determined by capitalist relations of production and that are subject to a high level of State attention* (cf. Collins, 1986; De Koninck and McTaggart, 1987; Hirsch. 1989, 37).

Hirsch says that "ecological conditions are such that early planting of subsistence crops mixed with commercial field crops soon gives over to a largely commercial village agricultural economy" (1989: 37). The deterioration of forest soils, which in northern Thai areas where deforestation and upland rice are prominent (e.g., in *Nan),* equates to purchased inputs (e.g., fertilizer, farming equipment, hired labor, etc.) being increasingly required for agricultural production. In these regards, "State interest in these areas is aroused partly by their political sensitivity, as evidenced by their 'border' status irrespective of proximity to the national frontier" (Hirsch. 1989, 37). *Pumuen* village is near the Burma border.

In 1972, King Rama IX visited *Pumuen* again. This was to further initiate orchard cultivation, as well a tea planting pilot project led by *Pumuen* villager, *Jafa* Chaikor. *Jafa* could speak both Thai and Chinese. He, sharing more of a personal connection with Rama IX, quickly became a prominent contact for the Thai government. In 1978, the Black Lahu immigrated from Burma to this area and established *Pumuen Nai* village next to the Red *Lahu* village. The tea stock came from *Doi Wawee*, about 120 km. away. While villagers report warm sentiments about the Monarch and this Royal/central Thai government's tea planting directives (versus the opium), and that the villagers did this willingly, the above photograph *perhaps* reveals an additional aspect of this story.

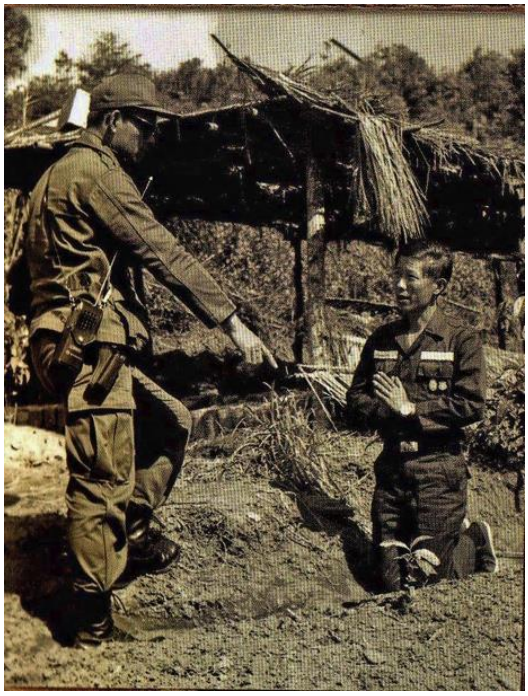


Photo courtesy of Dome Chaikor

> Developmentalism is the 'truth' from the point of view of the centre of power…The central thesis is that social change occurs according to a pre-established pattern, the logic and direction of which is known…Those who claim themselves furthest advanced claim privileged knowledge of the direction of change (Pieterse; 2001:18).

Jasuu Jamoo is a Black *Lahu* (*Pumuen Nok*) community member. Now this village's preacher (and among the informal leadership), he was among the first ten households who c ame to here. He moved here from another northern Thai area (*Mae Salong*).

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Jasuu reported in an October 14, 2018 interview that there were no big trees in the area when he arrived; rather, grass was plentiful. Deforestation was prevalent. For survival, he and the others also cut trees and performed slash and burn upland rice shift cultivation.

He initially worked hard labor for a landowner there, cultivating lychee, upland rice, and buffalo tending. *Jasuu* said that villagers from the Red *Lahu* village also worked together. The problem was that villagers shared in the division of labor and the pool of profit money. After being essentially forced to hand over 80 percent of these funds to the landowner, not enough remained for their livelihood; this is especially true since villagers at this time were transitioning to a more cash money-based societal system.

Jasuu reported on Chinese militant "bandit groups that were robbing and killing people here…The Thai Border Police battled and also feared these people." However, the reason the Thai Army built the roads here and throughout the other border areas was "to chase these people away. After the road was built, the militia groups disappeared."

Jasuu confirmed that villagers were also militarized and placed on the front lines. This was for regional political purposes and for natural resource policy management (e.g., reforestation). He said that during that time, the Thai government had a tree planting project. Therefore, to make more money, he labored for the Thai Forestry Department, planting trees for about USD $1 per day. The laboring women earned about half this amount.

He said that Christians from Chiang Mai promoted coffee cultivation in this area, which was a new market in Thailand. Later, *Jafa* (prior mentioned for his connection with King Rama IX) was pioneering orchard-style farming in this upland area; this included tea. During the initial stages of tea, they could not harvest the tea because they did not know how to grow or process it. The taste was bitter. There was no tea market for them, so they sold it to their neighbors. Some Chinese businessmen later taught *Jasuu* and others how to process tea. *Jasuu* also independently

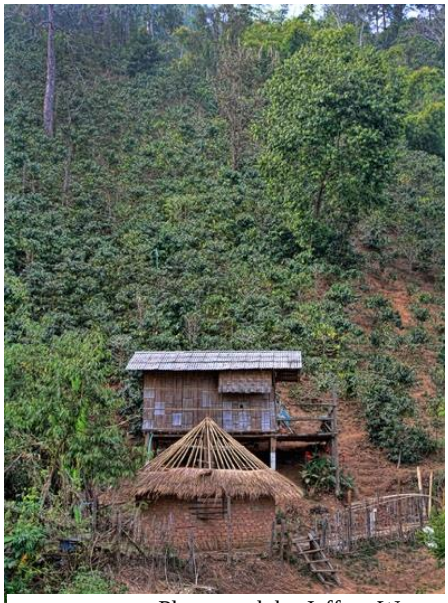
studied and learned how to cultivate this cash crop. The Thai government offers training in which he has participated. Nowadays, villagers sell to the markets in Fang, Chiang Dao, and beyond.

Preston and Ngah (2012) say that "Rural change is a continuous process in many world regions, but particularly significant in those areas affected by rapid urban and industrial change [such as in Thailand] (362).

> We have acknowledged that change has affected people in different ways according to their age, gender and social position. This needs further investigation, in particular the degree to which change differentially benefits those with superior social and political power – whether by having more property or just belonging to the dominant political grouping" (362).

As the opium went out, new societal functioning grew

By 1980, opium had been expunged from this area. By 1982, the village had grown to twenty households, and the church was built. By 1983, *Jafa*'s tea cultivation project was fully underway. Tea became, and continues to be, the primary cash crop of *Pumuen Nai* (Black Lahu) village.



Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Jasuu reported that in the mid-1980s the Thai government came and surveyed the villages. Villagers, along with providing their household census data, were interviewed and photographed. Afterward, villagers were granted a house registration certificate. They do not pay property taxes.

Now that they had been registered with the State, and hence became State territorialized subjects, villagers were also required to register child births. Otherwise, they would be ineligible for a State ID card linked with social benefits such as services at government healthcare facilities. This policy directive alone, while perhaps long-term leading to villagers' improved overall health, had a significant impact on their traditional medicine practices (and the related belief systems). Villagers receiving the Thai ID card did not mean they became Thai citizens. It just meant that they were now registered with the state and granted conditional permission to remain in their territory. Their cultures were rapidly changing.

The medicine woman/shaman in *Pumuen Nok* (Red *Lahu*) village, Napoi, now in her early 50s, said in a 2013 interview with me that far fewer people come to see her nowadays. “When I was a kid, nobody went to the hospital.” She said that community members used to also come to her for childbirths.

However, largely due to the 1985 child registration mandate, “Now they pile into the back of a truck and rush to the city.” The herbs she collects heal many diseases (e.g., malaria), she said. *Jiagulan* tea, for example, is a highly powerful medicine. *Napoi* said those who nowadays visit the lowland allopathic hospital for treatment “don’t get cured, so they return to me for help.”

Photographs by Jeffrey Warner

Napoi and her sister are the medicine people and the spiritual shamans in this village. Lahu tradition mandated that she wait until in her 40s before being eligible to receive this sacred medicine knowledge. It passed to her via oral tradition. Nowadays, unlike before, no younger villagers are stepping up to adopt and practice this traditional cultural lifeline. In my many villages, I have observed this rejection of traditional medicine practices.

Peculiar about this medicine woman and her overall situation was the two children living with her. *Napoi* said that for a fee of USD$30, this boy and girl were essentially purchased, as their methamphetamine addicted parents could not take care of them and had left the village. I have not confirmed this claim’s related details or truthfulness. I did observe that it appeared this medicine woman was taking relatively good care of these children. She admitted to grooming them for taking over traditional shamanism practices. I simply noted this as a fairly extreme case of social trends and ‘development’ impact related adaptation.

When this medicine woman was asked for reasons why people, especially the youth, are lacking interest in neither utilizing nor learning this indigenous knowledge, she said they now have modern medicine and electricity and have no interest in learning.

The aforementioned headman of this village confirmed that "things are changing," and it is not necessarily for the better. He, same as the medicine woman, said that the children are not interested in learning the traditions because there are technologies such as television and DVD's, etc. that "are more interesting to them" than traditional medicine or music. He said that God created "natural technology" such as the sun, moon, stars, and people. But humans created these other modern and "unnatural technologies," such as electronics. He shared that watching television provides them with the opportunity to see the news and learn about what is happening outside the village world, both domestic and international. "If we know about both inside and outside of the village, we can combine the two worlds," he said. "I also want to know what is happening in the world."

He said that younger people nowadays seem to have "no clue of the long-term consequences" related to abandoning their cultural traditions. He admitted that knowing it is his job as an elder to transfer (or restore) these traditions. He has tried to work with the newer generations but does not know how to do it. Another obstacle he faced was the lack of budget funds for hiring trainers. ... His daughter became Christian and built a church in the village. (Note: Christianity and animism are not particularly compatible.) He has tried to talk with her about using this church as a place for teaching about traditional *Lahu* culture. They teach Thai language and some English there, he said. However, the Church literature has changed the traditional stories.

He had particular concern over the reducing prevalence of traditional music. There are a few people left who know how to play the music. Some people in this village know how to play the drum, but nobody knows how to play the flute. He said that the flute and drum, for example, are vital. They need these instruments because they are used during ceremonies and to connect with the gods. He imagined one day that during the New Year festival, the traditional instruments were turned into CDs and karaoke machines. "I do not want to see this picture in the future." The following year, this village was plugged into high-power electricity. By 2018, the village headman's nightmare had come true. His microphone for making village announcements is even used for late-night karaoke parties that torment the entire *Pumuen* area.

This village headman was posed with the notion that this village has existed here for nearly two centuries, without the road and the dam and the technologies. Do villagers *really* need this stuff? "Technology is coming and changing things. But the village also has to develop in the right way…I want to have a meeting with the others to address what is happening."

"Outside Influences:" *Jasuu Jamoo, 66*

Issues addressed: technology impacts; children emulating mainstream culture; cultural traditions and indigenous knowledge

Photographs by Jeffrey Warner

"When I moved here nearly 40 years ago, only a narrow pathway carving through the jungle allowed us contact with the outside world. There was no electricity. Walking to the city about once a month took many hours. I didn't have outside influences. The road is good now, and city life is coming into the village. Villagers are copying behavior from the outside, especially the teenagers…

"To be *Lahu* is to collect your own food and respect the elders by giving them the first fruit. We used to do both. Everything has changed. It's not good. We want to preserve our culture. We are contributing to the changing of our culture. I wish the real sense of community through cultural traditions would return. This would make the spirit of everyone come back into harmony…

"I know that we need to preserve the culture. However, I don't know exactly how to do it. All I can do is manage my time while teaching. The first thing I teach children is how to play the flute. While I am still alive, I will reinstall and preserve my culture. If nobody preserves the culture, everything will be gone someday. If nobody helps, it will be gone. If we don't teach well enough, technology might become villagers' god…

"I remember the community relationship building activities, especially during the New Year's celebration when we would play courting games and dance together. Sometimes, 30 people would be playing a song together. Now, there are very few regular activities in the village for preserving the culture. People dance and wear traditional clothing on the outside because of what they believe on the inside. They treat each other with respect because of what they believe. Now, many villagers wear non-*Lahu* costumes…

"A problem is that villagers are marrying people from outside the village and staying in the city to work and live. When villagers move to the city, they lose touch with the feeling of being Lahu and don't believe anymore, enough to do the cultural activities from their heart. Now it seems like some people want to dance and some don't, because they have a motorcycle, a TV. They have many things and do whatever they want…

"I know that modernization is having an influence. My daughter also has electricity in her home, a cellular phone, motorbike, and a color television. Before there was television here, we would visit and talk together. Now, these relationships have been erased. You can get an education in the city. However, when you stay here in the village, it should be a *Lahu* life. Don't bring city life up to the village."

The animist medicine woman was asked further the reasoning for the middle-aged folks and particularly the youth being uninterested in learning indigenous knowledge. She said there are spirits and ghosts around the village that look like humans, but they are not humans. "They don't like those who know about the medicine," she said. "They can attack you." She has fear, and sometimes goes with the accompaniment of her husband or nephews. Likewise, when she ventures into the forest and collects herbs, there is a procedure that protects her from harm. She said this is a major deterrent for younger people and why they avoid these traditional ways.


Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

She again said that "the spirits get very angry!" if she shares this sacred information. She was asked how she feels about this overall situation. I have no further information because, upon later review of this interview conversation, my tape recording at that point turned into a screeching unintelligible mess! That night, to the surprised observation of my translator and research colleague, while attempting to sleep, something happened to me that appeared as though I was being tormented by spirits; it was not fun. (This happened to me twice, actually).

Anyway, I suspect that an additional reason for young villagers' lack of interest is due to Christian church influences. Supporting this idea is secondary information that *Jasuu Jamuu*'s daughter, *Farlae* (whom you will hear from later in this thesis), also wanted to know about traditional medicine. However, her father, the Black *Lahu* village pastor, deterred her from learning deeply about these traditional ways. Thus, here is evidence of traditional culture interfacing with modern development phenomena.

'Development' ensues

By the mid-1980s, the *Pumuen* area was underway to solidifying a new societal system state. This is particularly relevant to environmental panarchy,' this involving the ecological adaptive cycle metaphor of growth, *conservation, release, and reorganization* (Holling et al., 2002). This also pertains to what I consider 'societal panarchy,' this being when people, or a community, become institutionalized, scattered, mobilized, and then polarized.

Development "results in diffuse social capital and dynamic social relations with contradictory institutions potentially coexisting and an increased likelihood of conflict and backsliding toward scatter" (Pelling and Manuel-Navarrete, 2011, 3).

> "Rural development is seen as a varied series of responses to the formerly dominant model of modernization, which are complex in that they take place at various levels, involve multiple actors and create or arise with the emergence of new practices and new social and economic networks" (Preston and Ngah. 2012, 352–353).

Tea becoming *Pumuen* villagers' primary cash crop drastically progressed this area in terms of its 'development.' Modern electronics technologies, the tarred road, and the plethora of additional socio-environmental changes linked with this were yet to materialize. Regardless, these communities in a fairly short while transitioned (hence transformed) from their 'traditional' subsistence ways of life to that of 'an intervention in their collective affairs' (Pieterse; 2001). This was instituted via top-down Thai state rural development policies. Their economy and related social functioning were now prominently operating on this new system (i.e., a cash economy versus bartering). Villagers' existing social networks were also part of this dynamic. As of 2013, it had been 30 years since poppy plants were last seen blanketing this area. However, villagers were (and continue) spending their days picking tea and selling it in the lowland markets, like a wage job — versus living sustainably from the surrounding land.

While by the early 1970 s there was still no electricity in the *Pumuen* area, the walking path that led to the city had been expanded by the Thai Forestry Department. Some motorcycles existed in the village, and the first car arrived in 1975. While it seems that was progressing in its 'development,' these phenomena were, and still are, altering peoples' relationships among themselves and with their natural environment. The village was ever more becoming a small town.

It appears that Hirsch (1989) implies that there are ulterior motives behind the supposed betterment of rural peoples through development.

> Concepts of 'development' and 'participation' have taken hold as catchwords have been used in a wide variety of contexts. Meanwhile, the rural development program has afforded the Thai State, through the government Ministries operating at the district level, increased access to village institutions. This is against a background of rapid spread of capitalist relations in the Thai countryside, which cannot be separated from other more explicitly State inspired facets of rural change (Witayakorn, 1982). The broad range of activities implemented by the State bureaucracy at the district level is generally labeled as 'rural development.' (36).

This supposed government support for *Pumuen* in terms of the rural development-related cash crop schema began ever more significantly impacting *Pumuen* villagers' lifestyle. Life was transforming, and it is particularly the elders who took notice of this.

"It's Just Not the Same;" *Nabue Sri*, 70

(Issues addressed: culture changes; identity; youth versus elders' behaviors; individualism; clothing changes; community cohesion; uncertainty and insecurity)

"I was very happy after moving from Burma to this village 37 years ago. We were one of three households living here at the time. It was very quiet. Life was good. I worked on the tea plantation. I lived simply, growing rice and collecting food from the forest. I didn't have to buy anything, just salt. Now I have to buy everything, including vegetables…

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

"It's just not the same. Everything feels different, except during the New Year's celebration. Villagers, for the most part, just do not live the *Lahu* way of life anymore. The cultural harmony isn't as it was. We used to do everything together as a cohesive group. When we left the village in the morning to work in the forest, we walked together. Now, most go to work individually. They use their motorcycles.

"We used to collect rice as a group and carry it together. Now, many people use their own vehicles for this as well. Sometimes I experience that my neighbors went to the city to buy things, and I didn't even know they had left, even though I need something. Hunters who had killed a deer used to come and share the bounty. Now, they often sell the meat…

"Many things are changing. People are becoming more selfish, thinking that if they do things with others, there will be less for themselves in the end. Everyone is doing his or her own things, unlike in the past. It's about privacy now. People used to work through issues more as well, especially during village meetings…

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

"It is the parents' responsibility to preserve the culture. I want to work with the newer generations in terms of cultural preservation but don't really know how to do it. I have difficulty identifying and communicating with them. I view most young villagers as not being like real *Lahu* people because nearly all of them now wear modern Thai-style fashion (e.g., dresses, jeans, and T-shirts).

"Some of the children don't have enough money to buy traditional clothing. However, I feel very upset when they have traditional *Lahu* clothing yet wear Thai outfits. Maybe they worry that when they are in *Lahu* clothing they won't look good or don't wear it because it's too hot. I would like to wear a traditional dress, but my eyesight isn't good enough to make one. I need a young person to make one for me but nobody knows how…

“It's important to preserve the culture, but the new generations aren't interested anymore. If I were a teacher, I would educate young people about *Lahu* music and dance and the morals needed to be a good person…

“It's not the same as in the past but still there is some good. For example, people such as my son do take care of me when I’m sick. However, my nephews and their friends often come to my house on Sundays and drink. They used to follow my instructions. However, they are often naughty now and don't listen to me…

“All people need to have a good life is to live together peacefully. However, in terms of traditional *Lahu* culture being preserved, it's too late; it's too late…

What will come of this village and the *Lahu* people? I don't know; I am not a God.”

[Nabu Sri passed away less than one year after this February 2013 interview.]

The expanded road: links with the city, and out goes some ‘traditional’ ways of life

Recapping a bit, in the 1970s the only infrastructure linking *Pumuen* villages with the lowland areas was a narrow trail and later a treacherous dirt road, sometimes impassable during the rainy season. If villagers wanted to get to the nearest town of *Fang*, and hence the market at which they could sell their cash crops, they walked. En route they had to stay in the forest overnight.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Although there was motorcycle transport, this option was privy to the Royal Thai Forest Department officers. While the lack of road access largely inhibited villagers’ capacity for economic development, this somewhat village isolation situation also served as a buffer of sorts to the ways of the modern world. This contributes to cultural preservation of sorts. The road in *Pumuen*’s ‘development’ is surely a direct driver of change, and not necessarily for the better.

Hirsch (1989) says, “‘development’ comes with the implicit notion that prosperity lies in an urban lifestyle or at least proximity to such. This aspect helps obscure the double-faceted implications of, for example, road building or increased credit as instruments of rural development” (51).

Whereas, Olsson (2009) said:

> The theory is that a road improvement will lead to direct effects in the form of reduced journey time, reduced costs, and improved reliability. The benefits from these effects will in particular be passed on to previous road users, passengers and companies. The anticipation is further that these will lead to beneficial effects for the communities affected by the road. The extent to which different households and companies benefit, relocate and/or are established from any given road improvement will depend on a number of indirect effects which are in turn determined by context (477).

Besides increasing government access to the *Pumuen* area because of the expanded road, villagers began more readily transporting their farm goods to the city. It is true that Pieterse (2001) said that economic development opportunities are primary drivers of social change. Having money (or lack thereof) motivates people to do things they would not otherwise do.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Pumuen villagers also visited other village areas more often, which provided opportunities for courtship outside of their home village. They also brought to the village urban world commodities (e.g., processed foodstuffs, which also effected villagers' diet and overall health). Life was becoming more 'convenient' for villagers in terms of life necessities. *Pumuen villagers, for* now-necessary financial income, also ever more took jobs in the city.

Preston and Ngah (2012) share that these phenomena have also been happening in Malaysia. They reference De Koninck and Ahmat (2012), as they in their studies "summarize the changes affecting the 'original farming population' [of rural villages in Malaysia] and found that few now rely on farming as households diversify their livelihood strategies, often involving work away from the village" (355). Bryceson, Bradbury and Bradbury (2008), citing the work of Rostow (1962), stated that in "early modernization theory, roads were considered to be an important catalyst of economic development" (459), supporting Pieterse's development theory about finances and social change.).

Bryceson, Bradbury and Bradbury further say that the power of roads to stimulate development has largely prevailed.

> However, there is no consensus on precisely how roads become critical to economic development, and if they actually do provide as much benefit as believed. More recently, in the context of growing concern with the impoverishing effects of uneven spatial development, rural roads have been accorded an even more ambitious brief, that of poverty reduction…Chambers (1983, 1997) and Minot et al. (2003) maintain, "Physical isolation sustains poverty and accentuates vulnerability. Rural road investment is logically assumed to alleviate the poverty associated with spatial isolation" (459-460).

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It was 2013. *Jalae* and *Jaha* were perched on the ground alongside the dusty road connecting *Pumuen* with lowland urbanity. This was soon after this long-time roadway was transformed from a crudely constructed dirt pathway navigable by a four-wheel-drive truck to that of a more developed and smoothened roadway easily passable via motorbike and even navigable by car (a couple of years before it was tarred).

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Jalae, 50, has lived here since he was ten years old; *Jaha*, 36, moved here when he was sixteen years old. They recalled trekking the footpaths from here to the rural area below. When asked what life was life for them before the road, they expressed a sense of joy that now they can often go to the city. "It is very convenient" and good because before they "had to walk very far and then carry stuff back up to the village." However, they could not recall exactly how long their monthly journey took, referencing how they did not have enough money to buy a watch. Nowadays, they both navigate this road using a motorbike. [This alone reveals just how much this area has changed in such a brief time period — less than one generation.]

Jalae mentioned the Chinese (Yunnan) soldiers that once occupied this area. He said it was "very dangerous" for villagers living around there. The soldiers would now allow villagers to pass into some zones [perhaps where opium was being cultivated]. He also confirmed that when he was a youth, there were no big trees there, and that the Thai Forestry Department initiated the forest rehabilitation program.

Jalae and *Jaha* worked Monday through Saturday planting trees and doing other hard labor forestry tasks. They attended church on Sunday and then returned to another work week. This was before the tea came.

They said that many *Lahu* people lived around there. "But the Forestry Department set new regulations, not allowing us to do slash and burn cultivation. We couldn't expand our land or move from plot to plot." When they could no longer live in their traditional ways — also when *Jafa*, who later started the tea cultivation, was murdered (likely by the mafia bosses from Myanmar previously running the opium trade there) — they said "there was nobody here to support us…This forced many villagers to migrate."

On the other hand, *Jalae* and *Jaha* revealed that so many people living there created natural resource conflicts. Now there is a road and also fewer people; they have more resources. They believe "it is a better life" for them now. They grow an orchard and do other livelihood things. "We can bring our tea to the lowlands and sell it, and we can bring people to the hospital when they are sick."

Impacts of these direct and indirect drivers of change

Jalae and *Jaha* were asked how the road, motorbike usage, Thai school "higher education," modern technologies, etc. has affected them. Now they are "more educated and can communicate with Thai people…Now that I can communicate, I can even do jobs outside of the village." *Jalae*'s parents could only speak *Lahu*. Likewise, particularly with capitalism ever-encroaching their highland villages, a villager who cannot speak Thai will be inhibited on a multitude of levels, degrading their overall sense of security, freedoms of choice, and actions.

The guys mentioned the village youth attending Thai government schools. "Some youth even have a bachelor's degree." Regarding the school in the village, I will share that the catch of this "higher education" is for students to achieve graduation they must leave the village and finish in a lowlands high school. I maintain that this is a deranged policy. Most of the village youth cannot afford this luxury (more is covered later about this topic).

Jalae and *Jafa* admitted that youth living in the lowlands, learning the Thai language, and adopting mainstream national culture deeply affect them. They have become deeply changed and cannot fully adapt back to the village paradigm. "They return to the village and have lost parts of their culture and also some skills. Some of them don't even remember how to pick tea. They become like city people living a city life." For example, some returning youth can still understand

the Lahu language but forget how to speak it [or perhaps they choose not to speak in their native tongue]. “They speak Thai and cannot communicate with other villagers, especially the elders.” While there are good things about ‘development,’ this particular phenomenon “doesn’t feel good” for them.

“If villagers stay with their families and don’t leave the village,” they maintain their socio-fabric. They expressed quite passionately about how some village parents nowadays literally cannot control their children; this is especially regarding marrying people from “the outside.” Some villagers get married while away and never return to village life. The key factor regarding this, they said, is whether a community member has lived in the city and the duration.

It was obvious they both witnessed (and endured) a great deal and in a brief period. When asked about “preserving culture,” they could not grasp this concept. When asked how they would feel if this dirt road were someday tarred, it appeared that to them, this was an impossibility. However, they talked again about how if the road were paved, they would have more capacity for bringing sick people to the city hospital. That said, it is perhaps obvious that lowland market access (i.e., cash money livelihood) and health security are their primary concerns.

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For *Pumuen*, indeed, the road expansion from a trail to a road passable by four-wheeled vehicle enabled the construction of the Thai school, and hence a direct injection of mainstream Thai (and globalized) society.

Most people would maintain that “education” is good for villagers, right? However, the children in *Pumuen* may attend the (greatly underfunded) Thai school only until they are 13 years old. The primary limitation for *Pumuen* youth is the finances required for them to travel beyond the village and attend a lowland school. Therefore, especially in recent years, many of the youth are essentially forced to remain in the village and tend to the family tea farm (the ‘opportunity cost’ that De Walle mentions).

This said, *Pumuen’s* Thai government school provides youth with a rudimentary education, which is just enough so they have been exposed to mainstream “education” but not enough so they can evolve beyond their current socio-status. This essentially renders them lost and between two existence-paradigms. They become in Thailand-based functional and perhaps even more marginalized than when the agrarian village paradigm comprised their socio-fabric.

Consequently, the youth in *Pumuen* are ever more hanging out on the village periphery, drinking alcohol or doing *yaba* (i.e., methamphetamine, meaning "crazy drug" in the Thai language). This social marginalization phenomenon is also evident in the adult population, who are also sort of trapped in their circumstances. In 2016, *Farlae* (my main informant in this village) reported to me that over half of the village (especially the youth), with little hope of moving beyond the village, is now drug-addicted. How is *Pumuen*'s sociological situation so much different from that of a dilapidated rural town in the United States or Europe or Australia that has been run through capitalism's cyclic process?

This, I maintain, is a great injustice and humanitarian disaster— cultivating an identity crisis of sorts. No wonder most of the youth no longer see the value of maintaining their cultural traditions. Rhetorically speaking, where is its value in a modern capitalist world? From a government-business perspective, if not as a tourism commodity or to pamper the remnants of a peasant economy, is there a 'market' for traditional culture?

Increasing social stratification

Dominique Van De Walle, in her 2002 article, "Assessing the Excluded Benefits from Rural Roads," said, "recognizing the possibility that some potentially important benefits arising from rural roads are not included by conventional methods of measuring benefits" (579).

> There have been efforts to quantify social gains and add them to transport cost savings. For example, in attributing education gains it has been assumed that better road access will increase enrollments by an amount derived from mean national rates; previously non-attending children are assumed to complete school, and their life-time earnings predicted based on a comparison of earnings for educated and non-educated individuals nationally. Total additional earnings, appropriately reduced to take account of the costs of education, are then added into the road benefits measure. Such methods require strong assumptions…
>
> *Implicitly, road access is treated as the sole constraint to children attending school*. Yet, there could be a host of contributing reasons that may in turn partly explain why that particular road has not previously been built. *Demand for schooling could be low as a result of high local poverty and the opportunity cost of children's time*. Alternatively, there may be cultural reasons keeping girls away, the returns to education may be perceived to be low, or the quality of the school and teaching may be affecting the schooling decision (p. 579).

Building the Thai school in *Pumuen Nok* (red *Lahu*) village, the Thai mainstream education overall — including for those village youth who receive the chance to study, if it *is not actually* a

chance at receiving a (cultural) de-education— has had a significant influence on the *Pumuen* community, both negatively and positively.

While children can travel the road and learn to read and write Thai (at which many aren't successful), "The village children who have a chance to go to the city learn about city life," said Promburom, in an interview with me. "This has greatly affected the village traditions and changed villagers' attitudes, which has had an impact on the new generations, particularly on culture preservation in terms of the *Lahu* way of life." Something, is happening in *Pumuen* like nothing villagers have ever seen.

"Division;" *Jarunchai*, 31

(Issues addressed: education; language/culture changes; urban social influences; children are being left to themselves; labor; family dynamics; materialism and community division)

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

"I've been teaching the Lahu language to the village children for thirteen years. It seems that everything has changed here in one generation. The girls are much more interested than the boys in learning. And the boys do not obey like the girls. Teaching is not easy…

"Things have always sort of been this way. However, villagers now have electricity, cellular phones, motorbikes, and exposure to the outside world. They have to earn money to survive. This has changed children's psychology and villagers' relationships with each other…

"Many parents no longer force the children to learn the *Lahu* language. Families wake up in the morning, eat breakfast, and then the parents go work on the farm, like a job in the city. Parents don't take their children to me anymore. They tell them to go to school, but the boys often go to the forest instead.

"The main change I've noticed is that relationships between villagers are not the same. People are comparing themselves with others. Conflict is increasing. Some people no longer want to see or sit next to each other in church. Villagers marrying people from outside the village is becoming common. Alcohol is replacing the church. It's like the world is in the end times, the tribulation…I hope children will preserve the *Lahu* culture. If they copy the city, they will lose their culture."

[*Jarunchai* passed away about one year after this February 2013 interview.]

Global market forces, market dependency, and internal transformations: A trickle-down

Pieterse (2001) says 'dependency theory' in that the true role of the State is to facilitate world market access into society (i.e., people living in a particular country or region and having shared customs, laws, and organizations). In the case of indigenous peoples, such as those comprising *Pumuen*, "The interests of the metro bourgeoisie are viewed as preponderant over indigenous peoples' interests" (25). Ferraro (2008) explains that dependency theory is about how external (exogenous) influences heavily influence a State's national economic 'development' policies in terms of political, economic, and cultural factors. This is particularly true for poorer countries when they are coerced to export primary commodities to the richer countries who then manufacture products out of those commodities and sell them back to the poorer countries" (58). I suppose in the case of Thailand, colonization (imperialization) and the ensuing global market system-related policies can constitute this reality.

Pieterse (2010) says "In development sociology the leading paradigm has been modernization" (45) and 'functionalist modernization' transpires when you 'subtract the ideal typical features or indices of underdevelopment from those of development, and the remainder is your development program' (Andre Gunder Frank in Worsley 1984: 18).

> Most forms of evolutionism conceived of development as being natural and endogenous, whereas modernization theory makes room for exogenous influences. Modernization theory is usually referred to as a paradigm, but upon closer consideration turns out to host a wide variety of projects, some along the lines of *endogenous change*, viz. social differentiation, rationalization, the spread of universalism, achievement and specificity; and others involving projects of *exogenous change*: the spread of market relations or capitalism, technological diffusion and industrialization, westernization, nation-building (nationalism as a derivative discourse) and state formation (as in postcolonial inheritor states). If this diversity *within* modernization is occasionally recognized, still the importance of exogenous influences is considered minor and secondary (Pieterse; 2010: 45)

Much of rural development concerns international investment, or perhaps the pressure that governments may experience to invest in rural development projects. Bryceson, Bradbury and Bradbury (2008) stated, "World Bank lending, for example, in the 1950s and 1960s was heavily biased worldwide toward infrastructural investment, with road projects being exceptionally prominent. This was the era of belief in the power of roads to 'bring' development to remote areas" (461). However, these authors also assert that a succession of field studies beginning in the late 1970s documented the realities of rural transport, suggesting that rural road investments had a

limited impact on the lives of rural dwellers because the major share of rural travel and transport is bound up in domestic tasks, such as water and firewood collection, which generally involve walking on off-road paths (Howe and Richards, 1984; Barwell et al., 1985; McCall, 1985; Curtin, 1986; Mehretu and Mutambirwa, 1992; Bryceson and Howe, 1993; Porter, 1995; Fernando and Porter, 2002).

Walking off-road paths may, for decades, have been the case in *Pumuen*. However, as part of this area's (and arguably the world's) temporal development continuum, this is simply not the case regarding societal impacts being 'limited.' The expansion of the road to *Pumuen*, or any community for this matter, has detrimentally and beneficially affected the involved communities, The road is the link that Bryceson, Bradbury and Bradbury (2008) suggest is the "double-edged nature of mobility improvement" (478). In rural situations, they say, "where long distances are the norm, people are likely to have a strong preference for improved accessibility, which reduces their travel distance to basic services and economic activities rather than seeking to increase the overall distance they travel" (478).

On the other hand, Preston and Ngah (2012) discussed similar changes in rural Malaysia.

> Increased human mobility, which includes movement into, out of, and between rural areas (particularly with use of mobile communication systems…can paradoxically both stimulate and even make unnecessary some physical movement of people. Urban-based children with parents living in rural villages can call to check that they can buy enough durian fruit (for example) to fill their vehicle when they come to visit in order to sell on to friends and neighbors on their return to the city, potentially for the benefit of all concerned (p.360).

Olsson (2009) talks about the relationship between the direct and indirect effects of 'development' by citing Garrison and Souleyrette (1996).

> Transport improvement stimulates and enables, rather than creates, innovations (companion innovations) outside the transport sector, as it allows old things to be done in new ways and new things to emerge. In turn, these companion innovations drive social and economic advances. That old things can be done in new ways and new things can emerge implies. As pointed out by Lakshmanan and Chatterjee (2005), long-term changes in scale, composition, and location of economic activities induced by transport investments are more like development effects than growth effects. *Development implies a structural shift, where a new social and technical environment or a new set of economic opportunities emerges, and the pattern of relationships between the environment and social actor changes* (p.477).

To what Olsson is referring is the environmental and societal 'panarchy' process cycle.

Societal state shift: materialism, "convenience," and an altering village

Convenience, this material fruit of capitalism and modernity, was (and continues) becoming ever more part of their modern(ized) culture. Urban influence infiltration likewise had a near immediate and deep-seeding effect on villagers, creating an oil-and-water-like mixing of traditional *Lahu* and mainstream Thai societies.

Photographs by Jeffrey Warner

Resource conservation for rural communities like *Pumuen* is necessary for survival. This all changes with 'development.' Convenience, along with the 'modern technologies,' has become the behavioral drug of choice. Villagers now, rather than maintaining high skill in hunting and gathering local food, have become more dependent on the enticing elements of modernity.

Villagers were (and continue) depending more on this new market system, buying things they used to grow, such as rice and vegetables. They were (and are) becoming increasingly dependent on the timely arrival of the mobile market. Someone from the city operates this mobile market; in the early morning, he uses a motorcycle to bring goods (mostly vegetables and occasional special order items, such as ice or whiskey) to the village.

Partially due to Thai government regulations related to what *Pumuen* villagers could and could not do in what had prior become a protected forest area, and especially because of the increasing intensity of villagers' engagements with money market-related phenomena, a village grocery story was later developed. Villagers with these newfound opportunities for financial income also began purchasing motorcycles and other material goods. They began incurring financial credit debt (including at the village grocery store). They were adapting to accept and perpetuate a lifestyle of working to pay bills; this for them is a new form of economic slavery likening that of 'developed' world areas.

Hirsch (1989) talks about how road construction or village resettlement is often marketed as a means for villagers to access more 'convenience,' I suppose implying that, somehow, their lives would become easier once plugged into the urban matrix.

While I suppose this may be partially true:

> The question poses itself: convenience for whom? Not so much for the majority of villagers who have little occasion to leave the village for most of the year and who cannot afford electricity, as for the district and village administration, whose access to village and villagers is increased, and for whom development enhances 'ease of administration' and for the owners of transport among the village elite who stand to gain materially (Hirsch; 1989:51).

Luxny, 31, at sunset in February 2013 was sitting beside a species-diversified pile of aquatic critters placed atop a banana leaf. She had collected this grub from the mountain stream about an hour's walk away. This was enough food for one meal, yet she (with a hesitant giggle) shared a significant portion with another woman villager.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Luxny admitted that she cannot forest forage like this every day because sometimes there is no fish available, unlike in the past. She sometimes purchases foodstuff from the market; she even has processed foods (e.g., noodles) that she acquired from the village grocery store. However, she rarely uses this store or the "mobile market" [or cannot perhaps because she has no money]. Besides, for her, the urban market food "is not delicious;" nature-food "is more fresh and better to eat."

Luxny revealed that she has no land or money to build a house and lives with her sister. She used to have a small plot of land here that her mother gave to her; she sold it to another community member, who now pays her to pluck the tea growing on this land. However, "the income is not enough" to make a livelihood. [Note: This, per the UN Millennium Ecosystems Assessment, is an example of exploitation by a wealthier person who can purchase ESS.]

She, who could not speak Thai well and clearly a bit embarrassed about this, did receive some formal education at the village's government/military school; however, she stopped studying there when she was fourteen years old. She wants to learn more Thai language, though, so that she can "make friends with Thai people."

When asked about the technology changes that have recently and rapidly transpired here, she reported liking the television drama movies; "they're fun to watch." She enjoys the characters

but does not want to be like them. Regarding electricity, *Luxny* shared a memory about not having much light while cooking rice. Regarding her cellular phone, she "doesn't feel good" when considering the idea of not having this object because it allows her to contact other people. When asked about any aspirations she may have about the future: "I am satisfied to stay here like this…But I can make money while in the city; this is the only reason to go there."

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So with this new money market system in full force, most villagers pick tea during the day versus living traditionally off from the land. This generates immediate expendable income, an addicting short-time reward for their hard days' work.

Pumuen villagers are ever more moving toward being 'busy' with daily life working on the farm. This was (and remains) like having a day job at an office or factory. Just as in mainstream global (developed) societies, there arose for the *Pumuen* community members this social situation of having far less time for their spiritual practices, for taking care of their children, and for passing on traditions and indigenous knowledge. This is altering their societal core.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Preston and Ngah (2002), while referring to 'rapid development' and case studies of rural agrarian change in Malaysia, which they maintain is a country rarely referenced in recent debate about rural change in Southeast and East Asia, reference Ploeg and Renting (2004) as they "imaginatively conceptualize rural changes as 'broadening' – diversifying on-farm activities including helping to manage the immediate natural environment – and 'deepening' in focusing on quality (often organic) production" (353).

Considering notions of panarchy, particularly related with 'reorganization/mobilization:'

> Both authors [Ploeg and Renting] emphasize localities of production and the use of shorter market supply chains or 're-grounding,' involving existing social networks in communities to facilitate the inclusion of non-farm work into the household economy and developing new activities using skills less dependent on urban proximity. There may also be newcomers in rural communities who take up farming or engage in new, rural-based activities. This view of rural change incorporates the viewpoint of those based in rural areas while, at the same time, recognizing the major national and global economic and

political influences on rural change" (p.353).

Shigetomi (1992), who studied village communities in rural Thailand, says the impact of the market economy on rural villages has subjected them to significant changes.

> This means essentially that each farming household as an economic unit increases its degree of dependence on the buying and selling of commodities. The changes that come about involve people ceasing their cooperative mutual relationships and related functions, and the individual households are placed into competition in order to cope with changes in their economic environment. This change is not unidirectional toward dissolution. of cooperative unity. The most significant impact has been the vanishing of abundant forestland, and the commercialization of labor. This has removed the need for some types of cooperative labor activities (e.g., families helping each other with the rice harvest), while also creating new forms of cooperation" (e.g., perhaps one household has a vehicle and shares the transportation of agricultural goods to the market) (p.154).

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

This situation is a melding of what Shigetomi calls 'market' and 'cooperative' transactions' — the former being about profit and the latter being more about long-term benefits of societal unity and communal relationships. While Shigetomi's observatory hypothesis, in many ways, runs parallel to that of my observations in *Pumuen*, I would add that unity and communal relationships, at least in the past ten years, have not been nor are they *Pumuen* villages' societal trajectory. I have observed, and villagers have reported, that people are becoming more selfish both with sharing goods and cultural services and with their overall social behavior (e.g., domestic abuse, noise pollution, etc.).

In *Pumuen*, national and global economic and political influences (i.e., the global market system) are definitely ever more affecting villagers in the sense they are ever more emulating city life, taking jobs in the city, inter-marrying across ethnicities, and buying things from their neighbors with cash money. Especially due to the road, and later the electricity, teenagers, for example, can now ride their motorcycles to other villages, whereas they used to stay in their own village more. This also increased their access to alcohol and other drugs (and comparing themselves to other, perhaps more economically well-off areas).

I maintain that this phenomenon overall could be argued as a detrimental byproduct of urbanization and the primary root of environmental and societal degradation. This is called social stratification, which refers to a socio-system by which a society ranks categories of people in a hierarchy. The dynamics of this depends on an individual's lot in life. Their freedom of choice and action is intimately entwined. People make their lives based upon their related worldviews. Likewise, a society that claims equality for all is not necessarily an equal opportunity for all.

"It's All About Knowledge;" *Jan Muu*, 18

[Issues addressed: social pressures; oral tradition; lack of options for some village youth; some positives of 'development;' outside exposure impacts]

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

"Life is all about having knowledge. I am studying high school in the city. My only goal now is to graduate regardless of how difficult it is. If I have a good education, life is better. Only education can change the future. I want to have good food, a good life, and help my community…

"Education will help my family too, if I have a good job and salary. When I lived in the village, I put my power toward survival. When I am in the city, I put my power toward education. I can now have a good chance to come back and help develop the village…

"Villagers must receive a Thai education until we are sixteen years old. Many hill tribe children don't graduate from high school. Fewer than 10 percent get to study in the city. The other 90 percent stay in the village but are at high risk of becoming drug addicts. Even if we don't have anything, having a higher education can help…

"I am one of the few who has a chance to study in the city. I want to know about everything, especially foreign languages. I want to speak Chinese. I can have more opportunities. I miss life in the village when I'm away. I never forget about it. When I feel sad, I think of my family and my home. However, I feel good when I come back here and see that there is more development…

"Life for villagers now is a lot about having an income for supporting the family. I think people can keep their lives more with development. The development of tourism is good. I feel good that there are tourists in the village, creating income for the villagers. We also now have things like toilets. It's all about having a good road…

"Currently there is a balance between the older and younger generations. I think older generations are cleverer than newer generations. Young people are clever about technology. However, older generations know how to live…

"There needs to be a connection between the old and new generations. Newer generations must learn from their elders, and newer generations should exchange knowledge with older people. It's about balance. If there is no example, we will not know what we look like…

"Everything is changing. A bad thing I see happening is that villagers are selling their land to people from outside the village. The new generations don't care as much about the cultural traditions.

"They are mostly interested in new technology and sometimes don't know how to use this technology in a good way. They can now easily use their motorcycles and travel outside the village. Many are getting into trouble or dying due to accidents…

"Technology can help develop people's lives faster. Villagers are also competing with each other and becoming more private. They are adapting to be like someone else, like they are just wearing costumes. People want many things more and more…

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

"As far as television being in the village now, if you watch good programs, you will get good knowledge. If you watch a bad program, you will get bad knowledge. Everyone thinks differently…

"The way of the world is endless. I think about why the world is lost and how we can walk in this world. We should live a sufficiency economy where people have good food and a job – not rich and not poor."

(February 2013)

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A posse of *Pumuen* teens, all around eighteen years old, were perched near a newly founded village grocery store. It was Sunday mid-morning; music from the Christian church service was resounding throughout the village. When asked why they were not at church, one youth said "Sunday is a holiday. This is the time to hang out around the village and watch television…I already believe in God. Why do I have to go to the Church?" The others admitted to simply not wanting to attend services.

One of the youth stopped studying when she was 13 years old. The others said they had only finished elementary school. One male youth said that tomorrow, he would ride his motorbike to the lowland city (*Fang*), where we would attend high school. When asked about their life aspirations, some said they would go find work in Bangkok. Most of the boys, however, said they, upon turning 21 years old, will become a soldier or Forestry officer.

I suppose these are their options, which their worldview-limited aspirations provide for them hopeful thoughts of structure and hope.

In February 2013, *Ana* (16), *Wichai* (17), and *Yo* (14) were hanging out.

What are you doing today?

It's Sunday. We're taking a holiday, hanging out around the village. We just returned from the Thai Forestry Office and got paid for our labor. We get 140 baht per day (US$5) when we work, doing things like clearing grass and brush. Tomorrow, we will go to school.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

What do you do with the money you earn?

We buy things like food and stuff for our parents.

Most of the village is at church right now. Why aren't you?

I believe in God. Why do I need to go to church?

What are your life dreams?

We want to continue learning, but our parents cannot support this. We will quit high school soon and join the Thai military. We don't have many options. The military will pay us 9,000 baht (US$270) per month. We will train for three years. Every man should become a soldier.

Do you feel pressured to be more like a Thai than a *Lahu*?

Because I live in Thailand, I have to follow the Thai rules.

What's it like to be able to speak Thai?

It's awesome. I can go everywhere because I know how to speak Thai.

How come you aren't wearing your traditional *Lahu* clothing?

It's not the New Year's celebration. We participate in cultural activities but rarely wear the traditional dress. We know the cultural traditions. We play music and dance when tourists come.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

What are your reasons for wearing stylish hair and modern-style clothing?

It's from the city. It's Korean style. We want to look like those in the music bands. It's cool!

What's so cool about it?

It just is. It will attract a girl. In this village, there aren't many beautiful girls.

What about modern technology? Do you actually need it, or do you just want it?

We want a cellular phone, mostly to call home. We need a motorbike to travel to work and school. We need a television because when we were younger, we never saw a television. We'd be lonely without a television, especially when staying alone.

Do you want to live in the village when you are older?

Living in the village is much better than in the city; we feel free. When in the city, we think a lot, especially about our parents. However, we have our sights set for living outside this village.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

4.2.3. 2005–2018: Capitalism and Societal Roots of Transformation

The road brings: more power…more technology…more choices…more, vanishing culture

In 2005, the dirt road connecting *Pumuen* into the urban matrix also brought the solar cell with it. Glowing white flickering "clean" light bulbs quickly replaced the golden yellow glow of candles that *Pumuen* villagers had for decades been using as their light source.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

While villagers now had electricity, it is low power and limited villagers' usage capacity. They could operate black and white analog television, for example, but not (yet) satellite dishes, color television, karaoke machines, or other high-power requirement technology (which would later plague them). Watching television was not popular at first. When there was no television, they would walk to their neighbor's house, sit around the fire, and talk together about life. This would also soon change.

By 2010, the beginning of a Thai government-organized community-based tourism project (which Promburom was assigned by the Thai government to research and initiate) was operating in *Pumuen* village. Foreigners (both Thai domestic and international) stay with a household that has passed a central Thai government-set quality standard and experience facets of village culture (e.g., food, music, and dancing).

Preston and Ngah (2002) addressed tourism in rural Southeast Asia areas. They reference Leksakundilok (2004), who said:

> While staying with village families has for some time been possible in countries with an important tourist industry such as Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia, the provision of services such as village homestays as a coordinated part of community attempts to earn money from offering hospitality to tourists are more recent. Although ecotourism has become a term commonly associated with village-focused visits, and has grown in importance since the 1990s, such initiatives have often been driven by national and regional governments, and villagers have not necessarily actively participated in ensuring collective benefits" (p.358).

Promburom, an expert on community-based tourism and handicrafts marketing, reported that by 1977 traditional handicrafts practices, particularly those involving silver, were gone from the *Pumuen* village area. The silversmith, for example, moved to another village because of land shortages. Actually, land scarcity was the main reason for villagers to emigrate to other villages such as *Huay Born*, *Nong Pai* and *Pong Hai* villages in Fang district. They had again become displaced, even after their families had lived there for a century.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

While Promburom asserts that community-based tourism (CBT) is a tool that can provide *Pumuen* villagers with helpful "supplemental income," I maintain from observation that government-organized tourism operations in highland villages, generally speaking, are also predominantly another form of business exploitation that often brings more direct financial benefit to those other than villagers (e.g., tourism operators). Tourism also brings even more city life to the village, which has its cons and pros. However, CBT in rural villages like *Pumuen* differs from Thailand's mainstream tourism in the sense that tourism in the Thai lowlands is a fundamental element of modern Thai society and also serves as a substantial part of the national economy (ten to twenty percent of GDP).

Observing *Pumuen* and other villages throughout northern Thailand has led me to maintain that the traditions of one ethnicity (e.g., lowland Thais) cannot be weaved into that of another whose socio-fabric is far different and still synonymously maintain what is considered 'traditional' culture, regardless of marketing efforts. I supposed, though, that tourism brings positive elements to highland areas. The CBT project that Promburom helped install in *Pumuen* village, for example, has brought with it the reinstallation of the traditional flute as a part of regular life there, whereas these traditions were previously lost. Some children in *Pumuen* have learned how to play the flute, the drum, and how to dance. Likewise, there still exists in *Pumuen* area's Black Lahu village, with Christianity as this village's societal binding force, a palpable sense of community social cohesion and, for the most part, intact cultural traditions. The New Year's traditions including several days of dancing, food (e.g., sacrificing of many pigs), and communal sharing in *Pumuen* are being maintained. This is their time for themselves.

Coming to a point of no return?

By 2011, villagers working in the city and the related lifestyle and social behavioral changes had become commonplace and culturally accepted. Adults are not necessarily correcting the children's poor behavior. Social disorder is likewise becoming more common as villagers compete with each other more, using material possessions as a means of comparative measure. This is a prominent sociological trait of Western countries, arguably because of the capitalist systems and material cultures that drive them.

In 2012, high-power electricity was installed in *Pumuen Nai* (Black Lahu) village, while the traditional Red Lahu (animist) village nearby remained unpowered for the time-being.

All able community members of *Pumuen Nai* village were essentially forced by the Thai government to help build this small hydropower plant. If villagers refused, they had to pay a daily fine, equating to about half of what they would make if they spent the day working on their tea farm. Villagers who wanted, or perceived that they needed, electricity installed in their home paid US$100–$150 for the installation, which for them is a lot of money.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

While high-power electricity has brought modern conveniences (such as the light bulb) and perhaps a more comfortable life to villagers, this onset of electric availability has also brought with it a profound transformation of the village in terms of social functioning. They are powered up, functioning ever-faster, trying to keep with the rest of the market-driven world.

While the Black *Lahu* villagers still use fire for cooking and have yet to purchase machines such as a refrigerator or a rice cooker evident in other highland ethnic villages where high-power electricity exists, "This electricity capacity has changed the villagers by giving them more choices related to technology such as color television, karaoke machines, and DVD players," said Promburom. "It's not like the solar cell. I observed that all households changed from black and white to color television, and with more satellite programming…Villagers now routinely watch movies at night-time, for example, and this has

changed their way of life…The technology changed the way they interact with each other. They used to sit by the fire together. Now they all have their own television."

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Villagers who do not have a satellite go to a neighbor who does. Now, they do not use a candle because a light bulb does the job. Many children watch television instead of playing traditional games outside. They imitate, even emulate, what they see on TV, including aggressive actions. The movie and soap opera channels are the most popular among villagers. This information is coming to them via their interpretations of media and also from their children living and working in urban areas; they visit the village and also report via cellular phone.

There is now what could be considered noise pollution in the village. Residents are playing music loudly, singing karaoke until late at night. Due to the walls of their homes still being constructed of thatched bamboo, this disturbs everyone. Related conflict that was not part of this villages' aesthetic environment has surfaced and will intensify. This materialism has also brought about social competition, mirroring aspects of Western culture.

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Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Before modern technology, especially television, became part of village life, villagers commonly gathered in the evenings around a fire; they drank tea, and conversed about daily life. For centuries, this has been their tradition. *Lahu* people are hunters and gatherers. When gathering, the men would discuss matters of family and hunting, and the women would discuss household activities such as catching fish or collecting vegetables. This was also a time to address more serious matters, including community conflicts. The natural element of fire was likewise a neutral space for the community to come together amid a safe space.

Television has since largely become their electronic campfire. They gather and laugh about what they are observing, particularly the commercials and fighting scenes. It is a lighthearted way

of peering into a way of life that villagers never get to see otherwise. In 2013, I received a chance to talk with 14 villagers doing exactly this.

"In the past, we used candles or gas lanterns," a villager said. "We'd hang out...And later when there was no electricity (besides solar power), we used the black and white television. Many people would come watch; sometimes there was not even space for the house owner" exclaimed a villager with a shared laugh.

"We love to see the Thai people in the city," said one villager, adding that they know what they are watching "is not creative television that will bring us knowledge...We don't completely understand what they're talking about. We know from their actions that they're fighting but don't understand why. We just look. It's for fun…

"Not many of us go live in the city," another villager said. "We prefer to stay with family. There are many bad men in the city...It's dangerous there. We watch the mood and see bad things. We go to the city only to get more knowledge...It's safer here in the village; there's no pollution."

Preston and Ngah (2002) talk about how "different generations of rural people experience and adapt to changes in different ways. Older people are less likely to migrate and are increasingly mindful of how difficult life is in the city" (355).

These authors also said:

> This increasing awareness that some amenities taken as normal by urban people (e.g., good roads, not suffering from regular flooding, organized waste disposal, access to postal services and communal facilities for meetings and recreation, technologies and other modern conveniences, etc.) has resulted in the inadequacies of such facilities in these rural areas" (p. 356).

"We want the stuff we see advertised on TV, but it's too expensive," said another villager. "Now we just look at it...If we have a salary, we can buy things. If I have money, a car, a house, my life will feel better." Regarding language, "When we go to the city, we don't speak *Lahu* language. However, now even when we are deep in the forest, we use our mobile phone to connect with each other, and we speak *Lahu*."

Before, they "hadn't seen the outside world...It didn't fit into our ways of life. We thought this was better but have learned differently. Now we have bills to pay and worries we didn't have before." They are seeing the impacts that outside influences are having on their culture, especially with their children. Still, they feel like they "need to look like those on TV," said one villager.

So, what if their television access was suddenly removed? "We don't want to go back to not having TV...Everyone else also wants to know how much things cost and how much people on television make for a salary. But we do not want to see bad things, like Coca-Cola, shampoo, and other material goods. We know how to live without all this material stuff. We're used to not having it."

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

I maintain that traditional ways of village life and a modern technological society cannot authentically exist simultaneously; they clash. Besides global economic market forces, outside influences are essentially tearing villagers' traditional culture apart because they are receiving and accepting ideas that life may be better out there, somewhere else.

They joke about what is happening on television because they are at the earliest stages of modern 'development' and modernity, respectively, and related materialism; they likewise cannot tangibly identify with the media messages deeply influencing them. They are seemingly in shock, desperately trying to maintain their ways of life while slowly adapting to the encroachment of a modernized way of life, pulling them in one television program at a time.

A villager stated that people collecting a salary have "a better way of life." And a man while watching television mentioned "the end of the world" before asking me, "If someone has a big house and big money, why does he kill himself?"

With little hesitation, this is how I responded to his question:

> "Having all of those material things will not make you happy; this is a lie...Those people have established their sense of security in material goods. However, people who can take care of themselves, live off from the land, and not be dependent on others can perhaps be happier and more secure.
>
> "It is an illusion that everybody in America, for example, is rich and happy. Most are economic wage slaves and work very hard to pay for the things they don't really need. The idea that American life is one of relaxed privilege is simply untrue…
>
> "There is actually much poverty and violence in America. It is social inequality that causes this scenario, particularly when people compare themselves to others. When one household has a color television set and another doesn't, this naturally becomes the basis of desire to work more, get more, and justify working jobs they may not enjoy."

Considering my words, he said: “But we want to have the things we see on television and travel because we’ve never had a chance...Now I am old and have never gone anywhere. We don’t have money.” Yet, with this implementation of modernity, “our culture is changing.

Q: Then why do you turn the lights on?

Because light makes our lives more convenient. With fire, we can see only as far as the fire will allow. We also had to buy candles and batteries, which are expensive. With electricity, we pay once per month.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Q: Are you exchanging your culture for convenience?

Yes. But we will stay with the convenience. We can do many things.

Q: Can you balance using modern technology with maintaining your culture?

We know things will change, and we do want to preserve our culture.

[End of interview]

In a (*Lahu*) culture that is based on gender and social equality, a family in *Pumuen* that sees its neighbor as having electricity now believes that they also must have electricity. *Farlae*, whom you will hear about and from shortly, said in an interview with me that, “I can’t really afford this electricity. However, I want my children to have what the others have.” This alone is a signifier of a societal system of state change. Does this sound familiar to mainstream ‘developed’ and *supposedly* more ‘civilized’ society?

On a beautiful sunny day, these village youths were planted in front of this television set. When asked if they want to go outside and play games with others, one of them said they “are lazy today” and “this is more fun than playing outside.” They also like to walk through the forest and play in the waterfall. If no television is available, they will go play outside.

When asked what is so intriguing about watching TV, they said it is the characters — the danger, adventure, and the heroes. This is especially true for those fighting against the devil. They

especially remember Superman. They also admitted to not understanding everything they see; “We just look at the picture.” They quickly lost interest in talking further with me.

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Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

In June 2014, the dirt road connecting *Pumuen* village area with the lowlands was paved, shortly before the installation of a second Thai government-funded hydroelectric power plant that now powers the Red *Lahu* village that has existed there since the 1880s. Thus, a traditional animist village community that has never had modern amenities was abruptly plugged into the high-power grid. According to a villager, the tarred road and high-power hydroplant has resulted in community members nearly immediately purchasing vehicles (resulting in loan debt), washing machines, rice cookers, and color televisions. The infrastructure was quickly overtaxed, resulting in power outages and community confusion. The mentioned Red *Lahu* headman’s nightmare became true.

The tar road is good for farming logistics, though, making it far easier to transport their tea products to sell in the city. It is also easier to take sick people to the clinic or hospital. However, in the case of *Pumuen*, the theory that the road leads to education opportunities I maintain is a farce, as funding was cut off for the lowland Thai school that used to provide extended high school education for *Pumuen*’s older youth. This, as mentioned, has rendered the younger generations essentially lost amid the cracks of a marginalized society.

Preston and Ngah (2012) say, “It is also necessary to observe, in the context of personal and cultural history, the process whereby rural areas, physical resources and people are remembered and sometimes idolized (as remarked particularly in Thailand)” (359). They continue by referencing studies reviewed by Rigg & Vandergeest (2012), which “demonstrate how the village retains both symbolic and physical importance but different trajectories of change may in some circumstances revitalize existing economic and social activities or, in others, fundamentally change the nature of villages/communities. This underlines the need to recognize the complexity of change over time, and the limitations of generalized conclusions” (p.357).

Wrapping-up this 'de' of development story

If one person in *Pumuen* village can help us capstone this ethnographic story with more detail and current information, this person is *Farlae*. Since 2012, she has been my primary village contact. We have shared countless conversations. This has been over meals, while walking on the road or in the forest, and especially at nighttime lying in the dark readying for sleep. Even though a thatched bamboo wall stood between our two rooms, it seems that few barriers existed in terms of the information that *Farlae* shared with us.

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It was late evening in February 2013 when I had one of the first conversations with *Farlae*. We sat atop well-worn wooden stools placed upon her kitchen's dirt floor. Before starting our conversation, with *Farlae*'s permission I shut off the stark white fluorescent lights she (with the high-power electricity) had installed three months prior.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Knowing that when *Farlae* was born in this village 34 years ago, there were no such facilities, I (with intensions of psychologically warping her back to her childhood) also lit candles and placed them throughout our interview location. *Farlae*, noticeably weary from a long and tiresome day of farm work and taking care of her growing family, became near immediately sacred-medicine-pacified by these candles' flickering yellow glow. Now, almost like a hypnosis session, we had a good talk.

Farlae recalled her childhood involving candlelit eveningtime dinners with friends and family. Afterward, they would sit around the fire and sip tea; this daily ritual was their time to talk and regroup. Warm and relaxed, they would go to bed early, wake up at sunrise, prepare food for breakfast and lunch, and then have a productive day.

However, now with the electricity, this is changing. *Farlae* said that many villagers, including her own family members, eat quickly and then watch television. They stay up late and in the morning "feel lazy." She said that staying up late with the television makes her feel sick. Concerning using candles versus electricity, *Farlae* said that "the candles are more natural" and help her relax at days' end. However, candles are expensive, even more so than electricity.

Fifty percent of the villagers wanted the high-power electricity installed. She said one reason this community wanted the electricity was because they observed other villages having this modern convenience tool. *Farlae* admitted that she "needs" the electricity (and the electronics) because she does not want her children to be among the kids in the village without it. In the USA, for example, this material "have and have not" phenomenon is called "keeping up with the Jones.'" I have, for nearly eight years in Se-Asia, been witnessing this in its earliest societal stages. Anyway, *Farlae* is happy to have the electricity. The fluorescent bulb emits more light. However, she complained a bit that now she has a monthly for the electricity, the satellite, the motorbike, and her children's education. She said that she now has no money.

Farlae explained about her daily life, which I over five years have observed become ever more hectic. Her routine still involves waking up just before sunrise, washing dishes, and brushing her teeth before lighting a fire and cooking breakfast. Her children awake, eat, and then scurry off to school. *Farlae* and her husband then go to the farm. Sometimes she goes to the forest and forages for food, such as fish and herbs. She especially likes the taste of the streamfish. She "needs this sometimes," as this is her base cultural diet.


Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Sometimes, the mobile market does not come, so she has no food stuff. This is especially the times when she goes forest foraging. She does this, accompanied by other village women or just with her children. Sometimes, she goes alone, and friends watch her children (i.e., cultural service). With the mobile market, villagers can also acquire processed foods ("dessert"), which they also like. Regardless of the circumstances, she said that "When you come to the *Lahu* village you can have food; no problem." With synthetic products coming in from the city, this also brought about more trash strewn throughout the village area. I have observed that villagers are seemingly unaware that the glass and plastic will not deteriorate, as did their food's previously organic wrappings (e.g., banana leaves).

Walking with Farlae one day, we discussed about this, how there was trash strewn all over the roadside, mostly from "dessert" brought from the city. She said that the kids mostly do this while walking home from school. They do not listen to the parents who tell them not to do this. But the adults throw trash, too. She said the villagers do not think about it; they just do it. In the past, villagers raised pigs and walked down the road. It was dirty with feces.

The teenagers get drunk nowadays and then throw trash around, she said. It used to not be like this. She said that the merchandise "from the outsiders" affects them, including the alcohol. She said that the youth respect the elders when they are sober. But they get drunk and sometimes do bad things to other people. When *Farlae* was a kid, young people here didn't drink. She said that the kids imitate the adults. She is worried that the newer generations are going keep imitating this "terrible behavior" and does not want to see it.

Farlae confirmed that *Pumuen* villagers in the past were growing rice and had domesticated pigs, buffalo, and cows. "It was natural, and we didn't have to buy anything." Villagers later had orchards. However, the Thai Forestry Department mandated villagers' land use regulations affected this. For example, the pigs (at least initially) had to be kept in a pen, and buffalo were not allowed to freely roam. The government's concern is/was that the roaming pigs and buffalo would destroy the orchard or the recently planted trees.

She said that villagers nowadays do not entirely depend on the mobile market. If they need something, they ask their neighbors to share it. *Farlae* often talked about how there used to be "an abundance of food" that they never had to purchase. Nowadays, their food is expensive, which seems her primary annoyance and concern. Some villages use fertilizer and pesticides, but here they do not. They raise pigs for consumption, which are especially eaten during the new rice festival in October. She talked about her tea farm and how the tea does not grow well during the dry season; this is when she has to find other income-provisioning goods.

Farlae shared that her mother died during labor. Her father could not take care of her because he was opium addicted. *Jasuu Jamoo* adopted her because he did not have children. At eleven years old, she went to the city for study. Her father (*Jasuu*) worked for the Forestry Department and would buy milk for *Farlae*, walk all the way from the village to the city, and visit her. *Farlae* said that she always wanted to "go back home" with him. When she was thirteen, she had to return to the village and attend the government military school here because her father ran out of money. After she studied at the village school, *Jasuu* sent her to a Chinese language school for one year. Then she returned to the village and got married when she was seventeen years old, which is a traditional time for the *Lahu* to marry. She and her husband, *Jafa,* had to stay with her father for two years. Then she had to stay with her husband's family. This is the *Lahu* tradition. Her father eventually helped them acquire the wood for building a house.

Farlae recalled as a youth rarely receiving a chance to have things like dessert (e.g., processed food). The village's house roofs were made from grass. All food was natural and organic. She enjoyed her childhood, including the toys she used to play with. It was a slow life. People took care of each other. She said that the road and electricity are the primary drivers of this change. Now villagers are busy busy and have had to alter their lives accordingly.

Survival

In April 2014, *Farlae* and family cleaned up what remained of their orchard. The hail storm that happened a week prior — a climate change-related phenomenon villagers here had never experienced — nearly decimated their tea and coffee trees. "It was like snow coming down," said *Farlae*. She and the others were giggling about this event. Maybe this was a nervous laughter while trying to stay positive. Little did they know that in 2018, another devastating hail storm would ensue.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

This storm happened when the tea trees were not producing much, and little Forestry Department hard labor work was available. It was challenging for them during these times. Therefore, this is when villagers catch fish and hunt animals. During these times of the year, villagers rely on credit at the village store. They also go to the city and look for wage labor jobs, pretty much "any job." Villagers live and work in the city during the week, but many return to the village on weekends. [So, without the market or the need or ability to earn paper money, they return to the traditional ways. The market/cash is another indirect driver of change.]

Does *Farlae* have a hard life up here? "It's hard, but we can stay alive," said *Farlae*. "The main thing that makes life hard here is not having money." She added that if her children graduate with a bachelor's degree, this will make life easier. This is so the younger generations can do something else and send money back to their families. Modern-day villagers see "higher education" (versus their indigenous knowledge) as the key to survival in this modern world. *Farlae* would also like to gain a higher education, but her family cannot afford it. She had to choose but to return to the village and take care of her family. However, this also creates a situation that

perpetuates this overall phenomenon. Thus, formal "education" is both a direct and an indirect driver of change.

When asked during another interview about traditional textiles (e.g., clothing, and handicrafts), particularly regarding their usage by the youth, *Farlae* said that some village kids regularly wear traditional clothing. All of *Farlae*'s kids have traditional clothing. Parents must buy their children this clothing. This is the local policy that all children wear traditional *Lahu* dress at the village's school. The clothing is expensive, though, and most villagers have only one set. When parents buy from the *Lahu* market down in the lowlands, it is more difficult to buy clothing for the younger kids because they quickly outgrow them.

Villagers "are lazy" to make the clothing," said *Farlae.* Nobody *really* knows how. She said that people do not want to teach, and nobody wants to learn. The children are not interested in learning weaving (and other traditions). They see the "many processes" (e.g., small pieces to the back-strap loom) and "don't want a headache." Villagers also do not have time nowadays because they are so busy doing farm work during the daytime. One day if these sacred skills are gone, they are gone, said *Farlae*.

One village woman who knows how to weave wants to share her knowledge, but she does not know how to teach. Also, she is paying more attention to their businesses nowadays than traditional knowledge, said *Farlae*. Maybe, even though her mother taught her how to weave, she does not believe it is her responsibility. *Farlae* revealed this woman said if someone comes to teach her, then she will pass forward her knowledge. [Villagers not knowing how to pass on indigenous knowledge, and also youth not being interested, are indirect drivers of ESS changes.]

On another day, *Farlae* was sitting on her living room floor. She and a group of lady friends were making handicrafts. *Farlae* can make simple handicrafts, a simple pattern, but cannot do traditional weaving. She is dismayed by the fact that she cannot weave. Her grandmother knew how, but was very old and passed away. *Farlae* shared about receiving a traditionally weaved textile from her grandmother. She said it would be nice if someone would come to the village and teach, but the villagers do not know how to make this happen.

Farlae explained that when she was a kid, pretty much all villagers made their clothing. These skills disappeared from here 30 years ago. She said villagers used to wear their traditional clothing every day, even to work. Now they mostly only wear them to Sunday church service. [So the traditional dress became formal wear.]

Farlae's traditional dress wearing habits changed when she was a youth, during when she studied in the city. The youth, including her, were not allowed to wear their *Lahu* dress, so she adapted. In the three years she was studying, the village had already changed regarding the wearing of traditional clothing. [So urban dwelling is another indirect driver of change]. She said the village headman now tries to persuade villagers to wear their traditional dress.

If people are not wearing their traditional dress, is this a signifier of greater changes in society? What does this phenomenon mean to her? *Farlae* said that villagers feel the same inside, regardless of whether they are wearing the traditional dress. But "it's better" if they wear the traditional dress. Her father, *Jasuu Jamoo*, as the village preacher every Sunday, talks about culture. He said that many people come to *Pumuen*. It is good if when they come that they see people here are Black *Lahu*, explicitly evident in their clothing.

Farlae said that traditional clothing is one thing. However, it is mainly the *Lahu* language that reveals their culture. Many *Pumuen* villagers speak *Lahu*. However, the younger generations no longer speak *Lahu* as much as before. This is alarming.

Mono-cropping, shifting society, and resilience (October 2018 interview):

While Pumuen villagers are ever more diversifying their livelihoods, tea cultivation remains their primary source of livelihood. Considering the global and national market, and climate change (e.g., those two hail storms), Farlae admits that mono-cropping is not the most prudent community planning idea. Recognizing the related dangers with mono-cropping, villagers are now growing other crops, such as avocado, cherry, plum, and persimmon. Many villagers during July and August, when there is low tea yield, leave the village and do farm jobs elsewhere.

Fortunately, *Farlae* is equipped with indigenous knowledge tools that provide her with a true and sustainable sense of security and overall well-being. Her overall freedom of choice and action is somewhat limited, however.

Farlae is highly resourceful and diversifies her livelihood; she is exemplary of resilience. Likewise, her traditional upbringing is her true bank account and grocery store. This is not the case with many villagers, especially the youth who do not seem to realize the potential doom looming not far from their villages' doorstep.

She admits that having enough rice is her primary provisioning concern. However, when things are bad for her, such as when her cash crops were decimated by a storm or when she is low on cash money, she can revert to her bartering skills and trade wild forest plants with rice lowland

farmers. *Farlae* said she can always acquire provisioning services from her surrounding natural environment, but "this puts pressure on the forest." She said that villagers have their own management systems and related cultural norms, such as taking only the big plants. She regularly brings her kids into the forest and shares her knowledge with them. They camp overnight and cherish doing this together. They collect many things, and use the motorbike to carry it all back to the village. She said that she "doesn't know about the future, but I show my children how to do this. Not all parents do this."


Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Nowadays, the Thai Forestry Department allows this village to collect forest goods (non-timber forest products), but people from other villages are not allowed to come here and collect. Local people also know if someone is not from there, said *Farlae*. Villagers help the Forestry officers manage the forest, particularly by creating a buffer zone for regional burning season forest fires. Villagers receive a small fee. [This illustrates a core motivation for the central government to allow these people to live here: not necessarily about helping people but national resource management policy.]

What about (top-down) government involvement in *Pumuen*?


Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

All *Pumuen villagers nowadays have* Thai citizenship (or at least have Thai ID cards). However, two families from Myanmar came there. They did not have Thai ID cards and were eventually arrested and jailed.

Regarding infrastructure and facilities, the lowland Thai electricity office maintains the power infrastructure. Repairs are free; however, the community pays for the costs of municipal vehicles and workers' transportation. *Pumuen* manages its (ample) water supply. The *Tambon* Administrative Office provides garbage services three times per month. Villagers sell recyclables.

What is mandated by the Thai District Governor is 'community service development' initiatives, such as forestry work, cleaning the Church and government school, picking up garbage

strewn throughout the village, working on the dam, etc. Villagers are divided into task-oriented and color-coded groups that compete for prizes and prestige. *Farlae* (leader of the yellow team) once earned second place for an organic food cooking contest. Each group has rules. People, if they are lazy or refuse to participate, have to pay a fine to the *Amphur* (district) government.

The district government office has provided villagers with training for making soap from tea. The new village "hill tribe shop" was created in 2015, which is supposed to be a place for villagers to sell to tourists these goods (along with their other crafted textiles). The problem now is that villagers do not have money to buy base materials. Three years later, this building is empty and dusty; however, villagers make it look nice during the Monarchs' annual visit. [I met Thai Princess *Chakri Sirindhorn* in 2015 during her visit to initiate the hill tribe shop; she took a copy of my book unto her helicopter.] Villagers also get paid a small amount to attend lowland cultural events. They learn new skills and also share their indigenous culture; the Thai Tourism Authority arranges this.

Many Thai government departments are competing for funds. There is likewise more quantity now but not as much quality. Sometimes, villagers are essentially used for many national policy-related initiatives. They are targets for this, subject to budget-motivated directives. I suppose all stakeholders are doing their best to manage this overall 'development' situation.

Farlae said that although the government is never far away, she feels free in *Pumuen* and that the government does not control the village too much. The Thai military sometimes comes into the village. Besides checks regarding protected animal species, they organize drug enforcement and education trainings at the school, as the school master is a Thai Army soldier. This three-day exercise involves villagers getting paid about US$3 per day to attend the three-day training. [So this area remains as an international border buffer zone.]

For provisioning services and an overall sense of security, a good thing happening in *Pumuen* is that a buffalo husbandry project has been reorganized by the *Lahu* Baptist organization. This started 10 years ago. Villagers were selected for participation via a lottery. The first and fourth

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

baby buffalo belong to the participating villager; then the mother is returned to the Church/Organization and the lottery is re-initiated.

Farlae once had two of these buffalo. When things got tight financially, she sold one for about USD $1,000. She spent half this money on debt. The other half went for a down payment on a new motorbike and a grass cutter for clearing weeds that grew around her organic tea trees. About 12 households now have buffalo. Now that *Pumuen* villages' encompassing forest has been restored [improved ESS regulating services], the Forestry Department allows these buffalo (and cows) to roam the forest.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

So with development's perils there is some good; it is a mixing of multi-layered reality. This notion, however, is really about the question of development for whom?

Socio-ecological degradation and an uncertain future

It is not as idyllic here as some outsiders may believe (as I used to as well). *Farlae* does suffer. However, she appreciates that she "has freedom" in some degree to "not be controlled by city life." She lived in the city but feels more secure here in *Pumuen* because she knows that she can always collect food. Her indigenous knowledge is her capital. In the city, she has to purchase everything. *Farlae* admits to knowing much about city life, or what the future may bring for her and *Pumuen* village. She has, though, seen that "city people live alone…no mother, father, family, or community."

She was asked why she laughs so much. She tries to "let go" of her suffering. If people keep it inside, they will not be smiling and will become sick. If they do not manage their misery, then it is culturally considered "a bad performance," she said.

Farlae was asked what is a good life for her and for other villagers. She said that 95 percent of *Pumuen* villagers are "poor farmers; five percent are rich." Regardless of wealth, "having dinner together is important," she said. "Many people come to join, and they care about each other…It makes them feel happy when they have health and warm family. It makes the food more delicious."

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Over the last five years, Farlae has continually (and privately) shared aspects of *Pumuen*'s societal illnesses with me. She feels "sad" that the village has changed so much. While their encompassing natural environment has improved, their access to natural provisioning services has enhanced, their socio-fabric is arguably degrading. She explained again that television has had a big influence. Previously, only one person in the village had a television. If people wanted to watch, they had to pay a small fee. Her father, *Jasuu*, did not allow her to watch television and movies. Sometimes, though, she would see movies anyway. Any violence, especially with guns, would make her scared. [This reveals innocence.]

Life for her is now "more convenient." They have mobile phones and other technologies. She uses the phone to communicate with her son while he is in the city. However, "The teenagers are addicted to their phones. They don't want to work." The community is doing its best to adapt to so much change.

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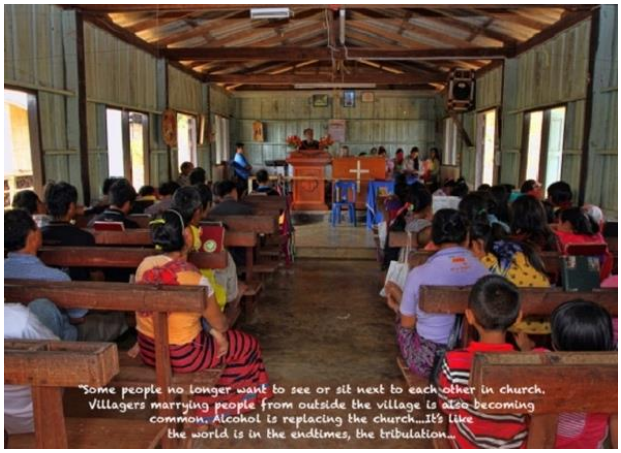
Jasuu Jamuu said in an October 2018 interview with me that he agreed that tea mono-cropping is not a smart idea, as the tea price fluctuates. He also talked about how, twice in four years, this village has experienced a devastating hail storm. It took two months for their crops to recover. This used to transpire maybe every ten years but now is happening more often. He said that the government, after these storms, gave villagers only a small amount of money to fix their house roofs but did not provide agricultural support. He says that "life is hard here."

Preston and Ngah (2002) emphasize that "de-agrarianization as a concept does recognize the decline in the importance of farming as a part of household livelihoods. This filters into other aspects of village life. It is one element of a relatively longstanding and widespread rural change

process" (361). *Pumuen* villagers essentially have yet to experience any notable 'bottom-up' community development processes. Yet, as Kelly, Yutthaphonphinit, Seubsman, and Sleigh point out in their article, "Development Policy in Thailand: From Top-down to Grass Roots," the "most effective development processes in Thailand have historically been those which rely on the least amount of outside promotion and the most organic spontaneity in the creation of community development groups" (Kelly et al., 2012: 11).

In terms of multi-level governance, *Jasuu* said there were no non-government boundary organizations working in this village, only the *Lahu* Baptist organization. This organization hires people to teach about four cultural pillars (i.e., Lahu culture overall, language (*Lahu* and Thai), music, and religion). *Jasuu* said he is looking for further outside support, particularly related to buffalo husbandry. This is important, especially during the time of year when villagers cannot receive sufficient income from cash crops. The income earned from selling a buffalo can help them for many months. About social degradation and this village's future, every Sunday he as the Church pastor teaches about *Lahu* culture values and ethics. Fifty percent of the villagers are bad, and 50 percent are good, he said. "But those who drink alcohol and do other drugs don't attend church nor listen to me," he said. "They don't like me."



Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Jasuu said that the newer generations are emulating city people. He said that just twenty years ago, there was no alcohol or drugs in this village. Nowadays, some villages even have heroine. He explained that alcohol and other drugs came to *Pumuen* most prominently about four years ago. This started with one household when a group of gangsters from Myanmar arrived with drugs, weapons, and money. They were shooting automatic weapons into the sky. Not long afterward, the Thai army came to the village and chased them away. *Jasuu* said that some of *Pumuen*'s elders are trying to teach their children the traditional ways. However, the youth say they "know" everything. Nowadays, neither he nor the other adults can control this social degradation phenomenon. This is happening throughout many villages, he said.

A disturbing aspect of *Jasuu*'s report is parent-child violence like he has never seen. You, especially the males, are demanding money from their parents (especially from their mother). If the parent disagrees, it has recently happened that the youth physically attacks his parents. This has happened with several families.

When asked why this social degradation is happening, in *Pumuen* and seemingly throughout the 'developed' and 'modern world,' *Jasuu* said it is prophesized in the (*Lahu*) Bible that "in the future there won't be any good people in this world. They will all have been gone…Seven women will be fighting to get one good man…There is going to be war around the world, war around the village, war around the household, war around the family, and war with father and son."

Jasuu "prays every night" for his fellow village family, "asking for blessing and that they think more about this."

In conclusion of this ethnography

Since 2013, I have been coming to this village area annually. Facets of what I have observed throughout this time remain in terms of a nourishing natural environment and a fairly intact social fabric. Also, every time I come here, it has become a more chaotic place, further reinforcing my hypothesis about the societal perils of economic capitalism — the 'de' of 'development.'

The most recent time in December 2018 was by far the starkest manifestation of this reality. Between the loud music playing day and night and many teenagers behaving like wild animals while racing through this village with their loud-piped motorbikes, it is obvious that people here are becoming ever more selfish and caring less about how their individual actions affect those collectively around them.

The new year and the new rice ceremonies, even amid the modern madness these people must interface nowadays, are a time for them to return to their roots and regroup. However, this year in *Pumuen,* urban-like chaos ensued. There was an onslaught of motorbikes and cars, droning city dance club music to which the village children were jumping around mindlessly (the village leader directed this noise to be shut off). Another notable phenomenon was the plastic junk available for the children, which the parents were pressured to buy. After the traditional dinner, nobody helped pick things up. They just left everything for the laboring women, and then went to the football field.

I had never seen this. I did not realize just how chaotic it was until I retreated to a village elder's house placed above the village, where we both decompressed. I could barely recognize this place; I wanted to leave as soon as possible.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

A village informant there told me that one of the most prominent problems now is alcohol. Even women drink nowadays, which has generally been a rarity. This is especially noticeable during cultural ceremonies, when before alcohol was prohibited. I have seen this in other villages, with drinking and fighting (crazy stuff).

Also to the aforementioned phenomenon of children attacking their parents when denied their money or material demands, one household involves a youth waking up every day at sunrise and cranking up the music, which then blares throughout the village. He stands outside, screaming into nowhere like a crazy man. He does this, even though his parents do not want it and try to stop him. I was told that this boy's brain is fried from methamphetamines. It was reported that one man recently killed himself by drinking pesticides; this came after a fight with his wife. Are people here going insane?

Quality of life for this community in terms of money and stuff may be increasing; however, quality in terms of overall societal environment is decreasing. This community is fairly cohesive, however, or at least it appears as such. Either way, the era here of gentle quietude, an inherent personality of these rural village communities (and humans, perhaps), is just simply no more. I mean, what is transpiring in this place for these societal phenomena to surface, and to semi-solidify in such a brief period?

While core elements of 'traditional' culture remain in *Pumuen*, for now, this village area largely because of government top-down development policies is becoming ever more plugged into mainstream Thai and global society, dissolving their root socio-fabric that is being replaced by incompatible threads of development modernity. Considering societal panarchy, it appears that this community is near the collapse release stage; their future is uncertain, to say the least.

As illustrated in Figure 1, *Pumuen* has functionally transformed from that of nature-subsistence ways of life — arguably more in-balance with its natural surroundings than people living in what is considered the 'modern world' — to that of depending near totally on a cash economy and its global market driven systems.

This village area, for now, does maintain socially nourishing positive attributes in terms of its overall functioning. This includes intact core beliefs attributed to some traditional *Lahu* ways of life (e.g., language, dress, some ceremonies, forest activities, etc.) and particularly a healthy village church. This community also has community cohesion in micro-level decision-making. However, villagers have, particularly in the last 60 years, experienced marked changes in both their socio-environment and overall functioning, and not necessarily for the better.

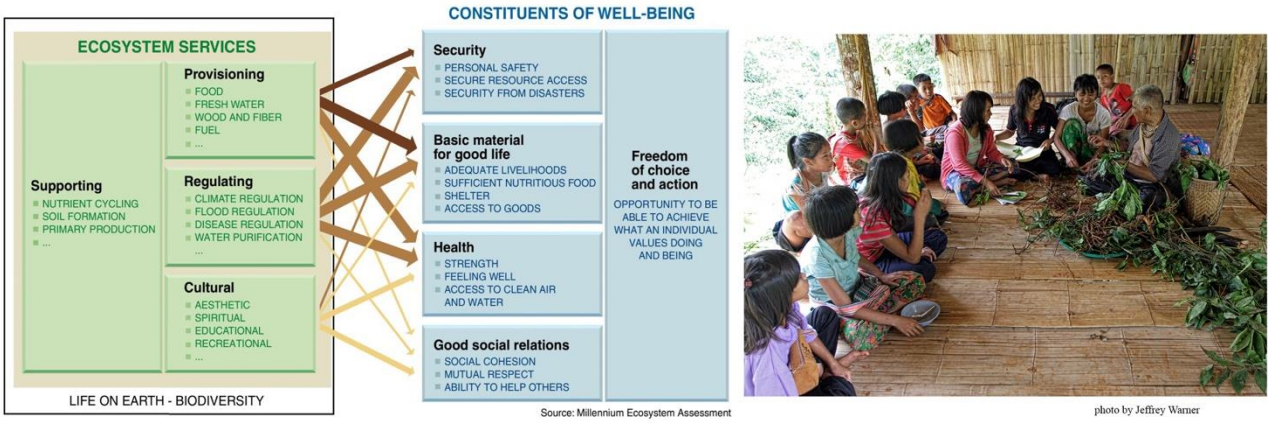
This development process has happened one decade, one development policy, and one primary and secondary change at a time. This is gradually building into a transformed societal system totally normal to some villagers (the youth), recognizable by some (the middle-aged), and as though another world to the elders. It has become a semi-functioning mess, if baseline compared to an era in their cultural histor y where their societal functioning was ordered by indigenous knowledge-based principles governed by finite natural resources.

"These are the consequences of developing this village area over the past 140 years," said Promburom. "You can see the holistic elements of the village, what is going to change, what has changed…I have now come here since doing my initial research and see the impacts that development has had on this village," added Promburom, with evident emotion. "The electricity has changed a lot of things. It used to be a peaceful area (and still is in most ways). Now there is noise from the music, the DVD players, and there are drunken people walking around in this village. These are behavioral changes, in a bad way that I don't want to see…

"I know that when change (modernization) comes, the villagers have to change as well. But I would like to see this village not change so much…We should have a management system so that the community changes slowly and their ways of life are sustained. Culture is the core, the root of the human species; it says who we are…We will do what we can do to preserve this."

Photographs by Jeffrey Warner

Chapter 5: Analyses of Ecosystem Services



Ecosystem services and human well-being model. (Source: www.researchgate.net; photography by thesis author)

This chapter considers factors included in the 'development timeline' (Figure 4.2), created from ethnography-based research of the *Pumuen* villages primary case study area and transplants them into an ESS qualitative and quantitative analysis. In doing so, I continue looking at three distinct panarchy-related societal system state changes this area has undergone: 1) subsistence/primitive (1800s-1950); 2) the area's 'development' in terms of a top-down State intervention in collective affairs (1950s – 2005); and 3) capitalism and modernity, particularly related to road and electricity impacts (2005–2018).

Part one of this chapter qualitatively considers *Pumuen*'s ESS-related provisioning, regulating, cultural, and supporting services, respectively. Real-life factors learned from in-field observations and interviews are placed into the three timeframes meant for representing societal system state changes that the case study area has experienced.

Part two transforms this ethnographic-based organization into a graphed quantitative analysis meant for displaying the case study area's ESS' longitudinal change *trends.* This pictorially articulates what has actually happened there over the past 140 years, and also what this may mean in and for the bigger picture.

This methodology, while imperfect, at least capacitates theoretical space for discussions related to specific ecosystems systems service factors. Part three reveals trends in *Pumuen* villagers' overall human well-being.

5.1: Perusing *Pumuen*'s Transforming Ecosystem Services

5.1.1. Provisioning

	1880s … until	1950s … until	2005 - 2018
PROVISIONING	• Clean and ample water supply; perhaps, some issues with water quantity due to deforestation • Staple foods are upland rice, forest plants and hunted animals • Some domesticated animals (especially) pigs) are used for consumption and income • No (or minimal) cash economy: barter and sell forest goods and opium • Wood (for cooking/heat) • Bamboo (and some wood) for house construction, tools, and other livelihood aspects • Forest products used for clothing and medicine	• Upland rice is the staple food; however, this is greatly reducing (i.e. lowland paddy rice is later acquired) • Solidifying transition to orchard cultivated cash crops (e.g. lychee, coffee, tea, peach, plum, etc.) • Increasing cash market economy: barter and sell forest goods (opium is eventually eliminated); wage labor • Natural foods from wild plants and hunting; some domesticated animals. This is reducing due to government land use restrictions (e.g. no forest dwelling animal husbandry, collecting or hunting of "protected" species) • Wood used for cooking and heat (with Thai Forestry Dept. restrictions) • Bamboo for house construction, but lessening frequency for other livelihood aspects (i.e. technologies use change) • Reducing biodiversity with forest restoration (i.e., non-compatible trees). However, natural foods are available (i.e. wild plants and hunting, *when necessary*)	• Clean and ample water supply is decreasing, largely because of cattle husbandry and increasing draw from others' commercial farming. • However, most food (including rice) is purchased from the urban lowlands; processed foods (e.g. "dessert") are prominent • Full transition to cash economy; cash crops plum, avocado; wage labor for government or in the city Community based tourism and forest buffalo husbandry used for supplemental income • Some domesticated animals used for ceremonies and selling. Not much traditional pig husbandry, mostly because of food costs. • Wood still used for cooking, • Bamboo, wood, and some concrete used for infrastructure

Figure 5.1: The case study's ecosystem services history (qualitative) — provisioning (Source: thesis author)

1) 1880s – 1950: Villagers live a subsistence lifestyle. Nearly all livelihood/provisioning services are derived from the encompassing forest. This being a watershed area, water that is clean and ample is available. It is possible that deforestation or culturally related phenomena create intermittent water supply issues. Regardless, villagers freely collect wood, food, and fibers. All staple foods are cultivated, including upland rice, forest products, and domesticated animals. Bartering (including opium) is their economic source, which is occasionally used for acquiring and purchasing urban lowlands-based goods such as rice and chili. Bamboo and wood were used for infrastructure, and for other livelihood aspects, such as hunting and fishing tools.

2) 1950s – 2005: Villagers still experience an ample and clean water supply. However, government instituted land use restrictions inhibit villagers' ability (and capacity) for traditional staple food production. This includes a diminishing ability for opium and upland rice cultivation. Additional restrictions on animal husbandry (especially forest dwelling) and the collection of forest resources such as "protected" plants and wild animals were realized.

'Traditional' provisioning services are gradually being replaced with sedentary agriculture involving orchards-cultivated cash crops and wage labor for the central government (e.g., trees planting), which is feeding an ever-growing cash money operated (and motivated) socio-fabric. Wood and bamboo are still being used. Selling one's time via wage labor is ever-increasing. Pig husbandry, although a core component of the *Lahu*'s traditional socio-fabric, is nearly eliminated. Cattle/buffalo husbandry serves as a replacement, particularly as a bulk cash income source. Upland rice cultivation was dissolved. As self-sufficiency is decreasing, the need for purchasing

provisioning services (e.g., food and clothing) formerly provided by ‘nature’ is becoming prevalent.

3) 2005 – 2018: For provisioning, cash money for villagers is a prominent societal centerpiece. Orchard-based cash crops, wage labor, and other forms of cash money income are hence desired and used. Rice and vegetables remain the staple food; however, their staple food is no longer that of upland rice. This sustenance good — along with most of villagers’ food, unless there is a dire necessity (such as having no money, or following a climatic disaster) — has become a purchased commodity.

CBT (i.e., engagement with national development policies) has come to the Black *Lahu* village, although villagers are not highly motivated by this income-provisioning resource. A replanted forest, and subsequent government-mandated land use policy relief, offer a bolstering of villagers’ allowance for forest food collection and animal husbandry; this is good for supplemental income and sustenance. An issue is that increasing usage of cash crops, particularly in lowland areas, is resulting in decreasing water supply. The increasing prominence of buffalo husbandry is degrading water quality.

5.1.2. Regulating and Supporting

— *Pumuen* Area’s Ecosystems Services —

	1880s … until	1950s … until	2005 - 2018
REGULATING	• No water or air quality issues • Minimal land use restrictions; Therefore, deforestation is prominent; high environmental risk for a watershed area dwellers (e.g. erosion, climate change, flooding, etc.), particularly for lowland/urban • Villagers experience disease (e.g. malaria, yellow fever, parasites)	• Minimal water or air quality issues • Disease reduction (i.e. eliminated or greatly reduced cases of malaria, yellow fever, and parasites	• Increasing water and air quality issues, largely due to upstream activities (e.g., cattle husbandry), burning, and water sequestration from lowland commercial farming • Forest restoration leads to improved climatic conditions overall (e.g., flood and climate regulation) • Diseases controlled, although obesity and mental illness increasing); Full usage of urban allopathic medicines • Increasing frequency of climate change phenomena (e.g. heavy rains and crop devastating hail); new environmental (and societal) risk factors are being evermore introduced • Increasing erosion because of road
SUPPORTING	• Land degradation: land is fertile but has low bio-diversity (e.g. small trees, shrubs, and grass • Steady soil formation and nutrient recycling • High primary production	• Decreasing bio-diversity • Soil formation and nutrient recycling continually improving with forest restoration • Primary production declining slightly	• Forest is restored and therefore greater soil formation and nutrient recycling. Steady primary production • Biodiversity that villagers can harvest is reduced with reforestation

Figure 5.2: The case study’s ecosystem services history (qualitative) — regulating and supporting (Source: thesis author)

1) 1880s – 1950: For regulating services, water and air quality are generally a non-issue. However, minimal (or no) central government mandated land use restrictions is reality during this era. Any deforestation in this area (although not severe) was likewise caused by opium and upland rice shift cultivation. Air and water quality, while perhaps there are some annual air quality issues from rice field burning, are optimal. For supporting services, the land is fertile and has high biodiversity.

Villagers experience diseases such as yellow fever, malaria, and parasites (and opium addition). Lowland dwellers' interests begin to incompatibly interface with highlanders' traditional lifestyles.

2) 1950s – 2005: For regulating services, central government mandated forest restoration efforts, while perhaps reducing watershed-related risks and animal species decimation (especially related to population increases), drastically affects the local overall ecosystem. Plots of land used for shift cultivation later created an environment of grass, shrubs, and small trees. Perhaps lower-level soil formation and nutrient recycling, at least in areas no longer being used for shift cultivation, stimulate medium primary production. This, at least from the perspective of the Thai central government and lowland dwellers, poses environmental risks for erosion, flooding, and other climatic factors.

While government-led domestic policies including education and allopathic medicine are eliminating for villagers the prominence of physical diseases such as yellow fever and malaria, overall societal health ever more declines. For supporting services, soil formation, nutrient recycling, and therefore primary production are continually remaining consistent. However, biodiversity, at least the natural forest goods that villagers can (or know how to) harvest, is decreasing; this happens in conjunction with tree planting involving species (e.g., pine) that negatively affect the native ecosystem.

3) 2005 – 2018: For regulating services, villagers are experiencing degraded levels of water and air quality, and an improvement in climatic regulation. Physical diseases, such as malaria and yellow fever, have been largely eradicated. This is although villagers are beginning to ever more experience obesity (i.e., from synthetic "dessert" foods, and mental illness). Traditional medicine cures have mostly been replaced with allopathic medicine.

Climatic regulation improves; however, water and air quality degrade due to fallout from the increased prominence of cattle husbandry (i.e., feces in the water supply) and cash crop cultivation (i.e., pesticide from other areas that is carried via the wind). Devastating climate change phenomena (e.g., rain bursts, cold air, and hailstorms) are increasing in frequency.

For supporting services, the forest has been replanted; however, while soil formation, nutrient recycling, biodiversity, and primary production remain consistent, biodiversity has notably decreased to the point that villagers have drastically altered their means of acquiring their basic needs for a good life. According to villagers' reports, biodiversity has decreased due to the introduction of non-indigenous tree species into the prior ecosystem (further explained later).

5.1.3. Cultural

Livelihood and Education

	1880s … until	1950s … until	2005 - 2018
CULTURAL	**LIVELIHOOD** • Subsistence/traditional way of life (i.e. no seeking of having extra, or wastefulness) • Freestyle land usage (without government intervention): practicing of slash and burn cultural harvest cycle • No (or very little) cash economy: villagers life off from the land, with very few outside connections (i.e. no or low capitalism market social influences) • Artisans create (and repair) clothing, hunting tools, and instruments **EDUCATIONAL** • No written text studying • Intact cultural education in the form of oral traditions: generationally passing forward *Lahu* language; folklore stories related with history, societal norms, and indigenous knowledge pertaining to livelihood; environmental conservation; natural medicines, etc.	**LIVELIHOOD** • Subsistence/traditional ways of life are declining (or changing forms) • Beginning of cash crops and capitalism related cash market economy; "development" and modernity related psychology and societal norms are forming • Still have artisans and clothing production, but this rapidly declining with the youth **EDUCATIONAL** • Declining of cultural (oral) education and traditions, as villagers integrate into the nation State • "Thai" culture, including language and mainstream education (i.e. the border patrol police school, and lowland exposure) is evermore becoming villagers' socio-fabric • With national culture "education" comes cultural de-education. … Villagers become more 'Thai' and hence adopt globalized mind-sets, norms and values	**LIVELIHOOD** • No slash and burn, or upland rice, cultivation (or traditions) • Fully implemented cash economy lifestyle; capitalism has become a societal centerpiece • Materialism and "convenience" has solidified (i.e., wants versus needs) • All clothing, and most daily life material goods, are purchased **EDUCATIONAL** • Oral tradition (e.g. language, hunting, societal norms) is no longer a main cultural element • Cultural education, such as *Lahu* language and music, is taught by some parents. Otherwise, it's offered weekly via the Church, both in the red and black *Lahu* villages. • Central Thai government granted college education funds for youth are slashed (2014) • Due to territorialization, and a responsive means of survival adaptation, villagers perceive national Thai education as a life necessity; they assess wealth and social status accordingly.

Figure 5.3: The case study's ecosystem services history (qualitative) — cultural (Source: thesis author)

1) 1880s – 1950: Villagers are living traditionally with a no-waste subsistence lifestyle. Their socio-fabric is composed of and predominantly revolves around freestyle land usage, which involves slash and burn shifting cultivation and the harvest cycle. Villagers have few outside connections. Cash money, mostly, is not a societal motivator. Facets of language, folklore stories, herbal medicine, livelihood, cultural norms, and conservation is reverently passed forward via oral tradition teachers who have earned this millennia-old right of passage. Indigenous knowledge-educated artisans create tools, clothing, and other life necessities required for supporting cultural composition and sustainable physical survival.

2) 1950s – 2005: Traditional knowledge equipped artisans and other cultural masters still comprise villagers' socio-fabric. However, traditional societal behaviors involving subsistence and agrarian ways of life are rapidly declining, especially with newer generations. Capitalism-related societal norms are forming and solidifying as State 'development' policies are ever more percolating villagers' ways of life; this is altering their livelihoods. Cash money, therefore cash crops and the commodities market system, are becoming societal motivators.

While villagers are integrating more into nation-state societal systems, oral tradition-communicated cultural knowledge is declining. Thai mainstream "higher education" is ever more replacing villagers' desires for education attributed to cultural 'traditions.' This is creating a form of de-education rendering the *Lahu* with a "Thai" mindset and globalized norms and values.

3) 2005 – 2018: Livelihood aspects intertwined with traditional slash and burn shift cultivation, hence the nature-regulated harvest cycle, have mostly become dissolved. Cash economics has become villagers' socio-cultural centerpiece. Villagers are living to work more so than working to live, ever more perpetuating an urban matrix lifestyle and its related consumerism "convenience" wants versus actual livelihood needs. Some cultural education is being offered via the village church and its outside affiliations.

While some villagers are still living elements of an analog lifestyle and self-sufficiency, villagers are primarily purchasing livelihood aspects (e.g., clothing, and food) prior supported by their encompassing natural and community environment. Oral tradition education is becoming more about the perpetuation of capitalism than about sacred indigenous knowledge designed for self-sufficiency and socio-political autonomy. As a traditional livelihood decimated responsive coping mechanism, youth are seeking state-led national education, which has become a social-wealth status. Adults now have new affordability pressures, which is creating newfound societal tensions.

Spiritual and Recreational

	1880s … until	1950s … until	2005 - 2018
CULTURAL	**SPIRITUAL** • Animist spiritual traditions (e.g. land spirits and shaman) surrounding the harvest cycle • Belief in natural medicines Traditional music and dancing • High prominence of villagers' participation across the age spectrum **RECREATIONAL** • Forest environment is their playground; entirely analog lifestyle • Some opium, alcohol (over) usage • Gather around the fire and drink tea	**SPIRITUAL** • Animist spiritual (e.g. spirits and shaman) in the Red *Lahu* village. … The Black *Lahu* village (1978) devoutly practices Christianity. Villages are religiously separate but do share friendly and cooperative relations. • Declining devout beliefs in traditional animism as the culture transforms from being about the harvest to becoming more about money harvest **RECREATIONAL** • Children and youth forest-frolic play football, and go camping • Some textiles creation (for personal usage and for selling) • Reduced (and eventual eradication of) opium usage, but increasing use of alcohol and methamphetamines • Evening fire and tea (i.e. relaxing and talking about village and life matters)	**SPIRITUAL** • Spiritual/religious services are still strong, with the Church in the Red *Lahu* serving as a cohesive force. • Animist spiritual services are held in the Red *Lahu* village every Sunday. A Church has been built in this traditionally animist village. • Many youth and others, especially drug addicts, avoid weekly spiritual services. **RECREATIONAL** • Children and youth forest-frolic, play football, drive into the city, etc. • Some parents take their children camping, especially to collect forest goods for consumption and selling. • Some textiles creation (for selling) • Tea culture (around the fire in evening) • Karaoke/TV/mobile phones (addiction) • No opium, but high prominence of alcohol and methamphetamines use

Figure 5.4: The case study's ecosystem services history (qualitative) — cultural (Source: thesis author)

1) 1880s – 1950: The community holistically lives a socio-fabric comprised of 'nature' and harvest cycle worship. Animist beliefs cultivate reverent respecting of land spirits and shamans. Traditional usage of natural medicines, along with music, dancing, and ceremonies, perpetuate this societal reality. Recreationally, the encompassing natural environment is their playground. Textiles are a form of livelihood leisure. There is some opium and alcohol usage (and addiction). However, societal cohesion is still being supported by traditions involving fire, tea, and traditional style of socializing.

2) 1950s – 2005: Nature-based animism practices remain in the Red *Lahu* village. The Black *Lahu* village (founded in 1978) is Christian, with the Church as its spiritual center. Spiritual beliefs (while declining in holistic prevalence) remain relatively strong; this is even while villagers' socio-fabric is transforming from being about the harvest cycle to about cash money harvesting. For recreation, the forest remains their playground; however, incoming is 'development' technological modernity. The karaoke machine, while an affective inlet and outlet for the youth, has become many villagers' nightmare. Opium (for selling and for recreation) is expunged; however, alcohol and methamphetamines (*yaba*: "crazy drug" are becoming ever more prominent both for leisure and societal pressure coping mechanisms). Evening fire and tea gatherings remains a socio-centerpiece for community cohesion.

3) 2005 – 2018: Religious/spiritual services maintain strong presence and as a societal binding force for both villages (animist and Christian, respectively). A church was built in the traditionally animist Red *Lahu* village, representing a traditional norms and values shift. In both the red and black *Lahu* villages, it is common for an increasing number of youths to avoid religious services. They (including adults) are rather using Sunday as a "holiday" for leisure (including alcohol and other drugs consumption); this is perhaps to relieve pressures from urban dwelling.

Recreationally, youth still use their forest playground and play traditional analog games (e.g., football); however, this is becoming increasingly replaced with electronics (e.g., television, cellular phones, and karaoke machines). Some women villagers make simple textiles for recreation and selling. Evening tea and fire culture still exist; however, villagers are becoming individualistic, with their televisions becoming their campfire.

Aesthetic and Socio-Environment

	1880s … until	1950s … until	2005 - 2018
CULTURAL	**AESTHETIC / SOCIO-ENVIRONMENT** • Slow jungle pace of life • Minimal or no "outside" cultural influences (e.g. technologies and cultural attitudes) • Social harmony (e.g. reverence for traditional culture and lifestyle, sharing; respecting of societal age hierarchy • Have land and air pollution (temporary, from burning), but no noise pollution • Some opium addiction and social strife (e.g. robbery and murders from Chinese communist militia groups)	**AESTHETIC / SOCIO-ENVIRONMENT** • Still quiet and peaceful, but with the road comes motor vehicles, some synthetic rubbish, and increasing pace of life (i.e. cash money desires) • Minimal "outside" cultural influences at-first. This changes with exposure to military and Forestry Dept. forces; then lowland/urban national culture. • Villagers perceptions and needs begin transforming, as the norms of urbanity begins setting into villagers' minds, especially the younger generations. • Social harmony (e.g. sharing; respecting of societal age hierarchy, etc.). However, the culture is changing with perceived wants and needs • Have land and air pollution (temporary, from burning), but no noise pollution • Traditional music and dancing is eventually gone.	**AESTHETIC / SOCIO-ENVIRONMENT** • "Busy" and "working" urban matrix (no traditional agrarian) lifestyle • Materialism: junk food, plastic toys, electronics, karaoke machines and motorbikes. Also: debt culture. • Village encompassed by forest: cool and clean air • Strewn ynthetic rubbish and noise pollution • There is social harmony (e.g. friendly relations and sharing). However, social degradation is prominent with materialism-worshipping. • Alcohol, heavy drugs, and domestic abuse is greatly rising. Mental illness is likewise becoming more prominent • Some rehabilitation/reinstallation of traditional culture (e.g. textiles, music, and *Lahu* language). • Traditional socio-fabric is largely gone, replaced by a modern world culture in a rural village environment. • Youth upon money demands are attacking parents • 'Subsistence' ways of life, like in the "developed" and "modern" world, become attributed to economic poverty rather than to a conservation belief system

Figure 5.5: The case study's ecosystem services history (qualitative) — cultural (Source: thesis author)

1) 1880s – 1950: Villagers experience minimal to no "outside" technological or socio-cultural influences. Therefore, they live a slow-paced, relatively isolated lifestyle determined largely by their natural and societal environment. While all human societies have interpersonal conflicts, it is reasonable to assume that villagers' social harmony in terms of reverence for their traditional ways of life (e.g., livelihood, social hierarchy, etc.) is intact. Villagers shared with each other and acted according to their societal norms and contracts. Some air pollution existed, particularly related to slash and burn cultivation; however, there is no noise pollution. Opium-related strife (e.g., addiction, and threatening/pillaging foreign gangsters) was present.

2) 1950s – 2005: This village area remains fairly quiet and peaceful. However, with the road has come exposure to central nation-state powers and its related territorialization. Opium cultivation, and any related foreign operations are expunged. Motor vehicles, especially motorbikes along with urban rubbish (physical and societal), are encroaching their way into the communities' societal center. Capitalism and consumer culture is ever more perforating villagers' socio-fabric. Migration (both temporary and permanent) has become part of villagers' world.

Villagers' pace of life is also increasing proportionately with cash money desires. Their worldviews and hence their perceptions and needs are transforming as capitalism and urbanity is rooting itself. Societal harmony, including sharing, is still prominent. Some air pollution exists from local and regional seasonal burning. Villagers, especially the newer generations, are ever more abandoning their traditional ways, including music, dancing, and language (to Thai), replacing these prior-sustaining cultural facets with "modern world" perceived needs.

3) 2005 – 2018: Villagers in both the Black and Red *Lahu* communities are "busy" exemplifying a (seemingly incompatible) mixture of traditional indigenous highland life and the urban lowland capitalism matrix. Materialism-related synthetic junk food, electronics, and debt is becoming their new reality — working to "pay bills." Their encompassing natural environment, post-forest restoration, is nourishing in terms of its ability to semi-support villagers' life. However, it is also becoming ever more polluted by synthetic rubbish and noise pollution (especially from karaoke machines and motorbikes); likewise, the overall aesthetic environment has been greatly degraded.

Social harmony and cooperation still exist here. However, as villagers have now cash-valued their time (driven by materialism), relationships, and community initiatives are maintained more by cash money exchange. Blatant mental illness and its related alcohol and heavy drug usage, aggressive societal and domestic abuse, and materialism worshiping have also become reality. Selfishness is on the rise. The entire community is holistically responding accordingly.

There is some rehabilitation of traditional culture, such as music, dancing, and language. However, the traditional socio-fabric that existed here 140, or even 30 years ago is mostly dissolved. Villagers still maintain their harvest cycle traditions (e.g., new year, new rice harvest, provisioning goods offering to the gods, etc.); however, these traditions are becoming ever more blanketed with synthetic skin (e.g., alcohol, and loud music).

Whereas subsistence ways of life, and their related environmental and societal conservatism, are used to represent community wealth here, these cultural facets have in ways become flipped to now represent poverty. Likewise, a new societal state system ever more replicating the 'developed' and 'modern' world is solidifying and arguably hampering villagers' capacity to live here sustainably.

This is particularly true when considering village youth. First, they have been pressured, essentially forced, to leave their village and reside in the urban lowlands for work, study, or other purposes. They often return to the village for "holiday." When doing so, they release their stored urban chaos energy into this agrarian village environment — creating a form of hell for everyone. Many elders claim they "cannot control" them. I assume that they just do not know how to do it. … Unless the youth at least see and acknowledge the modern world value of their millennia-old traditional socio-fabric and supporting villages' geographical and sociological environment, their future truly is uncertain. Perhaps ethnic peril is on their doorstep.

5.2. Qualitative Articulations of Quantitative Valuation

Considering the multi-era and multi-factor compilation of Pumuen's ESS in relation with societal transformation, this section graphically (quantitatively) reveals Pumuen communities' socio-ecological system trends. While what is articulated in this section about each graph is somewhat general, the final part of this chapter reveals villagers' detailed explanations of these ESS change trends.

There is no Pumuen village alive between 1880–1940. However, I am not measuring fish or the human population here; this is about socio-ecological change trends. That said, villagers equipped with their oral historical knowledge passed forward by their ancestors generally know enough what life was (and is) like there.

Methodology for this ecosystem services' quantitative analysis

Ecosystem services: Three *Pumuen* villagers of different ages and village status were asked to consider the 44 ESS-related factors revealed in section 5.1 (i.e., the 'development timeline') and valuate them based on their prominence (i.e., 'ESS factor intensity') during each respective period. The compiled scores were averaged and placed into a bar chart, revealing the change trends (i.e., increasing, or decreasing) for each ESS factor.

Examples of these ESS factors are as follows: 1) provisioning: fresh and ample water supply, wild forest food, cash crops, cattle husbandry, and wage labor, etc.; 2) supporting: diversity and primary production, etc.; 3) regulating: climatic regulation, erosion, and prevalence of destructive climate change phenomena, etc.; and 4) cultural: agreeable pace of life, fire and tea socializing, societal cooperation and sharing, prevalence of alcohol and heavy drug abuse, cash money desires, traditional music and dance, noise pollution, societal cooperation and sharing, self-sufficiency, etc.

Human well-being: These 44 ESS factors were then assigned a respective "well-being code" that is in conjunction with the human well-being framework established by the Millennium Ecosystems Assessment; I adapt it slightly by adding a few factors pertaining to the case study. Examples of these well-being factors are: 1) basic materials for a good life: adequate livelihood, access to goods, etc.; 2) security: personal safety, secure resource access, etc.; 3) health: strength and feeling well, access to clean air and water, and freedom from societal mental illness, etc.; and 4) good social relations: social cohesion, ability to help others, personal expression and learning, etc.

These human well-being components apply to multiple ESS factors; therefore, the factors were grouped. The well-being scores (determined via the averaging of the villagers' valuations) is articulated via a 4-factor human well-being line graph. While the ESS-related bar graph reveals the longitudinal change trends of specific factors, the well-being-related line graph reveals the longitudinal trends of the case study's overall socio-ecological functioning overall.

The purpose of this analysis format is so we — while considering the 'de' of 'development,' and how changes in environment impact relationships among ourselves and with our 'natural' world — can actually see (and measure) how this communities' area has changed socio-ecologically . What, comparing the past and present, are villagers' levels of security, basic materials for a good life, health, and good social relations? Do they feel as though their overall situation is providing for an overall sense of well-being? Let's see.

5.2.1. Supporting

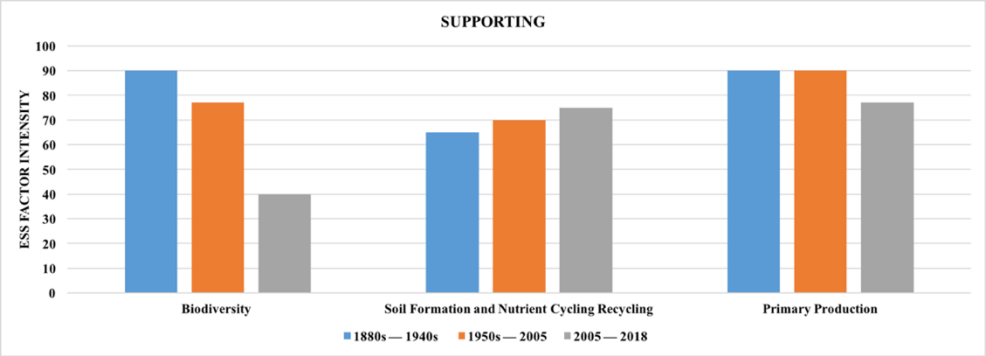


Figure 5.6: The case study's ESS history (quantitative) — supporting (Source: thesis author)

I begin this assessment by looking at *Pumuen*'s supporting services trends. Soil formation and nutrient recycling, and hence primary production, have slightly increased or have remained relatively stable. Due to central government-mandated natural resource policies, *Pumuen*'s encompassing forest has since the 1950s implementation of land use regulations, and reforestation efforts have become restored. However, biodiversity, at least that which villagers can (or know how to) harvest, has greatly decreased (reasons explained in another section).

Villagers can still harvest forest goods; however, this provides a villager with the indigenous knowledge for cultivating and harvesting the biodiversity provided by this supporting landscape. In modern times, primary production is connected with cash crops, which is linked with

financial income bonded with someone's sense of security. This (nowadays) is packaged with materialism and social degradation.

5.2.2. Regulating

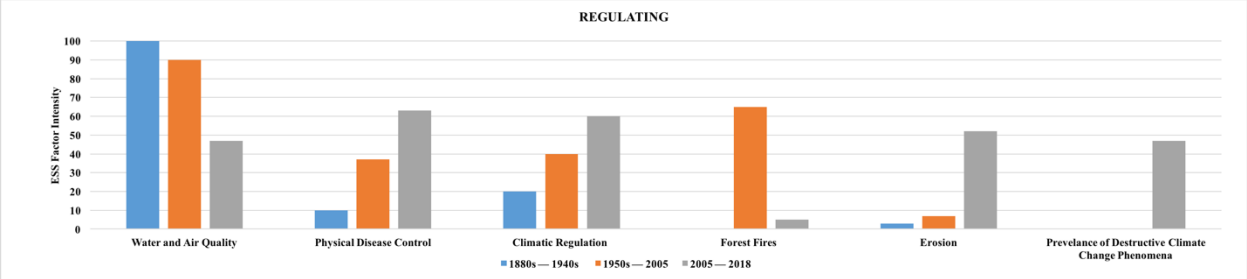


Figure 5.7: The case study's ESS history (quantitative) — regulating (Source: thesis author)

Supporting and regulating services are symbiotically related. A bolstered forest ecosystem has also improved the *Pumuen* area's climatic regulation, hence rendering villagers blessed year-round with clean cool water and air. This is not the case with many other northern Thai lowland and highland villages. The opposite scenario ensues as communities are facing serious deforestation problems largely related to extensive logging, which led to intensive commercial farming (e.g., maize). Climatic warming, flooding, and water shortages are common, which alter both environmental and societal ecosystems.

In *Pumuen*, water and air quality have reduced largely because of an increase in the prominence of animal husbandry (i.e., feces runoff into water source) and increased air pollution from nearby agro-business farms and their usage of pesticides. Villagers also reported increasing pollution from forest burning and vehicle exhaust.

I include physical disease control with ESS regulating services as the socio-component of regulating services. This is done with the intention of linking the natural environment with societal functioning. Villagers' physical disease control (e.g., yellow fever, malaria, parasites, etc.) has been bolstered (i.e., fewer diseases). This undoubtedly has a stronger correlation with government-led social education policies (e.g., 1980s initiative mandatory household, child registration, and mainstream health education) than it does directly about environmental regulation. Villagers before did not use lowland allopathic health care and experienced a prevalence of diseases such as yellow fever and malaria. Villagers still use natural medicines; however, they now have more choices, which are also connected with modernity. Improved physical health does not necessarily equate to a healthy overall ecosystem (including society).

Even though the encompassing forest is replanted and full, erosion has increased. This is particularly relevant to, and caused by the road. Climate change-related events phenomena, including hail and heavy rainstorms, are also on the rise, adding to infrastructure-related erosion.

5.2.3. Provisioning

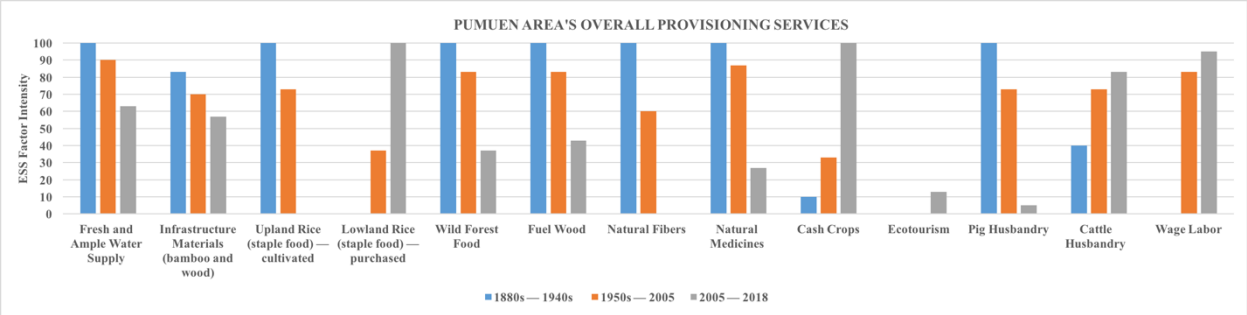


Figure 5.8: The case study's ESS history (quantitative) — provisioning (Source: thesis author)

I divided consideration of *Pumuen*'s provisioning ESS into two respective parts: 1) sustenance (i.e., food, drink, and clothing, regarded as sources of strength, nourishment, and other material needs); and 2) income, which is a fairly new village concept derived both directly from these provisioning services and from external sources (e.g., wage labor). This divided analysis is largely because notions of 'provisioning' (i.e., 'providing or supplying something for use…financial or other arrangements for future eventualities or requirements') have greatly changed over time in the *Pumuen* area (and globally for this matter). In other words, their livelihoods have implicitly and explicitly changed their meanings and motivations.

The Thai government's 1950s initiation of top-down land use regulations is the most significant underlying factor that overturned villagers' socio-fabric and related livelihoods. This national policy limited villagers' ability and capacity for doing many things related to natural resource utilization. Villagers literally had the choice to transform their livelihood to being cash crop (and wage labor) centered or societally suffocate and starve.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

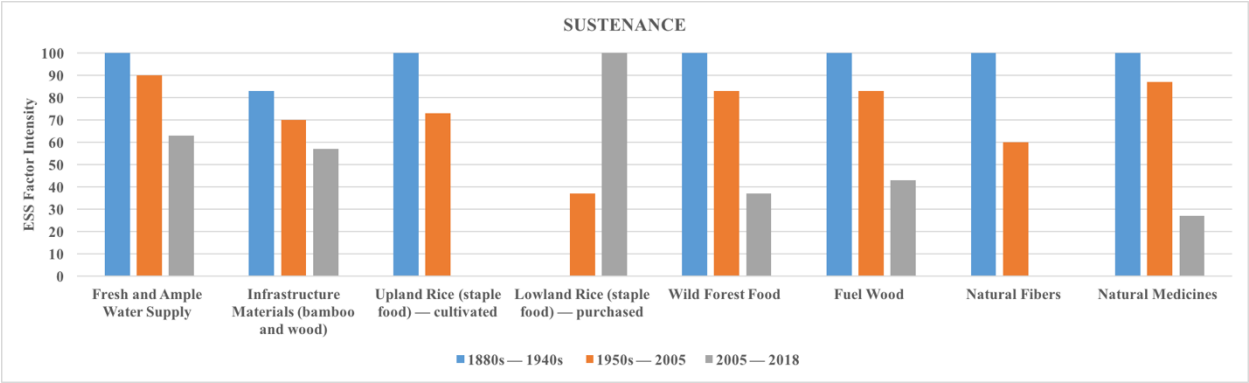


Figure 5.9: The case study's ESS history (quantitative) — provisioning/sustenance (Source: thesis author)

Villagers' fresh and ample water supply has consistently decreased, which is linked with an overall decreasing sense of security. This is transpiring, even though the encompassing forest has become full and lush. The water supply is also connected to their livelihood. This ecosystem service is more related to their overall health and consumption and in terms of bathing, cooking, drinking, food sources (aquatic creatures), etc. *Pumuen* villagers do not use irrigation for their cash crops, and their water comes directly from the mountain, so water supply is not necessarily relevant to their orchard cash crop cultivation. Other villagers, especially those in the lowlands, use this watershed's supply directly for the provisioning of irrigated cash crops.

It is notable to mention that since 2012, the water supply flowing through *Pumuen* has been used for the hydropower dam(s), which is connected with 'development,' electricity and modernity. Linking this with socio-dynamics, water supplied by the watershed was used for villagers' traditional (analog) ways of life. Nowadays, villagers have become addicted to the

hydropower dam's electricity generation for their home consumption. Nowadays (and in just six years), life for Pumuen villagers becomes greatly hampered if and when something happens to the power supply. For example, the frequency of climate change-related phenomena is increasing. Sudden and heavy bursts of rain have, on several occasions, resulted in sediment runoff that has clogged *Pumuen*'s hydropower dam. Blackouts have occurred. While older and middle-aged villagers can cope with this situation, reverting back to their more traditional ways (e.g., fire, and maybe even going to sleep early), this was reportedly not the case with the younger villagers now deprived of their light bulbs and electronic devices.

While villagers, for the most part, still use bamboo and wood for infrastructure and other analog technologies, this has been declining slightly with the implementation of concrete usage. Population increases and natural resource overharvesting is also an issue.

Probably the starkest holistic change with *Pumuen* is the literal elimination of upland rice cultivation and its replacement of purchased lowland rice; culturally speaking, this is a staple food. A foundational alteration in this provisioning resource arguably represents a holistic transformation of the village's socio-fabric. However, the *Lahu* are hunters and gatherers; wild forest food is intimately linked with their livelihood; it is who they are. Villagers therefore still dance with the forest; this trend, while perhaps changing forms, is decreasing; villagers are becoming addicted to the 'convenience' that the commodities market provides.

The forest for villagers can (and has) also become an income source, especially during market system fluctuations and extreme climatic phenomena. With this considered, reductions in biodiversity and therefore wild forest food has decreased villagers' security which has decreased their resilience to shocks that might render them in a despaired state. Natural fibers and medicine collection and usage has also declined. This is largely connected to reduced biodiversity, and with reduced cultural relevance. Fuel wood, mostly necessary for cooking, is becoming ever more difficult to find; however, it appears that *Pumuen* villagers are not (yet) lacking this resource.

A fundamental shifting of provisioning services: "income"

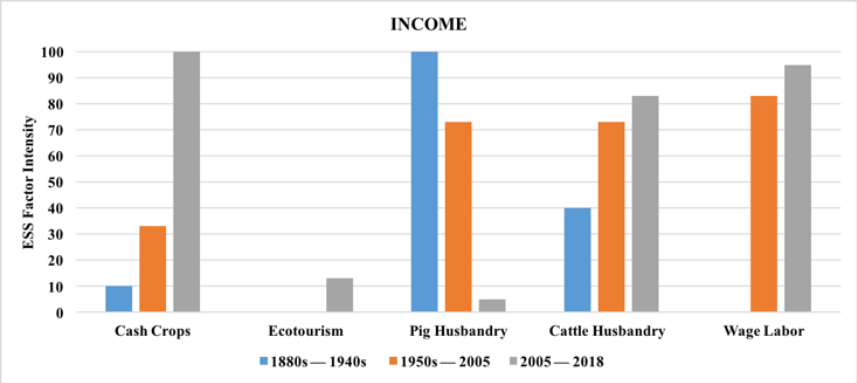


Figure 5.10: The case study's ESS history (quantitative) — provisioning/income (Source: thesis author)

For provisioning services income, the trend in *Pumuen* is that cash crops, versus depending on upland rice and forest products regulated by nature's holistically connected ecosystems, have ever more become villagers' socio-economic centerpiece. This is a major cultural shift.

Upland rice traditionally constituted villagers' sustenance; their related security depended on rainfall and other elements of climatic regulation. Whereas upland rice used to be villagers' cultural grounding staple, tea, at least for the Black *Lahu village, has* ever more become villagers' primary sustenance source. With an analogous notion in mind, upland rice and other forest goods were their sustenance, their food income. However, tea (and other cash crops) have now become their food. This is not in the sense that they literally consume the tea but that this cash crop is used solely for cultivating the paper money now required for purchasing their provisioning services (e.g., food, clothing, etc.).

It could arguably be said that tea has replaced the upland rice. I can carry this notion perhaps even a step further and state that money has replaced nature. 'Sustenance' has therefore changed definition, from constituting the food they eat to instead being about the money they make from the crops to capacitate purchasing of the food they eat. Money has therefore additionally replaced other livelihood aspects they used to value. Now, they buy the things they used to get from nature. Regardless, the motivation is the same: survival.

With the ever-increasing trend of cash crops has also ensued a near elimination of pig husbandry (related to villagers' traditional cultural/spiritual beliefs) but an increase in cattle/buffalo husbandry (used for bulk cash income). Regarding the ever-increasing wage labor prominence, this is arguably linked with a drastic decreasing of self-sufficiency (e.g., 'traditional' indigenous knowledge based livelihoods) and societal transitioning to the global maternity matrix.

As revealed in this thesis's chapter four, villagers worry now about money (alike those in 'developed' countries) and therefore are subject to new forms of security issues (e.g., climate change and unstable market forces). Villagers, versus a monthly few-day pilgrimage to the lowlands, now migrate en masse during certain times of the year, such as when the hot and dry season comes and the tea yield is low. Some never return to village life.

Ecotourism is part of the community ecosystem but not much. Tourism here is its own peculiar phenomenon, strewn with local power player conflicts that have essentially rendered tourism a non-significant factor. On the uplifting side, besides bringing to villagers' supplemental cash money income, this provisioning resource has also made villagers more aware of the need for cultural preservation. Traditional dancing and flute playing was gone in the Black Lahu village. This was until around 2011, when villagers were trained via an outside teacher how to play the flute; one man is now the master of this cultural skill. Some encouraging news is this has now changed in Pumuen with weekly cultural trainings that are Church organized. It is notable that *Pumuen* villagers initially did not restore these traditions because of explicit desires to restore lost cultural traditions but rather with motivations of monetizing their culture.

It is true what the MA says that some people with financial capital have more ESS-related choices; they can purchase ecosystem services. Some *Pumuen* villagers need not forage wild forest food or even tend cash crops. For example, an increasing number of villagers are creating village grocery stores. One *Pumuen* villager is a middle man for villagers' tea and coffee. Three times per year, he sells the tea in-bulk to the lowland market and collects a profit margin. He is one of a few *Pumuen* villagers with a truck. He and his family are among the few villagers who are considered rich. The family recently purchased a washing machine and other convenience objects. Other villagers did not agree to this, but he did it anyway. On several occasions, they have overloaded the village's electricity infrastructure. *Farlae* said, "Fine! Let it all break, and then we can all go back to the dark." … So here is a clear example of how modern-day wealth and its seemingly inevitable materialism leads to social stratification and conflict.

This middle-man villager also offers credit to villagers distraught for financial resources. While he may have an enhanced ability to help others in times of dire need, this is good for people's overall sense of security. However, this creditor's community friends can (and do) become indebted. There is a two-edged trend in *Pumuen.* Like people living in the 'developed' and 'modern world,' a bank loan is used for buying something someone does not actually need (e.g., a big house,

new car, etc.). On a micro level, Pumuen villagers also use this credit for feeding material wants versus supporting sustenance needs. For example, some villagers borrow rice from the village store, while others purchase Coca-Cola used for mixing with purchased whiskey or for simply quieting their whining children, who now want the synthetic materials good they are seeing displayed in the color television set.

Overall, with provisioning services, villagers' core motivations for their survival have changed with the need to fit into the top-down governed state system. What was essentially communicated to *Pumuen* villagers, and all highland peoples for this matter, is that 'you will become part of our national Thai culture, or we will starve you. You can try to independently continue doing your shift cultivation, but through government policies, we are going to interrupt this. Now you have no land for movement. If you have no land for movement, then you have no secure access to resources. You will do sedentary agriculture that bolsters *our nation-state.* You can resist. However, if you do, then we will kill you in one way or another.' There are cases in Thailand where this death sentence was literally practiced.

Let's forward this analysis discussion to the primary focus of this thesis: cultural services.

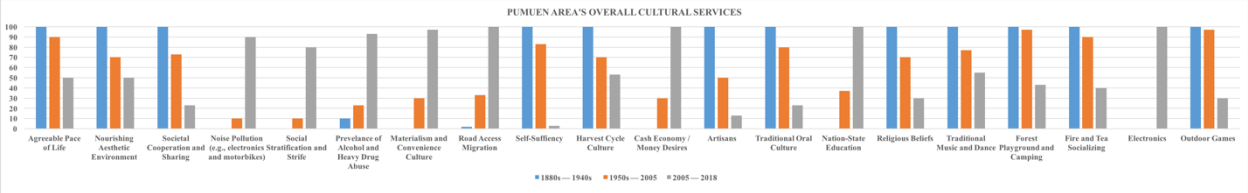


Figure 5.11: The case study's ESS history (quantitative) — cultural (Source: thesis author)

5.2.4. Cultural

I divided the consideration of *Pumuen*'s dynamic array of cultural ESS into five respective parts: livelihood; education; recreation; spiritual; and aesthetic/socio-environment.

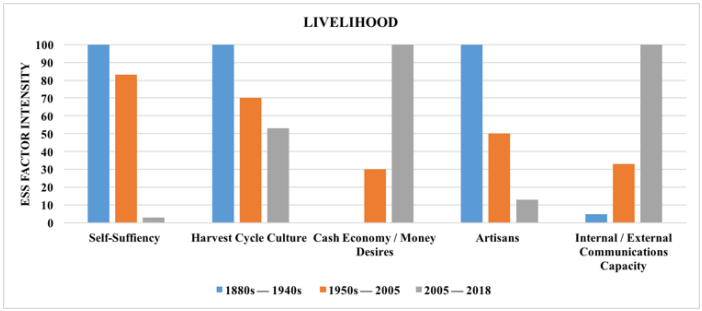


Figure 5.12: The case study's ESS history (quantitative) — cultural/livelihood (Source: thesis author)

Economics is the primary motivator of social change (Pieterse; 2001). So if a state wants to alter people's behavior, especially those living on the societal peripheries, it must re-determine what is required for people to cultivate their livelihoods. In the *Pumuen* case, the government systematically concocting a socio-scenario whereby villagers literally must depend on cash money for their material needs is arguably the primary force driving the deterioration of *Pumuen*'s societal fabric. You can have security in one area (e.g., a forest) while being *degraded* in another.

As notably mentioned in this thesis chapter's section 5.1, villagers' modern-day necessity for purchasing provisioning services formerly provided by 'nature' directly correlates with their continually reducing capacities for self-sufficiency and hence a hampered capacity for resilience to significant shocks.

We can first look at *Pumuen*'s trends related to artisans and shifting cultivation. The indigenous knowledge vitally required for making hunting tools and other life necessities has been continually decreasing; this is arguably in conjunction with the requirement for cash money-based necessities. Let us, for example, couple artisanry and self-sufficiency. If someone can make his or her life tools and cultivate the basic materials for a good life (e.g., food, shelter, clothing, etc.), then self-sufficiency increases. What then happens when money replaces sustainable traditions?

Looking further at the trend indicators, *Pumuen* villagers' cash income and money desires have greatly increased; harvest cycle culture has declined. Again, self-sufficiency also has consistently trended negatively in conjunction with the degradation of an indigenous knowledge-based livelihood. One affects the other. Eliminating shifting cultivation culture created a societal vacuum-hole that required being filled entirely with something else entirely — this being *"work."*

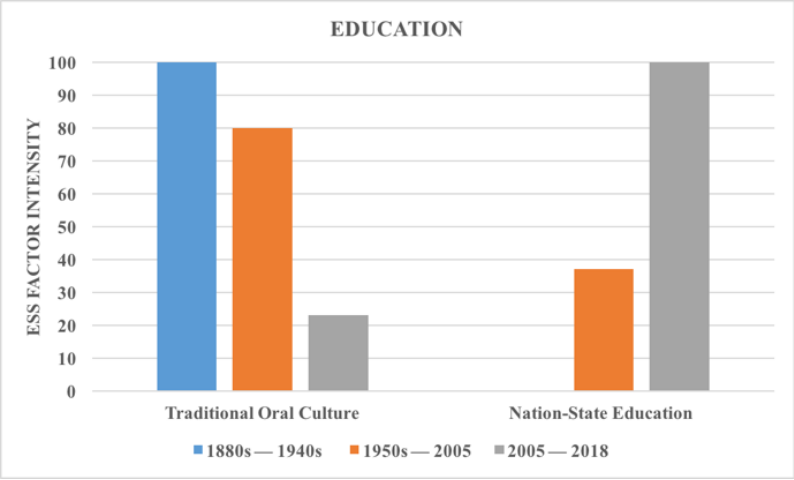


Figure 5.13: The case study's ESS history (quantitative) — cultural/education (Source: thesis author)

For education, villagers used to utilize and depend on oral tradition in conjunction with their indigenous ways of life; they knew how to survive and be self-sufficient. This has largely been replaced by national culture education, whereby youth are taught mathematics, English, and Thai language. This is information, and connected ways of life, not related to their foundational cultural traditions. This creates identity issues, which filter into macro and micro-scale and level societal behaviors.

'Development' and 'modernity' represent different stages in the development continuum. First comes 'development,' the fall from grace and purity; then comes modernity, which is the redemption (Pieterse, 2001). Oral 'traditional' culture is analog. National culture is digital. Development is about the market system. Digital is linked with modernity (technology). Modernity is about technology and government policies meant to cultivate links to global market chains.

This said, 'education' for P*umuen* villagers is becoming more about the perpetuation of capitalism than it is about sacred indigenous knowledge designed for self-sufficiency and socio-political autonomy. National education is connected directly with industrial capitalism. This modern 'education' is teaching villagers how to fit into the state economy and market system. This could also be linked with why their self-sufficiency is decreasing, why cash economy desires are increasing, and why there is less time to do artisanry and other facets of traditional culture. This connects with why their agreeable pace of life (addressed in the following section) is decreasing; they are laborers now, and there is less time for life aspects that do not generate "income."

Considering the ESS indicator related to the increasing trend in national education, perhaps this is why villagers are abandoning traditional knowledge and desiring "higher education." This is also why I maintain that higher education for villagers has become a wealth status. It is not necessarily that they want to be Thai. Rather, when they can fit into mainstream Thai society, they can access the goods and services that the mainstream societal system offers. This includes all aspects, from provisioning services to personal desires and needs.

In their home village, meeting the requirements of a globalized 'modern society,' whatever this means exactly, is not possible. Just six years ago, villagers were not even able to watch a soap opera because the infrastructure was not there. Comparing themselves with others, this sense of 'lack' creates societal pressures, which need to be and are relieved in different ways (both destructive and constructive).

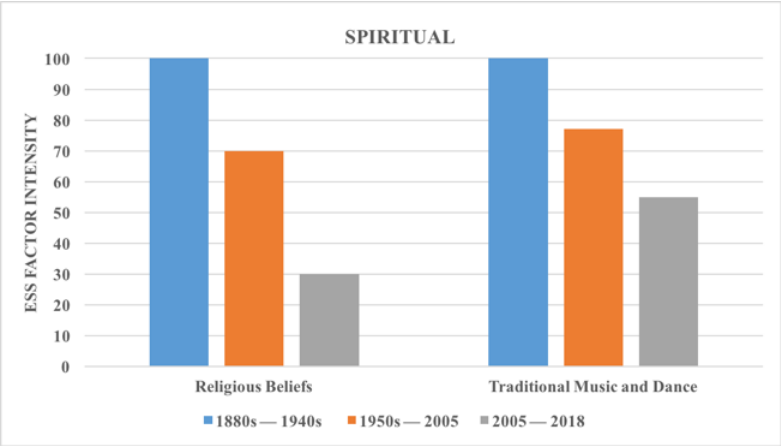


Figure 5.14: The case study's ESS history (quantitative) — cultural/spiritual (Source: thesis author)

Spirituality is related to security and social cohesion. Traditional music and dance are also connected with spiritual practices. Normally, villagers especially practice these millennia-old traditions during festivals. However, it appears that after the road and the electricity came to *Pumuen*, along with the ensuing television and other technologies, their spiritual practices became altered. It appears as though television (and the cellular phone) has become their church; many villagers would rather watch television and drama shows. They used to come together, motivated primarily by living life as a village unit.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Pumuen villagers (particularly the Black *Lahu*) gather every Sunday and attend spiritual Christian services together. The Red *Lahu* intermittently practiced their animist traditions. However, attendance is declining, especially with newer generations. The New Year and other harvest-based ceremonies remain relatively well intact; however, their content is ever more changing. In the past, for example, *Pumuen* villagers did not drink alcohol during ceremonies. This has changed because people are becoming more urbanized. Even women are drinking alcohol, which interviewees revealed is shocking; this is a blatant indicator of a societal-systems state change.

The trends reveal exactly as villagers *Jasuu* and *Farlae* told us in chapter four: technology is becoming villagers' god; this is also a societal symptom of modernity. Then again, have religious beliefs really declined in *Pumuen*? The church body, for example, is quite strong. However, the youth say they believe in God yet do not actually attend church and also do not necessarily live the religious moral principles. These spiritual practices are not actually part of their core beliefs and daily actions, whereas the older generations have authentically strong beliefs.

The prevalence of traditional music and dancing in *Pumuen* has declined, and now, it is somewhat increasing. Perhaps this is a positive indicator resulting from the Black *Lahu* community independently restoring its traditions — a turn-around from what was originally a cultural monetization. The music and dancing in *Pumuen* is therefore once again becoming a spiritual beliefs-based societal reality. Christianity is not the *Lahu* people's original belief system; however, ironically, it is the Church that is now fund-supporting the restoration of their traditional socio-fabric.

Core belief changes lead to behavior changes that lead to cultural norm changes, which transform into societal alterations. This is how the 'societal panarchy' cycle is articulated.

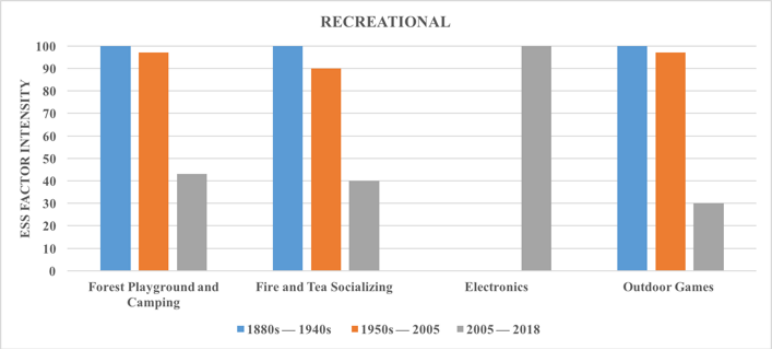


Figure 5.15: The case study's ESS history (quantitative) — cultural/recreational (Source: thesis author)

For recreational services, the trends reveal that *Pumuen* villagers used to go into the forest with their friends — hunting, fishing, camping and finding forest goods. Outdoor analog games comprised of their environmental fruits were also prominent. While they still do this, the dynamics have changed because now there are other choices such as television and mobile 'smart phones;' analog activities have been substituted with electronics technology. Toys that used to be composed of wood and bamboo are now in the form of purchased plastics.

Youth used to play together, but now the technologies stimulate individualism. I suppose it is, as such, all over the world, just in different cultural formats. I vividly recall growing up in the

rural northern United States. The forest was our playground, but this changed when video games became available. Life is life everywhere; the material capitalism blob is seeping in everywhere.

Evening-time fire and tea socializing remains strong, although declining. However, this foundation cultural component is also being replaced by, or at least including, television watching. I have observed that while villagers still rendezvous for tea time, the number of participants doing this together is decreasing. Most of them now have their own TV and cell phones. Likewise, when societal behaviors become more individualist, then this is where and when social exclusion becomes a part of the socio-dynamic, versus traditionally being more about inclusion.

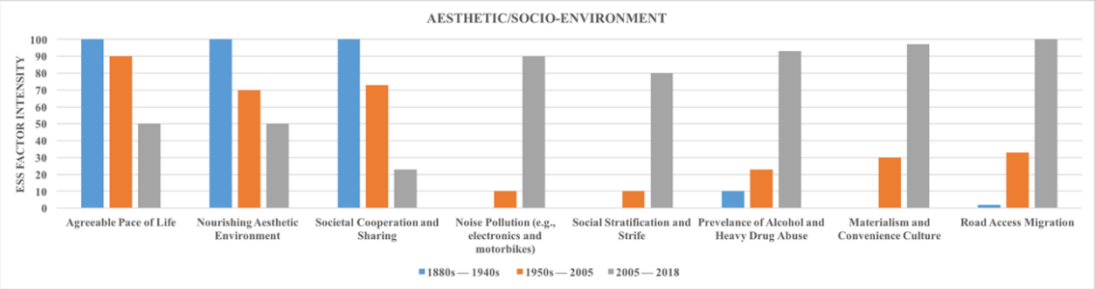


Figure 5.16: The case study's ESS history (quantitative) — cultural: aesthetic/socio-environment (Source: thesis author)

A peculiar aspect of *Pumuen*'s aesthetic and socio-environmental factors when compared with other ecosystems service is that pretty much every increasing trend actually equates to a negative factor in terms of social unity and long-term societal longevity. As you will see in this section, when considering *Pumuen*'s overall well-being, it is perhaps reasonable to consider whether for *Pumuen* another societal systems state change is soon approaching.

Pumuen's aesthetic 'natural' environment in terms of greenery has become enhanced. However, greatly bolstered road access and its ensuing materialism-based social stratification and strife, noise pollution, alcohol, and other drug use have been continually increasing. This positive trend is actually a negative indicator of well-being. Societal cooperation and sharing are decreasing, which reveals a degradation of the cohesive societal fabric. The agreeable (slow) pace of life is also decreasing, which is a negative indicator.

While I acknowledge that most aspects of *Pumuen*'s ecosystems are dynamically varying and semi-open for interpretation, it is undeniable that villagers' agreeable (i.e., agrarian, and slow-paced) ways of life have declined. This has deeply affected them, especially the elderly and middle-aged folks. Most *Pumuen* villagers nowadays awake tired and semi-miserable, dragging their feet in order to go go go, just like in the global West and throughout other 'developed' areas.

Pumuen villagers now have to make money for food, for education, for a motorbike payment, and for additional material things. This arguably forced integration with the nation-state is a primary reason they have a reducing of overall socio-environmental quality.

A "busy" life supposedly synonymous with 'progress' leaves little or no space for healing, for personal movement. Therefore, time for somewhat mindless recreation (e.g., television watching, drinking, social media perusing, etc.) is anticipated and arguably needed. Likewise, this urban-paced socio-culture creates internal tensions for people and is the root motivator for becoming more selfish, less patient, and more aggressive. This is why they do more drugs and alcohol, fight, drive fast, etc. It is a means of relieving stress and is a symptom of capitalism-driven social degradation. Nowadays, Pumuen villagers, just like those fully integrated into the urban matrix, rely on outside materials as a form of lifestyle justification. They use the mobile market. They used to grow rice and vegetables for self-sufficiency. Now they buy everything for their basic needs. Before, they used to use only salt. Now, they use monosodium glutamate (MSG) and other semi-synthetic outside resources. In the past, they lived a simple life; there was no need to buy anything – food, clothing, etc. This is all connected and revealed via the trends.

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Pumuen has experienced several societal state shifts. Perhaps needless to say, their socio-culture appears to be headed downward. Besides alcohol and meth, villagers are becoming ever more addicted to "convenience" and the electron. Materialism increases with cash flow; therefore, the convenience culture has increased. Increases in cash money accumulation result in a decreased need for societal cooperation and sharing. Villagers buying more stuff, such as motorbikes and electronics, is a reason the village noise pollution has increased. Karaoke machines have replaced traditional analog cultural music. Their need for more electronics has increased because of a new need for communication while community members are working in the city. This digitization of people's minds and ways of life also decreases the need for traditional indigenous knowledge-based oral culture, or even its relevance.

Fast-paced electronics technologies are ever more replacing analog ways of life and linked behavior synonymous with their 'traditional' socio-fabric. Analog activities, such as those attributed to fire and communication tools while in the forest, were not run by electricity. So let us consider electronics technology and its intimate link with 'modernity.' If looking at this from the perspective of Western 'developmentalism' and practice, the idea of 'development' is to first

government execute an organized intervention in collective affairs. So take what people do, interrupt this with and through policy directives, and then through these policies behavior is changed arguably by getting people to participate in the global market system. For people to participate in the global market system, technologies are required, such as those related to communication, crop cultivation, etc. Modernity is all about technology. Electronics are essentially replacing analog technologies. This is all linked with the global matrix in proportion to access.

5.2.5 Following-Up: Villagers' Explanations

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

The reason I have to use mixed methods for this research project is because in *Pumuen,* the environmental and socio-politics is very complex. Each ecosystem factor has many aspects. Also, the quantitative trends allowed focused room for much conversation.

I was initially perplexed upon learning how a replanted forest could cause environmental and societal degradation. How could more encompassing greenery create notable reductions in biodiversity (e.g., edible plants), more polluted and less available fresh water, diminished air quality, and a less favorable aesthetic environment? This scenario is largely because each ecosystem component is holistically connected with the others; when one is altered, so will be the others. Merely using theoretical tools is not enough. Sometimes, what is required is that we talk further with stakeholders and ask them to confirm what we believe is true, based on the research. The following section comprises further information learned from three villagers of an age range who evaluated the ESS factors and helped determine the trends in context with *Pumuen*'s 'development.'

Provisioning

Again, the most significant 'development' policy that has affected these rural highland communities in northern Thailand is land use regulations. Villagers reported that while *Pumuen*'s encompassing forest may have been replanted where there used to be rice and opium being grown, pine trees (and other non-native species) were used. This decimated the native ecosystems, including making a hostile environment for other trees and plants. Introducing alien species also

changed the overall indigenous ecosystem, decreasing overall biodiversity (pun intended). The new tree species affected traditional medicines' growth, for example. While for various reasons the pine trees around *Pumuen* have disappeared (e.g., harvested for fuel wood), because this is a 'reserved' Royal Project forest area designed for tea and other orchards, many pine trees exist further up the national park watershed.

The Red *Lahu* used to have troubles with the wood supply. Prominent opium cultivation requires that they travel far to collect wood. This is not the case with the nearby Black *Lahu* village. Different contexts create different resource-related situations within relatively the same socio-ecological system. Firewood availability is now decreasing because of land use regulations, population increases, and prolonged resource need requirements. There were fibers available for clothing, but they are gone. Actually, villagers sold them, and then some species went extinct. I suppose this transpired during a transition time from a 'traditional' livelihood to cash money market society needs. Perhaps for the first time, they realized that natural resource availability has limitations, especially when commoditized into an insatiable market.

For a transitioning time period, villagers' livelihood was comprosed entirely of Forestry Department labor. This is particularly true with their involvement in tree-planting programs. However, this has greatly changed because of decreased necessity; villagers also have other options (e.g., private orchard cultivation, wage labor, or urban dwelling overall). Villagers' traditional labor exchange (e.g., planting and harvesting) and bartering, while being practiced in *Pumuen* just 30 years ago, has predominantly vanished. Villagers used to grow both rice and tea, but now tea is the staple (cash) crop.

The soil quality in *Pumuen* was tested and reported by a village leader. It is healthy and produces a good yield. It is relatively the same quality now as it has always been because different crops are being grown there (e.g., tea, and other orchard crops). Villagers reported difficulty nowadays in finding certain forest foods that used to be plentiful. Wood and bamboo also used to be in ample supply. Nowadays, villagers have to ask permission from Forestry Department officers to collect things. An increased human population is creating strain on the entire ecosystem. There is high competition. People from other areas come to the *Pumuen* area and collect natural medicines and sell them in lowland markets. Villagers therefore have to travel "deeper" to collect forest goods. They, at the end of a long work day, would ever more purchase their provisioning goods from the mobile market or from the lowlands.

Another example of provisioning service changes is buffalo husbandry. Just because buffalo are used as a provisioning source (as a resilience means) does not mean this phenomenon does not impact other ESS factors, such as biodiversity, water quality, or socio-cultural aspects involving land usage. There is now far more buffalo husbandry being utilized for money sequestration and security. This is arguably a good thing versus working in a factory. However, these animals eat forest goods. The buffalo feces are polluting the fresh water supply.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

There is no longer much pig husbandry being practiced—a traditional *Lahu* culture norm. The Red *Lahu* are not keen on pig husbandry because of worries they will eat their cash crops. This reduction is also because villagers now have to purchase expensive pig food, which used to be forest-supplied. Villagers' pigs are no longer allowed to roam freely. There have been village conflicts over territory and roaming pigs, and communities want to avoid this. "It's a trade-off," said one villager.

Regulating and Supporting

Villagers reported that land use limitations (e.g., prohibited slash and burn cultivation) hamper their ability to maintain the overall socio-ecological ecosystem. Villagers, when practicing shift cultivation, would frequently burn the fields, which prevented overgrowth. It also balanced the ecosystem. A result is now more forest undergrowth and yearly forest fires. Air quality has decreased because of motorbikes, cars, trash burning, and forest fires. There is also more smoke because of the increased population. Orange orchards contribute to air quality degradation because of pesticide spraying in other areas. A positive factor is that the air there is cooler and nourishing nowadays, perhaps because of increased climatic regulation of forest restoration.

Water quantity has always been maintained. However, older people in the Red *Lahu* village before told villagers not to pipe the water into the village. They said that villagers should go to the river and collect this resource. However, this has changed. The Red *Lahu* village uses a water filter and has storage infrastructure, whereas the Black *Lahu* village, while it uses storage does not have a filter system and is experiencing issues with decreasing water quality. The water quality,

particularly in the Black *Lahu* village, is decreasing because of feces from over two hundred buffalo encompassing the villages. There is also more sediment from heavy rains (the climatic change phenomenon).

The road changed the watershed. In particular, the tarred version has messed up the water flow and is creating flooding and erosion. Regarding health control, villagers have experienced improvements in personal physical health (i.e., not necessarily psychological). A villager reported that they had never until fairly recently seen Thai government officials in the village about health issues. However, they trained villagers on how to do health tests (e.g., for parasites).

Erosion near *Pumuen* village, caused by relatively new impervious road surface.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Cultural

As all *Pumuen* villagers across the age spectrum have reported, life was very quiet there recently; there was no noise pollution 30 years ago. One villager said that "many birds and deer surrounded this village. Now there is noisy technology everywhere." Everyone was sharing their provisioning resources, especially meat. Nowadays, most everyone is selling it to each other and to the outside markets.

Regarding societal cooperation, villagers consistently say village life is largely now "about money, money, money; no more volunteers." There is also a rising conflict about land usage. People have a fence around their domestic and commercial territory, a new phenomenon. There was some materialism in the past. However, it was mostly about necessities that villagers acquired by walking to the lowland urban areas. They bought chili, salt, chickens, etc. Opium and other forest goods were used accordingly. This has totally changed.

A further symptom of societal degradation is alcohol and heavy drug usage. Surely, opium addiction existed here before; however, opium was used for medicine and bartering. When asked directly why villagers in such a brief period went from a relatively healthy society to now doing heavy drugs, etc., one villager said, "More development makes us want to consume more alcohol and other drugs." He said that these substances are also about availability. For example, alcohol was not easily available in the village until recently. Road access to the lowlands, or even the village store, and cash money expenditure (and credit) capacity changed this dynamic.

They do not grow rice anymore; however, although they purchase their rice nowadays, they maintain harvest cycle-related beliefs and ceremonies. Traditional artisanry is lost because villagers did not transfer knowledge. A teacher used to come there and pass on traditional knowledge. However, he died, and this teaching and knowledge went with him. Also, villagers can now purchase livelihood tools. Older people are still practicing the traditions, but not the youth.

The aesthetic environment has decreased mostly because of population growth and the usage of loud-piped motorbikes and noise racket from electronics. There is not much traditional music and dancing left because villagers "are obsessed" with the karaoke machine. Their traditional play toys have largely become replaced with plastics.

They used to communicate with fellow villagers, then with Thai Forestry Department officers, and now they can communicate with the whole world. Villagers before did not even know there were other villages nearby. Later, they walked to other villages. Now, they connect via motorbike and cellular phones. These technologies are useful. However, they create societal pollution on many levels. On the other hand, one villager said that technology is good because "now we can see and hear other people as well."

This all said, top-down government can change what people do on the outside but not necessarily what they experience on the inside, at least not right away. Multi-level governance, including inter-scale and level relationships, is vitally important. The local people know about their environments.

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Culture is an agreed-upon way of doing things. I maintain that culture must be connected and supported by both livelihood and the overall environment (both 'natural' and socio). Core belief systems are the heart center of a community. So, if religious beliefs decline, this is also linked with traditional knowledge and self-sufficiency (e.g., artisanry, such as hunting tools or clothing production). This is all linked with social degradation (or enhancement) because core belief changes result in social strife and vice versa.

You can see through the indicators in *Pumuen* that technology/modernity is replacing villagers' traditional socio-fabric. They are becoming digitized and electronic. So what flows faster, a nicely flowing mountain stream (analog) or the electron? Electronics are fast, whereas a river is slow and agreeable; it envelops and symbiotically wraps around the trees and the rocks and

flows at the rate of the geological slope. Everything is in balance, or at least in a perpetual state of balanced flux.

Using this analogy, villagers' agreeable pace of life is decreasing with the increasing prevalence of modernity and materialism, convenience culture, road access, and social stratification. This is increasing with cash money and materialistic desires, with national education exposure. All factors increasing are connected with 'development' and modernity. Factors connected with analog and 'tradition' are connected with tea and socializing, outdoor games, traditional culture, shifting cultivation, a nourishing environment, cooperation, and sharing; they are all decreasing. The increased pace of life is connected with modernity, which is about technology and digitization. Likewise, cooperation and sharing are decreasing with the increasing pace of life.

Traveling to the lowlands once a month, for example, likely involves traditions. When they spent a night in the forest, they likely discussed life's happenings and future-oriented strategies, etc. Before, when villagers lived more isolated, their behaviors were most centered on community needs. Now, their needs are more based on themselves (i.e., wants). It is more individualistic and arguably selfish. A villager's son for example uses social media to talk with his girlfriend in another village. It is all about him. Without the electronics technology, he would be doing something else more analog and connected with the community, maybe practicing traditional *Lahu* courting techniques (e.g., the flute). Villagers' boundaries have greatly expanded. Before, they had no road or easy access to "the outside." They experienced strong societal cohesion and sharing. Nowadays, they are more individualistic and do not think about the community as much. However, the church is vital for community cohesion. Again, if religious beliefs collapse, everything else collapses.

Modernity has compressed the world. Everyone is connected to everything. *Pumuen* villagers use Facebook and social media to connect worldwide. It has opened their world. There are no longer any boundaries, at least in relation to villagers' non-tangible world. Electronics increase connectivity. Even though they have the ability to connect with others now and get more information, does this not also render them more individualistic as well? Do they become more focused on the things they are alone interested in versus the overall needs of the community?

This is all connected. Nowadays, versus their lives comprising a 'moral economy' (i.e., slow rural agrarian life based on goodness, fairness, and justice, generally only possible in small,

closely knit communities, as opposed to where the market is assumed to be independent of such concerns), *Pumuen* villagers, and most 'developed' people worldwide, have to make money, buy things, and depend on capitalist global market systems. This phenomenon is also a negative factor for a sense of security and overall well-being.

It is becoming ever more difficult for *Pumuen* villagers to survive here, not because their natural environments (i.e., provisioning, and regulating services) are greatly degrading. They have even more technologies and market access. Their survival is becoming more precarious because their cultural services are degrading. Their societal fabric is unraveling. It has reached a perhaps minor societal state shift comprised of new (arguably incompatible) desires. The societal thread breakage/unraveling is coming from the youth strand, which is being affected by money and material goods addiction.

Villagers play the music so loudly at night, for example, ironically as an outward illustration of their true inner misery, behaving like a wolf howling at the moon. It is like they want to forget for a moment. Considering social psychology, graffiti, for example, is done because people are subconsciously dissatisfied with their environment and therefore communicate with it by attacking or altering it, in some way, to suit personal tastes; this is deeply psychological. So in *Pumuen*, when we see certain cultural factors declining and people acting in this way, especially with the youth, they are emulating urban behaviors but are doing it in a socio-environment that does not support this. This is why it is so contrasting to observe. This is where core belief changes (and preservation) come into play.

For perspective balance, just because people, or even a community's core beliefs change, or they are not entirely living their traditional ways of life, does not mean it will experience social degradation. However, the trend is generally that social degradation in terms of cultural ESS does stem from core belief change. This is especially true when someone's environment, and everything connected with it, does not support whatever this change is. For example, let us say that a *Pumuen* villager wants to be part of the mainstream national culture, or is being forced to become part (such as in Thailand, with Thai-fication). However, this person is living in a socio-environment that does not support this desire (e.g., a rural indigenous village). This person's mindset says, 'I want that material stuff. I want to live like people in the city," but his or her community environment does not support this; this is the core of mental/societal illness.

So here you have a real-life socio-situation where youth exist amid the *Pumuen* community. They want to be Thai. They want the stuff that city people (including their friends) have. However, 'I live in this village with these primitive people who live in bamboo houses and use a hole in the ground for a toilet, and they wear this clothing that I don't want to wear, and I am stuck here!" It is no wonder, then, why they are angry, why when they ask mom for money and when she refuses he beats on her; it is because he is angry not necessarily at his mother but more-so is angry at his overall situation from which he cannot escape. … My view on the societal impacts of 'development' involves notions that this is what happens when a government enacts 'natural resource' ethnocide polices that sever people's ability to live and be as they have always known. In "modern times" it is especially the youth who have to figure out how to fit into nowhere!

While *Pumuen*'s middle-aged and elder community members may have resilience to shocks, both environmental and cultural. The people who have survived here have been able to do so only because of their indigenous knowledge. *Farlae* at 35 years old may very well be the last generation who truly knows how to survive in this 'natural' environment. This is at least becoming not the case with the youth. They, with their lust for modernity, are perhaps ensuring their destruction. Seemingly blind(ed), they treat their lifeblood, their environment, and fellow villagers, with near disdain and while seemingly unaware that in 30 years, if this place even still exists, they will be in dire trouble. They will either literally be unable to stave off the calamities on their doorstep, or they will have found some way to adapt and/or create a restructured societal system. The same is true for anyone else in this material, plastic world.

Some villagers seem not to see the true wealth they still have. They are so rich in ESS, in the capacity to insulate themselves from the wretched misery that most humans in the 'developed world' endure every day. Some people are so rich yet are so poor in awareness. While their current resource levels may, to some degree, be sustaining their semi-modern lifestyle, some villagers — particularly those with traditional *Lahu* cultural knowledge — are adapting, or at least semi-adapting, to their ever-changing circumstances; this may not be the future case. Considering a rapidly developing world experiencing increasing prominence of environmental and societal degradation, villagers' full awareness of the vital importance of the ESS they have available to them (at least for now) are literally their life insurance policy.

A key point in top-down development is that it is essentially about using people for nation-state motivations. Considering *Pumuen*, a positive correlation is with the increase of national culture education and significant enhancing of villagers' personal health (and maybe even their ability to make choices and act. Still, provisioning services have also greatly increased. Another aspect is that the central Thai government's 'development' policies purposed for restoring the forest watershed encompassing *Pumuen* are thoroughly successful. However, this is also because the *Pumuen* community, and throughout northern Thailand for this matter, have not been allowed to continue living in their traditional ways. This community was used by the state system to bring to fruition state development policies, not human capacity development policies.

That said, top-down government is rooted in and governed by state interests. Bottom-up development schemes are projects planned and controlled by local communities to help their local-central and peripheral areas. In terms of top-down development, the *Pumuen* area arguably represents a mixing of these two paradigms. The *Pumuen* community does have a sense of belonging here, however. Maybe this is the point of the central government employing villagers to rebuild the forest. In exchange for being state labor, whether they signed up for this service or not, the government allows them to forage for food, which overall produces food security. So it is not all bad with top-down directives; actually, sometimes it is necessary.

Somewhat regardless of this notion, the central government policy forces that the *Pumuen* community's area have been subject to, particularly since the 1950s, have been highly detrimental, particularly on societal levels. The state forest has been replaced at the expense of the community. Once the state accomplishes its goals (of agriculture), then is there really any need for these labor-people to continue being in the forest, on state property? Considering Siam/Thailand's history, perhaps *Pumuen* (and other such rural village communities) are ever more becoming a hindrance to future state motivations! This case study area is a highly successful case of top-down 'development,' particularly as an organized intervention in collective affairs, which is more about GDP development than it is about civil and community development.

This all said, the quantity of life in *Pumuen* may be increasing, but quality in terms of overall socio-environment is decreasing. This community is fairly cohesive, though, or at least it appears as such (for now). Either way, the era here of gentle quietude, an inherent personality of these rural village communities (and perhaps humans overall), is simply no more.

5.3. Considering Human Well-Being: On the Road to Nowhere or Somewhere?

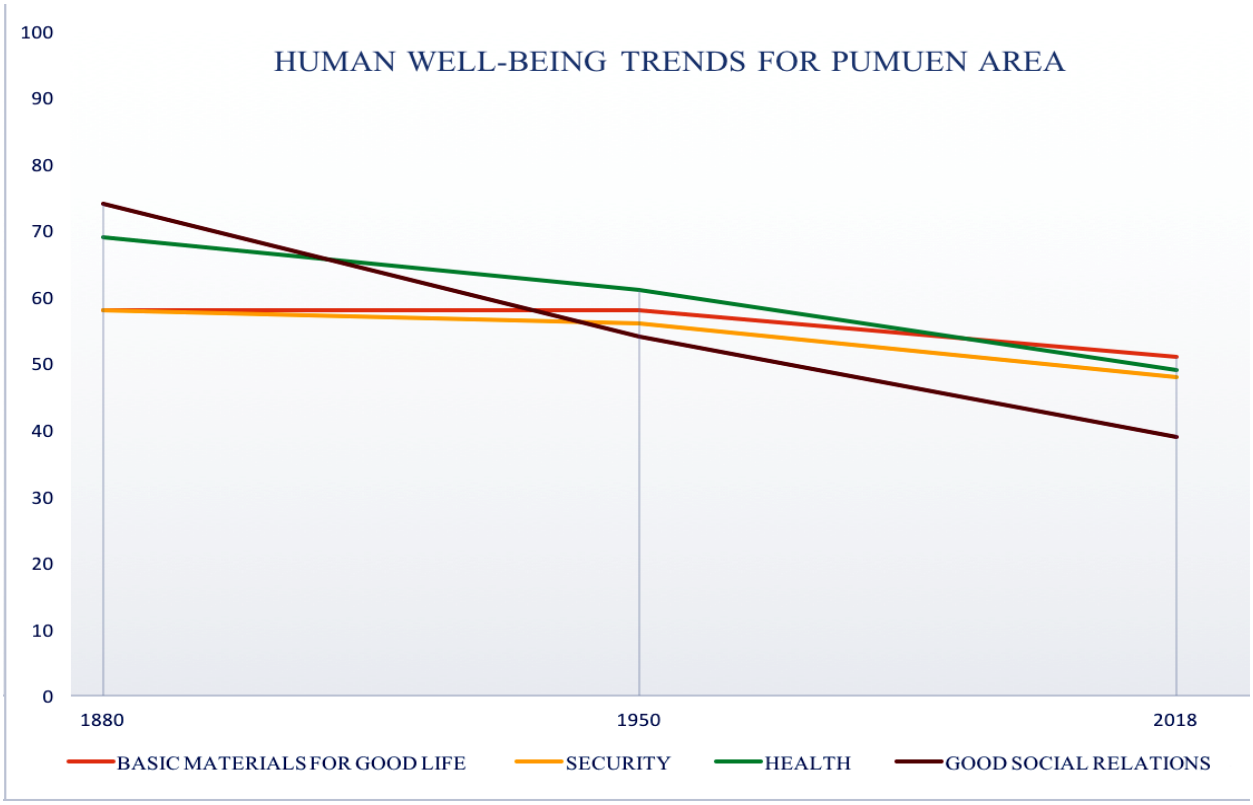


Figure 6.7: The case study's ESS related human well-being trends (Source: thesis author)

Considering villagers' provisioning, regulating, cultural, and supporting ESS in the context of human well-being, it is essential to holistically consider the ESS factors intensities and further connect them with the overall 'development' story. So how can we interpret this graph? What is perhaps *Pumuen*'s socio-ecological trajectory?

The *Pumuen* villages' ESS-related trends over the past 140 years reveal that villagers' basic materials for a good life (e.g., resources accessibility and ability to have a livelihood), sense of security (e.g., a clean and safe environment, and resilience to ecological (life) shocks), and health (e.g., adequate nourishment, being disease-free) have *all* declined. This is particularly true since around the 1950s, when I determined the second major societal system state change (i.e., land use limitations, and the onset of 'development') ensued.

The declining health trend is perplexing. Villagers are actually experiencing improved health conditions in terms of eradication of physical diseases, such as malaria, yellow fever, parasites, etc. Consider also villagers' degrading social relations, (e.g., a supporting community that capacitates social cohesion, mutual respect, and personal expression and learning). I guess this does not mean that their overall health — or even the socio-ecological system state — is not ailing. Look at (and between) the lines. Is *Pumuen* — particularly considering the villages' revolting youth — en route toward another entire socio-ecological system collapse? This is the stated objective of this thesis — to reveal and further contemplate these notions.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Photographs by Jeffrey Warner

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Introspective Discussion

This research project, intended as a nuanced multi-disciplinary investigation, delved into how we as a global community are perhaps at a pivotal point in our history. The economic market-related decisions that humans have been making for generations are rendering like never before very tangible effects on our reality in terms of our natural environment and overall social functioning.

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Rural ethnic indigenous peoples in northern Thailand offered us a societal context for focusing on the 'de' of development. This revealing illustrated how capitalism's tenets of land, labor, and capital detrimentally affect relationships among ourselves and with our surrounding 'natural' ecosystems. We pondered what 'development' and 'modernity' related processes are essentially taking away from humans' cultures and traditional ways of life and what are the societal replacements. What are the short- and potential long-term impacts of this supposedly glorious march of capitalism-linked 'progress?' What does this inquiry mean for Us all? Are we humans on the road to nowhere or somewhere?

This study-journey began by outlining a consideration for while modernity-related technologies and related lifestyles have become commonplace in modern-day 'developed' societies, world populations remain functioning on the margins of globalization and related modernization phenomena. At least for a while longer, both 'modern' and 'traditional' lifestyles can still be observed.

I established a foundation for learning more about this via a sociopolitical policies-related historical investigation into how Siam was initially internationally colonized/imperialized and how Thailand was later internally 'developed.' This two-phase territorialization process essentially overturned the nation's cultural root systems. This is especially relevant nowadays for those still attempting to live ethnically traditional lifestyles amid the state's societal peripheries.

I illustrated 'development' as an organized intervention in collective affairs by revealing fairly in-depth about one indigenous ethnic community area — *Pumuen*. This is a case study

template for the ‘de’ of development. Villagers from an age range and living within different life circumstances shared with us about their community and how 145 years of top-down government planning policies, global market influences, and infrastructural development have affected their communities’ geographical environments, socio-economic conditions, and psycho-social functioning. This is particularly relevant to the last 70 years, when top-down central-state ‘development’ policies perforated villagers’ socio-fabric. This ethnographic investigation provided information for creating a ‘development timeline,’ which was used for framing a qualitative analysis of villagers’ provisioning, regulating, supporting, and cultural ecosystem services.


Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

This study, which I longitudinally quantified, reveals trends pertaining to villagers’ well-being. Pumuen’s socio-ecological reality is transmuting. Its ‘development’ related socio-ecological degradation — serving essentially as a contextual case study for the country, and arguably of all humankind for this matter — has ensued one decade, one ‘development’ policy, one television program and policy scheme at a time. While fragments of the Pumuen communities’ culturally ‘traditional’ socio-fabric remain, villagers, because of top-down government policies, are becoming evermore plugged into mainstream national and global society. They have, as a means of adaptive resilience, socio-functionally transformed from that of a nature-subsistence way of life — arguably more in-balance with their natural surroundings than people living in what is considered the ‘modern world’ — to that of depending near totally on cash economics and its driving global market system. This has essentially created a cultural identity crisis.

The Pumuen villages area does maintain positive societal attributes, including some intact core traditional Lahu ways of life and community cohesion in micro-level decision-making. However, this is spiraling downward as villagers have, particularly in the last 70 years, experienced marked changes in both their physical environments and social functioning, and not necessarily for the better.

6.1. Ecosystems Transformation: Direct and Indirect Drivers of Change

Further considering the ecosystems of this thesis-monograph's primary case study, I maintain that the Pumuen villages area has undergone three primary societal systems state changes. The following section, respectively articulates some of the direct and indirect drivers of changes in their ecosystem services, which has affected these communities' overall well-being.

1. Throughout the *Pumuen* area's subsistence/primitive era (1880s–1950), the creation of a dirt road navigable by motorbikes and military vehicles (i.e., the state) is perhaps the most significant direct driver of change still fueling the 'development' processes ensuing 140 years later. During this timeframe, Siam was colonized/imperialized; later came the creation of Thailand as a political state. This socio-political and geographical territorialization cultivated indirect drivers of change involving regional and domestic international policy changes (i.e., anti-communism and 'rural development' policy directives). Villagers' increasing engagement with the central government (e.g., military) ensued, along with the increasing usage of cash money (i.e., global market engagement). This contributed significantly, although somewhat indirectly, to villagers' ecosystem services-related engagements. This at least began a socio-political process.

2. A top-down state intervention in collective affairs (1950s–2005) carried with it 'development' that forever changed *Pumuen* as this politically sensitive border area and the indigenous people inhabiting it. This included (and still includes) direct drivers of change comprised of staunchly enforced government land use regulations. This includes the expunging of opium cultivation (and opium addiction and black market-related socio-issues), and most notably, the systematic dissolving of traditional slash and burn upland rice agriculture. A new socio-political environment involving land-use change (i.e., cash crops) required labor. The Black *Lahu* migrated to this area. Orchard-based sedentary cash crops (i.e., tea mono-cropping) transformed the landscape. Eventually, the road was expanded. With bolstered urban (global market) access, the prevalence of modernity-related cultural inputs also ensued.

This for the *Pumuen* communities brought forth indirect drivers of change, including government-mandated household registration; this formally transformed villagers from being fairly autonomous and self-governing to becoming state subjects. Being under the State's umbrella also has its social benefits, including modern health care and some secure access to resources related to personal security (i.e., human rights). Pumuen's Thai government school (i.e., national culture education, and a *Lahu* traditional culture de-education) is also an indirect driver of explicit

changes that have ensued. Migration to the urban lowlands, wage labor and urban dwelling, cash money usage, marrying outside of the village, reduced practicing of ethnic traditions (i.e., indigenous knowledge for provisioning goods, medicine, music and dancing, and *Lahu* language), resource consumption changes (i.e., financial spending, purchasing of foods villagers' used to harvest from the encompassing forest, and consumption of non-traditional foods, etc.), have all comprised indirect drivers of change leading ever more to a near complete overturning of the villages' socio-functioning.

3. With capitalism and modernity fully settling into villagers' socio-fabric (2005-2018), directly contributing to this continues primarily being the easily navigable road. The installation of low- and then high-power electricity continually being ever more utilized is also a direct driver of change; villagers are ever more plugging into the global market matrix. *Pumuen* has recently experienced some devastating climatic events in cash crops that have encouraged villagers to consider alternative income sources involving multi-cropping and different forms of animal husbandry (i.e., a traditional *Lahu* livelihood trait).

The forest comprising the national park and watershed within which *Pumuen* resides has been restored, revealing a highly successful central government initiative. However, ironically, this has directly led to relatively negative ESS-related changes related to biodiversity; this is particularly concerning harvestable provisioning services. There is also the increasing prominence of environmental pollution, both aesthetic and societal. These changes overall have cultivated indirect drivers of ensuing further changes such as a highly increased pace of life, cash money-based socio-functioning, materialism, and social stratification, increasing usage of electronics (e.g., television, cellular phones, and karaoke machines), credit debt, and environmental pollution including noise racket, synthetic rubbish, and degrading water and air quality. Also ensuing is overall societal discontent resulting in an increasing prevalence of materialism and social stratification, alcohol and other drug abuse, suicide, and domestic violence.

CBT has indirectly contributed to the improvement of provisioning and cultural services' improvement (e.g., supplemental income, cultural pride, etc.). Some restoration of traditions, such as music and dance, and central government easing of land use regulations (i.e., capacity for natural foods foraging and animal husbandry), is somewhat helping these communities bolster their overall resilience while coping with a continuing onslaught of changes in a rapidly paced post-modern world.

Some of these direct and indirect drivers of change pertaining to villagers' access to potentially beneficial opportunities — migration via the road, "higher education," modern technologies, financial income, etc.) — not having access to these resources (i.e., poverty) is also resulting in an additional multi-layered gamete of directly and indirectly driven changes.

This all said, there may be major and minor (panarchy related) societal system state shifts in conjunction with direct and indirect drivers of change, which would require even deeper levels of examination.

6.2. Offering Some Discourse: Are Good Social Relations *Really* Unnecessary?

A further contemplation of 'development' and its societal implications

Micro-scale "development" impacts are ever more conglomerating and generating tangible macro-scale global footprints, and visa-versa. Our human condition is transmuting — changing in form, nature, and substance. This is perhaps an alchemical transmutation, as we interact with a globalized world to the extent that humanity has never seen.

This research project revealed that one rural indigenous ethnic community — as a social-scientific measurement for considering how perhaps all of humankind has been core-impacted by capitalist "development" — is experiencing now more than ever blatant and arguably precarious geographical and societal degradation. This is in proportion with the injection of top-down capitalism-driven state 'development' policies actually most useful for controlling resources (including people) and bolstering the capitalism-driven GDP money market economy., among other aspects. This is status quo 'development' in the sense of an organized intervention in collective affairs rather than for development's *supposed* purpose of solving problems and nourishing civil society by providing more choices (Pieterse, 2001).

Considering again this thesis-monograph's community case study, the replanting of this village community's encompassing forest, and the central Thai government territorialization of areas prior outside of the state's gaze, is surely a successful government initiative. However, villagers' livelihood aspects — from biodiversity and access to sufficient and clean water and food, sense of life security, to overall cultural and hence societal and personal health — are consistently degrading. This is particularly relevant to the 1950s top-down government implementation of land-use regulations. What later arrived at villagers was the (somewhat abrupt) implementation of global market access (and reliance), modern technologies, and cash money reliance.

Resultantly, the ESS-related trends over the past 140 years reveal that the *Pumuen* villages area (and perhaps all of Siam/Thailand for this matter) have undergone a whirlpool of transformative changes. It is observable that many villagers, especially the middle-aged and youth, are ever more enacting a lowland urban lifestyle. This involves laboring, money and materialism coveting, materialism, electronic technology usage, and participating in and becoming accustomed to an overall fast (and noisy) pace of life. This is while remaining sort of stuck in a rural village life paradigm. Like oil incompatibly mixing with water, these two societal lifestyle elements — 'traditional' and 'modern' — are seemingly shifting around, beside, and atop one another yet not congealing to create something sustainably new.

I have observed, in *Pumuen* and throughout other rural ethnic indigenous village communities, that many villagers want to, much like in what some may call more 'civilized' world cultures, keep up with their modernizing neighbors but do not know how to cope with their rapidly changing environment. The younger generations are looking to the outside world for examples of how to survive in a modern society. They have little to no clue which world-existence paradigm to which they should identify with or to which one they belong. Middle-aged villagers want to preserve their culture, for which they feel responsible. However, while their children know the cultural traditions, the middle aged are also being drawn toward the conveniences of an enticing modern world. Most of the elders cannot identify with any of this. And most of these villagers are enduring what is perhaps a very real and tangible identity crisis. I will boldly pose this question: Is it (really) okay that this is transpiring?

I again stress that *Pumuen*'s "development" reveals a successful case of top-down natural resource and national economy directed 'development.' However, in terms of human and social development, what is actually transpiring there (and throughout Thailand's sociopolitical peripheral communities) is arguably an ensuing humanitarian disaster — a form of ethnocide. For protection, *Pumuen*'s cultural services overall, at least for the time being, are quite strong (e.g., church activities, *Lahu* language, dress, food, music, activities, etc.). This is not the case for all of northern Thailand's rural villages; their resilience to detrimental development impacts depends greatly on leadership dynamics. Anyway, how long will this village's semi-unity endure if the newer generations keep harnessing such blind disdain for the traditional ways of life that may very well be their lifeline amid this accelerating modern world paradigm.

What this thesis reveals, and perhaps suggests, then is that even rural agrarian communities remaining intertwined with the 'nature' that semi-regulates them are experiencing now more than blatant and arguably precarious social degradation phenomena. Considering this socio-ecological context, we can only contemplate the true extent of social degradation ensuing within the realms of supposedly more 'advanced' societies synonymous with notions of 'progress.' This is perhaps because while organic goods can be distributed to materialism-driven societies, synthetics and their symbiotically linked 'modern' livelihoods cannot be abruptly introduced into the socio-fabric of an inherently agrarian society; they are, perhaps, simply not compatible. That said, acquiring more money, collecting more stuff, having more choices — more "development" — does not necessarily equate to human well-being.

Critique: Are social relations *really* weakly linked with ESS and well-being?

The United Nations' Millenium Assessment states that both provisioning and regulating services have low-level bonds with good social relations (see Figure 2.6: ESS framework (and well-being) model clarified). The UN maintains this same determination regarding cultural services: that social relationships are not an integrally strong element of ESS; this includes the potential for mediation by socio-economic factors.

With an opinion based entirely on my field research, I vehemently disagree with this UN assessment. Cultural services and human relations may not be vitally important for people living amid urban-metropolis communities, or for "policymakers" perched in their ivory-tower offices placed at the global centers of power. However, this preposterous notion of survival having low-level bonds with good social relations is absolutely untrue for those integrated into rural agrarian village communities. Social relations and indigenous knowledge are vital for their survival; this is especially relevant to arguably manipulated global market fluctuations and climate change phenomena. People living on the societal peripheries firstly experience these impacts.

The UN's placing of low-priority relevance to cultural services reveals on some levels how out of touch with actual on-the-ground reality some of these policymakers are. It is reasonable to consider also that those living at the village level rarely harness details related to regional and global scales. Either way, for rural agrarian communities, cultural services are soul food. They are as much important as, if not more vital, than any other ecosystem service. Community unity cultivates hope. When a society is cohesive, it can, through informed resilience, survive even through the worst of calamities.

So what happened to us? What can be done?

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Although the Earth's natural environments and human society — in perpetual flux — has always changed, there is seemingly something fundamentally different about this global scale societal system state amid which we are experiencing. Really, what happened?

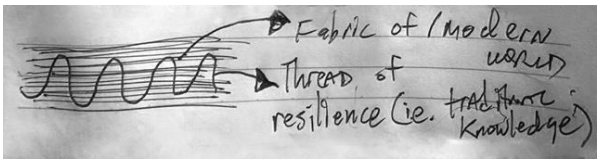
Regarding my primary 'de' of development-related research questions about what development/modernization related processes essentially take away from humans' cultures and 'traditional' ways of life and what are the societal replacements: Development and modernity appear to bring order and comfort. Yet, particularly in the advanced stages, these phenomena in more ways than not also cultivate much environmental destruction, pain, and suffering. This is everything that we — as a global community — do not inherently like. This is versus nourishing the socially binding commonalities that humans love and mutually share. I am referring to our core needs of being loved and accepted and of being accepting and loving; this includes our necessity for having a nourishing natural environment that includes familial and community connections. That said, the capitalist global market system (i.e., the commodification of 'nature') breeds the very societal injustices and 'problems' that 'development' (discourse) is supposedly meant to solve.

Tangibly speaking, perhaps globally, an indigenous knowledge-based socio-fabric used to be of greater prominence than the 'modern' world. However, a post-modern and globalized world has essentially reversed this paradigm, arguably creating a homogenizing global society. Whatever may be the root causes, it is as though the machine world is evermore burrowing its way into the heart of humanity and Earth's lifeblood ecosystems. Likewise, this capitalist development/modernity paradigm of madness globally simply cannot continue as a "free market," fairly unchecked and unconstrained animal consuming everything in its path. I ponder what it will require for humans to take a moment's pause, while we still have this chance, and temper this madness?

A vital need for multi-level governance and global cooperation

We must analyze precisely how topical matters are effecting overall human society. Only then can we truly begin to untangle this mess that humans have collectively produced. This is arguably since the onset of the Agricultural Revolution, when we calculated it is prudent to insulate ourselves from our natural world and create the very surplus driven market systems that now dictate our existence.

Life is dynamic. Diversity is needed, and multi-level governance collaboration is vital, providing society maintains its traditional socio-fabric. Perhaps culturally 'traditional' and 'modernized' ways of life cannot concurrently operate. This is at least true unless there is a multi-level socio-ecological management system.



From this thesis author's December 2018 field research notes

Resilience exists in the stretchability of this fabric, and the socio-magic thread is the traditional/inherent knowledge comprised of the values and norms inherent in this society. This framework perhaps must be base-programmed within an ethnicity's inherent (specific) indigenous knowledge directives and supported by and with modern-day globalized mindsets and technologies. Updated and innovative post-modern development strategies are required. Mindful intra-scale and multi-level governance collaboration is imperative. Local peoples, especially small and poorer farmers, must be consulted, particularly prior to any outside-initiated development.

I suggest that what is most important, prudent, and affective is that those working on global and regional scales and levels build solid and trusting relationships with folks on the local village scale, especially small and poorer farmers. This is to truly understand the multi-faceted dimensions of the local level and how forced changes in their physical environment impact relationships among themselves and with their 'natural' world.

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For a socio-political context like Thailand/Se-Asia — which I maintain is a world region representing the periphery of globalization, where facets of 'traditional' and 'modern' can still be observed — Kelly et al. (2012) said that one of the primary development-related challenges in Thailand is centralized bureaucracy and intra-government competition. These authors shared that in Thailand, community learning and empowerment are most effective when a process is truly participatory. "State agencies still have an important part to play in community development. They

should support and encourage community activities financially and logistically as well initiating opportunities for self-empowerment by communities and listening and encouraging their participation" (10) These researchers referred to a Thailand "era of military dictatorship and top-down development favoring rapid industrialization and entry into a market economy often at the expense of rural communities" (p.11), as though this is a past tense scenario. They reflected that Thailand's central planning agencies now exhibit the "valuing of community cultures and local participatory development projects aimed at sustainable development" (p.11).

As mentioned in Chapter Three of this thesis-monograph, the 2014 military coup in Thailand — what appears more as a socio-political revolution — at least temporarily changed much of what Kelly et al. (2012) wrote about this country looking to actually decentralize its government powers and focus on bottom-up community development policies. Because while Thailand's NCPO was working diligently to establish a socio-political framework for the 2019 elections, rural ethnic villagers surely remain not part of this country's policies related 'development' conversation. Perhaps this represents the global status quo and hence why we are now in this ensuing 'de' of development-related mess, together!

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

6.3. Is It Just the Beauty That Remains? We Can Choose Our Ways of Life

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

Indigenous peoples, those with distinctive historical ties to a particular territory, harness deep knowledge about humanity's intrinsic relationship with nature. What remains of them and their 'traditional' ways of life? Is what is enduring merely inherent beauty?

While lovely photographs and heartfelt stories depicting their lives can be presented, this is, in many ways, a façade. There exists another dimension in which everything may appear to be fine, but cultures have been shredded…fragmented…burned by global economics and greed — 'development,' this supposed progress! At least we still can witness facets of traditional culture in its ongoing stages of disintegration.

This questions the overall direction of humanity. Fundamentally different ways of life — the 'traditional' and the 'modern,' these paradigms that define humans' existence, nowadays — interact with each other as humanity overall relentlessly continues with this attempt to stitch together the 'natural' with the synthetic. People still have their cultural voices, and some good may even be forthcoming with modernity; however, there is malice amid this grace. Stitches and scars remain from nails hammered into the coffins that contain precious cultural jewels, the proven mastery of how to survive on Earth. At least, we still can witness facets of traditional culture in its ongoing stages of disintegration.

Still, with warm welcoming smiles, curious gazes, and near selfless generosity, these mountain-dwelling people revealed something to me that has perhaps been dampened by the supposed progress of modern development. This is a connection with our natural roots and with each other. The paradox is that indigenous peoples essentially choose to live like this, naturally free, as humans in a sense more integrated with nature. Many, however, not all, literally live hand-to-mouth; yet, they can live like this because they do live as such. They just live. This is a way of life—their ways of life.

I also realize that if the world's global market grid were to shut down, many of these indigenous-knowledge-equipped people would survive. This fact alone makes them wealthy. Therefore, I must ponder: What does it *really* mean to be poor? While the people living in these rural agrarian villages have very little in terms of material goods, sometimes barely enough food to eat or for the candles that illuminate their homes at night, I maintain that many of these villages function in a healthier and perhaps wealthier way than the rest of the modernized world. Does this not make them rich? What, really, needs to be "developed" here, in the natural world?

A Global Revival: We Can Choose Our Ways of Life

While much of what this 'de' of development thesis study addresses may seem dismal, there is hope; something eternal for Us remains. This is life — the natural roots that all living beings share. These are our core needs to be loved and accepted, to be accepting and loving, and to have a nourishing natural environment that includes familial and community connections. Perhaps, this is the beauty that remains.

I believe that a global revival, or at least an awakening, is happening: humans are becoming increasingly aware, or reminded, of our true connection with 'nature' and with each other. This dialogue must be placed into a context-container that people can relate to, such as the human condition overall. We are all citizens of Planet Earth. We, must dissolve these nationalistic borders and begin to bridge the understanding gaps between people by looking at human culture first; then the micro-details of group culture can be best shared and understood. It is *finally* time for Us as a global community to take a moment's pause and regroup?

I conclude by saying that, while rural village life certainly involves challenges and hardships perhaps overlooked by those who may romanticize this way of life, this livelihood, in many ways, appears fundamentally more natural and perhaps healthier than the lifestyles generally associated with those of the 'modern' world. I believe that if they, indigenous and other rural peoples, choose to live like this, then logically speaking the rest of the human world can and does also choose.

People I have talked with appear to accept that status quo developmental degradation as a phenomenon will take place regardless of whether we, as a global community, want it or not. Perhaps this manifest destiny is an untruth. Humankind, as it always has, can determine its destiny. We can choose how we live within the boundaries of our resources. … May we choose wisely.

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Appendix

(Issues addressed: pressure to "develop," to be "clean," and "survive;" trading traditional culture for comfort (i.e., "having a better life"); farming and food consumption changes; technology use changes (e.g., now using gas stove, refrigerator, and sewing machine, etc.); decreased safety in the village (e.g., theft); modernization)

"Now we have modernization. Everyone else is changing. How can we live without change? We have to change. There are people in the village who are maintaining the original Hmong way of life; it is difficult for them. We have to keep developing the modern way. We have to adapt to be like the others…

"We love to stay here in the village. We don't think city people have a better life. We don't really want to be like them. We do want others from the outside to see that we are developed. In the past, people from the outside would see that our Hmong way of life is undeveloped and dirty. We have to show that we are developing ourselves, becoming clean…

"In the past, we looked like tribes-people. We used wood for cooking; now we use gas. We use high technology, such as a rice cooker, and a machine for washing and sewing clothes.

"It's about comfort. Living in a bamboo house was cold and dusty. We have to keep developing and have a better life…

"Because of modernization and technology, our way of life has totally changed. Thirty years ago, only grass and trees surrounded our bamboo huts. There was no electricity and no paved roads, resorts or restaurants. This all especially changed about ten years ago. Now the trees have been cut and more houses have been built, mostly within the past two years…

"We used to grow upland rice for consumption. Now we have to buy it in the market. Now we grow cabbage and corn for income. Now we often eat corn instead of rice. The village shaman died eight years ago; now we see the doctor in the city…

"The New Year and wedding ceremonies are still the same though. However, we now have to buy the alcoholic beverage used for the traditions. We used to make it.

In the past, there was more safety in the village. We didn't lock the doors of our homes…

Photograph by Jeffrey Warner

"Now we have a refrigerator, DVD player and a TV. We need to lock the doors because we don't know who will steal our things. Safety first. As far as seeing many tourists here, having a tar road and traffic in the village, many of us love that people come to this village. The more people, the more fun…

"We like the present time. In the past, there wasn't a good road. We had to walk to the farm. Now we can use the car for work and easily travel to another village…

"We can have development and cultural preservation at the same time. We maintain our traditional culture. The Hmong dress shows that we are Hmong. We still do things like make rice cakes. We still make handicrafts and embroider to show that this is a Hmong village…

"We go to school and learn to speak Thai, but we speak Hmong with each other at home. If and when the older generations die, the new generations can continue the culture. Even if Hmong people live in the city, even if they don't know the Hmong language, they can still preserve the culture…

"The Hmong's way of thinking has totally changed. The picture that we can remember of the past, it's not like this way of life. The older generations have a different picture than the newer generations of what is really Hmong. In the past, a concrete house would not be Hmong. But now because of modernization, it is Hmong. Now we need to make money to build the concrete houses to replace the bamboo huts, to show that we are clean. We want to develop ourselves…

"If we think like a traditional Hmong, everything about our way of life has totally changed. However, for a modernized Hmong, our current way of life is just normal. If in our minds we can see that nothing has changed, we can enjoy our life…

"If someone were to come here with a magic wand and bring us back 30 years to the original Hmong way of life, we wouldn't want that. We don't like the past. We love this kind of environment. We don't have to live a hard life anymore. Our life is more comfortable…

"This, is the new Hmong."

We, as a global community, are perhaps at a pivotal point in our history. The economic market related decisions that humans have been making for generations are rendering like never before notable effects on our natural environment and overall societal functioning. Micro-scale "development" impacts are evermore conglomerating and generating tangible macro-scale global footprints, and vice versa.

Our human condition is changing in form, nature, and substance. This is perhaps an alchemical transmutation, as we are interacting with a globalized world to the extent that humanity has never experienced. If we are going to cultivate creative solutions to global challenges, is it prudent that we consider the roots of prominent global issues?

This mixed methods thesis, conjoining civil documentary journalism with the academic lenses of environmental and social science, explores this inquiry by focusing primarily on the 'de' of development. What is the capitalist global market system unfastening from our vitally important human cultures and life-sustaining "natural" ecosystems; what are the replacements? What does this supposedly glorious, seemingly with no destination, march toward "progress" mean for Us all?

As a context for investigating how perhaps all of humanity is being continually impacted by development and modernity related phenomena, we journey into the high mountains of northern Thailand. There, the traditional lifestyles of ethnic indigenous peoples are rapidly vanishing. Aspects of a homogenizing global culture are perforating their socio-fabric and shifting centuries of learning and indigenous knowledge aside. Villagers from an age range inform us about this.

Foundationally considering the imperialization and rural domestic development policies governing the land under villagers' feet, I longitudinally overlay socio-ecological change related phenomena in ways that bond notions of humans' inextricable connection with each other, with our environments, and how changes in one aspect resultantly impact the others.

This research project is about our human condition. Its goals are rooted in illustrating how we, communally sharing Planet Earth as a global village, are together being impacted by our collective actions. This societally unifying initiative has great potential for cultivating intercultural understanding, nourishing human healing, and building social capital.

Humankind, as it always has, can determine its destiny. … May we choose wisely.