Chapter 7

Conclusion

> The social movement must define itself in terms of its own nature and the nature of its social adversaries as well as of its objectives of over-all transformation, rather than in terms of struggle against models of authority and organisation bound to a pre-industrial or bourgeois society, as opposed to modern forms of economic and social power.
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> A. Touraine[1]

> Theorists and activists — like judges — 'are in the position of people trying to complete a story begun a long time ago; they don't have complete freedom of action, since the outlines of the plot are a matter of history, but they do have to use their own initiative in working out how best to continue'.
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> J.L.S. Girling[2]

In the previous chapters we have seen that development theorists and practitioners agree that development aimed at improving the welfare of individuals and of society, has various coexisting dimensions (economic, social, cultural, political and environmental). In the Thai context, Dr Puey, a Thai economist, says that the essence of development is to provide a suitable living standard for individuals (of various classes) and well-being for society as a whole.[3] *Phra* Dhammadilok, the Chairperson of FEDRA, argues that in pursuing development activities, social values and economic effectiveness cannot be considered in isolation and that the interaction between traditional and modern cultures can enrich present-day living if one understands and uses them properly.[4] NGO fieldworkers have also realised that they are more inclined to focus on their organisational philosophies and sectoral programmes than to recognise the interwoven aspects of development in a locality. An ATA fieldworker comments that to achieve a "holistic" view of development, one must examine a "chain reaction" from one development approach to another. In attempting to address the broad social consequences of development which are of concern to NGOs, an NGO cannot undertake economic or technological development activities in isolation and look to others to attend social and cultural issues. As social relations in a given situation

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1 Touraine, 1971, *The Post-Industrial Society*..., p. 117.

2 Girling, 1987, *Capital and Power*..., p. 214.

3 Puey Ungphakorn, 1974 (2517), *Sia chip ya sia sin* [Lose Only Life, Not Dignity], [in Thai], Bangkok: Khletthai Publishing, pp. 105-106.

4 Interview, INT-137-NGO, 26 February 1993, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

contain asymmetric power relations, the NGO cannot ignore the political aspect in development while tackling the problem of people's poverty.

The means to development are equally as important as the ends. Following Edwards, Rigg argues that the means to development must include the empowerment of ordinary people.[5] As Friedmann points out, the social and political empowerment process, implemented through an alternative development strategy, aims to strengthen the power of civil society while making the state and corporate business more socially accountable and responsible.[6] The finding of the thesis is that empowerment does not and will not occur at all unless concerned social actors play an interventionist role to create it by inquiring into a social situation in which asymmetric power relations are embedded. The process of empowerment involves social conflict, movement and intervention in social relations between different social actors and their adversaries in a given social situation.

However, Brass criticises the notion of "everyday resistance" arguing that even though the forms of resistance are "... directed against the state, both their mode (resistance-not-revolution) and form (the aestheticisation of revolt, or cultural opposition) of mobilisation effectively preclude a realistic challenge to the power and existence of the state itself".[7] He goes on to claim that empowerment at the grass-roots level carried out by NGOs does "no more than work within the limits imposed by (an international) capitalism ... diluting antagonism towards the existing class structure and diverting mobilisation away from other, large-scale and thus more effective forms of action".[8]

This claim may be correct if NGOs do not adequately understand the context of their work and the conflicts in a given situation. However, my study shows that there are different types of NGOs doing development work following their particular perceptions. For the type of people-centred NGOs which I studied, their interventions are not diversionary but essential to the very process of development regardless of the kind of regime (e.g. military or civilian; capitalist or socialist), because they help empower ordinary people to defend themselves against the adverse impacts of socio-economic and political changes.

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5 Rigg, 1994, "Alternative Development Strategies...", p. 17.

6 Friedmann, 1992, *Empowerment*..., p. 31. See also Chapter 3.

7 T. Brass, 1991, "Moral Economists, Subalterns, New Social Movements, and the (Re-) Emergence of a (Post-) Modernised (Middle) Peasant", *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2, January, p. 184.

8 T. Brass, 1994, "Post-Script: Populism, Peasants and Intellectuals, or What's Left of the Future?", *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 21, Nos. 3/4, April/July, p. 253.

The thesis demonstrates social and environmental movements ranging from everyday forms of resistance to collective protest.[9] The movements start from the articulation of social meanings in daily life as "everyday resistance" which could be escalated to collective protest if a tentative conflict is not properly resolved. These two poles of social movement cannot be seen in isolation and "replaced" by either one or the other.[10] It is a contextual situation that determines which form of action should be undertaken by the social actors who "can never be reduced to a function of a system"[11] as Touraine argues:

> A social movement is not necessarily revolutionary by nature. It becomes so only if a class struggle comes up against an institutional system that is unable to deal with the state of production and social relations.[12]

It is difficult to identify what "a realistic challenge" to the state's power is because, as Touraine remarks:

> Almost all societies have been penetrated by new forms of production, consumption and communication. Eulogies of purity and authenticity are becoming increasingly artificial, and even when leaders denounce their country's penetration by the market economy, the people welcome it.[13]

Claiming to work in response to the people's needs, the NGOs have to conduct their activities within and from the framework "imposed by (an international) capitalism" as Brass argues. However, Brass seems to overlook any positive aspect of modernity which emerged in the process of social transformation by embracing it all as negative because it is "capitalist development". Touraine, however, affirms that: "Modernity must not be confused with the purely capitalist mode of modernisation" because modernity contains "rationalist vision" which becomes "the most powerful critical weapon against all holisms, all totalitarianisms and all fundamentalisms".[14]

Edwards makes an interesting point saying that: "We cannot change the world successfully unless we understand the way it works; but neither can we understand the world fully unless we are involved in some way with the processes that change it".[15] The thesis reveals the ways in which Thai NGOs have been learning, largely since the early 1980s, while trying, through their intervention, to strengthen the power of

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9 See also Melucci, 1994, "A Strange Kind of Newness...", pp. 101-130; Peet and Watts, 1993, "Development Theory and Environment...", pp. 227-253; see also Peet and Watts, 1996, "Liberation Ecology...", pp. 1-45.

10 Scott and Kerkvliet, 1986, *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*..., p. 1.

11 Touraine, 1995, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 138.

12 Touraine, 1971, *The Post-Industrial Society*..., pp. 101-102.

13 Touraine, 1995, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 201.

14 *Ibid*., pp. 203 and 205.

15 M. Edwards, 1989, "The Irrelevance of Development Studies", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 1, January, pp. 124-125.

ordinary people and to create, as far as possible, a law-based Thai society. They have carried on their development activities with difficulty and are still in the process of finding a way because socio-economic and political changes are neither unilinear nor predictable. The changes and their impacts have been determined by different patterns of social relations in different social situations.

Changes, conflicts and responses

Socio-economic and political changes, conflicts and responses to the changes are intertwining activities which stimulate a society to transform and open – thereby enabling it to function and serve its members. In the Thai case, socio-economic changes have been more rapid since the government started implementing national development plans in the early 1960s. While giving privileges to the private sector and encouraging it to use the country's vast pool of resources and labour to increase economic growth, the Thai government has played a minimal role in protecting the people's rights to development and access to the country's natural resources. The closed political system and protection given to the private sector – especially foreign companies – prompted the urban middle class to demand a parliamentary system guaranteed by constitution. The socio-political response, in the mid-1970s, led by the urban middle class, opened up the Thai political system so that not only could ordinary citizens voice their grievances and formulate people's organisations, but also domestic business classes enjoyed a great deal of freedom to expand their businesses beyond military control and participate in national politics. However, a plan for "political reform" or *"patirup kanmu'ang"* led by a group of Thai intellectuals, for the first time during the mid-1970s, was aborted due to the ideological conflict between the 'right' and 'left' factions.

As Girling points out, the outcomes of past development in Thailand are mixed blessings. On the one hand, Thailand enjoyed the achievement of economic growth, the increasing significance of civil society and democratisation. On the other hand, various problems followed, for instance, the centralisation of power, competition and conflict over resources, and the destruction of local environments.[16] As this study shows, some

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[16] It may be partly correct to argue that competition and conflicts over resources cannot be blamed only on capitalist penetration into rural areas but also population growth. Werasit's study on rural transformation especially in Chiang Mai shows the relationship between the state policies and performance, capitalist development and population growth and decline over time. His research reveals that among three elements, the implementation of development plans by government officials and expansion of capitalist development by the private sector did more to bring about rural transformation and hardship on rural population than population growth *per se*. Werasit, 1988, "Rural Transformation in Northern Thailand". In addition, from his study on population change in the Northern Thailand, Kunstadter told me that there had been a significant

government officials disagreed with the ways in which private entrepreneurs 'exploited' public resources for personal gains. However, these officials found their positions too weak to protect the public interest due to a corrupt bureaucratic system and the power of self-serving politicians. Conflicts over resources, largely caused by the "capitalist development" occurring throughout the countryside, coupled with the military's interference in national politics in the early 1990s, prompted a group of Thai intellectuals and NGOs to call for political reforms for the second time in the mid-1990s. The ultimate aim was to create a healthy law-based society able to respond to social conflicts and demands and strong enough to accept public scrutiny. It is the political atmosphere of "open society" that gives rise to social and political reform; thus it is worth being protected to allow the reform to be pursued by concerned social actors.

My study of the three villages has shown the interdependent relationship which exists between peasants, the state and market. The relationship has been more evident than in the past through the improvement of transportation and communication in the countryside; the flow of commodities, luxury goods, agricultural commercialisation and labour; as well as the expansion of business activities into rural enclaves. None of these three villages is a purely 'traditional' village; each comprises an amalgam of traditional and modern cultures. However, although peasants in the villages generally satisfied their material needs and enjoyed necessary social services – especially health and education – they felt various kinds of pressure upon themselves and their families resulting from competition over productive resources. They realised that they could no longer live as in the past; nor rush to embrace an uncertain future. They needed concerned social actors to help them find the way. While the work of "community culture" theorists has been important in reviving the nearly forgotten life and culture of the people, the notion of village "community" which has been used to help strengthen the people's power is a socially constructed discourse rather than a fact about society.[17] Thus, there is a need for more discussion about the village community and its relation with the spheres of the state, economy and civil society.[18]

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fertility decline especially among the Hmong tribal groups. Interview, INT-026-ACA, 9 November 1992, Chiang Mai.

Moreover, a recent study on: "The Collapse of Thai Society: The Impact of Family Planning" in the past 25 years by Tiang Phadthaisong shows that the fertility rate is declining in every region. *Bangkok Post*, 22 July 1996.

17 See an argument of Peet and Watts, 1993, "Development Theory and Environment...", p. 228.

18 Thongchai Winichakul, 1995, "The Changing Landscape of the Past: New Histories in Thailand Since 1973", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 99-120.

Thai NGO movements

Social problems and crises in Thai society gave rise to student and popular movements in the 1970s and to the emergence of the NGOs in the 1980s. To some degree, the links with the earlier opposition movement meant that when the NGOs were free to form in the early 1980s, they were somewhat inclined to be anti-state, anti-capitalist and idealistic. They were composed of individuals, organisations and networks which were loosely organised due to their voluntary motivation and anti-establishment attitude.

However, with experience in the field during the 1980s, the NGOs began to realise that their development concepts and practice had not been the product of a single unified theory. Rather they had emerged through an iterative process of social relations and interactions between the NGOs and different social actors, from critical assessment, or from appropriation of earlier theories and patterns of movement. For instance, participatory development approaches did not emerge spontaneously, but from a reassessment of the social-welfare handout practice. Everyday resistance was theorised from an inadequate analysis of why and how peasants rebel.

The emergence and growth of the NGOs determined the nature of their movement. They claimed to be independent from the control of the state, business and any political party while allying themselves with ordinary people, especially the marginal. They were disappointed by the fact that the government's economic and technological programmes had neither improved the well-being of ordinary people, nor created ethical values. They were disillusioned with the government and with the revolutionary party (referring to the CPT) which, they believed, had been driven by an ideological conflict rather than a commitment to help the people tackle their problems and strengthen themselves.

The expansion of the Thai NGOs in the 1980s resulted from not only a more open political system, but also the expansion of overseas financial support. Many overseas funding agencies sought, in the first place, to support 'community development' in sensitive areas near the Thai-Cambodian border and in the Northeast region. However, few such agencies were interested in supporting the organisations (such as FEDRA and DISAC) which had pursued a "community participation" approach with the expectation that it would reach "the poorest of the poor". After discussion and negotiation concerning the significance of the "community participation" approach between some Thai intellectuals and funding agency representatives, a large volume of funding assistance was provided, between the mid to late 1980s, to support local development. A particular example was the Local Development Assistance Programme (LDAP) between the LDI and the Canadian government. Thus, the development partnership

between donor and recipient NGOs involved both funding and the exchange of development concepts and approaches.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, since the late 1980s, funding agencies have shifted their areas of assistance from Thailand to Indochinese countries (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) and their focus of assistance from community participation to campaigns on environmental, gender and AIDS issues as happened in Western countries.[19] In order to gain financial support, Thai NGOs have had to comply with the changing policies of their funding counterparts. For instance, a German funding agency elected to support the NGOs which lobbied the Thai government to change its policies and performance in relation to the local environment, in line with the policies of the German Social Democrat Party from which the agency's main source of funding came. This was a useful cooperation between a German donor agency and some Thai recipient NGOs. However, many other NGOs whose work has been involved in environmental issues, in everyday phenomena, and in responding to community needs, but which are unable to rationalise their action to fit the funding agency's framework, could easily miss such an opportunity.

Scaling-up activities in the form of political and environmental campaigns nation-wide are crucial if Thailand is to tackle the problem of misuse of natural resources by corrupt politicians, bureaucrats and businesses. What the thesis shows is that the scale-up activities must start from a place – often the village – where the people's problems occurred. As Edwards points out, a move to scale-up to higher levels, the process "must grow out of and be based upon participatory research at lower levels" and a link between the NGOs working at the village level and their networks could be made in many ways. Neither global nor local development research and practice "should be privileged" for both have a significant role to play.[20] This argument is demonstrated through the NGO activities in Chapters 5 and 6.

The NGOs presented "alternative development" strategies which they thought would strengthen the people's capacity to help themselves. Economically, they claimed that the high cost of agricultural investment and the introduction of modern farming techniques had led to indebtedness and bankruptcy among small-scale producers. The alternative strategy was to advocate subsistence farming models using intermediate technology and partial commercialisation. Socially, the NGOs argued that the rural development model aiming at economic effectiveness broke down the social and

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19 The shift of funding support has derived in part from governments in developed countries reducing the spending on social welfare within their own countries and reductions in their foreign aid budgets.

20 M. Edwards, 1994, "Rethinking Social Development: The Search for Relevance", in Booth, *Rethinking Social Development*..., p. 285.

cultural values of mutual help and spirituality. The alternative, they said, was to promote a "community culture" approach and revive ethical values through NGO socio-economic projects. Politically, the NGOs criticised the top-down planning and implementation by the state claiming that it resulted in disparities between rural and urban areas; in which case the alternative was to promote the autonomy of community members, with minimal intervention from the state, to plan and practice their own development.[21] The counter-proposals to state-led rural development made by the Thai NGOs were not much different from those advocated by other Third World NGOs.

However, the alternative development strategies, based on the notion of "community", were under attack from the late-1980s because they were bypassing the state and ignoring the "modernity" aspect of capitalist development. Besides some criticisms of the NGO practice outlined in Chapter 3, Kitahara, a Japanese sociologist, pointed out that when some academics and NGO workers talked about a "community", they were confused between an empirical description of what a community was and a normative explanation of what a community should be. He also criticised the bipolar systems of thought among development theorists:

> Their most serious problem lies in the naive dichotomy of "community" versus "modernity", and their resultant over-expectation of the former in contrast to easy and total criticism of the latter... One can agree that development at the community level will play an essential part in countering the destructive traits of nascent capitalism in Asia, but the community does not have the power to solve every defect of modernity. These theorists should narrow the gap between their over-idealisation of the role of the community and the objective achievement of the community system in rural development.[22]

It is understandable, Touraine argues, that in the struggle against the domination of established order of the state and market, anti-modernist effects could occur. However, to ignore a "modernity" aspect in the over-all process of social transformation "indicates an inability to see the forest for trees".[23] That is because "modernity":

> is neither technological progress nor the growing individualism of consumers, but the demand for freedom and the demand of freedom against everything that transforms individuals into instruments, objects or absolute strangers.[24]

For developing countries, Kitahara added, "modernity" had various positive aspects (such as democracy, human rights, freedom and equality before law). These aspects "deserve[d] to stand as ideal goals".[25] It seems to me that "community culture"

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21 A. Kitahara, 1996, *The Thai Rural Community Reconsidered: Historical Community Formation and Contemporary Development Movements*, Bangkok: The Political Economy Centre, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, pp. 78-79.

22 *Ibid*., pp. 104-105.

23 Touraine, 1995, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 250.

24 *Ibid*., p. 232.

25 Kitahara, 1996, *The Thai Rural Community*..., p. 33.

theorists are currently facing the problem of how to overcome what they see as shortcomings in Thai society and, at the same time, protect the positive aspects of the Thai culture from being overtaken by some negative aspects of the Western-oriented modernisation.

To some extent, NGO fieldworkers associated with urban NGO networks seemed to be influenced by alternative development strategies. Nonetheless, while working in a village, the fieldworkers had to adapt development strategies to different local situations and, thus, could not rely upon any uniform and dogmatic theory. To help remedy the people's poverty, *Phra* Dhammadilok advised FEDRA workers not to undertake only "medical formula" *(tamra ya)* but also "medicine" *(tua ya)*.[26] His advice could be interpreted as meaning that FEDRA workers should not only follow development doctrines but also assess their practice in relation to concrete social reality. Social interactions between villagers and other NGOs in the village and, especially, the senior monk's outlook on the world helped some active FEDRA fieldworkers recognise the fact that social transformation in a locality was like a running stream; the water flowing and changing from moment to moment was never the same.[27] Very little of the NGO rich experience was documented, showing the absence of a strong link between development theory and practice. That is because, as Edwards notes: "Practitioners do not write, and theoreticians remain in the abstraction of their theories", and as a result, social development research and practice become "two parallel lines that never met and both suffered accordingly".[28]

NGO interventionist role

Amidst competition and conflict over resource use and allocation between social actors from the spheres of the state, economy and civil society, the interventionist role played by the people-centred NGOs during the study timeframe was essential in counterbalancing the establish order (e.g. the 'state' and 'market'). However, there are opportunities for improvement in this interventionist role in the future, which will be summarised later in this section. First, however, the main lessons to be drawn from earlier discussions in this thesis are outlined.

Not every NGO practice is called 'interventionist'. This thesis has demonstrated that for an 'interventionist' role to exist, NGOs must understand social relations and conflicts between social actors competing over resource usage and allocation in a

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26 Attending the FEDRA Annual Meeting, 22-24 December 1992, Chiang Mai.

27 Interview, INT-137-NGO, 26 February 1993, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

28 Edwards, 1994, "Rethinking Social Development...", p. 279.

particular locality, and, in the wider context over time. They must also be able to produce and reproduce social meanings – often beyond the dominating rhetoric of the state and capitalists – to attract the people's participation in development activities, and, more importantly, encourage them to act in everyday forms of resistance and collective action. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 reveal that social movement and intervention could occur at any place, in an open political system, near or far from the city, provided that the people and NGOs have recognised the main problems, identified the conflicts and the key actors, adjusted their approaches and organised their collective activities.

The thesis also demonstrated that, in the process of social transformation, different kinds of social conflict have emerged in dealing with asymmetric power relations between various actors over time. For instance, during the 1970s, tensions occurred between the military and people in Village 3 on the issue of land use and occupation. These tensions grew from the mid-1980s when urban developers and investors began to expand their business activities in the region surrounding the disputed area. The military plan to force the relocation of some parts of the village prompted NGO intervention, as a counterbalancing factor. During the same period, tensions arose also between soya bean growers in Village 2 and middlemen, over the price of soya bean; and these were widened to include relations between government officials, politicians, business association and soya bean cultivators when the government's decision to allow the importation of soya bean residue reduced the price of the domestic product. By recognising social conflicts, and the rationalisation of different situations, the NGOs were able to find a suitable approach to the conflicts, and assist peasants to regain control over their resources and livelihoods.

Alternative development ideology, created by development professionals in the international arena, and adapted by various development practitioners – including Thai NGOs – in response to the failure of the growth theory, does not totally oppose the 'market', but encourages the people to be sensible in dealing with it. The thesis reveals that while the NGOs criticised the state for adopting a market economy model for Thai rural development which, they argued, undermined village self-sufficiency, their own development projects also encouraged villagers to become involved in the market economy. However, assessment of their past local development activities enabled the NGOs working at the village level to adjust their approach to immediate problems, and, more importantly, to achieve a balance between their economic and environmental activities, as shown in Chapter 4.

While the alternative development strategies (e.g. people's participation, self-reliance, community culture and community forest) inspired the NGOs to help empower the underprivileged, they were not effective unless they were interpreted as social meanings in relation to local situations. For instance, the meaning of "community forest", as

interpreted by the NGOs, motivated villagers living in the watershed area to formulate their environmental movement to manage and protect forest and other related resources. The meaning of "self-reliance", introduced by the NGOs and reinterpreted by people in Village 3, became a basis for the people's collective protest against the military land claim. The study shows that such collective action was an outcome of the elaboration of social meanings in daily life.

The study further shows that this NGO intervention to provide a political space for local empowerment could only occur in an open political system. Also, the NGOs had to analyse time-space correspondence in deciding the action to be taken in any particular circumstance. There was an example of cooperation between local officials, villagers and NGOs over natural resource management in the watershed area when villagers and the NGOs actively sought to bring these actors together, and made use of the occasion of a traditional ceremony, at the opening of the hydropower plant for generating electricity in the Lua village, to discuss a resource management plan. On the other hand, in the case of the military land takeover, protest escalated when negotiation between village and military representatives broke down and ended in violence against an NGO fieldworker. The military's approach, and its use of violence, in an "open society", captured the attention of the media and public, and damaged its reputation.

Such political intervention and local empowerment could not have occurred without the support of other members of civil society, who put pressure on the state authorities. The scale-up activities which followed involved the three pillars of the NGO movement, including individuals, organisations and networks, as shown in Chapters 5 and 6. Hence, the role of "community" should not be ideally promoted as equal to, but as a part of civil society.[29] Based on the social construction of village "community, the "community culture" approach accepted by the NGOs:

> may be used as a strategic weapon with which to strengthen the villagers' power to negotiate with outsiders. However, it cannot be taken as a grand reforming plan at the wider national level, as the complex system [of political economy] stretches beyond the scope of the simple community.[30]

The NGOs may be unable to provide an effective solution to rural development unless they critically assess social discourses and power relations among actors in the state, economy and civil society. Although structural Marxism is useful for uncovering the asymmetry of power relations between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' and to develop the notion of social conflict, one of its main defects is the lack of micro-level analysis into complicated and rapidly changing social reality. When a social and/or environmental movement supported by the NGOs in the form of collective protest fails to draw public

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29 *Ibid*., p. 13.

30 *Ibid*., pp. 96-97.

support or ceases to be an effective means of solving complex problems, it becomes necessary for them to reconsider their social meaning and action in every situation, especially in the current context of rural and urban interpenetration.

This study has suggested that the NGO interventionist role has been successful so far, and , desirably should continue. A number of lessons have been drawn in the course of the study, indicating a need for improvement in certain aspects of the NGOs' approach, and these are now summarised briefly in the paragraphs which follow.

First, while the NGOs effectively handled the conflicts between people and their social adversaries, tensions within and between NGOs were seldom resolved. Disagreement emerged within FEDRA between fieldworkers who wanted to see the organisation taking a more active role in protecting the people's rights to resources, and some administrators who preferred not to upset the powerful for fear of risk to themselves and their organisation. Tensions also appeared between NGOs and their headquarters and networks operating higher up, including some funding agencies. While the NGOs on the ground dealt with social conflicts and needed immediate support from those higher up, the latter were busy working on their own agendas and unable to provide the necessary help. Some funding agencies expected grass-roots NGOs to act in ways which could be in opposition to the people's needs. Thus, asymmetric power relations were likely to occur within the NGO community. Although NGOs encounter problems both within and without, priority should be given to discovering what it is that prevents an NGO from implementing projects which help the people empower themselves. Discussion, negotiation and mediation need to be put into practice at all times not only between NGOs and other actors but also within the NGO community.

Secondly, the NGOs need to work out how to improve economic effectiveness and, at the same time, to maintain social values in each village. Economic development is needed, yet it can result in social stratification, including marginalisation. Social values are also needed for villagers to maintain their common goals and activities. However, social values cannot be used unconditionally. Some of them could inhibit villagers' collective efforts and their approach to tackling conflicting interests among themselves, and between themselves and their social adversaries. A social value which is more heavily based on a model of charismatic leadership than the improvement of systematic structure in a community may be too fragile to cope with rapid economic change imposed from outside. The NGOs need to challenge some traditional 'values', as well as modern ones.

Thirdly, how the NGOs understand and deal with social order and conflict is important and relates to debates between NGO administrators and fieldworkers on whether individuals or social structures provide the primary factor for social transformation. A

structural analysis approach to development problems can lead to the understanding of social conflicts and identification of relevant actors, whilst a behavioural approach tends to claim human misconduct as the main cause of social malaise and environment degradation. The former is inclined to adopt macro-level analysis and examine social conflict in a social system, but lack a concrete sense of complex reality; the latter, on the other hand, tends to adopt micro-level approach and examine social integration rather than social conflict. These two approaches reveal, as Touraine says, the inseparable analysis between actor and system relations.[31] If we take an alternative view of "society as a field of conflicts, negotiations and mediations" between various actors, from different places of origin, in the three spheres of the state, economy and civil society, struggling to rationalise the spheres of autonomy, we will realise that, through space and time, the social structure does not predominantly determine human actions, but is constantly produced and modified by human actions.[32]

Finally, it is important for the NGOs to understand and deal with the issue of rural-urban interpenetration. Thai NGOs, during the 1980s, commonly perceived a distinctive division between 'rural' and 'urban' areas. Moreover, 'rural' was often related to 'traditional' whereas 'urban' related to 'modern' villages.[33] Nevertheless, the interpenetration between the city and the countryside has become more evident in present-day Thai society. The unevenness of spatial development and social problems resulting from rural disparity are well recognised in government plans. In response to these problems, development theorists, planners and practitioners need to move beyond the dichotomy of village 'community' and 'city', 'traditional' and 'modern' to discuss, negotiate and search for a new solution for action. However, villages close to town centres are likely to be interpenetrated more than those situated in remote areas. The spatial differences also need to be taken into account.

We must conclude that, as long as the NGOs seek to continue to help peasants empower themselves while creating a law-based society, it is necessary for them to move beyond the dichotomy between 'rural' and 'urban', 'traditional' and 'modern', village 'community' and the state, or beyond their bipolar views of a society, to discover the "third space", or a hybrid process giving rise to new meanings, issues, actors and networks. That is to consider the socially desirable aspects of development and change from the undesirable in different contexts over time. It is not useful for intellectuals and NGO workers to simply view a society as a system of repression, domination and the

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31 Touraine, 1995, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 353.

32 S. Pile and N. Thrift, 1995, "Introduction", in S. Pile and N. Thrift (eds), *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation*, London: Routledge, p. 3.

33 See J. Rigg, 1994, "Redefining the Village and Rural Life: Lessons from Southeast Asia", *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 160, Part 2, July, pp. 123-135.

reproduction of inequalities.[34] In the political atmosphere of "open society", discussion, communication, arguments among members in civil society and interactions with social adversaries would help establish a connection between particulars and universals.

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[34] Touraine, 1995, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 337.