



Networks of Civil Society Organizations dealing with Government's Project Development in Pak Bara Area, Southern Thailand

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Abstract

Two main purposes of this study are 1) to examine networks and roles of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) dealing with government's developing project in Pak Bara area. 2) to recommend directions for the CSOs' further participation in developing the Pak Bara area. The research used a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative which include non-participatory observation, in-depth interviews, focus groups, workshop discussions, and a survey. It was found that they are 10 active CSOs and 2 NGOs. Their participation in development could be classified into three levels: local, provincial, and regional as well as international. They demand appropriate ways of conserving and managing the natural resources are more beneficial than the economic growth expected by the government and international traders. They attempt to drive the consequent problems to the level of resources and income sources, relocation due to land expropriation, air pollution, loss of public issues that need people's participation in policy- and decision making: loss of natural traditional ways of life and collapse of society, and destruction of tourism. This research has two recommendations. First, at local level, the networks should add more religious and cultural dimensions in driving activities, and strengthen relationships between networks and communities around Pak Bara with the cooperation of community leaders. Second, at the national and international level, the networks should enhance understanding and cooperation with communities.

Keywords: Pak Bara Area/ Satun/ Networks in Satun/ Civil Society Organization/ NGOs/ Andaman Deep Sea Port/ Southern Thailand

Introduction

In Thailand a search for an alternative to the transportation route that has to go through Malaysia's Malacca Strait can date back as far as the reign of King Narai of the Ayuddhaya period. Up to the mid-twentieth century the efforts to reduce time and cost in international trading focused on the digging of the Kra Isthmus in Ranong. After innumerable failed attempts due to different causes including sources of funds, national security, and separatism in the deep South, it was in 1970 that the Songkla-Satun route was identified for the first time as the most optimum route by TAMS Corporation hired by Chao Chaokwanyhuen and Co. (under the name of Lhamtong Pattana Co.). However, this discovery did not receive much attention from investors or the Thai governments for decades; the Kra project still got supports, more or less,

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from such leaders as General Chatchai Chunhawan (1988), Police Lieutenant Colonel Taksin Shinawatra (2001) and the Senate (2005) (Prasertsri, 2009).

In the meantime, there has been an interest in connecting the Andaman Coast with the Thai Coast in the Gulf of Siam so as to facilitate shipping from the Middle East as well as Europe and East Asia as well as the Pacific, respectively. Therefore, a section in the Fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1981- 1986) specifies concerns about economy in Southern Thailand and its solution through the Songkla Deep Sea Port Project.

In 1989 General Chatchai started to implement the Songkla Deep Sea Port Project. There were also references to the Southern Seaboard Project and the Land Bridge Project, which is to link the Second Songkla Deep Sea Port and the Satun Deep Sea Port. These two projects were to be in accordance with the Development Strategy Plan for the South, the Development Strategy Plan for the Southern Border Provinces regarding Songkla-Satun Cluster, and, particularly for the Satun Deep Sea Port, the Satun Province's strategy to be "the Port of the Andaman Coast." However, the implementation of the development projects for the two sea ports were stalled because the country was facing an economic crisis in 1997. Four years later when Police Lieutenant Colonel Taksin Shinawatre became the Prime Minister, he declared a policy encouraging both Thai and foreign investors to carry out the deep sea port projects in order to stimulate employment and economic growth in the area and to be in conjunction with the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) (Manager on Line, 2009). In the new development plan for economic growth, the two deep sea port projects are included in the National Strategies in Developing Communication and Transportation Infrastructure (Ministry of Finance, 2013), which requires a foreign loan of ₦ 2.2 trillion to be committed by the Ministry of Finance (Proposed Bill for the Government Infrastructure Project, 20..). The Thai Deep Sea Port Project and the Andaman Deep Sea Port Project are supposed to cost more than ₦ 15,400 millions of the total loan.

The Second Songkla Deep Sea Port will be situated at Tambon Naa Tub, Chana District, Songkla. The Andaman Deep Sea Port Project will cover the area of La-Ngu, Tungwa, and Manang Districts of Satun. The strategic site where the deep sea port is designated to build is located in Pak Bara Village, which is one of the eight villages of Tambon Pak Nam, La-ngu District. Hence it is called the Pak Bara Deep Sea Port. Since the project is meant for international transportation, it entails several other projects, namely a dual-track train system to bridge the Second Songkla Deep Sea Port with the Pak Bara Deep Sea Port, the Satun-Perlis (Malaysia) Tunnel Project, the Oil Refinery and Pipeline Project, the Dam Construction Project, and the Power Plant Project. All these projects including related industries require an enormous piece of land and extensive geophysical alterations. In addition to sand digging right in front of the Pak Bara Village and land filling in the ocean, 1,892 acres of the Petra National Park, which links the village with the Tarutao National Park, will be requested for those purposes. It is very likely that the villagers' land will be expropriated with payment as well. From the local people's perspective and the environmentalists' studies the devastation will be incomparable with the financial gain, especially in the



long term. That is, there will be immeasurable destruction of natural resources, coastal ecology, seafood resources, fruit orchards, clean fresh air, marine tourism around the Petra and Tarutao National Parks, together with the loss of local communities and earnings and collapse of their way of life. Indeed, all these negative effects are against the province's pronounced direction in developing sustainable environment and culture with a focus on the conservation of natural resources and tourism. Undoubtedly, there have been objections and protests against this deep sea port project since its conception.

In Satun there are civil societies (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to follow up with the development plans of the province and the South. Their roles are to educate local communities concerning development projects and their consequences. NGOs in Satun have been active since 1985 (Nasae, 1997). The civil societies in Satun such as community organizations or activity groups have participated in the movement to learn, to establish rapport, and to emphasize "the common problems of Satun." The guiding approaches of these CSOs and NGOs focus on the management of natural resources, historic sites, and spectacular tourism destinations. They have formed the "People's Networks for Monitoring the Development Plans of Satun" with the support of local people to express a determination to encourage sustainable development and maintain natural balance for later generations. So far the "People's Networks" have followed the moves of the province's development plans and organized campaigns for correct understanding of the local people, community organizations and general public ("People's Networks," 2011). Because the Pak Bara Deep Sea Port Project and other related projects which are not suitable to the locals' ways of life have a tendency to cause conflicts and violence in society due to diverse opinions, the CSOs' and NGOs' recommendations for development plans which will not have adverse effects on the communities and socio-cultural aspects as well as their implementation methods are worth a close investigation.

Objectives

1. To examine the networks and roles of civil society organizations in developing the Pak Bara area
2. To recommend directions for civil society organizations' further participation in developing the Pak Bara area

Research Methodology

This research focused its study on the roles of the "People's Networks for Monitoring the Development Plans of Satun" and the "Ruk Jung Satun Network" [Love You So Much, Satun] from October 2012 – December 2013. It used a mixed methodology. Its qualitative method was for studying the data concerning the work of CSOs and NGOs about the development of the Pak Bara area, their approaches in determining development directions and driving the plans together with people's learning process, understanding and cooperation. Its quantitative method was for surveying the local people's opinions about the NGOs' work in order to elucidate collected data. Non-



participatory observation, interviews, in-depth interviews, focus groups, survey of opinions, and workshop discussions were used in this research.

Findings

Pak Bara Village is a populated area with a fishery sea port, fish open markets, and tourism ports. Its population is 4,115 while that of the whole Tambon is 10,478 (Empowerment Project of the Network of Community Organizations for Development of Tambon Pak Nam, Satun, 2014). The construction of a deep sea port, its platform, and subsequent industries will limit the villagers' ways of making a living and threaten tourism industry of the province. Therefore the community members, local CSOs and NGOs cooperate in continuously informing the communities there, organizing meetings with different associate members, seeking consultation, and sharing information with external alliances.

As for cooperation with the CSOs', participants come from the governmental sector, private sector, and the local communities. They try to drive different issues within the communities and provide members opportunities to share ideas and seek cooperation from others outside the communities (Puangsumlee, Chansomwongs, and Kosolsaksakul, 1999; Jitnirut and Saksung, 2000). CSOs are the driving force for changes. The cooperation varies in terms of formats according to space and group formation, participants' background, issues, and activities. The cooperation of the CSOs originates from love, concerns, and compassion which result in solidarity and community formation regardless of geographical boundaries.

NGOs form another group which helps resolve problems for communities affected by the government's projects. Their principal roles consist of developing the communities' civic consciousness; promoting group formation and development; researching, publicizing, and campaigning; and recommending and pushing alternatives for sustainable development.

The participation of organizations in Pak Bara Village could be classified as follows:

1. The kinds of CSOs and NGOs networks which have been continuously active in the area.

There were 22 organizations in the "People's Networks for Monitoring the Development Plans of Satun" and the "Ruk Jung Satun Network." This research studied 12 organizations which could be divided into 2 groups.

For civil society organizations, there were 10 of them: Coordinating Center for Researches for Local Sustainability in Satun, Community Organizations Development Institute, Local Fishery Association, Political Development Council, Community Organization Council of Tambon Pak Nam and Community Organization Council of La-Ngu District, Health Promotion Hospital of Tambon Pak Nam, Association of Political Science and Public Administration of Southern Thailand, Consumer Protection Networks, Reef Guardian Club, Pak Bara Bay Conservation Group.



As for non-governmental organizations, there were 2 of them: Association of Thai Seas Protection and Andaman Foundation. They have worked together in coastal Tambon of La-Gnu, Ta Pae, and Mueng Districts since 2010.

2. The roles of CSOs and NGOs

Their roles in activity supporting can be divided as performed in areas and in networks as shown in the following Table.

Organization/group	Roles in communities	Roles in networks
Coordinating Center for Researches for Local Sustainability in Satun	Supporting communities in conducting researches concerning occupations, education, tourism, disaster management, public health, traditions, culture, and folk wisdom	Being an associate member in supporting educational programs for local target communities, creating activities and group formations to strengthen the communities
Community Organizations Development Institute	Providing a common space to support cooperation of community organizations at the levels of Tambon, district, and province	Supporting activities of Community Organization Council of Tambon Pak Nam and activities at Tambon level such as Secure Housing and Community Financial Organizations
Local Fishery Group	Developing communities and leaders, developing members' occupations, managing debt, coordinating for cooperation between fish farmers and various agencies	Being a local community organization covering three villages of Tambon Pak Nam, La-Ngu District; and all coastal communities of Satun
Political Development Council	Developing politics education and participation, monitoring government's exercise of power, encouraging people's politics of good practice to be the institution for harmony at all levels	Supporting space creating activities with a focus on developing leaders' potential, supporting data presentations of CSOs in Satun
Community Organization Council of Tambon Pak Nam Community Organization Council of La-Ngu District	Being a platform connecting community organizations to exchange ideas and experience, and connecting with Community Organizations Development Institute to strengthen communities and encourage them to solve problems by themselves	Encouraging community unity and activities for local problem solving, providing financial supports
Health Promotion Hospital of Tambon Pak Nam	Providing medicinal services, coordinating the cooperation between governmental agencies	Providing human resources, venues, and information for health management and



	and people, encouraging participation in continual health care	communities, supporting local village volunteer networks
Association of Political Science and Public Administration of Southern Thailand	Providing academic and research data, providing community services, proposing opinions concerning policies about the South to the government and the public	Providing supports for data management and academic cooperation with communities
Consumer Protection Networks	Publicizing information for consumer protection, relaying complaints, driving forth public policies, mobilizing participation, encouraging consumer's rights, and coordinating consumer protection networks	Supporting activities for well-being and consumer protection in both La-Ngu District and the Satun Province
Reef Guardian Club	Conserving coral and sea grass by tourism operators and guides	Supporting activities and group formations for natural resources protection and local tourism
Pak Bara Bay Conservation Group	Being community volunteers and activity groups in guarding the local area, participating in observing changes in three villages of Tambon Pak Nam	Being community network in managing and restoring coastal resources of Pak Bara Bay by connecting with the Local Fishery Club of La – Ngu District
Association of Thai Seas Protection	Conserving natural resources and encouraging fishermen to have their own organizations to protect their interests	Being an associate member in educating local target communities, creating activities and group formations to strengthen communities
Andaman Foundation	Providing supports to strengthen communities particularly coastal communities, encouraging communities' rights in managing coastal resources, following up with fishery policies	Being an associate member in educating local target communities, creating activities and group formations to strengthen communities

From the Table, it is obvious that the “People’s Networks for Monitoring the Development Plans of Satun” and the “Ruk Jung Satun Network” had the CSOs and NGOs as their principal cores in driving the community members’ learning process in different aspects. Besides, they coordinated with governmental and local agencies in carrying out activities such as La-Ngu Hospital, Administrative Organization of



Tambon Pak Nam and Municipal Administrative Organization of Tambon KumPaeng, Pak Bara Tourism Operators, Association of Deputy Chiefs of Tambon in the Satun Province, Islamic Committee of Satun, Club of Imams in Satun, Association of Teachers in Public and Private Schools, Artists Groups for Communities, Community of News Reporters and Journalists in Satun, etc.

Besides the networks in the local area, the “People’s Networks” also had external network organizations as alliances in providing supports in various aspects such as data base creation, platform creation for experience sharing, and public relations promotion. Organizations which took part in these activities included the Administrative Organization of Tambon Naa Torne, Tungwa District; National Health Assembly, Association for Tidying Up the Town, Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organization, the Faculty of Political Science and the Institute for Peace Studies at Prince of Songkla University, and other organization groups. These cooperative activities gave the research team opportunities to participate and observe with numerous organizations to fulfill its understanding of the participatory process in developing the Pak Bara Area of Satun as well as to gather the networks’ situational movements against adverse development projects for further reports.

3. The networks’ working process in developing the area

The aims of the networks were to enhance the communities’ understanding about development of the area, to object and protest the construction of the Pak Bara Deep Sea Port and the government’s development of heavy industries, and to campaign for the protection of local natural resources. There were different processes in driving forth activities at three levels as follows:

3.1 Working processes within communities there were 3 main areas.

1) Providing the communities with new body of knowledge and enhancing their skills through community forum arrangement, VDO presentation, and dissemination of information about development projects of the nation and the Pak Bara area via such media as leaflets, books, Siang Satun newspaper and other social media. Besides, they exchanged ideas and opinions with the governmental sector and shared information through communities’ key persons.

2) Cooperating with communities in arranging activities, for instance youth camps, fishing contests, community seminars, and collective fasting. These activities were for developing and creating participatory process as well as rapports among members.

3) Campaigning for local natural resources conservation in the form of marching, using symbolic green flags, guarding the area and observing any encroachment for the government’s development projects, using the communities’ measure “Enter? Ship out!”

3.2 Working processes outside communities There were 2 major activities to link the local area with the external:

1) Building networks at the levels of province and region to get supports from networks by working and sharing problematic issues with other CSOs and NGOs such as taking part in organizing assemblies at province level or, in the name of “Ruk Jung Satun Group,” participating in organization networks at province level.

2) Asserting stand points by presenting the problems in general public and pushing them to be public issues in order to drive forth in a wider circle such as



submitting documents of protest to governmental agencies or publicizing activities and body of knowledge through different conventional media and social media. The methods used in driving forth their operation included monitoring the government's administration regarding development projects in the local area, strengthening communities' learning process and body of knowledge, campaigning and protesting the government's development projects of expansive industries, publicizing problematic issues in general public and cooperating with external organizations at both provincial and regional levels.

4. The communities' reactions to the development of the Pak Bara area

The research team used a stratified sampling survey with 400 members of three villages (Pak Bara, Talohsai, and Ta Malai) for their opinions of and needs from two types of developments, namely the Pak Bara Deep Sea Port Project with related large-scale industry projects and those of the "People's Networks for Monitoring the Development Plans of Satun" and the "Ruk Jung Satun Network." The gathered data can be summarized as follows:

4.1 The people's opinions of and needs from the Deep Sea Port Project and related industries regarding awareness of the projects, impacts, and the government's development directions are presented here in a descending order. The community members learned about the projects mostly from friends (32.5%) and from the other sources such as brochures, billboards, internet news, and Facebook 30.2%; family members or relatives 29.1%; NGOs 27.7%; and community leaders 19.5%. More than half (54.6 %) of the subjects used to participate in the networks' activities. The perceived negative impacts were higher than the positive impacts as illustrated in the following descending order: loss of natural resources and income sources (78.8 %), the villagers must be relocated due to land expropriation (75.5%), air pollution (73.8%), loss of traditional ways of life (70.0 %), and destructive effect on tourism destinations (69.8%). As for suggestions for the government's development projects, the appropriate directions should be in this order: tourism and services (73.1%), fishery (59.3%), natural resources (53.3%), agriculture (19.8%), trading and investment (18.0%), and industries (9.3%).

4.2 The people's opinions of and needs from the "People's Networks for Monitoring the Development Plans of Satun" and the "Ruk Jung Satun Network" regarding problems in the area, levels of trust in agencies with effects on communities, frequency of communities' participation in agencies' activities, and trust in activity participation are presented here in descending orders.

The first five problems in the area were narcotics (74.3%), Deep Sea Port Project (63.8 %), unemployment (37.5%), poverty (35.5%), and youth's quarrels (30.8%).

As for the communities' trust in agencies or organizations active in the area could rank as follows: religious leaders (3.75); teachers (3.69); doctors, nurses, public health officials, and health center officials (3.67); educators and university lecturers (3.45) and the "Ruk Jung Satun Network" (3.44).



As for the frequency of communities' participation in agencies' activities in the whole previous year, it was found that more than half (66.4%) used to join such activities and some part of the subjects (33.6%) never attended any activity or project. The agencies which the local people joined their activities were the Ministry of Public Health, hospitals and health centers (26.5%); the "Ruk Jung Satun Network"(18.0%); and the "People's Network" and local administrative organizations (17.8% each);

As for the agencies or networks of which activities were trusted by the community were that of public health officials, medical doctors, nurses and health center officials (3.04); the "Ruk Jung Satun Network" (3.03); People's Network for Monitoring the Pak Bara Deep Sea Port Project (3.00); and the People's Network for Monitoring the Development Projects of Satun (2.94). The agencies that approached the local people at the "low" level were district social developers and the officials of the Southern Border Provinces Administration Center.

5.The Networks' directions in carrying out activities in the Pak Bara area

There were 3 levels of work as follows:

5.1 Community Level There should be a continuity of the followings: 1) organizing activities which alert the local people to take part in activities of good causes; 2) distributing activities at the community level with a focus on activities which are not simply campaigning but which encouraging the people to recognize and treasure the natural resources and good things in their society; 3) continually providing them with new, reliable, and factual knowledge and information which is related to the impact of the government's large projects on the people and their ways of life; 4) seeking approaches to increase cooperation among community leaders, religious leaders, and the local people so that they will have the same understanding about approaches in developing the area; 5) supporting the cooperation of the local people with networks as direct stakeholders in order to drive the development directions of the area; 6) encouraging the new generation to creatively participate in assertion and drives for the benefits of the local area and pushing local youth to get higher education and return home to develop their home town

5.2 Local Organization Level There should be plans for the followings: 1) developing body of knowledge and sets of information which will benefit the area to strengthen the drive that is based on knowledge, data, and the local people's facts; 2) seeking new approaches to increase the number of participants, motivating them and adjusting activity formats with an emphasis on activities related to the development of people's living conditions in the present context so as to have updated data base for further application for development, concentrating on forming new local mass to bear the torch of the present generation; 3) strengthening the cooperation with the local key persons, explaining, and finding approaches which concentrate on responding to the people's needs through providing them with opportunities and space for expression their opinions and needs in development as much as possible together with trustworthy and understanding mentor organizations; 4) forming basic groups which are related to people's ways of life such as fishery groups and tourism groups together with the networks' supports in laying foundation and driving their demands with emphasis on each group's own decision and operation.



5.3 Network Level There should be supports for the followings: 1) creating networks to work at the provincial level in order to help support and encourage cooperation at a wider level with the existing “Ruk Jung Satun Network” as the core driver of sustainable development of the province; 2) distributing roles and duties in organizational networks in order to elicit potential and strength of each organization in the “Ruk Jung Satun Network” to develop the area, be it of governmental sector, private sector, or CSOs; 3) increasing cooperation with CSOs and NGOs in the South in order to exchange experience and push their works to be public issues and to cooperatively seek more varied approaches to development; 4) using media to reflect the campaigning issues in a wider circle of Thai society; 5) increasing the cooperation with local administrative organizations in order that they will be effective and efficient agencies officially recognizable by governmental authorities; 6) developing cooperation with educational institutes and agencies in order to have more systematic and reliable sets of information.

Discussion and Recommendations

The roles of CSOs and NGOs in developing the Pak Bara area can be classified in terms of space and networking. The organizing of activities in the area reflects the communities’ perceptions of common problems with a goal towards the creation of civic consciousness in the network management system (Supawongs, 1998). Their common roles are developing and creating consciousness, encouraging group formations and dissemination campaigns, and driving policy proposals (www.thaingo.org. 2012). As for the participation of CSOs and NGOs, it can be divided into three levels. The small level (S) refers to the organizations which operate their activities in the area around the Pak Bara Bay or in the Tambon Pak Nam. The medium level (M) refers to the organizations whose operations cover the area of the Satun province. The large level (L) refers to the organizations which support activities or join certain activities of the governmental sector, private sector and educational institutes. The findings of this research agree with the observations of Mitchell and Reid (2001) who explain that people’s participation in the development and decision making on different aspects of development can occur only when the local communities can benefit from such participation and the participation does not affect their traditions, ways of life, and values recognized in such society. Also the people’s participation can occur when the government listens to its people’s needs and the government must encourage the people to join in decision making with regard to the government’s activities. At the same time, the governmental officials must genuinely emphasize and encourage the people’s participation. (Carpini, Cook and Jacobs, 2004).

There should also be encouragement of communication to strengthen communities and create participation so that the local area will recognize the significance of a peaceful co-existence, reduced violence, and harmony in society. The CSOs and NGOs should play their roles at two levels. First, at the community level, the networks should use religious and cultural dimensions in driving forth activities and increasing good relationships between networks and communities which must be promoted by community leaders. Second, at the organization and network level, there should be cooperation in explaining to and coordinating with the communities with



the “Ruk Jung Satun Network” as the cores in organizing platforms for information dissemination. They should also create cooperation at the local, provincial, regional, and international levels in order to support works in the area for genuinely efficient operation of the organizations and restoration of peace in the area.

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Interviews

Abdulrosak Hemwang	member of Political Development Council	Interviewed on stage on Oct. 7, 2012
Aree Tingwang	Local Fishery Group	Oct. 7, 2012
Huddeen Usma	Leader of Pak Bara Bay Conservation Group	Oct. 7, 2012
Jehna Wuttanapun	Tamalai villager	Interviewed on May 3, 2013
Kraiwut Chusakul	Tourism Industry Group	Interviewed on Oct. 7, 2013
Nuttapol Benden	Tour Guide Network	Interviewed on Oct. 7, 2013
Napawan Juan-mai	Talohsai villager	Interviewed on Mar. 20, 2013
Samut Iad-trong	Community Organization Development Institute	Interviewed on Mar. 20, 2013
Somboon Kamhaeng	Andaman Foundation	Interviewed on stage on Oct. 7, 2012
Somyot Toh-lang	CSO Network	Interviewed on stage on Oct. 7, 2012
Wichokesak	Human Rights	Interviewed on Oct. 7, 2013
Ronnarongpairee	Sub-committee member	