

Navigating through Uncertainties: Dwelling in the Transition of Thai Society

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Abstract

This article interrogates the multifaceted nature of uncertainty pervading Thai society over the past decade. Rather than approaching uncertainty as an external metric, we conceptualize it as intrinsically woven into the fabric of lived experience—reflecting how individuals navigate and make meaning within rapidly transforming social, economic, and environmental landscapes. The turbulent reconfigurations of Thai society have generated novel forms of precarity while intensifying existing vulnerabilities, compelling citizens to develop adaptive strategies for survival and meaning-making. Our research delves into five critical domains where uncertainty has profoundly reshaped Thai lifeworlds: the disruption of urban labor regimes; the increasing precariousness of agricultural land tenure; the volatility of political institutions; the acceleration of religious and consumption practices; and the environmental uncertainties manifested through recurring haze crises. Through comparative analysis across these domains, we illuminate the diverse epistemological frameworks and tactical responses employed by differently situated individuals confronting uncertainty. This approach reveals uncertainty not merely as a condition to be managed, but as a productive site where new social relationships, knowledge systems, and imaginative futures are actively negotiated and contested. The study contributes to broader theoretical conversations by demonstrating how uncertainty functions simultaneously as a technology of governance and a space of possibility—where dominant power structures are both reinforced and challenged through everyday practices of adaptation, resistance, and aspiration.

Keywords: uncertainties, risk, dwelling, transition, Thai society

Introduction

The present work investigates the pervasive condition of uncertainty that has characterized Thai society over the past decade. Through an interdisciplinary lens that integrates sociological and anthropological frameworks, we examine the complex entanglements between uncertainty and human experience across multiple domains during Thailand's profound societal transitions. Central to our inquiry is the praxis of uncertainty—conceptualized not merely as an external condition but as a dynamic arena where understanding, knowledge production, and modes of existence are continuously articulated, contested, and reconfigured.

Our theoretical intervention positions uncertainty as an interactive sphere where individuals and collectives, situated within diverse social positionalities, actively engage with and negotiate experiences of precarity. This perspective marks a significant epistemological shift—moving beyond deterministic historical narratives, rigid quantitative measurements, and reductive numerical indicators toward a nuanced exploration of the conceptual dimensions, cognitive frameworks, and heterogeneous lived experiences that emerge when different social groups confront uncertainty. The research architecture encompasses five interconnected case studies that illuminate different facets of uncertainty in contemporary Thai society: First, we examine how ride-hailing workers navigate the algorithmically mediated uncertainties endemic to platform capitalism, revealing how digital technologies simultaneously generate precarity and possibility in urban labor landscapes. Second, we investigate agricultural communities near the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), analyzing how industrial capital enclosure produces land insecurity and transforms traditional agrarian relationships. Third, we explore the political volatilities precipitated by military interventions, illuminating how coups generate profound institutional uncertainties while creating spaces for democratic contestation. Fourth, we analyze the acceleration of religious practices and consumption patterns, examining how spiritual frameworks become reconfigured as strategies for managing economic uncertainties. Finally, we interrogate the climate enclosure manifested through particulate matter crises and atmospheric pollution, revealing how environmental uncertainties become sites of political negotiation and resistance.

Through rigorous comparative analysis across these domains, we identify patterns in how uncertainty manifests across different social contexts and elucidate the diverse epistemic frameworks, strategic adaptations, and tactical maneuvers deployed by various social groups. This synthesis generates novel theoretical insights into uncertainty as both a technique of governance and a space of possibility—where dominant power structures are simultaneously reinforced and challenged through everyday practices of adaptation, resistance, and aspiration. By triangulating knowledge derived from the lived experiences of diverse social classes throughout the past decade, this research contributes to broader theoretical conversations on precarity, resilience, and social transformation in contexts of accelerating change.

Theoretical Framework: Risk, Uncertainty, and Technologies of Governance

The article approaches uncertainty not merely as a lack of knowledge or a temporary gap in predictability but as a constitutive condition of contemporary life. Following classical distinctions made by Knight (1921), risk and uncertainty denote different modes of engaging with the future. *Risk* refers to situations in which possible outcomes are known and can be calculated, managed, or insured against through probabilistic reasoning. *Uncertainty*, by contrast, concerns conditions where outcomes cannot be enumerated or predicted due to indeterminacy, complexity, or instability. Whereas risk implies the calculable, uncertainty gestures toward the incalculable—the domain of the unforeseeable that resists algorithmic or institutional containment.

In sociological terms, as Beck (1992) argues, late modernity transforms the production of risk into a defining feature of social organization. In what he calls the *risk society*, institutions increasingly attempt to anticipate and manage hazards generated by modernization itself—environmental disasters, economic crises, or technological accidents—by translating deep uncertainties into calculable risks. This conversion, however, is not merely technical but profoundly political, since defining what counts as *risk* entails the exercise of power and authority over knowledge, measurement, and intervention.

Lupton (2013) further extends this insight by emphasizing that risk and uncertainty are culturally and discursively produced. They are not neutral categories but social constructs through which institutions and individuals make sense of instability and vulnerability. Risk thus functions as a moral and affective language—a means by which societies regulate behavior and assign responsibility. In this sense, risk and uncertainty are relational: they emerge from interactions between expertise, governance, and everyday life.

At the same time, uncertainty is not reducible to a disciplinary instrument. It also constitutes a lived and negotiated condition through which individuals and communities craft alternative logics of survival, meaning, and hope. Rather than a deficit to be eliminated, uncertainty becomes an arena of improvisation—a *space of possibility* in which people navigate and re-signify the constraints of governance.

Accordingly, the article situates uncertainty within a dual analytical framework: first, as a *technology of governance* that disciplines and organizes social life through calculative practices of risk translation; and second, as an *everyday condition* that people inhabit and reinterpret in ways that generate new forms of agency, resilience, and critique. This dual perspective informs the analysis of the five case studies that follow, each illustrating how uncertainty operates at the intersection of structural control and lived adaptation in contemporary Thai society.

Technologies of governance, as employed here, refer to assemblages of instruments, infrastructures, and rationalities through which state and market actors seek to manage uncertainty. Drawing on Amoore's (2020) concept of *technologies of uncertainty* and Foucault's (1991) notion of *governmentality*, these technologies are not understood as totalizing structures but as situated *dispositifs*—assemblages that do not merely impose control but actively shape how uncertainty becomes visible, calculable, and actionable in relation to local practices and imaginaries.

They encompass algorithms, metrics, legal instruments, and ritualized procedures that translate indeterminate phenomena into governable forms. Yet, as the cases demonstrate, these very technologies also reproduce new uncertainties and provoke contestation, revealing that governance itself is an uncertain and continually negotiated practice.

Manufactured Uncertainty and the Digital Economy

The late-twentieth-century expansion of information technologies and global capital introduced new modalities of uncertainty that transcend earlier industrial paradigms. Scholars of the platform economy (Srnicek, 2017; Amoore, 2020; Pasquale, 2015) describe how algorithmic systems mediate labor, consumption, and governance through opaque forms of data extraction and control. In such contexts, uncertainty is deliberately engineered: platforms externalize risk onto workers and users, transforming volatility into profit. These processes resonate with what Amoore (2020) calls “cloud ethics,” where decision making is dispersed across computational architectures that both conceal and generate indeterminacy.

Thailand's rapidly expanding platform economy exemplifies this dynamic. For food-delivery riders in Chiang Mai, uncertainty arises not only from income instability but also from algorithmic opacity—the unpredictable logic determining task allocation and suspension. Yet riders also appropriate this uncertainty as freedom, interpreting risk as opportunity, mirroring Beckett's (2016) notion of “imagined futures,” wherein economic actors project hopeful narratives amid unpredictability.

Affective and Spiritual Dimensions of Uncertainty

While global theories of risk emphasize institutional structures, anthropological work highlights the affective and spiritual textures through which uncertainty is experienced. Berlant (2011) conceptualizes “cruel optimism” to describe how individuals remain attached to fantasies of stability that simultaneously hinder their flourishing. In Thailand, middle-class engagements with prosperity religion reveal similar dynamics: uncertainty is embraced as an affective resource that sustains aspiration. The circulation of sacred entities and merit economies thus converts uncertainty into entrepreneurial energy, blurring the boundaries between belief, capital, and self-making.

This affective dimension underscores that uncertainty is not merely cognitive but embodied and emotional. It animates hope, anxiety, and resilience—the very forces through which people inhabit precarious worlds. Such experiences exceed Euro-American risk paradigms, aligning instead with Global South perspectives that emphasize improvisation and relationality (Tsing, 2015; Mbembe, 2019).

Research Methodology and Study Sites

This study adopts an interdisciplinary, mixed-methods design combining documentary analysis, multi-sited ethnography, and semi-structured interviews conducted between 2020 and 2024. Fieldwork was carried out in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Prachinburi, Kanchanaburi, Nakhon Phanom, and Ubon Ratchathani. These locations capture diverse configurations of uncertainty within Thailand’s transitional decade—from urban platform economies and agrarian frontiers to environmental management regimes.

Primary data were derived from more than one hundred in-depth interviews with platform workers, small-scale farmers, religious entrepreneurs, local administrators, and civil-society activists. Participant observation in workplaces, community meetings, and ritual spaces enabled fine-grained insight into how uncertainty is embodied, narrated, and acted upon. The research emphasizes *comparative synthesis* rather than exhaustive ethnography: each site functions as an analytical vignette through which different modalities of uncertainty become visible. The integration of these cases demonstrates how uncertainty travels across domains, producing a shared yet differentiated structure of feeling that cuts through economic, political, spiritual, and ecological life.

Case 1 – Platform Capitalism and Negotiating Uncertainty: Ride-Hailing Workers in Chiang Mai

The digital platform economy, rapidly expanding after the COVID-19 pandemic, epitomizes how uncertainty is manufactured and monetized. Food-delivery riders in Chiang Mai inhabit a paradoxical world in which autonomy is promised yet algorithmically constrained. Platforms such as Grab, Foodpanda, and Line Man employ ranking systems and performance metrics that render workers simultaneously visible and expendable. These algorithmic systems exemplify what Pasquale (2015) calls the “black box society,” in which opaque computational architectures shape social and economic outcomes without public accountability. For riders, such opacity transforms uncertainty into a structural condition of labor—where decisions about work allocation, suspension, or income fluctuation are obscured by proprietary code. Rather than functioning as neutral technologies, these systems actively

produce asymmetries of knowledge and power, embedding surveillance and evaluation into everyday practices of earning. In this sense, algorithmic governance does not merely manage uncertainty but manufactures it as a mode of control. Following Srnicek (2017) and Amoore (2020), these algorithms can be seen as *technologies of uncertainty*—mechanisms that translate human contingency into computational profit.

Interviews with riders reveal daily encounters with opaque systems: unexpected suspension from the app, fluctuating pay rates, and negative consumer ratings that jeopardize future income. Risk is individualized, and the social insurance of traditional employment is replaced by data-driven precarity. Yet workers also appropriate this indeterminacy tactically. Many operate across multiple platforms, cultivate customer networks through social media, and reframe uncertainty as entrepreneurial freedom. In Beckert's (2016) terms, they project *imagined futures* in which flexibility substitutes for stability. These practices echo Berlant's (2011) notion of *cruel optimism*: attachment to the fantasy of independence that sustains exploitation. Nonetheless, riders' everyday improvisations demonstrate how uncertainty can be re-signified as both constraint and possibility.

Ride-hailing workers, who function as intermediaries connecting merchants and consumers through digital platforms, form a vital component of Thailand's rapidly expanding service economy. This sector, which grew significantly during and after the pandemic, depends on digital intermediaries to mediate supply and demand. Yet the platform economy is inherently structured around risk displacement: uncertainty is not accidental but integral, designed to shift economic and moral responsibility onto the riders themselves.

The uncertainties experienced by riders manifest in two primary domains—technological and environmental—both deeply intertwined.

Technological Uncertainties

Algorithmic management generates instability in multifaceted ways. Riders often face temporary exclusion from the task allocation system, sometimes as a disciplinary measure, but just as often due to technical glitches or opaque algorithmic criteria. Such suspensions abruptly terminate income without explanation or warning. A common joke circulating among riders on social media captures this precarious mood: "If you wake up and your account isn't banned, consider yourself lucky" (Pooyongyuth, 2024: 36).

This dark humor reflects an everyday awareness that algorithmic governance operates without accountability. Within these opaque systems, corporations distribute work automatically, reducing workers' ability to plan or negotiate. Each platform employs distinct allocation logics: Foodpanda operates a tiered classification model that privileges higher-ranked riders with better time slots and delivery zones; Grab Food relies on performance metrics to assign orders, thereby rewarding speed and consistency; while Line Man adopts an open-competition model where riders must compete in real time for available tasks (Pooyongyuth, 2024).

These competitive systems, while presented as meritocratic, effectively externalize uncertainty. The platforms extract profit from riders' willingness to absorb instability—each individual bears the risks of algorithmic error, customer mood, and urban traffic. Uncertainty, in this sense, becomes a business model.

Everyday and Environmental Uncertainties

Riders also navigate uncertainties emerging from the physical and social environment of delivery work. Restaurant delays, unexpected road conditions, and volatile customer behavior all contribute to precarious labor rhythms. One rider described the everyday frustrations vividly:

Riders hate restaurants that take too long or skip our orders to serve walk-in customers first. It wastes our time, and then the customer blames us for being slow. Some are already hungry and get angry easily, so they take it out on us. What feels unfair is that restaurants and customers can rate or complain about riders, but we can't rate them back. It's one-sided (Pooyongyuth, 2024: 39).

This imbalance—what Amoore (2020) might call *asymmetrical transparency*—illustrates how digital systems quantify one side of the labor relation while leaving the other invisible. The rating mechanism becomes a disciplinary tool, reinforcing the customer's moral authority and the platform's managerial distance.

Gendered Vulnerabilities

For female riders, these uncertainties involve gendered dimensions. Delivering to isolated locations or working late at night introduces risks of sexual harassment and physical vulnerability. Women riders often rely on informal safety networks, such as real-time location sharing with peers or “buddy” systems during late shifts. These strategies exemplify the gendered moral labor required to survive in a platformized urban economy.

Collective Responses and Moral Economies of Resistance

Despite these precarities, riders are not passive victims. Many adopt *risk diversification* as a survival strategy—registering with multiple platforms, expanding into parcel or grocery delivery, or cultivating loyal customers who order directly. Yet beneath the rhetoric of “freedom,” riders recognize structural exploitation. As one veteran organizer in Chiang Mai explained:

We've worked here for years and feel that the companies take advantage of us in many ways. We buy our own motorbikes, pay for gas, and handle our own insurance. The company bears no responsibility. We understand it's freelance work, but there should still be some protection. The pay rates keep getting cut, even though they were already low. When we started talking among ourselves, we realized we all faced the same problems. That's when we decided to organize and demand fairness (Pooyongyuth, 2024: 53).

His testimony encapsulates the moral economy underpinning riders' emerging activism. Their demand is not for traditional employment but for recognition of shared vulnerability. What begins as individual frustration becomes collective awareness—a transformation of uncertainty into solidarity.

Reframing Uncertainty

Although platforms advertise freedom and flexibility, riders experience dense layers of control. The promise of independence conceals new forms of subordination, as algorithmic discipline replaces managerial supervision. The moral discourse of “*being your own boss*” legitimizes exploitation by

reframing insecurity as opportunity. Yet within this contradiction lies a kernel of political potential. Riders' collective reflections and online humor indicate a growing critical consciousness.

Their everyday adaptations—strategic multi-platforming, social-media organizing, and moral critique—reveal that uncertainty is not only endured but also interpreted. For riders, uncertainty is at once a threat and a resource: it produces vulnerability but also the grounds for community, creativity, and resistance.

In this sense, Thai ride-hailing work exemplifies the ambivalent ethics of late capitalism: a mode of labor in which algorithmic opacity generates both exploitation and ingenuity, and where uncertainty itself becomes a contested terrain of meaning.

Case 2 – Land Enclosure and Emerging Uncertainties in the Eastern Economic Corridor's Hinterlands

Before the advent of the *Eastern Seaboard Development Program* in the late 1970s, farmers in Thailand's eastern region inhabited what was often described as the nation's agricultural "breadbasket." Benefiting from the fertile watersheds of the Bang Pakong, Nakhon Nayok, and Prachinburi river basins, rural communities sustained livelihoods rooted in interdependence and reciprocity. As older farmers recall, the only uncertainties they faced were those of natural disasters, theft, and wartime displacement. People managed such risks through kinship ties and communal labor exchanges—mobilizing shared resources to recover from floods, or temporarily relocating to relatives' homes during times of conflict.

The establishment of the *Eastern Seaboard Development Program* and, more recently, the *Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC)* under the *Thailand 4.0* policy framework, has fundamentally reconfigured the social and economic valuation of land in the region. Development strategies aimed at transforming the eastern seaboard into a hub of industrial investment have triggered extensive processes of commodification—turning land from a subsistence resource into a speculative asset. Rapid land titling, rezoning under urban development plans, and the continuing vulnerability of the agricultural sector have all accelerated land transactions and dispossession.

Mechanisms of Enclosure and the Role of Intermediaries

In Prachinburi province, often conceptualized as the hinterland of the EEC, land enclosure extends beyond the logic of market exchange. Farmers describe a more complex landscape shaped by both coercion and collaboration. Large landholders profit from sales, while smallholders—pressured by debt, legal ambiguity, or fear—are compelled to sell. Two key mechanisms drive this transformation. First, *local intermediaries* act as brokers for external capital, consolidating small plots into large parcels for resale to investors. These intermediaries are often local elites—village heads, teachers, or subdistrict politicians—who leverage their social position to mediate transactions. Second, *networked governance* enables these actors to access state-backed development programs through personal connections with district and provincial officials (Benjanavee, 2024).

While officially framed as voluntary land transfers, these processes often involve subtle intimidation. As one farmer explained: "If they want your land, it's better to step aside. If you stand in their way—well, if you're not shot first, you still won't be able to stay here" (Benjanavee, 2024: 102).

Such testimonies reveal that coercion, though rarely visible, is embedded within the moral economy of land speculation. Land becomes a site where capital accumulation and rural survival clash under conditions of structural asymmetry.

Dispossession and New Forms of Rural Uncertainty

The enclosure of land has generated entirely new forms of uncertainty for smallholders. Many who once owned farmland have been transformed into tenant farmers or daily wage laborers. Tenancy is usually informal—without contracts or tenure security—and rents can be raised or terminated at any time. Others migrate between casual agricultural and factory work, facing erratic employment and low wages. These transformations have created a rural class of *risk-bearing subjects*, caught between the promises of modernization and the fragility of market dependence.

Adding to these insecurities is the influx of foreign investment—particularly from Chinese corporations in plastics, rubber, and recycling industries. While these ventures bring infrastructure and short-term employment, they also produce new environmental uncertainties. Villagers report rising pollution levels, deteriorating soil fertility, and contaminated irrigation channels. As one community leader observed, “The water looks the same, but the fish are gone.” Despite sporadic protests and petitions, the state’s response remains limited, and local grievances rarely penetrate the national discourse on economic growth.

Environmental Crisis and Moral Displacement

Environmental degradation compounds the uncertainty of livelihood. In several subdistricts of Prachinburi, villagers describe an “air of anxiety”—smoke from nearby recycling plants drifts across rice fields, coating crops and homes with fine dust. Residents experience respiratory illness, yet few dare to file formal complaints for fear of retaliation or bureaucratic dead ends. For many, uncertainty now takes on a moral dimension: the erosion of *thammachat* (moral order) and *withii chiiwit* (way of life). The loss of land thus signifies not only economic dispossession but the unraveling of an entire moral ecology.

Agrarian Persistence and Alternative Futures

Amid the expansion of industrial capital, some farming groups have chosen to remain, seeking to reclaim stability through organic agriculture and community-based food networks. These farmers interpret their practice not as nostalgia but as resistance through sustainability. One member of an organic farmers’ network reflected:

Promoting factories and landfills shows a misunderstanding of what Prachinburi truly is. This province has always been an agricultural land. I don’t oppose development, but it should consider our roots and multiple dimensions—not only the economic one. That’s the only way to reduce the problems we face (Benjanavee, 2024: 183).

This testimony highlights how agricultural persistence becomes both a livelihood strategy and a form of moral protest. Organic farmers’ collectives have gradually expanded from individual plots to coordinated networks linking producers and consumers across provinces. Their work represents an alternative development vision—one that reclaims autonomy and negotiates uncertainty through relational ethics rather than capital accumulation.

Uncertainty as Rural Condition

The Prachinburi case demonstrates that uncertainty is not simply a symptom of underdevelopment but a constitutive element of contemporary rural transformation. Development projects such as the EEC introduce volatility as a structural feature of agrarian life. Farmers are compelled to navigate multiple, overlapping uncertainties: legal ambiguity, market instability, environmental risk, and moral dislocation. Yet within these shifting terrains, communities also innovate new modes of solidarity and ecological care.

Uncertainty, then, becomes both a wound and a resource—a condition through which rural actors reinterpret belonging, justice, and survival in Thailand’s industrial frontier.

Case 3 – Coup d’État, Elections, and Political Uncertainty in Thailand from 1997 to 2023 CE

Political uncertainty represents another deep current of instability that has permeated Thai society for decades. Whereas economic uncertainty often arises from asymmetrical relations between employers and workers, political uncertainty emerges from the enduring imbalance of power between the governing elite and those under their rule.

In Thailand’s modern political history, beginning with the 1932 revolution, the nation has oscillated between competing elite factions negotiating control of the state. For much of the 20th century, these negotiations occurred largely within elite circles. However, since the late 1980s, a new actor has entered the political field: social movements that challenge the central state’s monopoly on legitimacy. The resulting confrontations—between elite networks and mass movements—have defined the recurrent cycles of uncertainty that continue to shape Thai politics.

Chaiyapong Samniang (2025) identifies at least four major “waves” of political uncertainty beginning in 1997. The first involved the *People’s Alliance for Democracy* protests against Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, which culminated in the 2006 coup led by General Sonthi Boonyaratglin. The second wave occurred during Abhisit Vejjajiva’s administration, when the *United Front of Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD)* mobilized against the unelected government, resulting in the bloody crackdown of May 2010.

The third wave arose during the Yingluck Shinawatra government, as the *People’s Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC)* staged blockades across Bangkok, effectively paralyzing governance and providing justification for another coup—this time under General Prayuth Chan-o-cha, who would rule for nearly a decade. The fourth wave emerged after the 2019 election, when new political actors such as the *Future Forward Party* (later *Move Forward Party*) mobilized an unprecedented youth-led movement that questioned the ideological foundations of the monarchy-centered state (Samniang, 2025).

Coup d’État as Mechanism of Control

Thailand’s modern political order is characterized by this cyclical rhythm of dissolution, protest, election, and coup. Coups d’état have historically functioned as instruments for elite networks to manage uncertainty—resetting the political arena whenever electoral outcomes threaten established hierarchies. As McCargo (2005) and Mérieau (2016) argue, Thai governance operates through a “network monarchy” or “deep-state constitutionalism,” in which formal democratic institutions coexist with entrenched informal authority. Within this system, uncertainty is not a by-product but a governing technique. The state’s power lies in its ability to *suspend* rules selectively, maintaining flexibility as domination. Citizens inhabit a perpetual condition of “maybe”—never certain whether laws will protect or punish them.

The New Uncertainty: Youth Politics and the Crisis of Control

The emergence of new political parties such as *the Future Forward Party (now the People's Party)* has unsettled this order. Despite systematic suppression by conservative elites—including party dissolution and disqualification of leaders—the movement has expanded rapidly, undermining the elite's monopoly over certainty. As one member of parliament from the *People's Party* reflected:

The younger generation is far more politically conscious than many think. I once went to buy a book by Professor Thongchai Winichakul and asked the shop owner who usually bought it. He said, “Mostly high school students, the ones with short haircuts.” During the NCPO years, the junta tried to rewrite history—removing the *Khana Ratsadon*¹ plaque, taking down monuments, and forcing the “12 Core Values”² into schools—but it failed. In the end, I agree with many scholars who say that the real force awakening the youth wasn't Thanathorn (former leader of *Future Forward Party*), but the oppression of the elite itself (Samniang, 2025: 54).

This testimony captures a crucial paradox: while coups are intended to restore order and predictability among the elite, they simultaneously generate uncontrollable new uncertainties—especially among the younger generation.

During and in the aftermath of military rule (2014-2023), resistance by youth movements became a defining feature of political life. Across the country, students and young professionals organized street demonstrations and online campaigns demanding democracy, accountability, and justice. These movements emerged even during the COVID-19 pandemic, when dissatisfaction with the government's ineffective handling of the crisis amplified calls for systemic reform. A medical student who participated in these protests recalled:

During the flash mob protests in February-March 2020, I gave my first public speech about the Emergency Decree and disease control laws, comparing them to international standards. I argued that the decree wasn't really about health—it was about control. I also criticized some doctors who ignored people's suffering. Joining that first flash mob made me realize that all our problems can't be solved individually. Politics is connected to every aspect of society (Samniang, 2025: 112).

Uncertainty as the Structure of Power

These voices illuminate how political uncertainty in Thailand is not simply chaos or instability—it is the structure through which power reproduces itself. Each coup attempts to restore certainty for the elite, but intensifies uncertainty for everyone else. The paradox of control is that it multiplies the very indeterminacy it seeks to eliminate.

The state's selective application of law, the dissolution of opposition parties, and the criminalization of dissent have all deepened citizens' sense of precarious legality. This mirrors the logic of algorithmic governance in platform capitalism: both systems operate through controlled unpredictability. In both

¹ The Khana Ratsadon, or “People's Party,” led the 1932 revolution that ended absolute monarchy and established Thailand's constitutional system. Their commemorative plaque, long embedded in the ground at the Royal Plaza in Bangkok, vanished overnight in 2017 and was replaced by a royalist inscription. No official explanation was ever given. For many Thais, the disappearance was less a mystery than a message.

² Announced by junta leader General Prayuth Chan-ocha shortly after the 2014 coup and made compulsory in schools, the “12 Core Values” prescribed how Thai children should think, feel, and behave — foregrounding loyalty to nation, religion, and monarchy, and deference to authority. Critics saw them as an attempt to manufacture political conformity from childhood. That they apparently did not work is rather the point.

domains, the subjects of power—whether riders or citizens—must adapt to rules that can change without warning.

The Moral Labor of Hope

Yet amid disillusionment, hope persists. Young activists articulate a moral vocabulary of perseverance that transforms uncertainty into ethical commitment. Their laughter, creativity, and refusal to conform express a new affective politics: not revolutionary certainty, but the moral insistence that democracy must be lived even under its suspension.

Kanokrat Lertchoosakul describes what she calls the “white ribbon generation”³ as young people shaped by habits of inquiry and critique that distinguish them from previous generations:

The white ribbon generation has been molded to question, critique, and seek answers about everything and in every dimension. When they are forced to find ways out of their own uncertain futures, they turn to question things that their predecessors might never have dared to—ranging from the deeply entrenched social structures of Thai society to long-held cultural conventions that have been accepted as untouchable truths (Lertchoosakul, 2021: 145).

Lertchoosakul’s insight captures how this generation’s political consciousness is not merely oppositional but epistemological. To question is itself a form of hope—a moral labor performed under conditions of constraint. The act of asking, doubting, and imagining alternatives constitutes a democratic practice in a society where certainty has long been monopolized by the ruling elite.

This perspective encapsulates Thailand’s contemporary political condition: a society in which the elite deploy coups to preserve certainty, while the younger generation insists that uncertainty—if collectively embraced—can itself become a democratic force.

Case 4 – Sacred Entities, Neoliberalism, and Transforming Uncertainty into Opportunity

For Thailand’s middle class, uncertainty does not always signify crisis or limitation. Rather, it often represents the emergence of new possibilities—avenues for transforming risk into opportunity and insecurity into entrepreneurial potential. In times of economic volatility, religious practices and the veneration of sacred entities have become crucial mechanisms for transmuting uncertainty into forms of moral and material capital. During periods of stagnation under military governance, these practices have intensified, reflecting a collective search for metaphysical reassurance amid neoliberal instability (Krajaejun, 2018).

A recent study on the “market of survival” (Kongachapat, 2021) found that as many as 52 million Thais held supernatural or spiritual beliefs and drew on them in everyday decision-making. This phenomenon underscores the centrality of religion as both an affective resource and a market mechanism in contemporary Thailand.

Anthropological scholarship describes this configuration as *prosperity religion* (Kitiarsa, 2012; Jackson, 1999)—a system in which religious symbols, rituals, and sacred figures are reconstituted as

³ The “white ribbon generation” is a term developed by political scientist Kanokrat Lertchoosakul (2021) to describe Thai youth who came of age during and after the red-yellow shirt conflicts of the 2000s. Having grown up watching their parents’ generation bitterly divided by color-coded loyalties, these young people largely rejected both camps — wearing white as a symbol of refusal to take sides in the old terms. Kanokrat argues that this political distance was not apathy but the beginning of a more independent critical consciousness, one that would later fuel the youth uprisings of 2020-2021.

consumable commodities within capitalist economies. Within neoliberal structures, where competition and acceleration define everyday existence, religion becomes a vital technology for managing insecurity. It provides not only emotional stability but also frameworks for action in a world where risk is individualized and institutional safety nets are eroding.

Religion as Entrepreneurial Strategy

Neeranooch Malangpoo's (2024) ethnographic research reveals that over the past decade, growing numbers of middle-class Thais—facing unstable employment, debt, and pandemic-related disruptions—have turned to sacred entities as metaphysical guarantors of success. Among these are small business owners affected by COVID-19, laid-off employees investing severance pay in new ventures, civil servants seeking supplementary income, and young freelancers navigating precarious project-based work.

These devotees engage with uncertainty not as passive believers but as strategic actors. They seek divine protection and prosperity from figures such as *Thao Wessuwan*, *Kru Kai Kaew*, and *Grandfather Sri Suttho of Kham Chanot*,⁴ believing these entities can guide and safeguard their entrepreneurial endeavors. Faith becomes both a moral resource and a practical tool for survival under the pressures of neoliberal competition (Malangpoo, 2024).

The Acceleration of the Sacred

An important characteristic of this new religiosity is speed—what Malangpoo (2024) terms “*instant religion*.” Devotees do not confine themselves to a single deity but worship multiple sacred figures simultaneously. Home altars, once dedicated to a single Buddha image, now feature an eclectic assemblage of gods, spirits, and monks. Temples and privately owned shrines have adapted accordingly, accumulating numerous deities within one site to offer what devotees call “*value visits*”—a single trip yielding multiple blessings. These spaces have become “ecumenical zones,” integrating diverse spiritual traditions within a commodified religious marketplace.

“Instant religion” thus exemplifies how sacred economies internalize the logics of neoliberal temporality. Speed becomes a moral and spiritual value in itself—proof that sacred power must yield tangible results quickly. The acceleration of religious practice—through fast travel to multiple shrines, mass production of amulets, and goal-oriented rituals—transforms faith into an affective technology for managing uncertainty. Within this temporal regime, the sacred is not antithetical to capitalism but deeply intertwined with it, offering believers a sense of agency amid the volatility of market life.

This dynamic resonates with Beckert's (2016) concept of *imagined futures*, where economic action is propelled by projections of possibility rather than certainty. The middle-class devotees who seek divine assistance for business success, career stability, or speculative investment embody precisely this logic of imagination. They navigate an unpredictable economy by envisioning alternative futures that may—or may not—materialize, investing emotionally and spiritually in the hope of prosperity. Similarly,

⁴ The three figures represent Thailand's characteristically syncretic spirit world. Thao Wessuwan is a guardian deity drawn from Buddhist-Brahmanist tradition, regarded as lord of wealth and protector against misfortune, whose following surged during the economic anxieties of the late 2010s. Kru Kai Kaew is a spirit teacher associated with knowledge and professional success, propitiated by those in competitive or precarious occupations seeking guidance and advantage. Grandfather Sri Suttho presides over Kham Chanot, a sacred forested island in Udon Thani believed in local tradition to be an entrance to the Naga underworld kingdom, and has become one of the most visited wealth-and-luck shrines in contemporary Thailand. Together they illustrate how devotional practice in Thailand draws fluidly across Theravada, Brahmanist, and animist traditions.

their attachment to sacred efficacy reflects Berlant's (2011) notion of *cruel optimism*: the affective endurance of hope that sustains individuals even when structures of opportunity remain exploitative or exclusionary.

In this sense, sacred veneration operates as both a coping mechanism and a moral economy. It allows individuals to transform structural uncertainty into emotional investment, merging faith with entrepreneurial aspiration. Rather than simply reproducing neoliberal precarity, these practices reveal how uncertainty is affectively inhabited and imaginatively repurposed as a field of possibility—one where divine intercession and human agency become co-constitutive forces in the pursuit of security and success.

Uncertainty and Multiple Livelihoods

The middle-class devotees participating in this “fast faith” economy share one defining condition: multiplicity. Few rely on a single occupation or income source. Many juggle multiple jobs or enterprises, treating spiritual engagement as part of their portfolio of survival. One restaurant owner, for instance, also works as an insurance agent for three companies and trades in the stock market. A hair salon owner supplements her income by selling beauty products online. Many of the young freelance media workers described their employment as *project-based and unpredictable*, dependent on professional networks that assemble temporarily and dissolve once tasks are completed. Work opportunities often arise sporadically—sometimes in clusters, sometimes after long pauses—so they feel compelled to accept every offer that comes their way. This rhythm of irregular, uncertain employment captures the volatility of contemporary creative labor, where flexibility becomes both necessity and burden. In this environment, faith provides psychological grounding and a moral sense of balance amid continuous economic instability. Even civil servants—often perceived as enjoying secure employment—experience a distinct kind of bureaucratic uncertainty. One government employee described the moral precarity of hierarchy:

Working in government has its own kind of suffering. Every document we sign carries risk—if something goes wrong, we are blamed. Sometimes we see things that are clearly wrong, but we can't object because we are lower in rank. If conflict arises, we get dragged in. And if someone wants to sabotage us, they can always file a complaint (Malangpoo, 2024: 81).

This testimony illustrates how neoliberal uncertainty penetrates even the state apparatus, eroding distinctions between public stability and private risk. Under such conditions, religion serves as both protection and empowerment—a means to endure what cannot be predicted or controlled.

Speed as the Measure of the Sacred

In the contemporary Thai religious economy, speed has itself become a measure of efficacy. Sacred power is expected to deliver results quickly—*prompt miracles* as evidence of divine favor. The proliferation of mass-produced amulets, express rituals, and live-streamed blessings reflects this new temporality of the sacred. Acceleration becomes a spiritual value, mirroring the temporal logic of capitalism. As one beauty salon owner put it succinctly: “I do only ten percent of the work—the gods do the other ninety” (Malangpoo, 2024: 137).

Her statement encapsulates the fusion of devotion and entrepreneurship that defines middle-class religiosity in contemporary Thailand. Faith, like business, operates on return and performance. The divine becomes a partner in enterprise, translating uncertainty into moral confidence and market opportunity.

Religion as Technology of Uncertainty

In this context, sacred entities and prosperity rituals function as what might be called technologies of uncertainty—cultural mechanisms that channel insecurity into action. Rather than eliminating uncertainty, they domesticate it, giving it form, rhythm, and meaning. Through faith, the middle class transforms volatility into a field of spiritual and economic experimentation.

The religious economy of the sacred thus parallels the digital economy of platforms: both promise agency within systems that thrive on precarity. In both domains, individuals internalize risk as a condition of self-making. But whereas algorithms offer calculative control, sacred entities offer moral assurance—an alternative mode of navigating the same world of unpredictable fortunes.

Ultimately, Thailand's contemporary prosperity religion reveals not the decline of faith but its transformation into a flexible moral economy—one that redefines success, merit, and uncertainty itself under neoliberalism.

Case 5 – Forest Fires, Smoke Haze, and the Politics of Managing Uncertainty

The phenomenon of forest fires and smoke haze in Chiang Mai province represents one of the most multifaceted manifestations of environmental uncertainty. While the controlled use of fire in managing deciduous and mixed-deciduous forests, as well as in traditional agricultural systems such as rotational farming, has long been practiced by forest communities and forestry professionals, absolute fire prohibition policies during dry seasons have paradoxically resulted in unregulated and widespread illegal burning. Moreover, Chiang Mai's distinctive basin topography has transformed smoke pollution from forest fires into an acute public health concern with enduring social impacts.

The phenomenon of forest fires in Chiang Mai must also be understood within broader Anthropocene debates, where human–nonhuman entanglements render environmental uncertainty both inevitable and uncontrollable. As Anna Tsing (2015) reminds us, disturbance and precarity are not merely symptoms of crisis but constitutive of new ecological relations. Similarly, Latour (2017) critiques the modernist separation of nature from politics, suggesting that governance mechanisms—such as haze management systems—embody the residual impulse to domesticate the Earth's instability through technical control rather than embracing its hybrid, unpredictable character. Grove (2018) extends this argument by conceptualizing uncertainty as a productive condition of planetary governance, wherein states seek to secure life by translating ecological volatility into calculable risks. Chiang Mai's hotspot-counting and *FireD*-permitting system⁵ exemplify this translation: a technocratic attempt to render environmental indeterminacy measurable, while in practice generating new uncertainties through bureaucratic and technological mediation.

In 2022, Chiang Mai implemented a paradigmatic shift in forest fire management—transitioning from absolute fire prohibition to allowing citizens and government agencies to request permits for controlled burning under the *FireD* regulatory system. This system employs advanced technology to forecast air dispersion indices and determine environmentally appropriate windows for burning. Satellite

⁵ FireD is a mobile application and decision-support system introduced by Chiang Mai province in 2021, replacing an earlier blanket no-burn policy with a permit-based approach to controlled burning. Operating under the "Chiang Mai Command Centre for Wildfires and PM2.5 Prevention," the system uses scientific consensus to set daily allowable hotspot quotas and authorize burns only under optimal weather conditions. Farmers submit burn requests through the app, and local officials — convening weekly in a provincial "War Room" — accept or reject them based on real-time conditions; FireD data also informs decisions on emergency firefighting deployment.

technology was also introduced to detect fire “hotspots,” with the number of detected hotspots becoming a key performance indicator for evaluating provincial fire management effectiveness.

That year, relatively abundant rainfall and summer storms mitigated the severity of smoke haze compared with previous cycles. The number of days exceeding 50 micrograms of PM_{2.5} per cubic meter dropped from 160 in 2021 to 90 in 2022, while hotspots decreased from 8,066 to 2,572 (Chiang Mai Provincial Office of Natural Resources and Environment, 2023). Yet, this quantitative management of uncertainty—reducing complex social-ecological processes to satellite-derived data—produced new uncertainties tied to technological reliability and transboundary environmental dynamics beyond provincial control.

Although Chiang Mai’s 2022 participatory permit system marked a move toward more decentralized governance, by 2025 the province had reverted to absolute burning bans in alignment with Ministry of Interior directives. This policy oscillation exemplifies the tension between technocratic environmental management and centralized decision making. The focus on numerical hotspot control revealed multiple challenges, including discrepancies between provincial and local data due to overlapping mapping references, weak correlations between hotspot counts and actual burned areas, and the potential for data manipulation.

Some farmers learned to evade detection by timing burns outside satellite transit hours—typically after 3:00 p.m. Using provincial boundaries as the basis for hotspot measurement also reflected a bureaucratic mindset that ignored ecological realities: fire and haze transcend administrative territories. Even if Chiang Mai succeeded in controlling its own hotspot numbers, transboundary burning from commercial maize cultivation zones in northern Myanmar and Laos continued to affect northern Thailand, as seen during the severe haze episode of 2024—underscoring the limits of domestic control and the absence of effective regional cooperation frameworks.

Attempts to govern environmental uncertainty through administrative metrics not only failed to address the transboundary nature of forest fires but also disrupted local ecological practices. For forest-dependent communities, fire management has long relied on prescribed burning and firebreak construction—methods integral to local forest stewardship in northern Thailand. Provincial bans on burning, however, introduced new uncertainties. As one villager explained, prohibitions against burning without consultation with local villagers conflicted with traditional knowledge systems:

When the state banned burning in March, communities shifted to February. When officials later extended the ban to February, we stopped again. After two years without burning, fuel built up, and in the third year, the fires were catastrophic—large trees died. Proper fire management means burning gradually. The big fires that kill trees happen because of total bans. That’s why we burn early—to prevent worse destruction (Vaddhanaphuti, 2024: 115).

Villagers also highlighted selective enforcement in fire policies—some groups received exemptions, while others, especially ethnic communities practicing rotational farming, were penalized. This uneven treatment fostered fear and uncertainty. A Karen farmer explained:

Burning in our fields isn’t the same as burning forest. Officials say avoid burning after 3 p.m., but that’s not always possible. People are afraid of the authorities. The state closes off our options, making things worse. Officials want us to schedule burns on a government timetable, but we can’t. We choose days based on weather—if it looks like rain, we burn before the soil gets too damp (Vaddhanaphuti, 2024: 119).

The *FireD* permit system further compounded uncertainty. Villagers found the approval process slow and unresponsive to local needs. One participant described the frustration:

Sometimes, three days pass and there's still no approval. We've prepared everything, but can't start. I ask the district admin who manages *FireD* to postpone the date, but can't reach them directly. They can't reach others either, so everything gets delayed. In the end, we just burn before permission arrives (Vaddhanaphuti, 2024: 127).

These accounts reveal deep epistemological conflicts between state-sanctioned knowledge and local fire ecologies. As another informant reflected:

Officials say if you burn twice, you must apply for *FireD* twice. But the second burn isn't burning—it's just gathering unburned wood and ash to return nutrients to the soil. Officials don't see the difference. They just say: "You used fire." That's the end of it. It's a clash between dominant and suppressed knowledge—between state control and community practice. Local people want dignity as rightful stewards of their land, but the state takes that away. When droughts, floods, or haze occur, they blame the hill people (Vaddhanaphuti, 2024: 122).

Ultimately, the monopolization of fire-use authorization by bureaucratic institutions—and the slow, opaque approval process—has entrenched rather than reduced uncertainty. It exemplifies the limits of technocratic governance that privileges centralized control over ecological understanding, silencing the situated expertise of local communities who have long lived with, and managed, uncertainty as a condition of life.

Discussion: Theorizing Uncertainty in the Mekong Region

Uncertainty has long been treated as a temporary disruption—an interruption to social order to be managed, mitigated, or eliminated through rational planning. Yet the ethnographic cases presented in this article challenge this assumption. In contemporary Thailand, and more broadly across the Mekong region, uncertainty is not an episodic crisis but an enduring structure of life—a condition through which power, morality, and imagination circulate.

Theoretically, this article draws from and extends Amoore's (2020) notion of *technologies of uncertainty*, Berlant's (2011) concept of *cruel optimism*, and Beckett's (2016) idea of *imagined futures*. Across the cases, we see how uncertainty is manufactured, circulated, and inhabited—not merely as a by-product of modernity, but as a constitutive logic of neoliberal governance and post-authoritarian statecraft. In this sense, uncertainty becomes both an effect of systemic asymmetry and a generative domain of social possibility.

In the Mekong context, uncertainty has distinct historical trajectories. The region's developmental transformations—marked by rapid digitalization, resource extraction, political militarization, and the commodification of belief—produce overlapping modalities of uncertainty that entangle economic, political, and moral life. The cases examined here illuminate the productive paradox of uncertainty: it is at once a mechanism of control and a catalyst for agency.

Rather than reducing uncertainty to risk—a quantifiable and insurable probability—this article foregrounds its affective, ethical, and relational dimensions. It asks: how do people live with and through

uncertainty? What social forms, moral vocabularies, and affective dispositions emerge from this condition? The answers, as the ethnographic narratives reveal, are multiple and often contradictory: uncertainty disciplines and enables, fragments and connects, exhausts and animates.

Uncertainty as Governance

Across the political and economic domains, uncertainty functions as a deliberate technology of governance. In the digital platform economy, algorithms operate as opaque infrastructures of control, promising flexibility while rendering workers perpetually vulnerable to invisible evaluation metrics. Autonomy is simulated through constant recalibration—an illusion sustained by algorithmic abstraction. As Amoore (2020) observes, algorithmic systems produce uncertainty as a calculative tool, transforming human contingency into computational profit.

Similarly, in the realm of agrarian transformation, the Eastern Economic Corridor's expansion exemplifies how uncertainty is weaponized to displace and reconfigure rural populations. Land titling reforms, speculative markets, and bureaucratic opacity transform land into a fluid asset class, eroding customary security and embedding farmers within volatile circuits of value. Here, uncertainty is not a market failure but a market strategy—central to the process of enclosure. Yet, the resilience of smallholders and organic farming networks underscores an alternative logic: the reappropriation of uncertainty as collective endurance, where ecological care and local moral economies offer fragile but meaningful forms of stability.

Political uncertainty, meanwhile, is sustained through the state's own recursive cycles of rupture. Thailand's history of coups, constitutional suspensions, and protest movements reveals a paradox: uncertainty is both the state's enemy and its tool. As McCargo (2005) and Mérieau (2016) suggest, the Thai state operates through deep-state constitutionalism—a regime that institutionalizes instability to preserve elite dominance. The coup thus functions as a ritual of restoration, producing controlled disorder to reaffirm hierarchical order. Yet, the emergence of youth-led movements, and the re-politicization of public space through digital and street protests have redefined uncertainty as a moral terrain. Activists transform the instability of democracy into a form of ethical commitment—the *moral labor of hope*.

Uncertainty as Moral Economy

Uncertainty also permeates the moral and affective economies of everyday life. The rise of prosperity religion and the cult of sacred entities exemplify how the middle class reconfigures uncertainty into opportunity. In the neoliberal order, success and failure are individualized moral projects; sacred economies of merit and protection supplement the insufficiencies of the market.

"Instant religion," with its accelerated rituals, multiple deities, and commodified symbols, embodies a spiritual temporal economy aligned with the logic of speed and productivity. As Malangpoo (2024) and Kitiarsa (2012) note, religious practice increasingly mirrors consumer capitalism—ritual efficacy is measured by immediacy, and sacred power is expected to deliver tangible returns. The informant who remarks, "I do ten percent of the work; the gods do ninety," encapsulates the intimate fusion of faith and finance that underlies contemporary moral economies of risk.

Yet these practices are not mere escapism. They constitute pragmatic ethics through which individuals navigate uncertainty with agency, transforming vulnerability into aspiration. Faith, in this sense, becomes a technology of affective resilience—an embodied practice for managing risk in an

unpredictable economy. Uncertainty here is moralized and spiritualized, converted into a terrain for hope, productivity, and meaning.

Uncertainty as Epistemic Contestation

The case of forest fire governance illustrates the epistemological dimension of uncertainty—how it is produced through competing regimes of knowledge. The state’s reliance on quantitative indicators and technocratic systems such as the *FireD* program represents an attempt to domesticate uncertainty through metrics. Yet this project of control inadvertently generates new uncertainties by marginalizing local ecological knowledge.

The testimonies of villagers and forest communities reveal the clash between state-defined “rational” management and community-based practices of living with fire. For these communities, controlled burning is not a reckless act but an ecological technique embedded in local cosmologies and long-term forest stewardship. The bureaucratic insistence on permits, timetables, and satellite monitoring produces procedural delays and moral frustration—an epistemic violence that devalues indigenous expertise.

In this sense, environmental governance mirrors the political and economic cases: uncertainty is not eradicated but displaced—from ecological processes to administrative systems. The state’s monopoly over fire authorization reproduces precarity and undermines trust, positioning uncertainty as both a policy failure and a political instrument.

Uncertainty in Southeast Asian Context

Across Southeast Asia, uncertainty operates through interconnected regimes of labor, environment, and development, but its configurations vary across national contexts. In Indonesia, Ford and Honan (2019) show how gig-economy workers endure precarity through informal reciprocity networks, transforming flexibility into a collective survival strategy rather than an individual privilege. Gellert (2019) similarly demonstrates how extractive development produces overlapping economic and ecological uncertainties, fusing neoliberal accumulation with state developmentalism. Forsyth (2014) observes that haze management across Indonesia and Malaysia reflects distributed governance, where uncertainty is normalized through multisectoral coordination rather than resolved. By contrast, Thailand’s uncertainties are shaped by algorithmic governance, centralized bureaucracy, and moral economies of faith—domains where control and contingency intertwine. Taken together, these regional comparisons reveal that uncertainty is not an exception to governance but its organizing principle: a condition that sustains state authority while compelling new social, moral, and affective strategies for navigating precarity.

Conclusion: Living with Uncertainty

This article has argued that uncertainty in Thailand is not a transient crisis to be solved, but a structural condition that shapes life under late capitalism and post-authoritarian governance. It is both a product and a practice—a domain where power is exercised and contested, and where people continually reconfigure meaning.

In its varied manifestations—algorithmic opacity, land dispossession, political coups, prosperity religion, and environmental control—uncertainty functions as an infrastructure of governance. Yet, as the

ethnographic evidence shows, it also serves as a resource for moral and practical invention. People do not merely endure uncertainty; they work with it, through it, and sometimes against it, transforming instability into strategies of survival, aspiration, and ethical engagement.

This reorientation—from uncertainty as deficit to uncertainty as relational process—invites a broader reflection on the Mekong region’s social transformations. Here, uncertainty is not an exception to order but its very medium: a dynamic field where the boundaries between control and improvisation, domination and hope, continually blur. To study uncertainty ethnographically, therefore, is to study the everyday production of the possible.

In conclusion, the politics of uncertainty in Thailand reveal the paradox of contemporary governance: the more institutions seek to impose stability, the more fragile and unpredictable the social world becomes. Yet, within that fragility lies the potential for renewal. The capacity to inhabit uncertainty—to interpret, adapt, and reimagine it—is not a failure of development or democracy, but a testament to the resilience and creativity of ordinary people. In this sense, uncertainty is not merely endured; it is lived as a practice of becoming.

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