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Never Settled: Community, Land, and the Politics of the Urban Commons in Bangkok

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Never Settled: Community, Land, and the Politics of the Urban Commons in Bangkok

By

Hayden Shelby

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in

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In the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge

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ABSTRACT

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Doctor of Philosophy in City and Regional Planning
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University of California, Berkeley

Charisma Acey, Chair

Since its inception in 2005, Thailand's *Baan Mankong* ("Secure Housing") policy has garnered international acclaim for its success in supplying affordable housing to communities throughout the country's urban areas. The program has been hailed as both empowering and effective because of its communal land tenure arrangements, innovative financial model, and participatory processes, which emphasize the role of networks of communities in guiding residents through the upgrading process. Though these community networks have received a great deal of attention and praise, researchers have too often spoken of them as a monolith. Few scholars have taken seriously the differences that exist between networks and the political implications of those differences. In this dissertation, I trace the trajectories of the community networks involved in *Baan Mankong* by looking not just at their immediate creations, but by stepping back to examine how they have formed as a result of and alongside evolutions in the concept of community itself. To do this, I begin with the Thai word for community—*chumchon*—and trace the evolution of the term and concept through seven decades of government programs, social movements, intellectual traditions. I then analyze how two prominent community networks involved in *Baan Mankong* result from these various influences and how their current political motives and institutional arrangements impact the communities they work with. This analysis points to the different possible political potentials of community in the planning context and how the role of communities with respect to policies can change when social programs grow in size and popularity.

In Chapter 1, I introduce the networks under study and discuss their significance with respect to the *Baan Mankong* policy. I then review several bodies of literature relevant to the study of *Baan Mankong* and similar policies. Finally, I discuss the methods and theoretical frameworks I employ in this investigation.

In the Chapter 2, I look to the era in which the word *chumchon* originated, when rural villages became the focus of both the mobilizations of the Communist Party of the Thailand and the counterinsurgency efforts of the Thai government and western powers. I weave together many social and political trends to understand how *chumchon* made its way into the lexicons, imaginations, and practices of opposing political movements.

In Chapter 3, I then demonstrate how, over the course of the latter half of the twentieth century, *chumchon* came to be applied not only to rural villages, but also to a particularly type of urban settlement, what are often called "slums." Just as was the case in the era of the insurgency, in the urban context *chumchon* became the focus of both government programs and popular mobilizations against the state. These efforts to manage and utilize *chumchon* to serve different political interests were carried out in part by members of *chumchon* themselves, but they were also organized by a growing number of professionals, from government employees to organizers employed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Influenced by the global spread of practices of community development and community organizing, as well as lessons from the time of the insurgency, these professionals forged a number of common practices, though often in service of very different ideologies and political goals. It was out of this complex field of ideas, practices, and new professions, that slum-based community networks and community-based urban housing policies emerged. The most well-known among these is the *Baan Mankong* policy and the community networks associated with it.

In the second half of the dissertation, I turn to the present era, looking at these networks and their work on two different scales. First, In Chapter 4 I examine the networks themselves, describing their organizational structures, rhetorics, and ways of operating on the ground. In doing so, I look at the networks from both a comparative and a relational perspective. This means that I first analyze the similarities and differences of the individual organizations before pulling back to look at how those similarities and differences function in the larger contexts of the *Baan Mankong* policy and urban politics more broadly. This wider focus shows how the two approaches have both, in their own way, been integral to sustaining *Baan Mankong* over the past 15 years.

Following this examination of the networks themselves, in Chapter 5 I zoom in to the level of the community, looking at how the networks affect the social, political, and material formations of *chumchon.* Through an analysis of four *chumchon* case studies and employing the framework of the urban commons, I discuss how communities' relationships with other organizations and larger political movements influence how they manage their collective ownership of land and resources. This small-scale examination of *chumchon* brings to light the everyday, human impacts of the *Baan Mankong* policy. It also highlights the lived reality of holding land and debt in common, both the benefits and the hardships. Furthermore, because the case studies represent communities that belong to different networks *and* began their projects at different points in time, I am able to trace how the process of doing *Baan Mankong* has changed as the program has "gone to scale" and various government entities have recognized the potential benefits to the state of having poor populations self-manage and take responsibility for urban development. I conclude that the process of creating the collective land and resources entailed in many newer *Baan Mankong* projects, far from being a political project of "commoning," are more accurately described as "being commoned."

In Chapter 6, I conclude by reflecting on what it means for a policy to be a success and the many unintended consequences of success. *Baan Mankong*'s declared success has resulted in its growth and expansion across Thailand. As the program model is replicated across the urban landscape, it reproduces particular physical forms, lifestyles, and modes of being a community. This replication carries with it a risk of producing de-politicized forms of community that function primarily as a means of managing poor populations. However, within the increasingly rigid structures of the established policy, as one network demonstrates, the prospect of using community as a base of political mobilization still exists. These dual possibilities of

community—management versus mobilization—serve as both inspiration and caution for planners seeking to learn from best practices and replicate programs deemed successful.

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Preface

This dissertation makes great use of the Thai language throughout. From the first chapters' analysis of the evolution of the word *chumchon* to quotations from key informants to excerpts by Thai scholars, I rely on forms of translation and transliteration to speak across the different languages and contexts. Creating this kind of dialogue is a messy art, and I make no claims to having done it "correctly." However, I have tried to be as transparent as possible in my efforts. This preface is an explanation and extension of this ethos of transparency.

I have employed two main methods of incorporating Thai into this dissertation. Within the main text, I include italicized transliterations of many Thai terms used by informants. A list of many of these words and their translations can be found in Appendix B. Over the ten years I have been learning Thai, I have been exposed to a number of different systems of Thai transliterations. Representing Thai to English speakers is notoriously difficult, and every system has its pros and cons. Some authors employ some version of the International Phonetic Alphabet to capture the greatest possible variation of sounds. However, this requires that the readers know this alternative alphabet. I suspect as many of my readers are literate in Thai as know the IPA. I have therefore opted for a simpler version that employs only English characters. Reluctantly, I am mostly adhering to the Royal Thai General System of Transcription (RTGS). I say reluctantly because the system has a number of shortcomings. First, it cannot account for vowel length and tone. Second, it employs representations of some sounds that are counterintuitive to the English reader. The most glaring example of this is in the case of aspirated consonants, which use an accompanying *–h* to distinguish them from their unaspirated counterparts. Thus, *ph* and *th* make the sounds at the beginning of "pad," and "tab," respectively, rather than "phone" or "thatch." This system has led many English-speaking acquaintances to recall to me with great fondness their vacations to Fuket in which they visited the island of Koh Fi Fi. However, using this imperfect system allows one to make the distinction between these aspirated sounds and their unaspirated counterparts, symbolized by the lone *p* and *t,* which make sounds similar to those at the end of "lap" and "at." While I adhere to this and most other conventions of the RTGS, I depart in a few ways. First, I use what I consider to be a more accurate phonetic spelling of certain vowels, including the อึ, ือ, and เือ, for which I use *–eu* and *–eua* instead of simply *–u* and *–ua.* I also replicate common spellings of well-known proper names that depart from this system, including that of the policy at hand, *Baan Mankong*. For Thai scholars cited who have their own recorded preferences for spelling their full Thai names, I have adhered to their preferences. I also follow the academic convention of citing Thai authors by their first names in the text and listing them first name first in the bibliography.

On that note, all Thai people whose full names are used are public figures. People for whom I use only nicknames (beginning with the titles "Pi" or "Khun") are not public figures and have not given me permission to use their names, so I have given them pseudonyms. This brings me to a final departure from the RTGS. For the nicknames of informants who are older or more senior than I am, I spell their titular appellation *Pi* instead of the *Phi*. I first learned Thai through the Benjawan Poomsan-Becker system of transliteration that spells the word this way. It is how I have always written the word, how I wrote their titles in my fieldnotes, and how I think of them. The title conveys respect, and I cannot bear the thought that readers might accidentally pronounce their names (even as pseudonyms) with a *Fi* in front.

The second way in which I represent Thai in this dissertation is applied only to longer phrases and quotes. For these, I use footnotes to include the translation in Thai characters. I do

this under the assumption that most people who are capable of comprehending anything of this length can most likely read Thai text and will find it easier to read the Thai script rather than a lengthy transliteration.

Finally, a note on how I went about learning and translating all of this language is in order. My own training in Thai began in 2009 when I was Peace Corps volunteer in a rural village in the southern province of Surat Thani for two years. Over the past ten years, I have been tutored by over a dozen formal language teachers and been corrected and coached by perhaps a hundred more informally. I am grateful to all of them, for as much as they have taught me the Thai language, they have also taught me something even more key to carrying out this research—humility. While I take great pride in my Thai abilities, I am not, nor will I ever be, a native speaker. There were numerous moments during fieldwork when I got lost in rapid exchanges, doubted my comprehension, or thought I understood something only to later realize I had gotten it completely wrong. Because of this, I made every effort in the field to check my understanding as I went. The most immediate version of this took the form of whispered paraphrases with friends and coworkers during meetings, often followed by more in-depth debriefings during long car rides through Bangkok traffic on the way home. During these exchanges, collaborators and I sorted out the meanings of more than individual words, as they inevitably offered their own readings of what was going on. In this way, the immediate necessity of understanding language created an opportunity for first-line analysis. As a result of these back-and-forths, my own interpretations are indelibly melded with those of the people who are the subjects of this research, and I believe the research is all the richer for it.

On a broader level, I checked my understanding by presenting preliminary findings to the three main organizations involved in this research—the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI), the National Union of Low-Income Community Organizations (NULICO), and the Four Regions Slum Network (FRSN)—to get their feedback on my interpretations, which mostly confirmed what I had understood. I also took advantage of a handful of colleagues and academic mentors who speak English, running my interpretations and translations by them to ensure accuracy to the extent possible.

Of course, "accuracy" is often impossible. Many sticky words and phrases have caused me a great deal of consternation over the course of fieldwork. "Empowerment" is a prime example. The English literature on *Baan Mankong* and similar programs is rife with it. It is used frequently by Thais who speak English, and everyone seems to agree that the word's meaning can be translated to the Thai context. However, no one can agree on exactly how to do it. Some simply use a Thai-ified pronunciation of the English word. Others say *kan hai amnat kap-*. Still others believe that this suggests too much agency on the part of a "giver" of power and opt for *kan sang amnat hai kap-,* which implies a more collaborative process of "building" power with others. Many more use multiple possible translations, seemingly interchangeably. From my vantage point, it seems that those who use these translations in Thai are nearly always people who also speak English and are referencing the English word, either implicitly or explicitly. I do not believe most non-English speakers use Thai words or phrases that would clearly be translated as "empowerment" in the sense it is used in English. I have therefore used only the English word in this dissertation. This is just one example among many instances in which I have had to make decisions as to when and how to translate across the two languages.

All of this being said, my translations are not the final word (pun intended) in this conversation. As this dissertation demonstrates, defining terms is a political process. The meanings of words and how they are translated can have profound consequences for those to

whom they are applied. I anticipate that some of the ways I use language will be called into question or spark debate. I look forward to the insights such exchanges may produce.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation marks both and end and a beginning. It is the end of five years of concentrated, nearly single-minded, work on a relatively narrow topic under the guidance of my teachers at Berkeley. However, it is also the start of a larger academic career and in many ways, a whole new phase of life. As I write this, I am expecting my first child and preparing to move across an ocean to begin a new position, where I will have the same title as many of my current mentors. The past five years have prepared me to take on these new challenges, and the people who have seen me through them have all played a role pointing me toward the future in one way or another.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my chair, Charisma Acey, who has given me invaluable advice for the past eight years, through three degrees at two universities. Charisma has provided academic guidance, but even more importantly, she has shown me how to navigate an often daunting academic system and told me to trust my gut in key moments. I am so grateful for the hours we have spent in her or over coffee, envisioning the future and strategizing about next moves.

I am equally thankful to have had the mentorship of a diverse committee. Carolina Reid has been a careful reader of my work and a huge source of moral support. She has also shown me what excellence in the classroom looks like, which I will take with me on this next step of my journey. Teresa Caldeira has taught me to always question my assumptions and premises. Because of her, I am not afraid to start back at the beginning, no matter how frustrating it may be. Penny Edwards has helped me to frame my work to be in conversation with the important regional issues of Southeast Asian studies. This both prepared me to focus narrowly on Thailand and exposed me to the many ways in which my work is in conversation with other areas of the region.

One of the great privileges of being at Berkeley is being surrounded by passionate and insightful peers. Classwork, conferences, and working groups have pushed me to think beyond the boundaries of my discipline. Within Wurster Hall, The Ph.D. room has been an endless source of both ideas and commiseration. I am so appreciative of the input of writing groups and readers, not to mention the many unscheduled side conversations, which have often led me in unexpected directions.

In the field, I was fortunate to overlap with a handful of other researchers whose company kept me afloat during a frequently lonely process. To Anjali, Bronwyn, Rebecca, Maryann, and especially Trude, I am so thankful to have had you to lean on during the most difficult parts of this process. Though he was not in the field with me, I also thank Eli Elinoff for his early advice, which paved the way for this whole project.

Of course, this entire undertaking would not have been possible were it not for the openness and generosity of so many people in Thailand. To Pi Tui, Pi Jay, both Pi Nuis (high and low tone), Pi Noy, Pi Dong, Pi Nong, Pi Toy, Pi Mam, Pi Jam, Jeff, both Pi Liams, and many, many others at the Four Regions Slum Network and Human Settlement Foundation, I will never be able to repay you for the time and insights you have provided. To the staff and leadership at CODI, including Pi Khiao, Pi Kan, Pi Jiap, Pi Ti, Off, Joy, Lapat, and too many others to name, I thank you for taking me along on many visits and catching me up when I fell behind. In NULICO, Pi Ang, Pi Wao, Mae Nong, and Mae Dao, your dedication has been an inspiration. I am also indebted to a number of Thai scholars, especially Boonlert Visetpricha and Pitch Pongsawat, who have pointed me toward relevant Thai literature and provided useful feedback on preliminary analyses.

I was fortunate to receive support from a number of funders over the three years of preliminary research and dissertation fieldwork that led to this dissertation. I thank the Fulbright IIE U.S. Student Program, in conjunction with Kittisak Jermsittiparsert of Rangsit University and the Political Science Association of Kasetsart University, for their support. In addition, the Social Science Research Council International Dissertation Research Fellowship, the Chulalongkorn University ENITS fellowship, the Davis Peace Prize, and the Berkeley Law School Human Rights Center Human Rights Fellowship all contributed funds at various points. Without such generous financial support, this project would not have been possible.

Finally, I thank my family, whose constant presence through these five years of extreme ups and downs have made all of this possible. It hasn't been easy. Life happens alongside intellectual growth during a Ph.D. My mom, Barb, has been on the receiving end of too many flustered and frantic phone calls to count, but somehow she always finds the right thing to say to calm me down. My family keeps me firmly rooted in so many ways, especially by providing a solid Ohio home base from which to conduct the nomadic life I have led for the past fifteen years. It has been wild a ride. I can't promise it will get any tamer, but at least I will finally have a wall to hang those diplomas on.

Curriculum Vitae

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Education

Ph.D	**University of California, Berkeley** City and Regional Planning *Dissertation: "Never Settled: Community, Land, and the Politics of the Urban Commons in Bangkok"* Chair: Charisma Acey Committee: Carolina Reid, Teresa Caldeira, Penny Edwards	2019
	The Ohio State University	2014
M.C.R.P.	City and Regional Planning	
M.A.	Geography (Human Geography and GIS) *Thesis: "Would They Stay or Would They Go? Relationships, Community, and Housing Preferences in Linden"* Advisor: Rachel Kleit	
B.A.	**Cornell University** Economics (Concentration in International Relations)	2007

Awards and Honors

2018 **Michael B. Teitz Fellowship**, Department of City and Regional Planning, UC Berkeley

2017-2018 **Social Science Research Council International Dissertation Research Fellowship** for the project *Creating Community: "Secure Housing" and Social Order in Thailand*

2017-2018 **Fulbright IIE U.S. Student Program** Open Study/Research Award, Thailand

2017-2018 **Fulbright-Hays DDRA Fellowship** (declined)

2017-2018 **Empowering Network for International Thai Studies (ENITS) Dissertation Fellowship**, Institute of Thai Studies, Chulalongkorn University

2017 **Foreign Language and Area Studies Summer Fellow**, Thai Language

2016 **Mesa Refuge Human Rights Writing Fellow**

2016 **Davis Prize for Peace**, a grant to fund the project "Filming the Future Thai Youth Conference" in conjunction with the Four Regions Slum Network ($10,000)

2016 **Teaching Effectiveness Award**, sponsored by the GSI Teaching and Resource Center

2015-2016 **Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award**, sponsored by the GSI Teaching and Resource Center

2015-2016 **Foreign Language and Areas Studies Fellowship Academic Year**, Thai Language and Southeast Asian Studies

2015 **Human Rights Summer Fellowship**, Human Rights Center, Berkeley School of Law

2014-2015 **Joe Lurie Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Gateway Fellowship**, International House, Berkeley

2012 **Outstanding First Year Graduate Student in City and Regional Planning**, Knowlton School of Architecture, Ohio State University

Peer-Reviewed Publications

Shelby, Hayden. 2017. "Why Place Really Matters: A Qualitative Approach to Housing Preferences and Neighborhood Effects." *Housing Policy Debate* 27(4): 547-569.

Shelby, Hayden. 2017. "The Right to Remain in the City: How One Community Has Used Legal Rights and Rights Talk to Stay Put in Bangkok." *Berkeley Planning Journal* 29: 129-151.

Unpublished Academic Papers

Shelby, Hayden. 2014. *Would They Stay or Would They Go? Relationships, Community, and Housing Preferences in Linden* (Master's Thesis). The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

Professional Reports

Shelby, Hayden. 2012. *2011 Ohio's KIDS COUNT Data Book.* Columbus, OH: Children's Defense Fund-OH, 2012. http://www.cdfohio.org/research-library/documents/resources/2011-kids-count.pdf.

Fernandez, Frank, Matthew Martin, Hayden Shelby, and Yumi Choi. 2013. *The Geography of Opportunity in Austin and How It Is Changing,* http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/my-product/austi/.

Rose, Kalima, Jason Reece, Jillian Ollinger, and Hayden Shelby. *Development without Displacement.* Policy Brief, PolicyLink.org, 2014.

Rose, Kalima, Jason Reece, Jillian Ollinger, Christy Rogers, and Hayden Shelby. 2014. *Using the FHEA to Increase Equity through Informed LIHTC Allocation.* Policy Brief, PolicyLink.org.

Peer-Reviewed Conferences

2019 "A Climate of Speculation: Sustainability Discourses and the Reshaping of Bangkok," Annual Conference of the Urban Affairs Association, Los Angeles, CA

2018 "Commoning or Being Commoned: Community Rhetoric and the Actual Practices of Collective Housing in Bangkok," Annual Conference of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, Buffalo, New York.

2018 Panelist, "ACSP-AESOP Transatlantic Session: After Hardin," Annual Conference of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, Buffalo, New York.

2018 "Participatory Planning or Participatory Democracy? The Networks and Narratives of Thailand's *Baan Mankong* Slum Upgrading Program" at the *Participate!* conference, University of Illinois, Chicago.

2017 "The Right to Remain in the City" Presented at the 2017 Annual Conference of the Urban Affairs Association, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

2016 "Uneasy Alliances and Conspicuous Silences: Networks, Bureaucrats, and the Future of 'Secure Housing' in Thailand" Presented at the 2016 Annual Conference of the Urban Affairs Association, San Diego, California.

2015 "Factors Influencing Housing and Neighborhood Preferences in Linden, Ohio" Presented at the 2015 Annual Conference of Urban Affairs Association, Miami, FL

2013 Community Indicators Consortium in Chicago, Illinois. Presented *The Geography of Opportunity in Austin and How It Is Changing,* a report and mapping project carried out jointly between Green Doors of Austin, Texas and the Kirwan Institute, funded by a grant

from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Sustainable Communities Initiative. Co-presenters: Matt Martin and Yumi Choi of the Kirwan Institute.

Invited Talks and Other Presentations

2018 "From Empowering the Poor to Enabling State Megaprojects: The Evolution of 'Friendly Finance' for Slum Upgrading in Thailand," Critical Perspectives on Microfinance workshop, HafenCity Universität, Hamburg, Germany

2018 *Baan Mankong in Bankok: Preliminary Analysis of Research Findings* **โครงการบ้านมั่นคงในกรุงเทพ ฯ ผลวิจัยและข้อวิเคราะห์เบื้องต้น**. Invited presentation at the Community Organizations Development Institute, Bangkok, Thailnd..

2018 *The History, Meaning, and Importance of the words "Community" and "Participation" in the Work of the Four Regions Slum Network* ***ประวัติ ความหมาย และความสำคัญของ"ชุมชน" และ "การมีส่วนร่วม" ในงานของเครือข่ายสลัมสี่ภาค.*** Invited presentation of preliminary research analysis to the Four Regions Slum Network, Bangkok, Thailand.

2018 *Creating Community: "Secure Housing" and Social Order in Thailand*. Thai Studies Department, Chulalongkorn University.

2012 Voices for Ohio's Children Regional Forum in Columbus. Presented highlights of the 2011 Ohio's KIDS COUNT Data Book.

2011 Ohio CASA/GAL Association 17th Annual Celebrate Kids! Conference. Presented 2010 Ohio's KIDS COUNT Data Book Co-presenters: Renuka Mayadev and Abigail Kline

2011 Voices for Ohio's Children Regional Forums in Columbus, Bowling Green, and Zanesville. Presented highlights of the 2010 Ohio's KIDS COUNT Data Book

2010 Volunteer Group 122 Peace Corps Thailand Pre-Service Training. Presenting on Thai language learning techniques, community integration strategies, and community meeting facilitation skills.

Teaching

2018 Adjunct Instructor, Zane State College, Zanesville, Ohio
Courses taught:

World Regional Geography, undergraduate online, Fall 2018

2014-2017 Graduate Student Instructor, University of California, Berkeley
Courses taught:

Planning for Sustainable Development, vertical upper division undergraduate/graduate, Fall 2014 and Fall 2016

Theories and Methods of Urban Studies, upper division undergraduate, Spring 2015 (awarded Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor and Teaching Effectiveness Award)

Community and Economic Development, upper division undergraduate, Spring 2016

Research Positions

2012-2014 Graduate Research Associate, The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

Assisted senior researchers with data collection, mapping, analysis, and writing for projects ranging from mapping indicators of community well-being to analysis of national housing policies. Wrote policy briefs for PolicyLink.org on issues around affordable housing, funded by the HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative.

2013-2014 Volunteer Co-PI, Columbus Food Mapping Initiative
Helped to implement a city-wide survey on food consumption habits as part of collaboration between the Kirwan Institute and the Ohio State Food Innovation Center.

2011-2012 Research Analyst, Children's Defense Fund-Ohio
Created and released the 2011 Ohio's KIDS COUNT Data Book

Professional Practice

2017-2018 Intern, *Baan Mankong* ("Secure Housing") central office, Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI), Bangkok, Thailand
Created content for a new English-language CODI website, translated other documents, and acted as interpreter for international engagements, such as the 2018 World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Attended meetings and went on community visits with staff as part of dissertation research.

2015-2018 Organizing Intern, Four Regions Slum Network, Bangkok, Thailand
Assisted with GIS mapping project of member communities and performed an analysis of available financial data on communities who have gone through participatory slum upgrading program Baan Mankong. Helped to put on a youth camp to develop future network leaders through the Davis Prize for Peace grant in summer 2016. Participated in meetings, community visits, demonstrations, and other Network activities as part of pre-dissertation and dissertation research

2013-2014 Development Volunteer, St. Stephen's Community House, Linden, Columbus, Ohio
Created, analyzed, and helped to administer the annual St. Stephen's Community Canvass survey, data from which was used as part of master's thesis. Assisted development

department staff in organizing large-scale fundraising and service events. Participated in other SSCH activities as part of ethnographic aspect of master's thesis research.

2009-2011 Community-Based Organizational Development Volunteer, Peace Corps Thailand

Coordinated and facilitated a series of meetings between local government administrators and active villagers to identify community assets and needs. These meetings were followed by a large group training on project design and management based upon the information gathered at the previous sessions.

Departmental Service and Leadership

2014-2017 Co-Managing Editor, *Berkeley Planning Journal*
2016-2017,
2018-2019 PhD Colloquium Co-Coordinator, Department of City and Regional Planning, UC Berkeley
2018-2019 Student Representative to the Search Advisory Committee for Dean of the College of Environmental Design, UC Berkeley

Professional Service and Memberships

Reviewer, *Housing Policy Debate*
Reviewer, *Berkeley Planning Journal*
Student Member, Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning
Student Member, Urban Affairs Association

Language Skills

Advanced speaking, reading, and writing in Thai
Advanced speaking, reading, and writing in French

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Early in the morning on May 2, 2018, hundreds of residents of Thailand's poor urban settlements gathered outside the United Nations in Bangkok. Many waved small paper flags printed with slogans like "The right to housing is a human right!"[1] and "Poor people are not criminals. Being poor is not a crime."[2] Others had hand written larger posters that were more directly related to the goal of the day: "We don't want to be trespassers… Release the lock on the 61 communities so our brothers and sisters can rent."[3] The purpose of the demonstration was to demand new negotiations with the Ministry of Transport and the State Railways of Thailand (SRT) in order to establish 30-year rental agreements for communities living on SRT land. In 2000, the Four Regions Slum Network (FRSN), the slum-based movement that had organized this protest, had successfully negotiated such agreements for 61 communities. However, in the nearly 20 years since the original negotiations, urban land pressures had intensified, evictions were increasing nationwide, and it was now deemed necessary to expand the opportunity for long-term leases more communities on SRT land.

After starting the demonstration at the Bangkok United Nations building in a symbolic appeal to universal rights, the protesters planned to march a half kilometer down the wide promenade of Ratchadamnoen Nok Road, past numerous government offices to the Ministry of Transport to make their demands. As nine o'clock rolled around, people began to gather their belongings and signs to start the march. In the midst of the hubbub, I passed Pi Na, an NGO organizer and "mentor" (*phi liang*) of some of the communities of the FRSN.

"Our brothers and sisters from NULICO haven't come,"[4] she told me, and asked if perhaps I knew where they were.

"I don't know," I responded. She shrugged, looked around one more time, and walked off to attend to more pressing matters. I turned to my phone to check for messages that might point to the whereabouts of the NULICO contingent.

As it turned out, I would find a few members of the National Union of Low-income Community Organizations (NULICO), another community network, after arriving at the Ministry of Transport. The group had intended to send 150 representatives to the demonstration, but only a dozen showed, and they had gone directly to the ministry, wary of marching through the street. They waited and watched as the FRSN crowd pour in, noisily laying down tarps, arranging their signs, and chatting over mid-morning snacks. The NULICO members looked on, hesitantly discussing their next moves.

Like the FRSN, NULICO is a network of poor urban communities, created for the purpose of connecting those with little power in the hopes of increasing their ability to access rights to land and housing in the city. Also like the FRSN, NULICO plays a prominent role in the acclaimed *Baan Mankong* housing policy.

Baan Mankong is a slum upgrading program that works through the establishment of communal land rights and community-based financing for physical upgrading. It is what is

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[1] สิทธิที่อยู่อาศัยคือสิทธิมนุษยชน

[2] คนจนไม่ใช่อาชญากร ความจนไม่ใช่อาชญากรรม

[3] เราไม่อยากเป็นผู้...บุกรุก...จงปลดล็อก 61 ชุมชน เปิดให้พี่น้องเราได้เช่า

[4] พี่น้อง สอช. ไม่มา

known as a *participatory slum upgrading program* in the development world. Completing a *Baan Mankong* project involves years of organizing community members, creating community savings groups, finding new land if staying in place is not an option, negotiating with landowners, navigating complex government bureaucracies, and ultimately constructing new housing and infrastructure. It is an arduous and confusing process, and residents who undertake these projects often rely on the received wisdom and support of community leaders who have more experience in such matters. That is where NULICO and the FRSN come in.

Both NULICO and the FRSN are community networks that help communities implement *Baan Mankong* projects. However, beyond this basic similarity, the two organizations have little in common, and the demonstration at the Ministry of Transport marked one of the first real attempts at collaboration between the networks in the fifteen-year history of the policy.

Figure 1: FRSN members with signs saying "Housing Rights are Human Rights" and "Reform Urban Land for Housing for Poor People"at the Ministry of Transportation. May 2, 2018.

Figure 2: FRSN member with sign saying "We don't want to be trespassers… Release the lock on the 61 communities so our brothers and sisters can rent" at the Ministry of Transportation. May 2, 2018.

While the organized mass of FRSN members confidently set up camp, rallied each other with rousing speeches through a speaker system on a pickup truck up front, and even chatted with the police and soldiers monitoring the activities, the handful of NULICO members observed cautiously from sidelines. Over the course of the day, even as the protest proved successful and representatives were called up to speak to government officials, some of the NULICO contingent migrated even further from the crowd, observing from across the street out of concern that they did not have the requisite written permissions to demonstrate. The majority remained at a distance or had gone home by the time the Minister of Transport emerged from the building to announce that the parties had reached an agreement to create a joint committee to look into opening more land for rental, make site visits to communities, and hold further meetings in the coming weeks to move the proposal forward. The announcement was met by cheers and applause from the legions of FRSN members. The two NULICO leaders who had been selected to sit in on the negotiations as representatives emerged from the building elated. One exclaimed to me that she had never been part of negotiations like that before, where they got nearly all they asked for. NULICO's approach, she said, was more "compromising,"[5] and she herself had never actually been part of the negotiation before. It was always people "higher" than her who sat at the table.

The role this NULICO member was used to was one in which she worked alongside government administrators, helping to carry out projects and train other community leaders to do the same. Over the years, many NULICO leaders have become adept at accounting, writing grants, collecting community-level data, and providing proper documentation of project progress for the government agencies involved in *Baan Mankong*. The most senior members of the network do interact with government officials regularly, but in a very different capacity from what the representative at the SRT negotiations had experienced that day. They are almost always sitting alongside staff of the government agency that administers *Baan Mankong*, and, as

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the representative expressed, the stances of NULICO at these meetings are decidedly less staunch.

The demonstration and negotiations of May 2 were undoubtedly a success in terms of the goal to open negotiations for SRT land rental. However, much work was left to be done before any of the desired long-term leases would be realized, and despite the fact that the concrete goals of the day had been achieved, doubts had been raised as to the capacity of the FRSN and NULICO to work together. The events at the Ministry and the preparations in the weeks prior had thrown into stark contrast the differences between the approaches of these two organizations. These differences, their origins, and their impacts, are what motivate this dissertation.

1.1.1 Policy as a Medium of Refraction

In the following chapters, I examine the case of the *Baan Mankong* program. My investigation does not take the form of a typical policy analysis, though, which would look at policy in terms of how it works relative to its intended outcomes. Instead, I take a step back, asking first how *Baan Mankong* was produced by tracing the many influences that led to its creation. To do this, I begin with the primary unit of *Baan Mankong* interventions—the community. Starting with the coinage of the Thai word for community—*chumchon*—I track how the *Baan Mankong* policy has been shaped by social movements, governmental trends, and intellectual currents that seek to create forms of community. This construction of community occurs both materially and discursively; thus, a major theme of this dissertation is the ways in which the narrative influences practice.

Once created, I argue that *Baan Mankong* acts a point of refraction for the various elements that comprise it. In the physical sense, refraction means the changing of direction of a wave when it passes from one medium to another. In the case of *Baan Mankong,* social movements, government agencies, and especially communities and the individuals that comprise them, change direction as a result of being involved in the policy. The redirection of these different actors has produced a slew of results, only some of them intended by those advocated for the creation of the program. Fifteen years after its inception, *Baan Mankong* has led to a specific, recognizable new kind of urban form, new legal and financial categories, new ways of holding land, and re-configured relationships between state entities and poor urban residents. All of these changes have led to the emergence of a distinct, instrumentalizable form of community. Not all of these communities are instrumentalized toward the same goals, however. As I demonstrate, the different movements and political currents that helped to create the policy have continued to work in different ways within it, shaping communities toward their own ends. These differences are related to how actors conceive of concepts such as rights, democracy, and justice, and they are most visible in the divergent political strategies, structures, and practices of the community networks that guide residents through the *Baan Mankong* process.

1.1.2 Research Questions

In examining the origins and impact of *Baan Mankong,* this dissertation is motivated by three primary research questions: (1) What local and international discourses surrounding the concept of community have shaped the way it has been institutionalized in the *Baan Mankong* policy? (2) How do the different community networks involved in *Baan Mankong* differ in terms of their political philosophies, organizational structures, and practices? (3) How do the communities that go through the *Baan Mankong* process differ depending on their network affiliation?

In addressing these core questions, I also discuss an additional, unexpected theme that arose over the course of research that is crucial to understanding the current context of the policy and its potential future impacts. This is the importance of scale. Over the past fifteen years, *Baan Mankong* has grown exponentially, driven by reports of its "success" on multiple fronts. In the latter half of the dissertation, I discuss how the growth of the program has been made possible because of the distinct roles of the FRSN and NULICO and how the experiences of communities going through the program in its present form differ based on the network they belong to. These differences point to the importance of this type of in-depth, ethnographic and institutional analysis of policy, as structures and forms that looks similar on the surface can vary significantly upon closer investigation.

1.2 The Basics of *Baan Mankong*

The primary function of *Baan Mankong* is to alleviate poor housing conditions and insecurity of land tenure in urban areas. As of 2014 it was estimated that up to 25 percent of Thailand's urban residents live in areas that are considered slums according to the United Nations' definition (UN Statistics Division 2014). In Thailand, most slums are fairly small, and they are dispersed throughout the city. Residents living in these small settlements often inhabit their land via a long-established custom of land-sharing and informal rental from private owners or temples. In other cases, the settlements are built on land belonging to the State Railway of Thailand or the Crown Properties Bureau (Angel and Pornchokchai 1989). Residents living under these conditions are often at risk of eviction, either because a private landowner wishes to sell to a developer or because a government entity plans to beautify the land or put it to other use.

Started in 2003 through the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI) of Thailand, a public agency sponsored by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Human Security, Baan Mankong aims to mitigate the problem of eviction by acting as both a source of loans for physical upgrading and a process of intervention between residents and landowners seeking to evict. The end result of a Baan Mankong project may be some form of on-site upgrading with formalization of land tenure, or it may be relocation and rebuilding. What all projects have in common, though, is that they operate by establishing formal, documented communities, or *chumchon*. To participate, the *chumchon* must save money collectively as a form of collateral with which to borrow money together from CODI for physical upgrading. They then eventually sign communal purchase or lease agreements to whatever land they occupy (Somsook 2009).

Forming discrete communities, establishing legal land tenure, learning to manage finances collectively, and constructing or upgrading homes is a long and messy process. When residents undertake a *Baan Mankong* project, they are aided and advised by networks of other communities. The use of these community networks in the policy is key to many claims of the policy's empowering impacts. However, as I will demonstrate, the community networks involved in *Baan Mankong* play very different roles with respect to both individual communities and the policy more broadly.

It should be noted that *Baan Mankong* is a nationwide policy, and most of the actors and organizations I discuss operate throughout the nation's urban areas. I made multiple trips to provinces around the country over the course of fieldwork to track their work. However, in this dissertation, I focus on Bangkok for several reasons. First, it is the nation's primate city, and because of its population, a plurality of *Baan Mankong* projects have occurred in the Bangkok Metropolitan Region (BMR). Second, as the seat of national government, it is a primary location for political mobilizations and policy negotiations. Third, the BMR, because of its administrative

complexity and overlaps between municipal and national government jurisdiction, is a unique urban context compared to other urban areas in the country. Multiple collaborators have pointed out to me that doing *Baan Mankong* projects in other provinces is often easier, particularly in the case of city-wide initiatives, and looking outside Bangkok would provide a different view of the program. I believe this is true; however, it is precisely because of the difficulties, complexities, and overlaps with high-level state agencies that I believe Bangkok deserves its own treatment and can speak to larger trends in urban governance and state motives.

1.3 Literature Review

1.3.1 The Role of Community Networks in Community-Based Planning

The story of the FRSN and NULICO is of interest on its face for scholars of participatory planning because these two cases present contrasting approaches to community participation in the context of a single housing policy. *Baan Mankong* has been held up as a model of community-driven development, and the praise for the model is in no small part due to the prominent role of community networks in driving its large-scale implementation (e.g. Das 2018; Herrle, Ley, and Fokdal 2015; Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2004a; Sotomayor and Daniere 2018). However, in the policy and planning literature related to *Baan Mankong*, "community networks" are frequently painted as a monolith, and if specific networks are mentioned, NULICO is typically held up as the example. Only Thai-language articles (Boonlert 2007, 2008) and anthropological studies of *Baan Mankong* communities (Elinoff 2013) have pointed to the differences that exist across the networks associated with the policy. As I will demonstrate, these differences are consequential both at the level of individual *Baan Mankong* communities and at the level of the policy itself. Such insights should be of interest to researchers and practitioners looking to learn from *Baan Mankong* in order to implement similar housing policies elsewhere and understand the potential of community networks in urban governance.

"Community network" has become something of a buzz word across many fields in the social sciences, urban planning, and development. The term itself inspires hope for the possibility of bridging micro and macro scales of activism, connecting local struggles in order to form national or even global movements. Such networks have been posited as representing new forms of "deep democracy" (Appadurai 2002), "insurgent planning" (Miraftab 2009), or "people-driven poverty reduction" (Satterthwaite 2001). However, others have cautioned that the existence of such connections and social resources do not necessarily always result in pro-poor urban governance. Quite the contrary, government or private actors can "capitalize" on the social capital of the poor to move urban development projects forward (Beall 2001). The *Baan Mankong* networks provide points of comparison to test these different observations about the possibilities of community networks and begin to tease out how and why *different* community networks might have different impacts on urban politics and governance. In the case of *Baan Mankong*, these differences manifest themselves most concretely around the access to and management of land through collective forms of tenure.

1.3.2.Collective Land Tenure as a Solution to Affordable Housing

Beyond the celebration of its participatory processes and community networks, another reason that *Baan Mankong* has received attention from international researchers and practitioners is that it represents a large-scale implementation of collective land tenure. Whether through purchase, rental, or a special designation called a community land title deed, when *Baan Mankong* communities gain legal rights to occupy their land, they do so not as individuals, but as

a community. Most often, the rights are held by a housing cooperative, the legal form that represents the community. This type of collective tenure has long been of interest to urban scholars for a number of reasons. The first is for its practical potential as a means of preserving the affordability of housing and preventing displacement. However, beyond this pragmatic concern for affordable housing, for many, collective land tenure represents a concrete and legal way of pursuing the political project of creating urban commons.

On the level of housing security and affordability, the claim that collective land tenure can preserve affordability and prevent displacement rests on two related lines of logic. The first logic applies equally to the global North and the global South. It is based on the fact that, by placing land and housing in the hands of a collective entity—often in the form of a cooperative or a non-profit land trust—that property is essentially removed from the private property market. Any value that accrues to the property due to market mechanisms goes to the collective entity, not the individual owners. The individual owners, were they to transfer to the units, would do so only at the cost of the unit, not the underlying land. The intention is that this will both maintain the affordability of the units in the case of transfer *and* prevent frequent turnover for profit (Lauria and Comstock 2007).

The second logic applies primarily to cities of the global South, where settlements with various forms of what is called "informal" land tenure are more common (Payne 2004). In such cases, de Soto (2000) has famously advocated for individual land titling not only as a way of providing more secure land tenure, but also as a way of bringing the property of the poor into the formal market, allowing them to capitalize on these assets that had previously been "dead capital" due to their informal status. The arguments of de Soto have been widely critiqued (e.g. Gilbert 2002; Payne 2001; Payne, Durand-Lasserve, and Rakodi 2009). However, collective land tenure serves as an answer to one prominent criticism of individual titling in particular—that titling can actually decrease tenure security because it clears the way for market-driven displacement (Payne, Durand-Lasserve, and Rakodi 2009). Housing policies that work through communal land tenure, often in the form of slum upgrading programs, seek to get around this problem by putting land and housing in the hands of a community rather than individuals. Through this collective mechanism, the first logic discussed above then works to prevent displacement by market mechanisms. However, in slum upgrading programs, the argument for collective land tenure's capacity to prevent displacement follows an additional logic, which is that the strengthening of community itself also serves as mechanism to keep people in place. Arguments along these lines in the policy literature typically assert that the coming together of a community, typically through programs designed around the concept of "participation," allows poor residents to help one another, strengthening their connections to each other and collective social resources, or "social capital."[6] In increasing social capital, residents also gain skills, knowledge, and external social ties that can translate social capital into financial or political capital, for example, through the ability to negotiate favorable terms for financing and service provision (e.g. Somsook 2005; Satterthwaite 2001; Mitlin 2011). All of this, in theory, contributes to residents' ability to resist displacement. This model of increasing social capital through community-based participation is central to many of the claims of "empowerment" surrounding collective housing policies (e.g. Archer 2012; A. K. Das 2008; Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2004a).

[6] See Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000) for full and elaboration of the concept of social capital. Beall (2001), Das (2008), and Archer (2010) have reviewed the literature connecting social capital and community-based urban development programs.

Not everyone agrees that such forms of tenure are necessarily empowering. As Huron (2012, 2018) has discussed, a prominent debate even among advocates of housing cooperatives is whether or not limiting residents' ability to capitalize on the increased market value of their homes actually represents progress in terms of social equity. It may preserve affordability for lower income people, but it also deprives them of a key benefit of homeownership—the accumulation of wealth. Elinoff (2013) has gone so far as to claim that models like *Baan Mankong* highlight forms of what Holston (2008) calls "differentiated citizenship" because poor people only have collective access to rights that middle and upper class people can access as individuals. The collective nature of these rights not only limits the financial benefits to participation in such schemes; it also requires labor of participants. The work entailed in organizing a community to begin a collective housing project can have significant negative impacts' on residents capacity to carry out their normal livelihoods, especially for community leaders (Endo 2014). This community-building work is a political process that can lead to divisions and conflict just as much as it creates a sense of empowerment (Endo 2014; Elinoff 2013). The underappreciation of the labor and hardship involved in collective housing leads Huron (2012) to call for a reassessment not only of these housing schemes, but also of "romantic" notions of the urban commons more broadly.

1.3.3 Collective Housing and the Urban Commons

Beyond their practical potential for providing affordable housing, collective forms of housing have a theoretical and ethical appeal for scholars and activists because they represent concrete instantiations of "the commons." A great deal of contemporary literature on the commons cites as motivation a desire to refute the fifty-year-old claims of economist Garrett Hardin (1968), who assertions regarding the "tragedy of the commons" have served as justification for the supremacy of private property the world over. The most famous and comprehensive effort to dispel the myth of this supposed tragedy has common from fellow economist Elinor Ostrom (1990), who has employed a "new institutionalist" framework to study and schematize many examples of actually existing commons throughout the world. However, as Harvey (2012b) as pointed out, these studies of the institutions that govern the commons mostly concern fairly small-scale examples collective management of common-pool resources, often in rural and agricultural settings. Less work has been done regarding how the commons might be applied to urban land and resources, where populations are large and institutional environments complex.

"The urban commons" is a phrase frequently invoked by scholars of the left, usually in an effort to conceptualize rights to housing, land, and space that prioritize their social value as opposed to their economic value (e.g. Harvey 2012; Blomley 2008). This line of thinking is what connects conversations on the urban commons to LeFebvrian notions of "the right to the city" that argue for producing the city as a space of use value instead of exchange value (Lefebvre 1996; Purcell 2002; Marcuse 2009; Harvey 2012a). Like the right to the city, the urban commons is a concept that has evoked much discussion because of its slippery nature. In the broadest possible sense, Negri and Hardt (2012) have suggested that the city itself is a space for the production of a political imaginary they call "the common." Such wide-ranging political conceptualizations would likely frustrate more institutionalist scholars, who criticize those who confuse "the commons" with categories such "open access" and "public space" (Bromley 1992; Swaney 1990). However, still others argue that particularly in urban settings, a, institutionalist perspective that views urban commons only as bounded, recognized spaces will miss the many undocumented forms of the commons that are created through the collective appropriation of

space, or "commoning" (Blomley 2004, 2008). What most of these varied descriptions of the commons share, however, is that conceive of the commons as resources or spaces that are produced and managed collectively by a group and that they are distinct from both the state and the market.

While imagining the urban commons as something "beyond state and market" (Dellenbaugh et al. 2015) is certainly appealing, as Huron (2015, 2018) has pointed out, what distinguishes the *urban* commons from the most of the classic examples of Ostrom is that urban spaces are "saturated" with state regulations, financial institutions, and markets of various kinds. While it may be true that examples of the urban commons have existed just as long or longer than state and market rules have governed cities (Brinkley 2019), in the contemporary moment, urban commons must be "carved out" from spaces governed by state and market institutions (Huron 2018). Or, as Harvey (2012b) puts it, creating the urban commons involves, ironically, a form of "enclosure." Even when such enclosure is achieved, the practices of urban commoning involve negotiating with these other institutions that shape urban space and exiting in tension with them (Huron 2015).

In order to survive amidst these other institutional forms, the commons must be maintained by a committed collective of "commoners." Such collectives can go by many names, but frequently they are simply called a community. This is the case in *Baan Mankong*. Scholars have long posited that the reciprocal norms of community are often essential to maintaining the commons (Swaney 1990). The word community comes laden with assumptions, often revolving around ideas of traditionality, insularity, and stasis. However, in the case of the urban spaces, the communities that come together to the create the commons may be strangers at the start (Huron 2015). Even in cases where a community already exists, "the making or unmaking of the commons involves the making or unmaking of communities and vice versa" (Sundaresan 2011). Community is never a given, and for this reason, the concept, practices, and the word itself must be critically examined with respect to their use in programs that use community as a basis for collective tenure like *Baan Mankong*.

1.3.4 The Possibilities of the Urban Community

Community has been a central concept of the Western social sciences since their inception. In early Marxian thought, Friedrich Engels (2010 [1884]), in *The Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State*, offers a detailed account of community life based on shared property and labor in various European countries prior to the advent of the capitalist mode of production. However, perhaps the most well-known formulation of the community comes from Ferdinand Tönnies (Tönnies [1887] 2001) in his description of the small-scale, rural *Gemeinschaft* ("community"), which he poses in opposition to modern *Gesellschaft* ("society"). The contrast between traditional community and modern society emerged as a way to describe the changes in lifestyles and social relations that were taking place as a result of industrialization and urbanization. A similar transition was described by Durkheim's (1997 [1893]) during this same period as a shift in forms of human solidarity from the "mechanical" form based primarily on kinship and similarity to a more complex "organic" solidarity deriving from the division of labor in society.

In the twentieth century, conceptions of community traveled to the city. Members of the Chicago School of Urban Sociology set as their task the understanding of what they often termed "The Urban Community." In the preface to an edited volume of that title, Burgess (1926, vii–ix) introduces the works of the collection as a counterpart to the research of rural sociologists, who had so fully considered the issues of rural communities. He goes on to describe how this new

field of urban sociology set out "the think of the city as living, growing; as an organism" (x) through an approach that would come to be known as "human…ecology" (Park 1969, 91–92). The Chicago School scholars sometimes agree with Tönnies and Durkheim that the competition of the city alters the traditional solidarities of rural life, instead creating it "a solidarity based, not on sentiment and habit, but on community of interests" (Park 1969, 104). In addition, as opposed to the geographically confined rural community, Wirth (1969, 163) declares that "the city as a community resolves itself into a series of tenuous segmental relationships superimposed upon a territorial base with a definite center but without a definite periphery, and upon a division of labor which far transcends the immediate locality and is world-wide in scope." However, amidst this amorphous geography of segmented relationships, the urban community as an organism "naturally" produces new forms of local identification, because "So complete is the segregation of vocational classes that it is possible within the limits of the city to live in an isolation almost as complete as that of some remote rural community." (Park 1969, 113).

This segregation within cities and neighborhoods led other urban sociologists, anthropologists, and activists to take a narrower view of community in urban space. Researchers like Gans (1962) and Stack (1975) applied the ethnographic method that had been developed in the studies of remote communities to segregated "urban villages." In the process, they describe the urban community not as the city itself, but as a highly local social form, something more closely resembling the kinship-based solidarities of Tönnies' community. While these urban community ethnographies sometimes portrayed social relationships in similar ways as the ethnographies of remote communities, making them appear as "natural," they did so in a way that also recognized that the communities themselves were created through the societal changes that were driving migration, urbanization, segregation, and structural inequalities.

At the same time that urban ethnographers were describing social relationships resulting from urban processes and inequalities, activists and policymakers were actively trying to shape urban communities to address injustices. Saul Alinsky (1989 [1971]) famously developed a school of thought guiding the practices of what came to known as community organizing. Alinsky's methods included encouraging organizers to integrate themselves into communities, gain members' trust, and learn about their needs and desires. Once this trust and understanding is established, organizers can guide communities through the pursuit of their collective goals, starting with things that are small and achievable and gradually building solidarity through tackling larger objectives together. Alinsky's methods emerged as part of a wave of activism in the 1960s and 1970s that sought to change how cities were seen and governed, often emphasizing the need for community participation in urban planning, as opposed to the top-down methods that had dominated the early part of the century. This vision was most clearly articulated in Jane Jacobs' seminal work, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). In response to these demands, many municipal governments began to adopt practices calling for citizen participation in aspects of planning. However, Arnstein (1969) warns that while participation can take the form of citizen control over development projects, it can just as easily become a rote exercise or even result in manipulation of less powerful communities on by city officials and politicians.

Community-based efforts of government were by no means unique to the United States. As Roy, Stuart, and Shaw (2015) have argued, many of the community-based interventions on the part of the U.S. and local governments in the 1960s relied on techniques and forms of expert knowledge being developed as part of counter-insurgency measures in Southeast Asia. The practices of governing at the local level were thus being formed as part of global discourses on

the management of unruly populations. During this period, "community development" began to take shape as a traveling practice throughout much of the world. It gained steam over the course of the following decades. However, most community development programs were not directly related to counter-insurgency, but rather to broader aims around international development.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, community came to define an alternative development approach to programs that sought an elusive "modernization" of poor countries. By the 1990s, development practitioners and scholars alike were recognizing that decades of development policies aimed at increasing industrialization and trade had proven ineffective at lifting vast portions of the population of many countries out of poverty and had only increased environmental problems, especially for rural dwellers (Chambers 1986; Cooke and Kothari 2001). Community-based participatory development, most famously articulated in by Robert Chambers' (1994) approach of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), sought to "put the last first," recognizing that the poor themselves may understand their own needs and conditions better than so-called "experts" from powerful development institutions like the World Bank. The premise of PRA is that poor communities possess a wealth of knowledge and capabilities that can enable them to address issues better than outsiders could. However, these knowledges and collective capabilities often have not yet been identified or developed to an extent that they can be used most effectively for the betterment of the community. This is why there is still a role for the professional in development—to guide communities through the process of recognizing their assets, identifying challenges, and creating strategies to address them.

This type of community work gained traction in the 1990s through a new development approach called "good governance." First articulated in a report called "Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Development" from the World Bank (1989), good governance emphasizes that governments are not the only entities that govern. In this conceptualization, "governance" is enacted not only by state entities, but through actors in civil society. While different agencies of the international development scene interpreted good governance through lenses that veered toward more political versus more administrative (Leftwich 1994), they shared an increasing interest in distributing money in new ways. This entailed moving away from central governments and toward direct funding of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), many of which focused on community development and local participatory approaches (Charoensinolan 2000; Missingham 2003)

While the increasing funding and interest in community-based development was celebrated by many as a welcome turn away from top-down development, it soon drew concern and consternation from those involved in its implementation. Many of the criticisms of echo the issues raised by Arnstein (1969) about participatory approaches used in U.S. cities—namely, that the processes often did not overcome existing power relations, and that the exercises of participation often became more about educating the participants than truly creating space for them to be in the drivers' seat (Cooke and Kothari 2001). Others took issue with the presuppositions that a pre-existing, egalitarian community was there to be developed in this first place, calling such assumptions a myth (Guijt and Shah 1998).

While community has been declared a myth by some, to others it presents a paradox (Rose 1999; Li 2007). The thrust of this paradox is that in community-based interventions, community is considered "natural" and pre-existing, yet at the same time it is in need of intervention in order to be properly formed. These tensions make the construction of community a site of politics. Many scholars of Southeast Asia have explored how portrayals of communities by states, corporations, international development agencies, and local people have been integral

to contestations over land in the case of community-based forest management (e.g. Li 1996; Peluso 2005; Peluso and Vandergeest 2001; Tsing 2005). These accounts reveal the centrality of land and community to the conceptualization of the relationship between individuals and states.

1.3.5 Community, Government, and Politics

The role of community with respect to the modern nation state has been theorized in conflicting ways by many thinkers in the past several decades. However, two scholars offer contrasting theorizations of community that are particularly interesting in light of the contestations over land and collective identity that are so central to many of the participatory development programs instituted in since the late twentieth century: Nikolas Rose and Partha Chatterjee. Both relying on the Foucaultian concept of governmentality,[7] these two writers offer nearly opposite visions of the role of community with respect to state power.

In *Powers of Freedom*, Rose (1999) identifies community as a key site of the exercise of governmentality in the age of advanced liberalism. What he means by this is that community has been envisioned as a sort of "third space" of governing, an alternative to both the state and the market. In its function as non-market, community does not bear the markers of a-morality associated with impersonal exchanges. Being outside the state, thought, it is seen as a-political. Put together, these characteristics, make community appear as a moral, a-political, and "natural" realm of human interaction. However, this appearance is only part of the story, for "On the one hand...this 'natural-ness' is not merely an ontological claim but implies affirmation, a positive evaluation. On the other, this zone is identified as a crucial element in particular styles of political government, for it is on its properties and on activities within it that the success of such political aspirations and programmes depend. This third space must, thus, become the object and target for the exercise of political power whilst remaining, somehow, external to politics and a counter-weight to it" (Rose 1999, 168). These "styles of government" include, on one level, classic administrative techniques of counting, calculation, categorization associated with governmental management of populations. However, in what Rose terms the "advanced diagram of community," there is another, moral, dimension, in which "individual conduct no longer appears to be 'socially determined': individual choices are shaped by values which themselves arise from ties of community identification. Community thus emerges as the ideal territory for the administration of individual and collective existence, the plane or surface upon which micro-moral relations amongst persons are conceptualized and administered" (136). In this conceptualization, community is an ideal form through which government, in the Foucaultian sense of "the conduct of conduct," can work, often through the work of NGOs and other voluntary associations, rather than the state alone. This is what Rose refers to as "government through community."

Chatterjee sees governmentality and community interacting quite differently. In the collection of essays *The Politics of the Governed*, Chatterjee (2004) explores how oppressed populations can make political claims through the creation of a sense of moral community beyond the community of the nation state. Chatterjee frames his argument as a challenge to the classic idea of the "imaged community" that Benedict Anderson (2006 [1983]) posited as so

[7] Governmentality is broad term conceptualized in varying ways by many scholars, including Foucault himself. In this discussion, I rely on a description of governmentality that emphasizes its reliance on decentralized and multi-faceted modes of rule, its capacity to create certain types of self-governing citizens and subjects, and its dependence on enumeration, documentation, and statistics as a means to manage populations (Foucault et al. 2009).

central to the emergence of modern nations. Within this vision, the imagined community of the nation is key to overcoming the conflict between the ideal of universal citizenship and reality of difference. Chatterjee explains that in the eyes of the liberal state, the nation is the only recognized form of community. In the ideal vision of the liberal nation state, the members of this community interact through a "civil society." However, as Chatterjee points out, the reality in most of the world is that the demographic makeup of this quite limited, restricted to a stratum of elites. "The rest of the world" engages with the state not as rights-bearing citizens acting within civil society, but as populations that are governed by the state. Governmentality, in this view, creates not communities but population groups to be administered, managed, and cared for. Community and its moral implications are quite different for Chatterjee than they are for Rose. Using an example of a group of poor urban residents at risk of eviction, Chatterjee demonstrates how they used a welfare association that had been established in order to administer services to them as a population group as a basis for organizing to negotiate with officials and resist eviction. In the process, their ways of identifying with each other changed. They used the word "family" to describe their relationships, and carried on with shared cause. Chatterjee interprets this as key factor in allowing this population group to engage politically with the state, even though they are excluded from civil society. Instead, they must function in what Chatterjee calls political society. Engaging in this way involves a critical manipulation of the governmental categories. In his description of the residents struggling against eviction, he says, "Although the crucial move here was for out squatters to seek and find recognition as a population group, which from the standpoint of governmentality is only a usable empirical category that defines the targets of policy, they themselves have had to find ways of investing their collective identity with moral content. This is an equally crucial part of the politics of the governed: *to give to the empirical form of population group the moral attributes of a community"* (emphasis in original) (Chatterjee 2004, 57). For Chatterjee, then, elites can engage with the state through civil society, which entails belonging to the "universal" community of the nation as rights-bearing citizens. Those excluded from civil society—"the governed"—who exist in the eyes of the state only as population groups, can engage in political society by investing their population group with "the moral attributes of a community."

For Rose, government is exercised through community. For Chatterjee, community is a political form that can manipulate or resist government. The dilemma of this dissertation is whether or when such seemingly divergent visions of community can be true. Might the two descriptions apply to different types communities? To the same community at different times? And are the two even necessarily opposed? In the case of *Baan Mankong*, just as with many instances of community-based forest management and participatory development programs, "community" eventually comes to have a definite, even legal form. Over time, this form can be taken for granted, and it is easy to begin debating the merits community-based programs based only on outcome with respect to their stated goals. However, I choose a different path. Instead, I take heed of Tsing's (2005, 247) cautionary note, that "Before we follow either advocates of critics into naturalizing the object of their debates, it seems useful to ask how this object has, in various times and places, come into being." To do this, I perform an extended case study of *Baan Mankong*.

1.4 Methods

1.4.1 An Extended Case Study of a Policy

In this dissertation, I examine the *Baan Mankong* policy on multiple scales using the logic of the extended case study (Burawoy 1998). I begin from its global and historical origins and trace these through its creation by and through the Thai state. Then, I examine how the policy operates at the scale of the city, the network, and the community. For each scale, I rely on research techniques rooted in ethnography, with participant observation as the core technique and interviews and historical research adding context and depth. In telling the story of *Baan Mankong* through this multi-scalar approach, I rely on the Tsing's (2005) metaphor of *friction* to describe the interactions of awkwardly allied groups as the they struggle to enact "engaged universals."

The initial research for this project began through an attempt to understand how the policy actually functions on the ground, inspired my own confusion about complex existing descriptions in the literature and ubiquitous but ambiguous references to "community networks." After two summers of preliminary fieldwork with one of these networks, the FRSN, in which I observed their interactions with officials from the government agency that administers *Baan Mankong*, the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI), I came to several important understandings about the policy. The first is that the word *chumchon* was central to both organizations, but that they used it in different ways, with different moral and political implications. The communities that worked with these two organizations were told by both that it was important to be a "strong community" (*chumchon khem khaeng*). However, the messages sent by these two organizations about what constitutes a "strong community" and the ultimate goals of becoming such an entity differed substantially. The second important preliminary finding was that the *chumchon* that emerged from *Baan Mankong* projects often bore little or no resemblance to the collection of residents that undertook the policy in the first place. Sometimes small collections of willing residents from many different locations were grouped together in order to have the necessary number to do a project on new land. Sometimes large existing settlements were administratively split into two communities for ease of management. Almost always, residents were lost and gained, and relationships were reconfigured as part of the *Baan Mankong* process. These reconfigurations occurred under the influence of the often-tense alliance between the FRSN and CODI. To understand the why these organizations worked in different ways and what effects they were having on the communities they were creating, I needed a fuller understanding of where this word and concept that was so central to the policy had come from.

1.4.2 The Extended Case Study

To place *Baan Mankong* in a global and historical context, I build an extended case study. The core techniques of this are ethnographic, emphasizing participant observation. To build an extended case of *Baan Mankong*, I relied on multiple dialogues. After doing preliminary fieldwork with the FRSN, I shifted my focus to the central organization of the policy itself, CODI. There I worked as an intern for three months, attending meetings, going on community visits, and carrying out projects in conjunction with staff and community leaders. Through this work with CODI, I became acquainted with the leaders of NULICO and also came to understand the many global influences on *Baan Mankong*. I even traveled with a group of community leaders and CODI staff to the United Nations' World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur, acting as a translator between our Thai contingent and community representatives and NGO leaders from

around the world. Finally, throughout my period of fieldwork from June 2017 to September 2018, I began to piece together the history of community/*chumchon* in Thailand with respect to *Baan Mankong* through interviews and archival research. I continued this work after returning from the field by putting these primary sources in conversation with existing secondary sources on the history of Thai government policy, the communist insurgency, and social movements. Ultimately, I put these findings in dialogue with the literature on community, the commons, and participatory policies outlined in the previous section.

1.4.3 Embedded Case Studies

The extended case of *Baan Mankong* is achieved by placing the case of the policy in these larger global and intellectual conversations. However, to understand how the policy and the concept of community are being applied on the ground, I look at units smaller than the policy, assessing how they relate to the larger case. To do this, I apply an embedded case study logic (Yin 2009). An embedded case logic allows the researcher to compare smaller units within a larger case, assessing differences, similarities, and changes over time. In this case, I apply the logic of embedded cases at two levels. The first embedded cases I look at are the two community networks, the FRSN and NULICO. I compare how they came to be, the rhetorics they deploy, the larger political goals they pursue, and their roles with respect to the larger policy. The primary research techniques employed at this level of analysis were participant observation at network events and interviews with network leaders and members. However, the balance of these techniques across the two networks was uneven. I had originally intended to intern with NULICO for a period of months in the same way I had with CODI and the FRSN. However, over the course of several months of attempting to establish this type of regular participant observation, it became clear that the organization of the network did not have sufficient regularly-occurring activities outside of CODI for such an arrangement. Thus, I continued to engage with NULICO leaders by continuing my work with CODI, attending meetings the NULICO members recommended and performing interviews to help me understand how the network worked that might not be readily visible to my observations. In this case, a failure of fieldwork turned out to be a finding in and of itself and pointed to a key difference between the two cases.

The second level of embedded cases in the project are individual communities within each network. For both NULICO and the FRSN, I selected two communities in which to perform more in-depth case studies. The selection of these cases based on several considerations. The consideration was achieving some level of comparability between the two networks. To do this, I selected one case of an established community that had completed *Baan Mankong* and was well into the process of loan repayment and one community that was early in the process and just beginning their initial savings and housing cooperative formation. Through this criteria, I was able to assess two things: first, how the process may have changed across time within each network, and second, how communities who had started the process at similar times with different networks compared to each other.

Beyond this consideration for some level of similarity across networks, cases were also selected for their diversity. One of the touted strengths of *Baan Mankong* is that it is flexible, accommodating communities of various sizes, locations, and land tenure situations. Communities may start on private, government, or religious land; they may have some sort of existing formal rental arrangement, or they might be squatters; they may seek to stay on a piece of original land with most of the original residents, or they may combine residents from multiple locations onto a new plot; they may reconstruct housing entirely, or they may merely upgrade in

place; finally, they may establish long-term land rights through purchase, rental, or a community land title deed. These numerous sources of difference became apparent through the many months of participant observation with the networks, CODI, and other informants, during which I made visits to approximately 40 different communities at various stages of the *Baan Mankong* process. Through these visits and the opinions of informants, I determined that the key elements of diversity that must be included within the four case studies were (1) government rental versus private purchase, and (2) in-place upgrading versus relocation. Within each network, one community represents upgrading in place through a rental agreement with a government agency, while the other represents relocation of combined settlements onto purchased land. Figure X shows how the differences and similarities are distributed across the cases.

	Four Regions Slum Network (FRSN)	**National Union of Low-Income Community Organizations (NULICO)**
Well established (At least ten years old; houses are nearly all fully constructed)	**FRSN A** Renting government land in original location	**NULICO A** Combining multiple original settlements to new, purchased land
New (*Baan Mankong* was begun less than two years prior to fieldwork, and no housing construction had begun prior to the end of fieldwork)	**FRSN B** Combining multiple original settlements to new, purchased land	**NULCIO B** Renting government land in original location

Figure 3: Distribution of Characteristics across Community Case Studies

My engagement with these different communities was necessarily uneven, as communities in different networks and at different stages of the process had different levels of activity. However, I did establish a basic minimum protocol so as to have comparable data on each. This protocol included:

- At least one interview with a community leader to discuss the community's history, how it came to do *Baan Mankong*, its progress thus far, and its relationship with CODI and either NULICO or the FRSN (in the case of the newer community in the process of combining four settlements, this meant interviewing all four settlement leaders)
- At least one visit to the community during a weekend evening (when residents were likely to be home and able to socialize) in order to speak with a large number of residents and observe their casual interactions
- Attending at least one formal community meeting.
- Collecting available documents on the community's history and plans

1.4.4 Analysis

At the level of technique, analysis of the data collected for this project took many forms and occurred through an iterative process. After each of the two preliminary visits to the field, notes, photos, and interviews were reviewed. Preliminary analysis was written up and presented for conferences. This preliminary analysis helped to clarify the research questions and formulate the plan for the eventual fifteen-months of fieldwork. Over the course of this fieldwork, field notes and photos would be reviewed after each phase of research was completed to make adjustments based on hunches or new questions that arose. After the completion of fieldwork, notes, interviews and some documents were analyzed through an iterative coding process in using qualitative data analysis software, Atlas.ti. First attempts a coding used an open system. However, it should be noted that the formal analysis through establishing quotes and excerpts with software constitutes just one way in which I examined the numerous forms of data gathered. In a project where context is so key, the kind of disembodied excerpts that can arise through software-based analysis often prove inadequate. Just as often as I relied on software, I reviewed the audio or transcripts of entire conversations next to each other, compared photos and notes from different events, and wrote and rewrote summaries of the different sub-cases in an effort to configure the many pieces into something meaningful.

Through these phases and piecemeal strategies, I was guided by a general framework inspired by Tsing's (2005) concepts of "friction" and "engaged universals." Tsing posits friction as a response to discourses around globalization that conceive of the transfer of ideas and knowledge as seamless flows. Against this, she emphasizes that things only move forward through the friction that occurs when "the rubber meets the road" (6). It is through the heat and motion that occurs when different forces meet that ideas, policies, and practices are propelled onward, often in new configurations. This friction occurs in "zones of awkward engagement" (xi), where alliances are created between actors whose interests overlap but do not fully align. In Tsing's own work, these zones occur through efforts to create community-based forest management. When these efforts are undertaken, the programs are the tangible subjects of debate, but in the process, so are ostensibly universal concepts like rights or the environment. However, despite assumptions of the universality of these concepts, the parties involved bring different interpretations to bear on their implementation. This process of implementation turns these ideals into "engaged universals" (1; 6-11). Tsing's conceptualization of engaged universals that are reshaped through the frictions produced in particular sites encourages the researcher to dig deeply into specificities while not abandoning the possibility of speaking to the global. In this project, the primary engaged universal under investigation is the concept of community. However, in the process, community intersects with many other universal ideals, including "citizenship," "participation," "property," "rights," and "empowerment." My purpose in this project is not to define any of these terms, but rather to analyze how they are understood, deployed, and transformed through the interactions of the many people and organizations involved in *Baan Mankong*.

1.5 Organization of the Dissertation

In the follow chapters, I trace the trajectories of these community networks by looking not just at their immediate creation, but by stepping back to examine how they have formed as a result of and alongside evolutions in the concept of community itself. To do this, I begin with the Thai word for community—*chumchon*.

Thailand presents a unique case for studying community. To start, in both popular understanding and certain intellectual traditions, "community" has been posited as an essential

element of Thainess, the traditional social unit of a collectivist culture (Chatthip 1999). However, despite this belief in the primordial nature of community in the Thai context, the Thai word *chumchon* not coined until the middle of the twentieth century (C. J. Reynolds 2009). In the Chapter 2, I look to this era, when rural villages became the focus of both the mobilizations of the Communist Party of the Thailand and the counterinsurgency efforts of the Thai government and western powers, to understand how *chumchon* made its way into the lexicons, imaginations, and practices of opposing political movements. In Chapter 3, I then demonstrate how, over the course of the latter half of the twentieth century, *chumchon* came to be applied not only to rural villages, but also to a particularly type of urban settlement, what are often called "slums." Just as was the case in the era of the insurgency, in the urban context *chumchon* became the focus of both government programs and popular mobilizations against the state. These efforts to manage and utilize *chumchon* to serve different political interests were carried out in part by members of *chumchon* themselves, but they were also organized by a growing number of professionals, from government employees to organizers employed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Influenced by the global spread of practices of community development and community organizing, as well as lessons from the time of the insurgency, these professionals forged a number of common practices, though often in service of very different ideologies and political goals. It was out of this complex field of ideas, practices, and new professions, that slum-based community networks and community-based urban housing policies emerged. The most well-known among these is the *Baan Mankong* policy and the community networks associated with it.

In the second half of the dissertation, I turn to the present era, looking at these networks and their work on two different scales. First, In Chapter 4 I examine the networks themselves, describing their organizational structures, rhetorics, and ways of operating on the ground. In doing so, I look at the networks from both a comparative and a relational perspective. This means that I first analyze the similarities and differences of the individual organizations before pulling back to look at how those similarities and differences function in the larger contexts of the *Baan Mankong* policy and urban politics more broadly. This wider focus shows how the two approaches have both, in their own way, been integral to sustaining *Baan Mankong* over the past 15 years.

Following this examination of the networks themselves, in Chapter 5 I zoom in to the level of the community, looking at how the networks affect the social, political, and material formations of *chumchon.* Through a discussion of four individual cases studies of *chumchon*, I analyze how their relationships with other organizations and larger political movements influence how they manage their collective ownership of land and resources. This small-scale examination of *chumchon* brings to light the everyday, human impacts of the *Baan Mankong* policy. It also highlights the lived reality of holding land and debt in common, both the benefits and the hardships. It also Furthermore, because the case studies represent communities that belong to different networks *and* began their projects at different points in time, I am able to trace how the process of doing *Baan Mankong* has changed as the program has "gone to scale" and various government entities have recognized the potential benefits to the state of having poor populations self-manage and take responsibility for urban development. I conclude that the process of creating the collective land and resources entailed in many newer *Baan Mankong* projects, far from being a political project of "commoning," are more accurately described as "being commoned."

In Chapter 6, I conclude by reflecting on what it means for a policy to be a success and the many unintended consequences of success. *Baan Mankong*'s declared success has resulted in

its growth and expansion across Thailand. As the program model is replicated across the urban landscape, it reproduces particular physical forms, lifestyles, and modes of being a community. This replication carries with it a risk of producing de-politicized forms of community that function primarily as a means of managing poor populations. However, within the increasingly rigid structures of the established policy, as one network demonstrates, the prospect of using community as a base of political mobilization still exists. These dual possibilities of community—management versus mobilization—serve as both inspiration and caution for planners seeking to learn from best practices and replicate programs deemed successful.

Chapter 2: Unsettling Traditions

2.1 Introduction

On an April afternoon in 2018, I sit across from a professor who has led the social and intellectual movement called *sitthi chumchon*, or "community rights*,"* in his office in Northern Thailand. *Sitthi chumchon* has sought to organize rural Northern communities to increase their power to negotiate with the state. Despite these controversial political leanings, the professor is mild-mannered and humble. As we talk, he says "I don't know" frequently for a man with a wealth of knowledge and 50 years of experience in his field. I have come to interview him about the history of the word *chumchon* and his involvement in discussions about the role of community Thai society. I am specifically interested in the debates between his own community rights school and a competing movement, *wathanatham chumchon,* or "community culture," whose focus was more on developing communities' "local wisdom" in order to build self reliance and distance themselves from the state. But if I came expecting the professor to expound upon the stark differences between his own thought and those of his intellectual adversaries, I am sorely disappointed. Describing his approach to community culture, he's says,

> I was not happy with the community culture school from the very beginning already. But I think that at the beginning, we should be friends, we should form an alliance rather than, what do you call, criticize them outright, you know… because I don't understand them completely, either. So I just try to work with them…We should not have only one approach. We should have more than just one, something like that. But I do not just completely dismiss them…We should form an alliance or work together. But we criticize them a little bit to show the difference. To distinguish ourselves from that kind of approach. We think that that approach alone might not be enough.

It turns out that this history, like so many other strands of influence that have shaped contemporary practices around *chumchon,* is more a tale of uneasy and shifting alliances than of fierce rivalries.

Also like so many other currents, the origins of the community rights movement, and even the professor's own thoughts, are difficult to pinpoint, as they span multiple scales and geographies. In the 1970s, when many of his contemporaries who were associated with the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) had fled to the forests to escape government counterinsurgency efforts, he was in the United States, studying Marxist social theory under famous western anthropologists. However, he is loath to credit this training with the development of his ideas with respect to community rights. That, he says, has always been more grounded and practical than theoretical: "it really comes from my strong engagement with the people in the field. I mean, doing research, and then trying to come up with certain ideas that are more, that can gain more impact. That's what we are thinking, during our work, we never think about theory or anything like that. Even though that is in the back of your head, but you don't know how it comes into your work, you see. It's like a more natural, we do not adopt it consciously, let's say."

But despite this insistence that his ideas come from the field, he readily tosses about the many different theories of community he has read and thought about over the years, from

comparative studies of open and closed corporate communities to Thailand-specific debates on the nature of the village in traditional society. On all of these fronts, he refuses to take sides or stake out a clear position with respect to other scholars. His views, he says, are always evolving. At his age, he recounts, he cannot even remember what opinions he held in different periods of life. As the interview comes to a close, I begin to appreciate that the absence of fixity may perhaps be his greatest conviction, for in one of my final questions, he responds with absolute certainty.

A fundamental and common assumption among Thai scholars and lay people alike is that the *chumchon*, this small, collective social unit, represents the traditional Thai way of life. Despite the fact that the word *chumchon* was only coined in the middle of the 20th century, it is believed that the term is merely a new appellation for a very old social structure, the village. So before leaving, I ask the professor, are the *chumchon* that he works with today in some way the same as villages of the past? Without hesitation, he laughs: "No, no, no…*community is not settled. It's dynamic. It's fluid*."

2.2 Following a Fluid Object

In this chapter, I track the emergence and transformations of the word *chumchon* and its associated meanings, focusing specifically on how this term, which originally applied to rural society, has become a key element of urban governance and social mobilizations of the urban poor. My purpose is to articulate an evolution of tensions around the use of this complex and contested word. In doing so, I draw inspiration from Tsing's (2011) metaphor of *friction* to think through how new ideas and social constructs are produced in "zones of awkward engagement" (xi), where opposing forces meet. I trace how global currents have interacted with local movements to create new forms of knowledge, meaning, and social organization. Often contradictory versions of these forms coexist simultaneously. Thus, the "object" of my study is not so much an object as a study site that is, as the professor of community rights astutely describes, "fluid" and "dynamic."

To do this, I draw from historical texts, secondary literature, and interviews with academics, activists, and community development workers. I begin in the era immediately following World War II, when *chumchon* is believed to have been coined. I then describe how it has been taken up by various intellectual traditions in the ensuing decades, acquiring assumptions of a much longer history in the process. These assumptions and narratives of *chumchon* have concrete impacts. As I will demonstrate in this and subsequent chapters, the stories told about *chumchon* influence the practices of social movements, state entities, and *chumchon* themselves. While these narratives frequently posit *chumchon* as "primordial" or "natural" to the Thai way of life, I argue that this most local of social units has, in fact, always been a global construction. Through this *unsettling* of this term, I set the stage to analyze its contemporary manifestations in the *Baan Mankong* policy.

2.3 The Pre-history and Coinage of *Chumchon*

"For decades, scholarship on the Thai peasantry has proceeded as if the history of the peasantry were known" (Bowie 1997, 797).

Long before the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) and the Royal Thai Government (RTG) began their efforts to shape the rural populace into their own images of ideal *chumchon,* Thai elites and foreigners have believed that the Thai peasantry lived in peaceful, egalitarian, and self-sufficient plenty. Katherine Bowie (1992, 798) refers to the spread of this "history" of rural

Thailand as “Fabrication through Repetition,” and she dates its origins at least to King Ramkhamheang, who, with the simple and oft-repeated statement, “There is fish in the water and rice in the fields,” painted an idyllic picture of the life of the Thai peasant that endured for centuries (Bowie 1992, 797). Since history as an academic subject or intellectual pursuit did not exist as such in Thailand until well into the twentieth century (Bowie 1992; Reynolds 2006), these romantic notions were perpetuated through the de facto histories of the nation, though, as Bowie (1992, 799-801) notes, many of them were written by urban elites relying, at best, on short visits and second-hand knowledge.

Later descriptions of the peasantry tended to perpetuate these earlier characterizations, though with some differences according to their ideological leanings, which Bowie (1992) classifies as either “romanticist” or “Marxist.” Accounts of peasant self-sufficiency gained a new air legitimacy in post-World War II era, as foreign anthropologists took an interest in studying rural Thailand. There was a great deal of scholarship by Americans during the 1950s to the 1970s, much of it relying on the "romanticism" of early Thai work, imagining the Thai peasant as peaceful, self-contained, and static due to the abundance of resources and land (Kemp 1988; Bowie 1992)(Kemp 1988. 989; Bowie 1992). Anthropologists often painted these pictures despite mentioning evidence of markets, trade, and conflict that belied their romantic claims (Bowie 1992, 801-802). Marxist literature of the time perpetuated many similar themes, though differing in certain respects. For example, they emphasized the change wrought by the Bowring Treaty in 1855 and employed the language of “feudalism” to describe the reasons why peasants did not trade or have many external relations (Bowie 1992, 802-803). Nonetheless, both the romanticists and the Marxists painted pictures of self-reliance and isolation when describing the state of social relations in rural Thailand throughout much of history. As Bowie (1992, 804) explains, “ironically, Thailand's Marxist scholars have perpetuated aspects of the view held by the royalist elite." Perhaps it should not be surprising, then, that both the CPT and the Thai government sought to create similar types of social structures as they fought to win over the populace.

While *chumchon* tends to connote a traditional, harmonious, collective rural existence, the word itself arose out of a global ideological and geopolitical conflict. In the wake of the end of World War II, the spread of communism throughout the eastern hemisphere was the driving concern of many foreign policy makers in the so-called “Free World.” By the 1950s, the influence of communist China in Southeast Asia was on the rise, and the forces of Pathet Lao and the Viet Minh were gathering steam. While the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) was well established by this time, its presence was small compared to the parties of neighboring countries. This, combined with a historically friendly—if, at times, non-committal— disposition towards the United States, made Thailand an ideal base from base from which to operate regional counterinsurgency efforts (Randolph 1986). While these efforts certainly took the form of military interventions, they also focused on social and economic strategies for countering the influence of the Communist guerilla fighters, often in the form of “community development” (Nairn 1966; Scoville and Dalton 1974; Randolph 1986). Over the course of the 1950s through the 1970s, as the CPT grew in size and influence in villages throughout the provinces, the Thai government and foreign funders intensified efforts to win the allegiance of the country’s rural populations through the promotion of community-based resources. In the crucible of this domestic and global battle for the loyalty of rural Thais, *chumchon* was forged as a way to translate concepts serving both sides of the ideological divide.

2.3.2 Chumchon: The Early Written Word

Despite the association of the word *chumchon* with the traditional, collectivist, Thai way of living, it is likely the word did not exist, or at least was not in common usage, prior to the mid-twentieth century (C. J. Reynolds 2009). As recently as the 1940s, the Macfarland Thai-English dictionary contains no entry for the word *chumchon*. However, the words *chum* ("to come together") and *chon* ("people") are listed in separate entries. Half a century earlier, the 1890 Macfarland English-Siamese dictionary did not list *chumchon* under its "community" entry, instead interpreting the word as *muu rathsadon nai tambon neung*,[8] an awkward bureaucratic translation meaning roughly "a group of subjects in a district." This description of community as a unit of governance is quite telling and foreshadows later developments in its usage. However, what is perhaps most curious about this early translation is that it does not equate community with "village," which is translated as [waiting for book, probably *ban* or *muban*]. The assertion that community is simply a new word for a village lies at the heart of arguments for its ancient roots (Nartsupha 1991). However, as of 1890, in the minds of English speakers in Thailand, "village" and "community" were not equivalents. And while the English meanings of these words may seem poor evidence for their respective significance in Thai, as this section demonstrates, translation has been integral to the constructions of *chumchon* from the beginning.

As Reynolds (2009) has adeptly documented, there were multiple impetuses for the creation of a word like *chumchon* in the Thai language in the middle of the twentieth century. The most specific claim to its coinage comes from the diplomat known as Prince Wan (C. J. Reynolds 2009). The grandson of King Mongkut (Rama IV), the monarch who began the project of making then-Siam legible to the Western powers in the late nineteenth century (Thongchai 1994), Prince Wan was ambassador to both the United States and the United Nations in the era immediately following World War II. He has been credited with translating terms for numerous Western institutions into Thai, including those as grand as "democracy" (*prachathibotai)* and as mundane as "bank" (*thanakhan*). It is possible he coined *chumchon* as early as 1934 (C. J. Reynolds 2009), and the Community Development Department points to 1940 as being the year in which the "community development line of thinking"[9] originated within the Ministry of the Interior (Community Development Department n.d.). However, the word was almost certainly not yet used in common parlance.

At the other end of the ideological spectrum, Marxists of the era were in search of a term for "primitive commune" and the sort of communal land holdings believed to be the basis of the Asiatic Mode of Production. As of the 1950s, writers in this vein were using *chumchon* for this purpose, though no one person claims to have coined the term. At the time, some writers were also using other words, including *chumnum* (C. J. Reynolds 2009), defined as an "assembly" or "congregation" in the 1944 MacFarland dictionary. In contemporary times, *chumnum* is still an important word for leftist activists; however, it implies a temporary gathering of people, such as a rally or direct action. The word *chumchon* would ultimately win out to describe more permanent communal settlements in this intellectual tradition.

2.4 Chumchon on the Ground: 1950-1970

These early efforts to translate to *chumchon* were not merely bureaucratic or intellectual exercises. They reflected movements on the ground to claim and reshape rural society. On the

[8] หมู่ราษฎรในตำบลหนึ่ง

[9] แนวคิดการพัฒนาชุมชน

part of the Thai government, this new word *chumchon* served as a vehicle for policies initiated to achieve two related aims. The first was to improve the economic lot and quality of life of the country's rural population. This would ultimately serve the second--and, in many respects, more important—goal, which was to tamp down a growing communist insurgency. The spread of the communist movement in Thailand occurred alongside concomitant anti-communist interventions on the part of both the Thai government and the United States. However, the direction of causality between the two phenomena was more complex than one might assume.

2.4.1 International Aid and the Community Development Efforts of the Thai Government: Cooperation and Tension

The Thai government initially undertook efforts at "rural development" [10] in 1940, under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior. The Community Development Department, in its own history, claims that this was the origin of "the community development line of thinking" (*naew kit kan pathana chumchon*) (Community Development Department n.d.), though it is unclear to what extent the word *chumchon* was actually used at the time. However, in 1956 a national plan for community development was drawn up (Nairn 1966). The stated goals of this early effort were twofold: 1) "to build up the hearts and minds of the rural people so as to be good citizens;"[11] and 2) "to promote the improvement of livelihoods for rural people"[12] (Community Development Department n.d.). The order of these two goals is quite telling with respect to the political aims of the plan, with improved livelihoods coming after the creation of "good citizens." The results of this early rural development plan were quite modest; however, a much larger effort was still to come, both through the initiatives of the Thai government and through international aid. All of these programs aimed, in some way, to shape a citizenry while simultaneously improving the material conditions life for the country's rural population. However, Thai and foreign interpretations often differed in terms of exactly what constituted a good Thai citizen and what type of national government such a citizen should desire. Despite tensions in terms of the broader visions of what type of Thai society should emerge from these efforts, there was general agreement that a major aim of community development was to increase capacity for local self-government.

By the 1950s and early 1960s, a significant amount of international aid was flowing into Thailand for rural development. During that period, the United States invested some $300 million in grants and loans for agricultural, educational, and community development efforts in rural areas in Thailand through the United States Operations Mission (USOM, later USAID) (Scoville and Dalton 1974). Other major funders of the era included the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as well as multinational corporations, such as the Shell Corporation (Nairn 1966). Much of this aid was targeted toward "community development," which a UNESCO documents describes as "'the processes by which a local community can raise its own standard of living.'[13] This sort of "self-help" approach to local development would appear over and over again through the many efforts to develop communities in Thailand in the ensuing decades, and later intellectual movements would even posit the self-sufficiency of local communities as an inherent quality of traditional life. However,

[10] การบุรณะชนบทพัฒนา

[11] สร้างสรรค์ชีวิตจิตใจของประชาชนในชนบทให้เหมาะสมที่จะเป็นพลเมืองดี

[12] ส่งเสริมให้ประชาชนมีการครองชีพที่ดีขึ้น

[13] [internal quote Minutes of the second General Meeting of the Regional Education Officers Conference, Ubol, July 14, 1955 (from the files, UNESCO Regional Office, Bangkok), p.2)], cited in Nairn 1966

in these early community development efforts, foreign aid agencies hardly viewed villages as autonomous. In fact, an early UNESCO document on the prevailing conditions reported that rural Thailand was ripe for "social change" because of a willingness to follow authority (Nairn 1966). The programs, thus, sought "a combination of assistance from outside the community with local self-help and effort.'" (Nairn 1966, 48).[14] Much of this outside assistance came in the form of what was known as "fundamental education," defined as "that kind of minimum and general education which aims to help children and adults who do not have the advantages of formal education to understand the problems of their immediate environment and their rights and duties as citizens and individuals and to participate more effectively in the economic and social progress of the community."[15] This emphasis on personal development as a means to creating a particular type of citizen reflected a common Western perception of the goals of community development—the promotion of liberal democracy. Citing prominent American aid administrator Sheldon Turner, Nairn (1966) says that, "A view expressed by the USOM Community Development Office was that the only objective of a community development program was to promote the growth of autonomous and self-governing institutions at the village level as precursors of the general development of democracy with a peasant base." However, this high-minded aim toward creating a democratic populace existed alongside another, more pragmatic, political aim, which was "to build a bridge between people and government,' composed of building blocks linking popular demand for and government supply of services" (Randolph 1986, 96).[16] This "bridge building" between the government and rural dwellers was believed to be the key to preventing the spread of insurgency.

Foreign interventions in community development—and certainly the money that came with them—were welcomed by the Thai government, led in the early days by Prime Minister Phibun Songkhram, who was eager to consolidate his support in rural areas. The construction of these proverbial bridges was entrusted to Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat, a military officer in charge of rural development who would stage a coup in 1957 and become Prime Minister in 1958. While these officials were concerned with improving the material conditions of life for the country's rural dwellers, this concern had more to do with simply preventing unrest than achieving the progressive social change envisioned by foreign donors. As Nairn (1966) puts it,

> While the politically minded Westerner may see in rural development schemes generally a means of promoting democracy, it seems certain that the Thai elite saw something quite different. Amelioration of peasant problems was a means of preserving the status quo. After all, what better way was there of preserving the ancient Thai order of things than to have a happy contented peasantry, with good health, an improved agriculture through application of science and technology, a developing school system, and a slow but steady rise in per capita income? If at the same time, Thai values regarding religions and monarchy and concepts of social status could be preserved, what better way could there be to avoid the stresses and general disruptions of more radical courses? (Nairn 1966, 101–2).

[14] Ibid

[15] Ibid

[16] (citing footnote 35 USOM, "The Strategy of the Thai/Aid Program," undated (circa 1965) (mimeo)).

These differences in goals, along with failures of communication and administrative coordination, ultimately led to the discontinuation of most of the foreign-led community development efforts of the 1950s and early 1960s (Nairn 1966; Scoville and Dalton 1974). However, by the mid-1960s any differences in motivation between the United States and the Thai governments were overshadowed by a perceived growing communist threat.

The floundering and uncoordinated community development efforts of both the Thai government and aid agencies in the 1950s and early 1960s took on a new air of importance by mid-1960s. As Nairn (1966) puts it, "The reasons for this community development boom are not hard to find"[17] (104-5). After 1965, the membership of the CPT was indeed growing. Between 1965 and 1968 some sources estimated that the number of insurgents approximately quadrupled, from 500 to 2,000 (Randolph 1986). However, these numbers were still quite small compared to movements elsewhere. And in reality, it was events elsewhere—namely, the seizure of Laos by communist forces—that spurred the sudden urgency placed on community development more than the actual uptick in Thai insurgents' numbers (Nairn 1966). While the Community Development Department had been created within the Ministry of the Interior, it was largely inactive in its first few years. However, in 1964 it was integrated into a larger, multi-agency civilian and military effort to intervene in rural areas known as the Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) Program (Nairn 1966; Scoville and Dalton 1974; Randolph 1986). Official literature on the department describes its goals in terms of creating communities that are better prepared to enact the development plans of the nation, including "preparing communities to be a base of support for development projects of all agencies working in rural areas," [18]and "seeking cooperation and support for projects of the government and private organizations".[19] This preparation to contribute to larger development efforts involved creating communities that could self-govern and manage themselves, as the goal of the Community Development Department as of 1962 was to "improve rural people's quality of life through the cooperation of the people developing themselves, which is to say that development workers must work with the people rather than do things for them"[20] (Community Development Department n.d.).

2.4.1 The Co-Evolution of the Rural Mission of the Communist Party of Thailand and Thai Government-U.S. Countermeasures

Marxist thought began to percolate among intellectuals in Thailand in the early 20th century. The spread of Marxism was fueled mostly through intellectuals studying in China, which marks a difference between the dissemination of Marxist thought in Thailand compared to most other Southeast Asian countries, whose primary influences came from exchanges with Europe (Baker 2003; Morell and Chai-anan Samutwanit 1981, 78). Through this eastern influence, what would be eventually become the Communist Party of Thailand would adopt strategies quite similar those professed by Mao Zedong. Vietnam also played a significant role in the establishment of a Marxist movement Thailand, with Ho Chi Minh assisting in the establishment of the original Community Party of Siam in 1930 (Baker 2003), and in 1932 there

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[18] การเตรียมชุมชนเพื่อเป็นฐานรองรับโครงการพัฒนาของทุกหน่วยงานที่ลงสู่ชนบท

[19] แสวงหาความร่วมมือช่วยเหลือสนับสนุนโครงการของรัฐบาลและองค์กรเอกชน (From the index of Community Development Department, national archives, บัญชีสำรวจเอกสารกระทรวงมหาดไทย กรมการพัฒนาชุมชน, (8) มท 5.4.1.35-5.4.149)

[20] ปรับปรุงคุณภาพชีวิตของประชาชนในชนบทโดยการมีส่วนร่วมของประชาชนและการพัฒนา ตนเอง ซึ่งอาจกล่าวได้ว่าพัฒนากรต้องทำงานกับประชาชน มิใช่ทำให้ประชาชน

was an uncharacteristic “flurry of open propaganda” by the party (Morell and Chai-anan Samutwanit 1981, 79). The Thai government wasted no time in combatting the then-minimal movement, enacting the Anticommunist Act of 1933 (Morell and Chai-anan Samutwanit 1981). This was ten years before the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) would even hold its First Congress (Baker 2003). The stringent response to communism is believed by many to have fueled communist sympathies rural areas (K. A. Bowie 1997), and was by no means an approach that was initiated by the Thai government alone.

The great irony of American anti-communist interventions in Thailand is that the military was continually trying to combat an insurgency that was fueled by American military intervention. The CPT itself made this connection explicit in explaining its major motivations in a 1974 internal history of the party: "At present the major imperialist which dominates our country is America. The landlord class and bureaucratic capitalists who hold power have followed the policy of selling the nation, and becoming lackeys of American imperialism" (Baker 2003, 516). On the ground, the presence of U.S. troops in the Thai countryside and the resentment they engendered played no small part in the rising sympathies of rural dwellers for the insurgency (K. A. Bowie 1997; Nitirat 2007). These sympathies would play into the eventual strategy of the CPT to build a largely Mao-inspired peasant insurgency.

While shaping *chumchon* eventually became a goal of both the left and the right, it is not clear when or to what extent *chumchon* was a pertinent concept for the CPT. Despite the fact that Marxist intellectuals were using *chumchon* by the 1950s (C. J. Reynolds 2009), there is little evidence that the CPT itself was using the term, at least in the early days. An internal account of the party’s history makes no mention of the word (Baker 2003, need to email him for the original Thai version), nor is there any mention of “community” in English accounts of the party during the time it was active and immediately after (de Beer 1978; Chantima Ongsuragz 1982). However, it is certain that the party’s primary targets and bases of operations were rural areas. At the Third Congress of the CPT in 1961, it was decided that theirs would be a rural movement based on the principles of Mao Zedong. The necessity for this type of rural insurgency was based on the party’s assessment that Thailand was “semi-feudal” and “semi-colonial” (Chantima Ongsuragz 1982, 365; Thomas 1986, 23; Baker 2003, 514) Based on this assessment, they determined that, “Among the revolutionary forces, the working class is the leader, while the peasant class is the great army and the main force. ” (Baker 2003, 516). It stands to reason, then, that their work in this era may have focused more on constructing an armed fighting force than on establishing what might be called communities. From the 1961 Third Congress until 1965, the party developed camps and trained insurgents in forests and mountains. After 1965, the party's military arm, the Thai People's Liberation Army, conducted guerrilla warfare, primary in the Northeast (Thomas 1986).

By international standards, the size of this fighting force was still quite small in 1965, at just 500 or so (Randolph 1986). Nonetheless, the belief in the importance of Thailand to the fate of the region as a whole drew a sizable reaction, both foreign and domestic. Through foreign aid and the initiatives of the Thai government, Bowie (1997) has pointed out that the influence of communism in this era was perhaps not so much through the actual impacts of the CPT’s own insurgency, but rather through the ways in which the communist threat shaped the Thai state. Much attention has been paid to the enormous amounts of aid for military interventions, the Border Patrol Police (BPP), and a more comprehensive program designed to secure countryside in 1964 known as the Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) program (Scoville and Dalton 1974; Randolph 1986). However, an early and important counterinsurgency measure that would

have enduring impacts on Thai society was the initiation of community development *(kanphatthana chumchon*).

This large rural development effort could not have been enacted without a corps of trained community development workers. These workers tended to be among the youngest civilian staff in the government (Scoville and Dalton 1974). As the next section will demonstrate, they were not the only young people working in the villages. As the 1970s progressed, the youth of the country, many of whom were raised in cities and towns, found themselves dispatched to the country's remote areas. Some worked for the government, others were fervent members of the CPT, and still others nominally joined with the communists in order to escape threats and protest the actions of the government. What they all had in common was a mandate to reshape the collective life of the rural populace.

2.4.3 The 1970s Student Movement: From the Campus to the Forest

The most well-known group of young people to work in rural areas in the 1970s is a group of former student activists that would eventually come to be known as the Octoberists (*khon deuan tula*) because of their involvement in two protest movements that took place in October of 1973 and 1976. While the former was heralded as a success of democratic mobilization, the latter would end in mass bloodshed and lead the Octoberists to flee to the forests to fight with the CPT. Over the course of this tumultuous decade, this generation of student activists would gain experience in communal living and local mobilization that would set them up to become leaders of community-based movements in the coming decades.

The number of students in higher education in Thailand had grown dramatically by the early 1970s, resulting in a new population of politically active young people with places and resources to organize. This was due to a number of factors, including the founding of new vocational schools and universities in Bangkok and the provincial capitals, as well as a growing middle class that could afford to send their children on to higher education (Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit 2014). Universities proved to be a space for this new generation of students to interact with progressive professors and begin to organize along democratic ideals. One of the most prominent student organizations of the era was the National Student Council of Thailand (NSCT), founded in 1965 (Missingham 2003, 65). The NSCT was a leading organizer of a massive protest movement that started with students that eventually toppled the military government of Thanom Kitticharnon on October 14, 1973. At that point, the primary motivations of the student movement revolved around the creation of a genuine democracy and putting an end to the imperialist actions of the United States (Kanokrat 2016; Morell and Chai-anan Samutwanit 1981). While the most well-known actions of the student movement are their major protests of October 1973 and 1976, the movement also entailed efforts to organize in villages throughout the country. This training would prove pivotal for many of this generation, which would later be known as the Octoberists.

Beginning in 1973 (Morell and Chai-anan Samutwanit 1981) many members of the growing student movement took part in the Democracy Propagation Program under the support of Prime Minister Sanya Dharmasakti. The program sent students out into all 580 districts in the country to educate the populace on liberal democracy and the principles of self-government. Most of them were wholly unsuccessful in this respect, as they spoke in grand theories that seemed detached from the actual concerns of poor farmers. However, some those who listened to the concerns of the villagers gained a tremendous education in the process. In the recounting of Morell and Chai-Anan, "Perhaps the most significant consequence of this program was to give the students a tremendous experience with rural life, a shock-treatment exposure to the farmers'

true living conditions. The students learned far more from the villagers than vice versa. Many were radicalized, becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the structure of government in Thailand and with the Bangkok establishment from which many of them came" (Morell and Chai-anan Samutwanit 1981, 152). This education not only formed the seeds of radicalization; for some, it also provided an opportunity to exercise new roles as organizers: "Some of the students did remarkable work. Those who were pragmatic, who *listened,* who exercised common sense, made a great impact on the areas they visited. Instead of teaching the farmers about the democratic system of government, they mobilized farmers to political action. They showed them what could be done, and how to take the first steps. Since there were no elected members of parliament during this period, the students were acting as the only brokers for the farmers' grievances" (Morell and Chai-anan Samutwanit 1981, 152). The protests of 1973 demonstrated the power of the student movement to mobilize the masses of the country. Up until that point, the CPT had been the primary group attempting to do so. Morell and Chai-anan (1981, 155) attribute their success in this respect to five major characteristics: "organizational capability, unity, manpower, information, and prestige." As of 1973, this power was put to use in the service of toppling a military regime. However, between 1973 and 1976, the rhetoric of the NSCT and other student groups would begin to shift, setting the stage for a more radical stage of the movement.

In the three intervening years between the 1973 and 1976 October protests, factions of the student movement grew more radical. This was at least in part due to a shift in the CPT's policy toward making an active effort to target propaganda toward the students, who they had previously considered to be "soft-minded intellectual bourgeois who were not truly committed to revolutionary struggle" (Morell and Chai-anan Samutwanit 1981, 287). However, after 1973, the CPT was persuaded to change course. One of the leaders of NSCT during the 1973 protest, Seksan Preasertkun, broke off to form a more explicitly leftist group, the Federation of Independent Students of Thailand (FIST). This group also began sending students to rural areas and slums at the same time as the Democracy Propagation Program, but with a message that was closer to that of the CPT. Marxist terminology, such "capitalists," "feudalists," and "imperialists" also began to make its way into the language of the NSCT leadership and literature (Morell and Chai-anan Samutwanit 1981). However, at this point there was still no explicit alignment between the two movements.

The absence of an explicit connection between the CPT and the student movement did not prevent movements of the right from accusing student activists of being communists. At the same time as the NSCT and other progressive student groups were gaining influence on campuses, village and student groups from the right were also growing in numbers and momentum. The Red Gaurs and Village Scouts were on the rise in villages throughout the country (Morell and Chai-anan Samutwanit 1981; K. A. Bowie 1997). These movements also had student members that were particularly influential in provincial vocational schools, stoking acute political rivalries on campuses (Nitirat 2007). In addition, the more conservative older generation in the general populace began to associate the student movement with the communists (Morell and Chai-anan Samutwanit 1981). Even though the majority of students did not align themselves with the CPT and never read any Marxist literature prior to 1976, the general backlash from conservatives to their progressive movement may have pushed many young people into sympathy with the party (de Beer 1978). This growing divide between political movements and generations set the stage for violence and a subsequent mass movement of student activists into the arms of the CPT.

In the first days of October, 1976, tensions between the right and left reached a boiling point on the campus of Thammasat University. Incited by the return of two military field marshals who had been exiled after the 1973 overthrow, students of the left began to mobilize. The police and military responded, and they were backed by members of the Village Scouts and Red Gaurs. Over the course of two days, tensions grew until on October 6 violence erupted. Formal accounts of what is known as “the incident” or more pointedly, “the massacre,” of October 6, 1976 paint a harried and chaotic picture. Forty-six students were confirmed dead from the incident, though some reported having seen over 100 bodies carried away (K. A. Bowie 1997, 28). What is clear is that over 3,000 students were arrested, though only 19 were charged (K. A. Bowie 1997, 28; Nitirat 2007, 24)(Bowie 1997, Suwit Committee 2007, 24). When the majority were released, they began a mass exodus to the forests to join the CPT. Ultimately, several thousand decided to or go into the forests (*khao pa*). Many who went into the forests had been convinced by the October 6 incident that fighting to change society by peaceful means was not yielding results, and therefore it was time to take up arms. Others were fleeing what was called the "white menace” (*phai khao*), which referred to the growing imposition of American force in Southeast Asia (Nitirat 2007, 24). It is estimated that around 3,000 students fled to the forests during this time (Chantima Ongsuragz 1982, 362). Only a minority had actually studied Marxist texts or had any knowledge of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology of the CPT (Nitirat 2007; Kanokrat 2016; Missingham 2003).

2.4.4 Students in the Forests: Communalism amidst Conflict

The number of insurgents in the CPT ranks grew exponentially in the mid-1970s. Even before the October 6, 1976 incident, their ranks were increasing. Before the incident, it is estimated that the CPT may have had up to 7,000-10,000 armed cadres, backed by another 6-7,000 unarmed civilians. These numbers led the government to declare 40 of the country’s 76 provinces to be “sensitive areas.” When the students fled to the forest in late 1976 and 1977, they were joined by other leftist activists, including labor and famers’ organizers (Morell and Chai-anan Samutwanit 1981, 295). By 1978, there were approximately 14,000 armed insurgents nationwide, with many thousand more unarmed militia members and tens of thousands of supporters (Thomas 1986, 17–18). Insurgents were located throughout the rural Northeast, North, and deep South in scattered settlements. However, the Party maintained major strongholds in the North-Central region encompassing the provinces of Phitsanulok, Loei, and Phetchabun (de Beer 1978; Thomas 1986) (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Region of the Major CPT Strongholds in the Provinces of Phitsanulok, Phetchabun, and Loei

Very few detailed first-hand accounts exist of life in the forests with the CPT. Existing accounts make it difficult to discern whether *chumchon* was a relevant word or concept used by the CPT during this time or whether the word entered the lexicon of the Octoberist before or after their work with the CPT. However, from the limited accounts that do exist, it appears that many of the cadres were doing work far beyond the armed combat that is emphasized in many of the histories of the party, and that their focus was often building self-sufficient communes. The actual practices in the different settlements and strongholds throughout the country likely varied, so it is impossible to know how much the piecemeal accounts that exist can applied broadly to the overall non-combat strategy of the CPT (de Beer 1978). However, they do offer a glimpse into the daily life that would later influence the professional trajectories of many of the activists who participated.

In the forests and villages, these cadres and their supporters did more than build an army. Upon arrival at the settlements, which are sometimes called "camps" (de Beer 1978) and sometimes "communes" (Kanokrat 2016) in the literature, they went through a Military and Political Training School, where they built relationships with the other new recruits, whom they began to call "comrade" (*sahai*). They also learned the teaching of Mao and other Marxist thinkers, though this education often took the form of attempted indoctrination, and ideological debate was not necessarily encouraged, a point of disappointment for many of the students (Kanokrat 2016, 69–70). At least in some of the camps up in the northern strongholds, when new recruits arrived, they were divided into four training groups, only one of which was for warfare.

The others were for agriculture, cultural, and political activities (de Beer 1978). The roles and responsibilities of the new recruits largely reflected their professional and training prior to fleeing to the forests. Those with specialized skills in areas such as medicine or music were sent to Vietnam and China for specialized training (Kanokrat 2016, 70). With a diversity of skills and a commitment to each other, the CPT cadres and their village allies built a collective life in their rural strongholds. Letters from the camps describe at least some of them as being largely self-sufficient in food production through practices of cooperative farming with villagers, albeit with the occasional need to ration or import provisions.

This type of cooperative living with villagers was one of the many principles formally espoused by the party at the time. Quoting from a broadcast of the CPT's radio station, Voice of Thailand, Morell and Chai-anan (1981, 88–89) outline ten disciplinary principles of the CPT. While these ten principles reflect a level of military discipline, they also demonstrate a holistic commitment to creating a new way of life:

1. Listen to and obey orders in performing your tasks
2. Extort no property which belongs to the people.
3. Respect and help the people--be polite to them.
4. Be honest in purchasing necessities from the people; return whatever you borrow from the people, and pay compensation for any people's property damaged by our armed forces.
5. Cause no damage to the people's crops and farms.
6. Drink no intoxicants while on duty.
7. Do not scold or beat anyone.
8. Do not intimidate or take liberties with women.
9. Do not torture prisoners of war.
10. Give all property captured to the public.

These principles of collective life of was certainly enacted to some extent in many of the camps. At least some had electricity, provided basic education to children, and had trained medical workers practicing acupuncture and traditional medicine. They also emphasized the promotion of what were considered traditional Thai values, such as respect for elders, marriage and other ceremonial customs, and practices of mutual aid. This was, for many participants, an explicit rebuke to the perceived influence of American culture on mainstream society. Despite this dedication to local customs and tradition, many of the practices of the camps undeniably relied somewhat on models adapted from Vietnam and other countries (de Beer 1978, 149–50). In a contemporaneous description of the camps based on dispatches from the field, de Beer (1978, 150) summarizes life in the camps, stating that "This testimony gives an idea of life in 'liberated areas', and of the type of society the CPT wants to build, which seems not very different from some aspects of today's Cambodia. The stress on independence, on self-sufficiency and on refusing to rely mainly on foreign assistance--even when it is socialist--is interesting, as too is the emphasis put on political work before military activity."

The life being created by the CPT in the camps, then, was one of complexities and contradictions derived from necessity. The cadres and their supporters were building a distinct culture based on local traditions, but many of them were obviously borrowed from neighboring countries who had influenced the thinking of the party's leaders. Furthermore, this impulse to create or preserve a local culture was itself a response to international influences. They were

trying to build a cooperative, self-sufficient way of life. However, this was not always possible, and as the 1970s drew to a close it would become more and more obvious the extent to which the support from outside, particularly from China, was keeping the party afloat.

What comes across most strongly from accounts of these camps is that, despite the fact that the vast majority of literature on the CPT's strategy emphasizes its focus on building an armed peasant insurgency, in practice the building up of the movement involved building political will through the construction of a communal form of life beyond the reach of the state. When the students were in the forests, "They learned how to work independently in listening to problems, building friendships, settling and living in communities, and persuading and organizing people to fight the Thai state" (Kanokrat 2016, 70). Thus, propaganda, providing for basic needs, and building relationships was just as important as warfare. Citing a letter from a student who had visited a camp in 1977, de Beers (1978, 149) says that his impression was " that the CPT could easily liberate much larger areas of Thailand militarily but that its concern was first to win the hearts of the people."

2.4.5 The Community Development Department and the Phatthanakon in the Villages

They not the only ones trying to do just that in the villages during this time. As the insurgency grew in the 1970s, so did the government's non-military approaches to counter-insurgency. These civilian counter-insurgency efforts built on previous attempts to promote economic development in rural areas and self-government on the part of villagers. However, by this point previous efforts at rural development in the form of the ARD, which emphasized the construction of roads and other infrastructure, were having negative if any effects on the morale of the rural populace. It had become obvious that large scale construction projects often served the interests of the military more than the people, and investments were not being distributed evenly among the populace. This, on top of the often-negative interactions between employees of the central government and villagers, meant that rural development efforts were breeding resentment in at least equal measure to loyalty (cite Bowie? How else?). In contrast to these large-scale investments, the government began also invested in another arm of its civilian counterinsurgency measures. This effort was less about infrastructure and more about "build[ing] strong communities." Through the Community Development Department, efforts were made to put people on the ground who would live in the villages, understand the villagers' wants and needs, and gradually build the types of "bridges" that had been the focus of U.S. interventions for the past two decades. The people who would do this work were largely a class of new recruits to the civil service, much younger than most other staff. These young community development workers, known as *phatthanakon* (literally "developers"), that the government put out in the field were the perfect counterparts to the students who had fled to join the CPT. While it likely was not the intent of the government to provide such counterparts, since the program began before the events of 1976, the presence of these two groups in the villages at the same time meant that two important phenomena were happening simultaneously: (1) villagers were being encouraged to live in self-reliant and self-governing communities by outsiders representing two ideologically opposed views; (2) a generation of young people representing these two sides were developing skill sets for doing this type of organizing work that they would employ in careers long after the acute conflict in the forests and villagers had subsided.

Like the Octoberist generation who had fled to the forests, the *phatthanakon* received practical and ideological training before they began work in the field. Also like the student activists, this training focused on the promotion of local culture and capacity but was strongly influenced by knowledges and practices from other places. The training of these workers was an

organized and international effort. According to Khun Anurak, a former community development worker in the 1970s who went on to a career in agricultural research and consulting for Thai government and international agencies, many of the Thai directors of the community development training programs were initially trained in the U.S. or by USOM staff (2017). These high-level interactions resulted in a training regimen for younger Thai community development workers (*phatthanakon)* that would eventually be dispersed to work in villages throughout the country. These steps bear the hallmarks of many participatory approaches being used in international development efforts throughout the world at the time, which were "designed to mobilize the populace in the identification of local priorities and the pursuit of economic and social goals through government-aided self-help" (Scoville and Dalton 1974, 53). The work required of the *phatthanakon* served multiple goals. The first was build up a sense of collectivity among the villagers. The second, building off this, was to connect this collectivity to the government through concrete investments funneled through the community. Finally, the *phatthanakon* were to relay information about the villages to the government, providing a foundation of data and making the villages more legible.

The meaning of "community development" at this time, as opposed to other efforts at "rural development" was very explicitly about developing a particular type of social unit, not just providing improvements in the material conditions of the rural population. Through the *phatthanakon, chumchon* became an social object with a collective psyche to be molded by professionals. As Khun Anurak describes, "In those days, Thai people were individuals. They don't' work together in groups. The government tried to get them to understand group function…We have a motto: Community development workers, are supposed to create community power and use community power to develop their own community." Creating this "community power" and "group function" could not be done without intensive engagement on the ground, as well as core operating principles and training in "community psychology" and 'the philosophy of how to organize the community."

Beyond initial training in these philosophies, the government, like the CPT, had strict rules about how the *phatthanakon* were to act in the villages, as well as what their goals were. They must be in the villages at least 20 days during the month. They must plant rice with the villagers, stay with families, become one of them. Their work was then assessed by higher ranking officials who would drop by without warning. One of the ways in which the officers would determine how well the *phatthanakon* was performing his duties was to go around the village and simply ask villagers if they knew the *phatthanakon* and what their opinion was of him. This aspect of being well-known and well liked was explicitly about countering the negative narratives the communists were spreading about the government: "We were trained how to be a good government officials and how to create a good image. This was our strength to get away the communists." In place of the communists' narrative, the *phatthanakon* were to spread the idea of democracy and freedom and explain why this was different from what would happen to them if the communists took over. This was part of a larger anti-communist propaganda campaign at the time (see figure 1, propaganda image).

When the *phatthanakon* were in the villages, they were aware of that the communists were also at work in the same areas. According to Khun Anurak, they always assumed that someone around them was probably a communist spy. However, he emphasizes that the *phatthanakon* had a clear advantage over the communists, which was that they could organize out in the open, whereas the communists had to work in secret when they were outside the communes. Despite the necessary furtiveness of those supporting the communists, both sides'

awareness of each other's work was, at least on occasion, more than abstract. Khun Anurak describes at one point in his tenure actually meeting and speaking to a communist organizer when he was in the field. Even though the two were on opposite sides of an intense and violent conflict, in this particular moment, the two shared a mutual respect. The communist reported that he knew he could never say anything against Khun Anurak in the village because Khun Anurak was so well liked that to do so would mean losing the respect of the villagers. Thus, the work in the villages was always about building relationships, trust, and respect first.

If the *phatthanakon* were successful in their work, they and the community were rewarded with funding for projects. Communities were evaluated based on their strength, and for the successful *phatthanakon,* the villagers would understand that they "need to be the strong community because if they are not strong the government will not support them." Teams of evaluators from Bangkok would make visits to the different villages and rank them in order to determine funding priorities, "So the first priority for support for infrastructure will go to the strong communities. So, communities know if you are stronger you will get more support." In this way, communities that were deemed to have the most strength and capacity for self-reliance were then provided with the most outside support.

A final key function of the *phatthanakon* was the collection of information. This began early in the service of the *phatthanakon* and served the dual function of providing a set of activities to aid in community integration, as well as to add to the state's knowledge. A training manual from 1972 details the procedures the young *phatthanakon* were to undertake in the villages. Such techniques included a three-month period in which the *phatthanakon* were to collect a variety of household-level data, perform community mapping exercises, and interview informants. The purpose of doing this initial data collection was to better understand the needs, wants, lifestyles, and attitudes of the local people. This understanding would, in turn, lead to a level of community integration on the part of the *phatthankon*. However, the data collected would also serve another objective of these *phatthanakon*, which was "to be a center of preliminary information and statistics"[21] about community development in the nation (Community Development Department 1972). Through the data, then, communities were amendable to study and categorization at an aggregate level. This type of data collection was just one effort at accumulating research and creating knowledge about communities in this era, as will be discussed in the final section of the chapter.

The ultimate goal of these combined efforts of the *phatthanakon* and the increasingly sophisticated community development apparatus at the national level was, as Khun Anurak puts it, to come out victorious in the competition with the communists to "win over the people" (*yaeng ching prachachon*). The reasons for the eventual fall of the CPT are complex and hotly debated, as will be outlined in the next section. However, the ability of the government to "win over" the general populace no doubt played at least some part. In the view of Khun Anurak, the *phatthanakon* played a crucial role in this.

> …the Thai government was able to suppress the communist threat because of the work of community development. It was only the community development worker that stayed very close to the community…We are the only department to stay in the village. The [cultural officers] stay at the district level. You don't stay in the village. You go and come back. But the community development worker was the only one staying in the

[21] เป็นศูนย์สถิติข้อมูลเบื้องต้น

> community as part of the family. This is very crucial. But not many people know that. Most people thought we fought the communists by using military power. But that was not true… we convinced people about the good things about democracy. So we don't have to use weapons.

2.4.6 The Fall of the CPT

Most analyses agree with Khun Anurak that it was not the military's counter-insurgency efforts that defeated the communists in the end. However, just how much can be attributed to the efforts of the Community Development Department in particular is debatable. Most accounts of that time do not mention the role of community development in the final months and years of the CPT at all. Instead, the primary reasons given for the party's decline include shifting geopolitical alliances, internal conflicts, and a softening of state policy toward the communists themselves.

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the relationships between the communist factions throughout Asia were tense. Thailand had long aligned itself with China but also received aid and training from Vietnam. However, Vietnam maintained closer ties to the Soviet Union. The invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam further intensified tensions in the region. Finally, China reached an agreement with the Thai government, establish greater trade and diplomatic relations, but under conditions that China halt its support for the CPT. A major aspect of this agreement was the defunding of the the Voice of People of Thailand (VPT), the CPT's radio station and primary mode of spreading news and propaganda (Kanokrat 2016, 73; Thomas 1986, 19–20). Without external support for training, weapons, and other operations, the CPT's capacity to mobilize its cadres and spread its influence dwindled. The decline in support from outside meant leaner times in the field, creating dissatisfaction among the younger recruits, in particular. It was just one of many conflicts that began to arise between the established CPT leadership and the student activists.

This hardship heightened already existing tensions between the old guard and the many new recruits that had joined them after October 6 incident. The new cadres were dissatisfied on multiple fronts. One of the chief complaints revolved around the party's principle of governing according to a doctrine of "democratic centralism." This phrase and the principles underlying its practice were meant to achieve a unity within the movement while still adhering to democratic principles. Under the doctrine, "individuals must submit themselves to the organization; public interests must take precedence over private interests; the minority must conform to the majority will'. The minority has the right to express and uphold opinions, but it must comply with the majority's decision until the next round of voting. Elections are periodically held to fill high-level positions" (Chantima Ongsuragz 1982, 374) quoting statements released by the Party). This structure was, at least for a time, responsible for the success of the CPT over government efforts, despite the CPT's much smaller numbers: "The most important aspect of its strength lies in its ability to control its own members and cadres. As a tightly knit, highly disciplined organization, it is essentially a closed structure; recruitment is strictly and carefully controlled. The party uses a tight hierarchical structure in which the lower unit is directly under the control of, and responsible to, the upper echelon; at the top is the Central Committee. The party's advantages over the government's similar hierarchical structure emanate from its more careful selection of members, and their training, motivation, and discipline" (Morell and Chai-anan Samutwanit 1981, 87).

Under the democratic centralist doctrine, in principle democracy was practiced through the freedom to express one's opinions and through elections of high-ranking officials. However,

in practice, appointments by high-ranking members were also used to fill a number of important positions, discussions regarding important policy decisions were orchestrated and controlled by the top brass, and even when there was the opportunity for 'the masses' to express themselves, the old guard was less than enthusiastic about considering the opinions of their newer members (Chantima Ongsuragz 1982, 374). Even if the Party had followed these principles, though, it may not have been able to resolve the vast differences of opinion that now existed in the expanded coalition that was out fighting and organizing in the forests by 1979.

The backgrounds and ideologies of the people considered "communist insurgents" in fact expanded far beyond those who were, strictly speaking, members of the CPT. Many of the leftist intellectuals, organizers, and villagers working with the CPT were not full party members. A large number were part of a new organization that was started in 1977 called the Co-ordinating Committee of Patriotic and Democratic Forces (CCPDF). The CCPDF was comprised of allies of the CPT, but it operated independently (Thomas 1986; Chantima Ongsuragz 1982). As for the student activists, even those who wanted to be full members were often denied full inclusion. Instead, they were given the title of "young communist" (*sanibat yaowachon*) (Chantima Ongsuragz 1982, 362; Nitirat 2007, 27). Even the most dedicated young activists were made to retain this title, even after years of service. By not allowing the students to become full members of the party, they could not hold office and make decisions about the movement's strategy (Nitirat 2007).

If they had had control of the party's strategy, many of the students who were most committed to the communist principles would have gone in a different direction, a direction that would have taken them out of the forests. By 1979, many of the students were questioning the old guard's assessment that Thailand was "semi-feudal," the chief justification for pursuing a peasant-based insurgency. Instead, many of the younger generation that was more dedicated to the cause believed that Thailand had developed a sufficient industrial base so as to justify direct work in urban centers, as opposed to the CPT's Maoist strategy of encircling the cities with a rural base(Thomas 1986, 22–23; Chantima Ongsuragz 1982, 364; Kanokrat 2016, 75).

Additional stress came from the recruits whose true commitments leaned more liberal-democratic than truly communist. Many of the Octoberists were familiar with Marxist thought on a cursory level, but their reasons for joining the insurgency had little to do with wanting a true communist revolution. Instead, they were more motivated by the desire to overthrow the American imperialist influence and create a genuine and lasting democracy in place of the older generations' veneration of traditional hierarchies and acceptance of military rule (Morell and Chai-anan 1981; Kanokrat 2016; Suwit committee 2007). When they joined up with the insurgency, many were quickly disillusioned when faced with the realities of CPT discipline and the rigid Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideologies of the member. In addition, many in the old guard treated them as though they must "atone for their sins of bourgeois materialism, middle-class consciousness, and liberal individualism" (Kanokrat 2016, 71-72).

The combination of the reduction in external aid the presence of internal divisions laid the groundwork for the wave of defections that began in 1979 and continued through 1981. The exodus was aided by the policy changes of the Thai government, now led by Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanonda, who in 1980 and 1982 issued Orders No. 66/2523 and 65/2525which shifted counter-insurgency strategy from military intervention to political, social, and economic development. This included the promise of regular elections and the right to peaceful political protest (Chatima 1982, 364). These basic assurances of democratic process went a long way to "winning over the people," especially the Octoberists whose primary commitment was to

democracy (Chantima 1982; 354; Kanokrat 2016). This was followed up in 1981 with Order No. 66/23, which provided amnesty for insurgents who wished to defect, allowing them to return to mainstream society as "participants in Thai national development" (*phu ruam phatthana prathet thai)* (Chantima 1982 354; Suwit Committee 2007; 26-27). With both the motivation to defect and the assurance that they could return to society unpunished, the student activists left the forests *en masse*. While a small number of cadres would remain in the forests for several years, by 1981 the CPT-led insurgency had been hobbled to an extent that it would not be able to overcome. By the mid-1980s, even the most dedicated insurgents had either left the country or were attempting to re-integrate themselves into mainstream Thai society (Thomas 1986 23; Suwit committee 2007 28-30; Kanokrat 2016, 75-79).

2.5 *Chumchon* in the era of the Community Development Department and the CPT: Similarities and Differences

By the mid-1980s, the major conflict that had led to the first efforts to construct *chumchon* on the ground had ended. However, the legacy of that time would live on, both in the villages that had been the focus of the work, as well as through the generation of professionals on both sides that had honed their skills in community-level work in the field. While the student activists who joined up with the CPT and the *phatthanakon* were attempting to shape *chumchon* to serve opposite sides in a national and ideological conflict, the actual methods, skills, and even the rhetoric they used to do this may not have been so different. In particular, the goals of self-reliance, self-governance, and democracy were important to both sides, though these goals ultimately served opposing aims in the broader national political context.

In the end, the duties of the Octoberists and the *phattanakon* both involved living with villagers, understanding their wants and needs, and organizing them into units that conceived of themselves as discrete, collective entities that could provide for their members through mutual support. Though in different ways and to different desired ends, both groups of young people professed ideals of democracy that could only be achieved through local self-governance. The main difference between these democratic visions was that one aimed to construct a system that could take down the existing Thai state, while the other worked to create a local system that could prop it up. Through the work of these two groups of young people, the concept and practices of *chumchon* penetrated the lexicon and lives of villagers throughout the country. In just a few short decades, this new term had proven to be useful and malleable, able to serve the political objectives of opposing sides. In the ensuing years, "*chumchon"* would only gain in popularity, making its way into policy and activism far beyond its rural roots. This future, though, would be built on an acquired history, constructed through a series of intellectual movements. Like the ideologies and practices of both the CPT and the Thai government, these intellectual movements would aim to create something uniquely Thai but would never escape global influence.

2.6 The Intellectual Currents of Community in Thailand

Why would both the CPT and the Thai government have been trying to form self-reliant, self-governing collectives in the rural areas of Thailand? The most likely answer may be that both sides believed that such entities already existed and were, in fact, the "natural" social state of peasants in the Thai countryside. This idea had existed among elites, both Thai and foreign, long before the mid-twentieth century. However, during the period of the conflict in the forests

and the decade or so after, significant bodies of scholarship emerged to formalize this image of the Thai peasantry, this time formulated around the concept of community and the new Thai word for it, *chumchon*. Thus, at the same time that community was being shaped by opposing forces in the countryside, it was also acquiring a longer and seemingly "natural" history.

In this section, I discuss three strands of scholarship related to the conception of community as the traditional social form of rural Thailand. The first, following Kemp (1988), I call community studies. This refers to the body of anthropological research led by western scholars in the middle of the twentieth century that tended to use community as a geographically contained unit of analysis. The second is the community culture school of thought, led by Chatthip Nartsupha. This school, by relying on empirical historical and economic research, has provided the grounding for much of the activism and policies around community in Thai context from the 1980s to the present. The third school of thought is community rights. While less discussed than community culture in English literature on community in Thailand, community rights has been an influential body of work that splintered off from community culture. Its scholars and activists have put forth distinct arguments about the role of community with respect to the state and the have argued against the view that community is a traditional and static form. In what follows, I outline the history of each current, its most prominent scholars, and its impact on broader understandings of community mainstream Thai society. I conclude by reviewing the evidence against community as a native or traditional social structure, making the argument that community itself, like the word *chumchon*, has been a relative recent construction, created to serve multiple opposing interests.

2.6.1 Community Studies

"The literature on "peasants", "peasantry", and the "peasant village community" is huge and frequently contradictory, but within it certain themes emerge…However, further reflection suggests that at least some of these themes and their ordering of the subject are not what they purport to be, that is, fairly objective observations on a set of distinct phenomena. Instead, they have far more to do with the development of Western culture and society than with the empirical realities, often of the so-called Third World, which they supposedly describe and explain" (Kemp 1989, 6)

The community studies school in Thailand arose out of a joint project of western universities, led by Cornell University, to study the effects of modernization on pre-modern communities in various parts of the world. In Thailand, community studies is significant for several reasons. First, it demonstrates the influence of the counter-insurgency desires of western powers on the production of knowledge about Thailand in the mid-twentieth century. Second, as part of this knowledge production, the category of "community" was imposed on a peoples and geographies despite evidence by the researchers themselves that the category was far from apt. Third, because of the strong role of Cornell University, a prominent trainer of Southeast Asian scholars, in the community studies project, Thai researchers who would be influential in policy in the ensuing decades were trained in this tradition. The most notable is Akin Rabhibhadana, discussed in Chapter 3, who would articulate Thai slumdwellers as urban "villagers" and explain many of the social phenomena that take place within them as a result of poor rural dwellers re-creating their village communities in city. He would provide input on *Baan Mankong* and publish reports in Thai on communities' outcomes.

In Thailand, the most famous community study focuses roughly on the geographic region of the *tambon* (“commune” or “subdistrict”) of Bang Chan. Bang Chan is located in an area of central Thailand that was, in the 1940s and 1950s, still outside of Bangkok but being affected by the changing landscape of the rapidly urbanizing region. The lead investigator of the Bang Chan community study was Lauriston Sharp, an anthropologist from Cornell University. Sharp first wrote about Bang Chan in 1950 in an article in *Far Eastern Survey*. The article illustrates the changing social structures and material wants and needs of the residents of Bang Chan. Most importantly, though, it explains how these factors impacted the political attitudes of the residents. In a clear and concise manner, Sharp clearly articulates why it is of utmost importance for western powers to understand the social, economic, and political dynamics of the Asian societies that were increasingly threatened by popular unrest, leading to a rising tide of communism (Sharp 1950). As a result of this article, Thailand would become a hub for using social science methods to enhance counterinsurgency (Randolph 1986, 110). These efforts to use research for counterinsurgency would be institutionalized as the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) under the Department of Defense. In 1961, a field office was established in Thailand through a joint Thai-U.S. Military Research and Development Center (Randolph 1986 110). Most of the ARPA personnel were civilians of both American and Thai origin, and many were employed by various agencies, which included the RAND Corporation, American Institutes for Research, and research institutes from Cornell and Stanford Universities (Randolph 1986 111-112). Some of the key outputs of the ARPA effort were to produce maps of villages, trail networks, and other geographic elements of rural areas. They also collected village-level on the size, location, population, economic characteristics, and leadership of villages for a project called the "Village Information System" (VIST), a computerized data set that the Thai government could use. This project was defunded before its completion, but the data was later transferred to the Ministry of the Interior. Much of what was produced was probably not of much use to the RTG as it was too technical to be easily translated into action. "U.S. research input was most often accepted passively, as a concession to the peculiar American proclivity for data accumulation. Subsequent application was rare" (Randolph 1986 113).

While most of the efforts of this massive investment in village-level research would not be put to direct use by the government, its legacy has lived on in academic circles in Thailand, most notably through the original Bang Chan project, which through the support of numerous American and Thai institutional funders, Sharp would be able to continue across over a decade with the help of numerous research collaborators, both Thai and western. The culmination of the Bang Chan work would be a book, co-authored with Lucien Hanks, provides a wide-ranging portrait of an area under transition (Sharp and Hanks 1978). However, this book was hardly the only influential output of the community studies era. In the preface of *Bang Chan: Social History of a Rural Community in Thailand* (1978), Sharp and Hanks list over 25 published articles and monographs dealing Bang Chan and other areas of Thailand that were produced during the same period. The authors are mostly western, though a couple of Thai academics appear, including Akin Rabibhadana, who would later become a leading voice on the conceptualization of urban communities as villages of the city. Professor Akin produced numerous studies of urban communities in general and has published multiple books and reports on the outcomes of *Baan Mankong* in particular.

The *Bang Chan* study is significant on a couple of levels. First, it portrays a compelling case of rural area in transition. Second, though, it presents a contradictory account of an area that the authors stubbornly refer to as a “community” despite providing ample evidence that neither

the geography nor the populace form such a coherent unit. The *Bang Chan* study, then, represents a clear case of Western concepts of community being applied to the Thai case.

In *Bang Chan*, Sharp and Hanks explain the history of the region, the system of land holdings and how it has changed across time, and mostly importantly, the economic and social relations of villagers. In particular, Sharp and Hanks illustrate the nature of collective life in what they call the Bang Chan "community"—or, more importantly, its absence. While they never cease to identify Bang Chan as a "community," they never fully justify the usage of the term. In fact, quite to the contrary, they undermine the use of the word on geographic, economic, and governmental grounds. In describing how they determined the study site, they explain that "the research group established geographical boundaries for its work, somewhat less arbitrarily than the government's administrative boundaries" (Sharp and Hanks 1978, 23). In the very first line of the description of "The Community," they declare, "This is Bang Chan, whose households and fields merge with neighboring communities as do the turgid waters of the canals" (Sharp and Hanks 1978, 22). Illustrations of the social and economic interactions in Bang Chan provide even less evidence for the presence of a distinct sense of community among the residents. In describing how residents obtain necessary labor for farming when that which is available in the family is not enough, they find not a cooperative system of mutual aid but a market: "Here are no ethnological mysteries. The system has the familiar shape of Adam Smith's free enterprise: each person bargains in the open market for the best arrangement he can make, and if this is not satisfactory, he may move elsewhere...A principal feature of Thai society is the ubiquity of this kind of transaction, and the ease with which relationships can be broken off" (Sharp and Hanks, 1978, 46). On the issue of governance, they again find no evidence of a coherent collective: **"**Though mutual help was commonplace within a household, no contract bound together the households of the hamlet. The fisherman from each household sculled his own catch home in his own boat, dried the fish on leaves provided by his own helpers, sold these wares to a merchant of his own choosing, and spent the earnings on his own wants. Such arrangements certainly sufficed for these three households, but even larger hamlets with fifty households may develop no corporate arrangements. The concept of the common-weal, which expeditiously organized hundred of communities in North America and Australia and furnished a basis for enforceable authority, rarely took root in this moist tropical heat.**"** (Sharp and Hanks 1978, 61). While the Bang Chan studies no doubt provided important findings on the changes and social issues occurring in the Thai countryside in the mid-twentieth century, what they did not find was the very object they purported to study. As Sharp himself summarized in an early version of the Bang Chan report, "When our team of anthropologists from Cornell University entered bang Chan in Thailand, we expected to find an 'organized village'. We searched many a month for its center, for its integrating structure--without success. Bang Chan had a name, but not even the glimmering of a community. Individualism seemed to reign supreme" (Hanks 1968, 30 as quoted in Kemp 1988, 7).

The Bang Chan team remained wedded to the study of a "community" despite evidence of its absence for reasons beyond mere intellectual stubbornness. There were structural and institutional incentives for framing the project around community. It was conducted as part of a larger effort led by Cornell to study cultural change in pre-industrial countries, including Thailand, India, Peru, and the American Southwest. The stated goal of this comparative effort was to "provide discrete descriptions of the cultural life of local communities in the context of their differently developing regions" and to investigate how "the ramifying influences of the present, most of them stemming ultimately from the Atlantic civilization, affect the future of the

peasant communities and of the agrarian societies of which they are a neglected part" Sharp and Hanks 1978, 26). Baked into the very premise of the work was that peasants in various parts of the world traditionally live in communities, and it is only the impact of "Atlantic civilization" that is causing this cultural mode to change. However, as the findings of the Bang Chan study suggest, this may not be the case, though the researchers themselves were loath to admit it.

2.6.2 Community Culture

The community culture school of thought came into prominence in the 1980s through its most well-known advocate, Chatthip Nartsupha. An economic historian, Chatthip has become one of the most well-known and most controversial scholars in both the English and Thai literature on Thai history. Through his presentation of empirical evidence of the historical presence of self-sufficient communities in Thailand and his articulation of a theory of native political structure around such entities, Chatthip influenced numerous scholars and NGO workers. While community culture is, indeed, a school of thought with a variety of writers and activists constructing and adhering to it, Chatthip is the towering figure at its helm. However, his scholarship has not been without its detractors.

According to Chatthip, before community culture was a coherent school of thought, it was a practice performed by missionaries and NGO workers in rural areas. In the article, "The Community Culture School of Thought," Chatthip (1991)offers his most concise articulation of what the community culture school stands for, as well as the story of its forebears. He credits four people, in particular, with originating the ideas and practices, including Niphot Thianwihan, a Gramscian and liberation theologist who was strongly influenced by Catholic missionaries and the Catholic Council of Thailand for Development to promote cooperation in rural areas where farmers frequently experienced infighting. Another, Bamrung Bumbanya, believed that the middle class, working through NGOs, had a role to play in promoting the preservation of traditional modes of cooperative production in order to resist capitalist development. Aphichat Thongyu advocated for promoting traditional culture and resisting policies of national development that were leading villagers to succumb to the allure of the conveniences of the modern world. Finally, Prawet Wasi, the most adamantly anti-state of the group, promoted the development of small group identity, believing village communities needed to be "reconditioned" to maintain their original communal and independent character. He also based his thought strongly on Buddhist teachings. In Chatthip's (Nartsupha 1991, 125) words, Prawet "re-interprets Buddhism, which was the state's culture, and gives to it the task of being the guardian of community harmony." While all of these forebears emphasized the development of a local village culture and community, they were also influenced by international institutions and intellectual currents. Most prominent among these were the Second Vatican Council, which greatly influenced Father Niphot. For the other three, their philosophies were shaped, in part, by the increasing presence of international NGOs and a development philosophy that emphasized self-sufficiency and empowerment.

Chatthip himself was influenced by global intellectual currents indirectly through these four Thai thinkers, as well as directly through his own education. Though he would become advocate of traditional modes of production and life of rural peasants, Chatthip himself came from a relatively prosperous background, attended private schools, and earned graduate degrees from Tufts and Northeastern University in international law and finance (C. Reynolds 2013). This initial academic training created familiarity with studying large-scale issues of state economic policy and production, and he wrote a doctoral dissertation on these issues in Thailand in 1968. However, upon returning to Thailand shortly before the events of 1973, his intellectual

trajectory would take a very different turn. He joined in debates with Marxist Thai intellectuals and began reading the work of Kropotkin on mutual aid (C. Reynolds 2013, 12). He became a prominent member of what came to be known as the Political Economy group of Marxist intellectuals (Thongchai 2008, 577). Through this engagement, he retrained himself, becoming an economic historian "by dint of his own effort as he began to question the applicability of the new knowledge he had acquired abroad to Thailand's specific conditions as a developing economy." (Reynolds 2013, 4).

Out of these various intellectual engagements, as well as fieldwork collecting oral histories in Thai villages, Chatthip constructed his own theory of an inherently Thai political economy. In *The Thai Village Economy of the Past (setthagit muban thai nai adit*), originally published in Thai in 1984 and translated into English in 1999, Chatthip lays out his theory of the village community and its relation to the state and capitalism. In this theory, the history of the village community can be divided into two distinct historical periods. The first period is that of the "primordial community," which existed prior to the existence of a state. The second period is that of the village community under the sakdina system, which many Marxists describe as a feudal system (Chatthip 1999). Contrary to other Marxists of his day, Chatthip did not believe that the village community underwent significant change under the *sakdina* system (Thongchai 2008 578). Instead, he insisted that the village community remained intact due to three main factors. The first was the abundance of land and resources relative to the population compared to many other nations in the region. The second was the fact that, under the sakdina system, the state extracted surplus from the villager only by force, not though economic relations of trade. This prevented the emergence of classes among the villagers. The third factor was the strength and security of the village community itself (Chatthip 1999, 74-75). These combined elements, Chatthip asserted, produced a particular type of system that allowed communities to exist as a social and economic structure that was resistant to the intrusions of the state and capitalism. He called this system *sangkhomniyom baep anathipat,* alternately translated as "anarchic socialism" (Chatthip 1999, 42), and "libertarian socialism" (C. Reynolds 2013, 14).

What did this form of community-based anarchism consist of? The first element was collective ownership of all land by the community, which would then distribute it according to need and mutual agreement (Chatthip 1999, 10). Through this commonly-held property emerged the second element, a self-sufficient, subsistence-based mode of production: "Village production under the sakdina system was subsistence production, meaning production for own use and not for sale or exchange" (Chatthip 1999 16). This form of self-sufficient production was related to the internal social relations of communities: "Mutual cooperation between members of the village was a very clear expression of the relations of production of the Thai village community. This cooperation was another factor binding individuals to the community." (Chatthip 1999 28). Part of this mutual cooperation entailed a self-government through a council of elders (Chatthip 1999, 10). The ultimate result of these many elements of communal living was a distinct "community culture" (*watthanatham chumchon*) that endured even throughout the era of the *sakdina* system: "Beliefs were held in common, namely belief in the spirits of the common ancestors of the village. Kinship links were maintained. People cooperated in social activities and there was no class division, except for the existence of slaves who were accepted as part of the family. There was no class conflict within the village. Production relations were similar to those of the primordial socialist community--a small community in which people help one another in a spirit of common humanity" (Chatthip 1999, 73).

Out of this analysis of traditional social relations of the village community Chatthip constructed a political project. The solution to the supposed underdevelopment in Thailand was not capitalist development, but a return to the original nature of the Thai people, which had successfully resisted the intrusions of the Thai state and Western imperialism until relatively recently. To justify the "naturalness" of this social state, later in his career Chatthip began to study the social organization of ethnic Tai peoples outside the boundaries of Thailand, arguing that such groups demonstrated the same communal characteristics as traditional Thai villages (Chatthip 2005). The way forward for Thai development, then, was "to preserve the old-style production relations, but improve the form and increase the productive power by developing the technology in the village. This will enable the villagers to retain their uniqueness and commitment, to develop their organisational strength to increase their bargaining power, and to provide the poor with some institutional support they can rely on" (Chatthip 1999, 77). This is the message that would be taken up by a generation of young NGO leaders, many of whom were emerging from forests in the 1980s in search of a new way forward after the fall of the CPT.

Chatthip's work has been widely adopted in intellectual, policy, and activist circles in the past three decades. However, it has also been met with criticism. On empirical grounds, Bowie (1992) through an analysis of textile production northern Thailand, provides evidence that political economy of the countryside was marked by trade, a relatively sophisticated division of labor resulting in class divisions, poverty, conflict, and continual change. Anan (2001) and Kemp (1988; 1989) have also challenged the idea of a self-sufficient, self-governing social groups based on their own research and historical studies. Perhaps the fiercest critic of all, though, has been Thongchai Winichikul, who charges Chatthip with a form of conservative ethnic nationalism that paints over the diversity and divisions that have always existed in the territory of now-Thailand in favor of "an essentialised, even orientalised" village community (Thongchai 2008, 579).

Despite these various criticisms, the legacy of the community culture school of thought has continued to hold influence, though perhaps not always in the ways envisioned. Despite the decidedly anti-state and monarchy stance of community culture, the influences of the thought are undeniable in King Bhumibhol's concept of Sufficiency Economy (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4). That such a viewpoint should make its way into royal rhetoric is not surprising to many critics, who have challenged the backward-looking nature of Chatthip's views. As Thongchai explains: "Chatthip's romanticism about 'the people' is different from that of the leftist radicals. Unlike the latter's 'people', whose potential has yet to be realised, the utopian essence of the people in Chatthip's view is primordial and transhistorical. Originating and posited in the past, this people can still be found in the present, although it needs be revived and revitalised now. Such a romantic view of 'the people' is akin to that of the radicals and other conservatives. Royal-nationalism also sees 'the people' as loyal subjects who, in their transcendental Thai-ness, are loyal to the unique nation and the monarchy" (Thongchai 2008 587).

2.6.3 Community Rights

The community rights school evolved over a similar period of time as community culture, and certainly some of the early forbears of community culture also influenced scholars and activists of the community rights movement. In fact, even though community culture and community rights are often spoken of as separate intellectual strains (Anusorn 2017), many of the key figures of community rights do not consider the schools of thought to be competing with one another. Rather, they describe them as two strands of thought that critique and enrich each other. However, community rights is distinguished by several key features: (1) an emphasis on

environmental management; (2) engagement with discourses of human rights; (3) the promotion of community engagement with the state through the principle of participation; and (4) a view of community as dynamic and ever-evolving.

Perhaps because community rights overlaps in some ways with community culture, community rights have scarcely been written about in the English language Thai studies literature. While a few scholars have researched the progression of community forest management rights (Vandergeest 1991, 1996; Johnson and Forsyth 2002), these projects have not discussed "community rights" (*sitthi chumchon*) as a body of thought extending beyond community forestry in the way in which the term is used in Thai scholarship and activism. Because of this, the sources used in this section are quite different from the previous two, incorporating almost entirely Thai scholarship, as well as interviews with academics and conversations with activists during fieldwork.

Unlike community culture, community rights has no single figure that stands for the movement. Most of the early work of the movement was based in the north of the country, and many of the key figures are based out of Chiang Mai University, such Anan Kanchanaphan and Yot Santasombat. Saneh Jamarik of Thammsat University was one of the original scholars of the movement and is responsible for bringing a human rights perspective to community-based activism. He later extended the work to urban areas through his research in the Ban Khrua Muslim community in Bangkok (Chonthira and Saneh 2000). Meanwhile, Anusorn Unno of Thammasat University has researched community rights in the South. Through the work of these scholars and others, community rights has extended from its origin in the north to cover the entire country.

Community rights shares certain commonalities with community culture. The first shared feature comes from the backgrounds of the scholars themselves. Like Chatthip, most of the community rights academics were educated abroad. Saneh, who is of the same generation as Chatthip, earned a degree business management from the U.K. In the late 1950s and was in Thailand for the events of 1973 and 1976. The younger generation were studying abroad, mostly in the United State, during the 1976 incident or just after. Like Chatthip, the community rights scholars were engaged in Marxist thought to some extent, though they eventually departed from this tradition over time and see their theories as deriving more from their own research than pre-existing social theories. Beyond the backgrounds of the individuals involved, community rights shares some common beliefs with community culture. The first is that collective management of land and resources has a historical precedent in Thailand. Evidence of such collective management exists in institutions such as the *meuang fai* system of collective irrigation management, which existed for 700 years. The second is the commitment to community as a social and political unit that is both more appropriate to the Thai people than western forms of social organization. Attached to this commitment is a belief in community as a form of resistance to western imperialism.

Aside from these basic commonalities, the community culture and community rights differ in some important respects. The first is that community rights derives its primary influences not from historical studies, but from active environmental movements. The first academics to articulate community rights were doing so through their engagement with communities and NGOs working in forests and rural areas. Many of these movements were against state appropriation of lands for forest preserves and dams (Missingham 2003). In this way, community rights emphasizes material access to land and resources over the issues of

culture. Though culture and traditional institutions of collective resource management enter their discourse, it does so in a secondary way.

The second distinct aspect of community rights is in the name itself. The movement embraces a rights-based approach, relying particularly on theories of human rights to justify claims when legal rights do not exist. This aspect of the work sometimes sits in awkward tension with the desire to resist the imposition of western concepts on eastern ways of life. However, community rights scholars have, at times, sought to work productively with international institutions to extend notions of human rights beyond the concept of the individual to include the collective (Chonthira and Saneh 2000). At the same time, activists and academics have relied on the concept of international institutions like the United Nations and the concept of human rights to pressure the government to create new forms of rights for groups who have been dispossessed of their lands.

This use of rights discourses and engagement with both international and national forms of government represent another distinction between the community culture and community rights schools of thought. While community culture envisions a sort of anarchism in which community sits apart from the state, community rights articulates community as a unit through which the poor can collectively engage with the state. One prominent community rights scholar describes this collective engagement with the state "participating for negotiating for power." He describes how his views and those of his fellow academics evolved from a cultural framework through work with communities and activists of the Octoberist generation in the field:

> I worked with the…the younger generation. They used to be students here. They went to the jungle and then came out, and they set up an NGO here, and they asked me to help them… They have stronger Marxist influences in their work. They're not talking about culture, but more about power, how we can we mix the power and culture together?…And so we are more trying to…as we said, empower people…Because the [community] culture school, they would like people to recognize their culture. And because of that, then they go into the area of wisdom, so culture goes into wisdom. But we start with culture…[and] we go into power.

A young community rights activist, in describing what members of the older generation had told him about the evolution from culture to rights, explained that many activists had initially gone out into the villages thinking that the answer to development lay in working with the people, developing the communities. Then, after several years, they realized that while they had been out in the villages, the government in Bangkok had been creating policies that were damaging the very communities they were working with. So, they switched their focus to organizing communities to change policies. Through this type of practical and evolving engagement in the field, community rights as both a political and intellectual movement became centered around power through participation.

A final core difference between the community culture and community rights schools is that community rights does not regard community as a static concept fixed on a particular, traditional model. This difference in outlook may reflect a difference in discipline and methodology. Many of the scholars associated with community rights have been anthropologists by training. Reynolds (2013) has pointed out the potential importance of these disciplinary differences in discussing the work of Anan, who has put forth one of the most robust and detailed criticism of Chatthip's work. Reynolds (2013, 2) muses that the basis of much of the criticism

makes sense when viewed through a disciplinary lens: "Anan is an economics-minded anthropologist with historical sense, while Chatthip is an anthropologically-minded economic historian. It is natural that they should spar with each other." While Chatthip's work looks to the past to find an essence that might endure in the present, the work of Anan and the others in the community rights school has always been firmly rooted in the present, looking to the past only for context. This, combined with the geographic diversity of the scholars engaged, has resulted not in a particular model of community based on an essential culture, but rather a flexible principle around which to organize and advocate for change. Community rights is, as one scholar described in interview, "a new social principle," elaborating that "A lot of people in [the community rights] school simply glorify the past. But I think they're less concerned with the future… *Sitthi chumchon* not only offered a new social principle, but it also implies the next level is alternative policies. That's why we have common land rights, common title deeds."

The ability to access rights through collective bodies represents a path to political inclusion for many people. For community rights advocates, this represents a way forward in for polity that has long modeled itself after western governmental forms but without with de facto unequal access to political representation. As the scholar in the previous passage describes, "we don't have a concept of citizenship the way the West has. We have always been loyal subjects. But chumchon has been a counterforce of that, of that domination..[It is] self-determination for the whole unit…Once you want to claim the rights of citizenship, what happens? They say no, Bangkok citizens are more important than you! That's what they get when they apply the citizenship without community. I think the *sitthi chumchon* approach is trying to bring the people back to rebuild their sense of community wherever they are." However, community rights is not without its contradictions, especially as discourses of rights move toward issues of citizenship among the younger generation. The professor explains "Once you stress the community rights, you sort of become nobody as an individual subject. You are subservient to the collective identity. But once you apply the citizenship approach it means that you become the subject in and of yourself, and the community takes a back seat. Maybe that's a trend that's evolving." This conflict between the desire for equal rights of citizenship across classes and construction of community as a form of mediation between poor individuals and the state forms the heart of what Elinoff (2013) has described as a system of differentiated citizenship in Thailand.

2.7 Conclusion

The intellectual schools that arose around community in the twentieth century brought up important debates that continue to this day. The first is whether or not the village community ever existed as a "primordial" social unit in Thai culture. The second is what the function of political function of community should be in relation to the larger state.

Through the community culture school of thought, *chumchon* became enshrined as the traditional Thai way of life, part of the essence of Thai-ness. This belief in a self-sufficient peasantry has longer roots than the community culture itself (Bowie 1992; Reynolds 2006). However, such beliefs have also been hotly debated. In community studies, evidence of individualism and the presence of markets argued against mutual aid and cooperation, even if the authors themselves never abandoned community as an organizing concept of their work. Other studies not related directly to community coming out during similar time periods suggested similar ideas about individualism as a prevailing element of Thai culture. After describing the various forces and institutions that have shaped Thai society, including Buddhism, the Monarchy, the Government Bureaucracy, and the natural environment, Morell and Chai-anan (1981, 22) conclude that "An amalgam of these forces has led to a combination of individualism

and reluctance to organize on the one hand, and yet acceptance of hierarchical subordination on the other. Aspects of family socialization practices and Buddhism produce a loosely structured society, a kind of individualism by which every person pursues his own interests and resists community organization." Others have argued that even if villages existed, they were never self-contained and separate from larger aspects of government in the ways described by Chatthip: "The Thai society was predominantly a village society, in the sense that nearly all the people lived in villages and practiced a relatively simple and stable kind of agriculture. But the culture was not a village culture…Even in the village a man was consciously a member of a larger society. Its governmental aspect involved down-ward efforts at control and exploitation within the framework of a grand rationale, and the concomitant upward flow of some of the fruits of production" (Siffin 1966, 9). The evidence against the village community has been most forcefully organized and argued by Kemp (1988), who called the idea nothing but a "seductive mirage."

Whether or not the village community was truly a native social form in rural Thailand may never be settled. Perhaps cooperative, self-sufficient villages existed in some times and places but were simply not as ubiquitous as is commonly assumed. Perhaps some types of cooperative institutions, such as the *meuang fai* irrigation system, existed alongside markets, hierarchies, and individualistic practices. What is certain is that stories of the prehistory of *chumchon* have influenced its present discursive formations. This discursive production has, in turn, impacted how it has been actively created on the ground. The CPT and student activists, as well the Thai government, both held beliefs about the traditional social structures of Thai peasants. As Bowie (1992) has pointed out, the beliefs of Thai Marxists, rooted in the concept of the Asiatic Mode of Production, bore some striking similarities to the romantic beliefs about the countryside held by royals and elites. These similarities in the perception of history resulted in similarities in the types of self-reliant, self-governing collectivities they attempted to develop in the field, albeit for political aims that opposed each other on a larger scale.

The larger political purpose of community is what remains at stake in debates over *chumchon*. Should *chumchon* seek to be, as Chatthip would argue, a self-sufficient entity that can remain the same across time, resisting the encroachment of the state with all its western influences? From the vantage point of the twenty-first century, such a result seems unlikely. Moreover, as Thongchai (2008, 586) has argued, this type of social formation can easily slide into the service of a neoliberal state: "Whatever the original intellectual impulses behind Chatthip's and his colleagues' work, the various themes which they wove together in their discourse about Thai-ness have resonated because they fulfill critical ideological needs of neoliberal times...The antistatism is, of course, particularly useful in neoliberal times: the poor Thai peasant can conveniently be portrayed as too upstanding to need state handouts (and those who do need them can conveniently be portrayed as not authentically Thai)." Another possibility for *chumchon*, as the community rights scholars and activists have argued, is that *chumchon* might be a unit that can unite the power of the disenfranchised in order to negotiate with the state. However, as some of its own advocates acknowledges and Elinoff (2013) has argued, relying on collectives to ensure the rights of the poor can negate the individual, creating a bifurcated system of citizenship in which the upper classes can access rights as individuals but the poor can do so only as members of *chumchon*.

This debate over the purpose and potential of *chumchon* formed out of beliefs and movements in rural areas. Toward the end of the twentieth century and in to the twenty-first, the discursive formations of *chumchon* and the movements creating them on the ground would

migrate to cities, along with a massive flow of people from the countryside to urban areas. Along with this, new policies and institutions would be created around *chumchon.* Like the initial formations on *chumchon,* many of these, many of these new movements and policies would have global influences. Some of these policies have instituted by the government to categorize and manage poor urban dwellers. In other instances, they have been the result of political organizing to gain access to land and resources in the city. In some cases, the same policies have served both purposes, as is the case in the *Baan Mankong* program. In the following chapter I will review the movement of *chumchon* from the countryside to the city and the various policies, practices, and discourses that have resulted in the creation of *Baan Mankong* and its supporting institutions.

Chapter 3: *Chumchon* in the City

3.1 Introduction

In 2003, the *Baan Mankong* collective housing program was created under the auspices of new government agency called the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI) of Thailand. Numerous academic articles and books have discussed the origins of the policy in terms of the new government institutional arrangements and funding sources that enabled it (e.g. Herrle, Ley, and Fokdal 2015; Somsook 2004; Yap and De Wandeler 2010). In these accounts, the history of community-based activism that preceded the creation of the policy is afforded a few sentences, if it is mentioned at all. However, understanding this activism that preceded the policy is crucial to comprehending how *Baan Manong* functions in the present.

In the decades prior to *Baan Mankong*, numerous actors and global influences contributed to a national movement of community-based organizing for rights to land and resources. This movement, which encompassed both urban and rural issues, established many of the practices of protest and negotiation with state authorities that would provide the blueprint for the *Baan Mankong* model. While this movement has been discussed in Thai literature on the subject (Boonlert 2003, 2008; Ekkaphonat 2016), a detailed accounting of the this history as a point of origin for the policy is missing from the English literature on *Baan Mankong*, much of which seeks to identify how the policy works and how elements of it might be replicated elsewhere. The first aim of this chapter is to offer a more enriched account of the origins of the *Baan Mankong* policy by focusing on the importance of grassroots movements in its creation. The second aim is to take a step back from the policy itself to illustrate how it is situated amidst larger trends discussed in the prior chapter related to the establishment of *chumchon* as a unit of both political organization and governance in the urban context. In the process, I also situate the creation of *Baan Mankong* in the broader contexts of Thai urban development and global trends in development practice.

While *chumchon,* as articulated by the well-known community culture school of thought, describes these social units as essential forms Thai social organization in a *rural* context, *chumchon* has also come to apply to urban settlements. This history of *chumchon* in the urban context overlaps with and derives from the word's application to rural settlements in important ways. However, a number of local and global forces have also influenced the way in which it has emerged as a key social unit in the city. In this chapter, I weave together multiple histories of population movements, policy changes, and international development trends to demonstrate the many strains of influence that have shaped the emergence of urban *chumchon.* I begin by describing the population movements within Thailand that led to the growth what are commonly called “slums” in Bangkok. I then address the different phases of housing policy that sought to solve the problem of slums and how these policies were influenced by international institutions such as the World Bank. In response to the inadequacies of government responses to shelter needs in the city, a grassroots movement emerged, enabled by the return of members of the Octoberist generation to mainstream society and the availability of new sources of funding for NGOs through the efforts of international donors to establish “good governance” in the Third World. These same discourses around good governance would manifest themselves in a new willingness on the part of the government to create community-based programs to address urban poverty. Ultimately, government and grassroots movements would lead to a series of collaborations between a slum-based organizations and progressive government workers that formed the model on which *Baan Mankong* is based.

Competing visions of urban *chumchon* emerged at the interstices of these multiple histories. On one hand, the slum movement, supported by NGOs, envisioned community as a unit of organization in what they called *phak prachachon*, or the people's sector. In the people's sector, citizens' organizations maintain independence from government in order to hold the government accountable and make demands of it from the outside. However, the government was seeking to create *chumchon* as an integral part of *prachasangkom,* or "civil society," a term that had gained prominence through the rise of discourses around good governance. In the civil society view, *chumchon* occupies a different space with respect to the government. It is a liaison, an entity that can provide services in association with the government, even act as a unit of government. Through the lenses of the people's sector and civil society, *chumchon* came to be shaped by institutions and discourses, as well as by individuals who now earned a living by working with community members. Through the histories of *chumchon*, the emergence of civil society and the people's sector, and ultimately the creation of *Baan Mankong*, community became a concrete and tangible object. In conjunction, the formation of *chumchon* came to be a realm of professional practice for a range of actors.

3.2 Stages of Bangkok's Development and Early Housing Policies

The government initiatives and social movements that led to *Baan Mankong* were greatly influenced by the people and practices developed in rural areas in the era of the insurgency. However, the policy has taken form in the context of Thailand's overall urbanization and the evolution of urban policy. In this section, I review the population trends, government structures, and policies that resulted in a housing crisis for many poor urban dwellers and the growth of slums. I also discuss how the word *chumchon* came to apply to these early settlements and the interventions that targeted them.

3.2.1 Early Bangkok Settlement Patterns and Land Control

Before Bangkok became the complex primate city that it is today, many of its areas, even within the city walls, did not look entirely different from the countryside. As Askew (Askew 2002, 23; 41) has described, Bangkok's early urban form was comprised of villages (*ban*) and water hamlets (*bang*), along with the royal citadel and numerous neighborhoods that specialized in producing goods for trade. These villages and neighborhoods were connected by numerous canals that were constructed for both transportation and irrigation over the course of the early Bangkok era (Ingram 1971; Tanabe 1977). When the city was first being settled, like much of the rest of the country, there was ample land for settlement and cultivation.

The history of landholdings in early Bangkok and how they evolved is notoriously difficult to construct (Sharp and Hanks 1978, 75; Footnote 1 p. 261). The difficulty derives from both the complexity of the matter and its political nature. Part of the difficulty arises from the fact that, in principle, all land belongs to the King, as he is the *phra jao phaen din* (Lord of all the Earth) (Askew 2002, 31; Sharp and Hanks 1978). This means that decisions with respect to land have been—and still are, to an extent—a monarchical affair. By definition, this makes land an especially politically sensitive topic. Detailed documentation of early landholdings is often not readily available, either because such files do not exist or because they are considered "secret documents."[22]

[22] The researcher came across difficulties in accessing early land surveys from the National Archives of Thailand because at least one important set of survey documents from the early 20th century was labeled "secret."

From what is known about the evolution of landholdings, it is clear that in early Bangkok, up through the around the mid-18th century, nearly all those who settled within the city walls had the explicit permission of the King or one of his high-ranking subordinates (Sharp and Hanks 1978, 75–79). Despite the fact that land technically belonged to the King, property rights of the various high-ranking people who occupied and managed the land were informally respected, and by the late 19th century a *de facto* market for the sale and rental of land had emerged (Askew 2002, 31–33). Throughout the country, the formal titling of land took place in fits and starts, and Larsson (2012) has argued that the Thai government and monarchy have, at times, strategically used opacity in land ownership for the sake of national security to prevent foreign powers from being able to acquire land.

Over the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the care of the much of the lands of Bangkok, while still ultimately under the purview of King, would be devolved to various government agencies. During this period, the Thai government, following international advice and pressure, developed an intricate and multi-tiered bureaucracy (Riggs 1966; Siffin 1966). Some of these primary government landowners include the Crown Property Bureau (CPB), which maintains land that is still directly controlled by the monarchy; the State Railways of Thailand[23] (SRT); the Treasury Department, which controls much of the land along the canals in Bangkok, among other holdings; the Irrigation Department, which controls another portion of canal lands, and the Port Authority of Thailand, which controls what would become Bangkok's biggest slum, Khlong Toei (Angel and Sopon 1989; Askew 2002; Endo 2014).

In Bangkok, the fact that much of the land is owned by agencies of the national government makes planning at the municipal level particularly difficult. Bangkok as an administrative unit and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration would not be created until 1971 and 1972, respectively (Angel and Sopon 1989, 6; Askew 2002, 61–63). The rather late implementation of an agency that is specifically charged with the management of the city has led to difficulties with planning and land allocation, especially considering much of the land under its auspices has higher management. Askew (2002, 83) describes the Thai state as a "congeries of competing agencies charged with devising and implementing policy and projects" which in Bangkok has resulted in "ill-coordinated activities and legal impotence in enforcing land-use controls." It was into this "congeries" of land controlling agencies and frequent opacity with respect to private ownership that millions of new residents to Bangkok and its surrounding provinces arrived in the mid- to late-twentieth century.

3.2.2 "Development" and The Growth of the Primate City

In the post-war period Thailand adopted *kan patthana* ("development") as a national mission, even an identity (Chairait 2017 [1999] ; Ekkaphonat 2016). While some of this development effort was focused on rural areas, primarily to tamp down the growing communist insurgency, as discussed in the previous chapter, a much larger effort was focused on constructing an industrial economic base. Following the guidance of the United States and the World Bank, the Thai government emphasized the growth of urban areas over agricultural areas, which in turn led to the impoverishment of many farmers, an important push factor in rural-urban migration. In addition, starting in the 1960s there was the pull factor of jobs created due to an initial emphasis on import substitution policies that emphasized the promotion of domestic industries. In the 1980s the country's economic strategy changed to emphasizing exports, which resulted in the lowering of the basic commodity prices received by farmers. This pushed even

[23] For a detailed discussion of the history of the SRT and its landholdings, see Elinoff (2013).

more people to the city (Ekkaphonat 2016, 1–5). Between 1960 and 1986 the area of Bangkok and the provinces immediately surrounding it gained 4.9 million people (Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit 2014, 328). This larger area, which includes Bangkok proper, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Samut Prakan, Samut Sakhon and Nakhon Pathom, came to be known as the Bangkok Metropolitan Region (BMR) in the 1980s. The BMR is often used as a planning term and for demographic descriptions of the area, which functionally operates as a coherent region in many respects. However, the different provinces retain separate administrative powers (Sopon 2003, 3–4), adding yet another layer of complexity to the governance of the metropolis, which showed no signs of slowing its growth as it moved into the twenty-first century. By 2005 this region's population passed 10 million, accounting for about half of the country's total urban population (Kioe Sheng Yap and De Wandeler 2010, 332). This, along with its role as a center of both national government and global trade, arguably made Bangkok "the most primate city in the world" (Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit 2014, 199).

This growth that took place in the second half of the twentieth century was diverse and uneven. As Askew (2002, 49) has described, "many 'Bangkoks' emerged from the transformative processes of the post-war period, defined variously in terms of state representation and policy, urban functions, settlement patterns, ecologies and ways of life. Bangkok's existing functions as centre of government and prestige were considerable enhanced, but new dimensions also emerged as economic change articulated with space and society—Bangkok became simultaneously a key industrial city, a city of the poor, a city of the middle classes and a tourist city." Within this diverse urban space, lower income people, many of them new migrants, would have to contend with a shortage of affordable housing and a complex system of land management that was constantly shifting.

3.2.3 The Rise of Slums

Housing in the capital city could not keep up with the boom in the urban population that began in the 1960s. People at lower income levels were especially likely to have no other way to house themselves than by constructing their own homes. By 2003, 1,763,872 people lived in slums in Thailand, or 3% of the population. Of these, 62 percent of these were in BKK proper and another 22 percent were located in the other provinces of the BMR (Sopon 2003, 7). It is commonly believed, particularly by elites, that the growth of slums stems from poor migrants from rural areas squatting on land. While this is true in some cases, the actual phenomenon of slum formation and the demographics of the people who live in them are more complex.

The 1960s and 1970s saw massive growth in self-built housing in Bangkok, resulting in settlements that meet many of the five criteria for being called a "slum" as set forth by the United Nations, including non-durable shelter materials, insecure land tenure, overcrowding, and lack of access to water or sanitation (UN-HABITAT 2003). However, the slums of Bangkok defy many stereotypes commonly held about such settlements. First, the actual settlement patterns of slums in Bangkok look quite different from the 'megaslums' in other parts of the world. Because of the complex system of landholdings, as well as other features of the urban landscape, such as the system of canals than ran through the remaining paddy land of the region, most of these settlements were relatively small, pockets of land throughout the city (Askew 2002). With the notable exception of the Khlong Toei slum, to this day slum settlements remain small compared to those of other countries, where slums have resulted from large-scale land invasions. Some have also attributed this small-scale settlement to Thai culture, which leads settlers themselves to try to meet their needs inconspicuously, without causing conflict. In this cultural explanation, land owners are incentives to allow settlement through a sense of duty those lower than them in

social status and the shame, or loss of face, that would result from turning people away (Kioe Sheng Yap and De Wandeler 2010, 333). Because of this system of small-scale settlements, most slum dwellers in Bangkok do not live on the geographic periphery of the city, but rather are scattered throughout the urban region, including in the heart of the city (Endo 2014, 43).

Perhaps the most common misperception of about slum dwellers among the Thai elite is that they are squatters. In fact, as of 2003, less than 20 percent of the slum settlements are actually squatter settlements (Sopon 2003, 9–10). In the vast majority of cases, residents have constructed housing on land with the permission of the legal owner, be that owner a government agency or private entity. They then pay that owner a modest rent for the land, though often these rental agreements do not specify a time period for the lease, carry little legal weight, and may even be verbal (Angel and Sopon 1989, 138; Boonlert 2008, 38). A 1984 survey, to the date the most comprehensive slum study the city, revealed that the state agencies with slums on their lands included temples and mosques at the highest, followed by the CPB, the Irrigation Department, the Treasury Department, and SRT (Angel and Sopon 1989, 136–37). Therefore, the state in its many manifestations has long accommodated the growth of slums, calling into question just how 'informal' many of these settlements are.

A third misconception about Bangkok slums and the people in them is that they are all poor people working in the "informal economy," (*setthagit nok rabob),* a term that came into vogue under the administration of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra in the early 2000s (Ekkaphonat 2016). What are considered slum settlements display a high degree of variation in terms of the income level of the people and the quality of the housing, both within and between settlements (Askew 2002; Endo 2014). This diversity in income levels stems from a diversity in occupations, even within the lifetime of a single person, which may include informal manual labor or selling street food, but could also include contract construction, driving taxis, or even government office work (Endo 2014). This variety of livelihoods also entails a variety of incomes, and while most slum dwellers might not be considered middle class, in fact the majority do *not* fall below the national poverty line (Askew 2002, 141).

A final misconception about slums is that the people in them are originally from the countryside. This view is expressed by the well-known academic Akin Rabibhadana, who conducted his early research at Cornell with members of the community studies team that researched Bang Chan. Akin has long argued for seeing slums as the diverse settlements that they are (Askew 2002, 140). However, he has also propagated some of the more essentialist beliefs about them, stating in one of his most recent works that "When rural people move to the city to live, they still maintain the same behaviors as before. They call the places they live "villages" (*muban*), and they are still villagers, just as before, even though the environment has changed. The area around the village, instead of being a field or forest as before is now a concrete jungle (Akin 2009, 21–22).[24] This belief in the inherent rurality of slum dwellers is contradicted by studies of the actual origins of slums. It is true that many slums were settled by people coming from other provinces and gradually expanded, usually by individually households being invited to join through their personal networks or through the expansion of families over multiple generations (Endo 2014, 29–40). However, contrary to popular belief that slum dwellers are newly urban villagers, the people living in slums are not necessarily more likely to be of rural origin than other city dwellers. As Sopon (2003, 6) has pointed out, migration is not the primary

[24] เมื่อชาวชนบทอพยพเข้ามาอยู่ใจเมือง พวกเขาก็ยังคงมีพฤติกรรมเช่นเดิม เรียกกลุ่มบ้านที่พักอาศัยว่า "หมู่บ้าน" และตัวเขาก็ยังเป็นชาวบ้านเหมือนเดิม แม้ว่าสภาพแวดล้อมได้เปลี่ยนไปแล้ว บริเวณโดยรอบหมู่บ้าน แทนที่จะเป็นทุ่งนาป่าเขาเหมือนเดิม กลับกลายเป็นป่าคอนกรีต..." (Akin 2009 21-22).

reason for the growth of slums. Much of the rural-urban migration is temporary or not of low-income people. In addition, many of the people living in slums were born in the city. Some of the more historic slums were, in fact settled early in the twentieth century of before (Herzfeld 2016; Shelby 2017) and even in those that are newer, current residents may be second or third generation Bangkokians (Endo 2014). In the past couple of decades, many of the newer slums, including those of people who were living under bridges, have been constructed by people who have been evicted from other places in the city (Suwit, Abhayut, and Nophaphan 2003).

By the 1980s the slum population in Bangkok proper stood at around one million (Angel and Sopon 1989). This absolute population would remain stubbornly constant over the next few decades, despite decreasing as an overall percentage of the city's population (Sopon 2003). As urban growth continued the threat of eviction grew ever-present for residents and became a source of mobilization for collective action.

3.2.4 Eviction

The problem of owners seeking to evict slum residents is nearly as old the slums themselves. At the same that slums were expanding, the growing population and increased economic activity was increasing land prices. This led to evictions so that both government and private owners could gain higher rents for their land than they could get from their current tenants (Ekkaphonat 2016, 7–9). Prior to the 1970s the government did pursue any kind of formal housing policies to deal with slums (Chiu 1984). Eviction was often quick and violent, with arson begin a popular means of forcibly removing residents when they refused to leave. This use of force quickly fell out of use, however, because of how public and visible it was. A violent eviction created a stir, and residents rallied against it, often using newly available media channels. The democratization at many levels of government made it politically dangerous for government agencies, and it was generally seen as socially unacceptable (Angel and Somsook 1988, 12), so in the 1980s landowners came to rely on legal channels. They would file a legal case against residents who refused to vacate the land within 30 days of receiving notice. Residents, having few resources to fight these legal threats, would face steep penalties or imprisonment if they refused. Though this use of legal action for eviction was not fair to residents by any means, it was also a slower process than fire or violent eviction by the police. The time it took to file a case and follow through with it opened the door for residents to organize to negotiate, if not to resist the eviction entirely, then at least for more compensation or more time (Ekkaphonat 2016, 7–9). As I will discuss in later sections, these effort on the part of slum dwellers would grow more organized over time with the help of NGOs.

The eviction of slums did little to decrease their numbers. With ongoing housing shortages, most slum dwellers resorted to reconstructing their homes in a similar manner elsewhere in the city. As the decades wore on and the amount of vacant urban land decreased, this resulted in two trends: the appearance of more slums on the outskirts of the city as land in the urban core has grown scarce, the densification of centrally located slums (Ekkaphonat 2016, 43). In recognition that eviction alone was both politically unpopular and ineffective at solving the problem of slums, from the 1970s on the Thai government pursued a variety of strategies to deal with existing settlements.

3.2.5 Early Housing Policies and their Treatment of Slums as Chumchon

The Thai government approached slums in many different ways from the 1970s to the 1980s, from the direct construction of apartment buildings to more pragmatic approaches that sought to provide infrastructure and semi-legal status to settlements. These different strategies

were carried out by a diverse set of agencies at different levels of government, often with overlapping or uncertain jurisdictions. What most of these different strategies had in commons, though, was that they began to treat slum settlements as *chumchon*, both by formal appellation and in the way they interacted with the settlement residents as discrete social and spatial units.

The earliest attempts at building affordable housing in Bangkok took place at approximately the same time as *chumchon* was making its way into the lexicon as a term for the peasantry, and the use of "community" to describe slums was already apparent. The equivalence between rural villages and the urban poor would be set in formal government structures by the 1970s, at the same time as the government was pursuing its most aggressive rural development efforts. However, at the time government policies in urban areas had less to do with pacifying members of *chumchon* than with relocating them.

Prior to 1970, no single agency was charged the task of housing the urban poor. From 1942 to 1970, the Housing Bureau, the Housing Division, the Housing Scheme Bank, and the Community Improvement Office were all in charge of different aspects of shelter provision (Chiu 1984, 31). The Community Improvement Office was the most local agency, operating under municipal authority. Despite what the name implies, it was not primarily charged with improving the conditions of settlements. Technically resettlement and constructing new residences were within its purview. However, in practice clearance was its main concern, and "By the mid-1960s, its only achievement had been the reduction of existing residential facilities through its clearance projects and this office stimulated the relocation rather than the elimination of slums" (Chiu 1984, 32).

The 1970s saw both a more concerted effort to produce legal housing for poor urban dwellers and movements toward formalizing *chumchon* as a unit of governance. In 1972 the Thai government, following international trends at the time, condensed the various agencies in charge of housing into a National Housing Authority (NHA). The NHA was initially charged with an aggressive program of direct building, but it faced a number of financial difficulties, including higher than projected construction costs and payment delinquencies from tenants, and land acquisition difficulties. These challenges in terms of acquiring land stemmed from the fact the agency was reliant on acquiring land primarily from the many other public agencies that owned land in the city, and those agencies were increasing likely to want to lease out their lands for commercial purposes because of the promise of higher rents due to increasing land prices generally. The land they did end up purchasing was far from the city center, often in the outlying provinces of the BMR rather than Bangkok proper (Askew 2002; Chiu 1984). This distant relocation meant that residents would incur much higher transportation costs if they worked in the city. In addition, to save money on construction costs and electricity, most of the NHA flats did not have elevators, even though some were up to give stories tall. This meant that households with elderly or disabled residents could not live in them. Finally, apartment-style living was not conducive to the livelihoods of many of the potential residents, who needed communal spaces to prepare goods for sale or to store equipment for construction. The mismatch in location and design between the needs of potential residents and the actual housing produced by the NHA meant that many people who were given rights to occupy the apartments sold those rights and continued to live in self-built housing in the closer to the city center (Boonlert 2008, 40–43; Ekkaphonat 2016, 18–19).

By the late 1970s, the failure of the NHA flats led the government, under the advice of the World Bank, to pursue "second-best solutions." These solutions, known as sites-and-services schemes, did not seek to fully construct new durable housing, but instead aimed at installing

basic infrastructure and providing access and providing formal access to services like municipal water and electricity (Boonlert 2008; Chiu 1984; K.S. Yap 2002). Such schemes, while only partially solving issues of inadequate shelter, were thought to be more feasible for governments because they were lower cost. The hope was that once these basic services were provided, they would enable and incentivize residents to upgrade their own housing over time. In Thailand, sites-and-services projects were carried out by the NHA with the help of a World Bank loan. The first of these projects was started in the Thung Song settlement in 1978, and the larges one completed was in Bang Phli, covering 19,070 units being covered. At the same time, the NHA also conducted some more comprehensive on-site upgrading in a handful of communities. However, the major downfall of these approaches was that did not engage in trying to ensure more secure, long-term land tenure for residents. The government attempted to get landowners to agree not to evict for ten years after the upgrading so as to ensure the investment would be worthwhile. However, most owners were reluctant to acquiesce to this condition, so few projects got off the ground (Boonlert 2008, 40–43).

While these early sites-and-services schemes and on-site upgrading attempts were hardly widespread, they reflected a larger turn in urban governance. Instead of viewing slum settlements as areas to be cleared via the relocation of residents to high-rise apartments, slums were being viewed as a specific type of socio-spatial unit within the city called a *chumchon*. In the 1970s, slums were officially renamed *chumchon eh at*, or "congested communities," a euphemism that reflected the views of some NGOs at the time who sought to avoid the term slum, which had made its way into Thai ("*salum"*) carrying at least some of its English stigma with it (Askew 2002, 80; Endo 2014, 29–40). Along with this new name came new governmental measures to address these communities. During the three-year period of parliamentary democracy from 1973-76, the government made a concerted attempt to create a system of community committees that could act as intermediaries between residents and the local government. Some communities, including those in Khlong Toei, had instituted the practice on their own as a means of organizing and arguing their case to authorities. However, Askew (2002, 146) emphasizes that when the BMA took up the creation of committees they were primarily for the purpose of administration. The practice spread, and by 1982 the NHA and the BMA created a formalized system of community committee elections held by the local district officials. In the 1993, the BMA came out with a five-tier system of categorizing communities. *Chumchon eh at* is the poorest and least formalized of the five. *Chumchon meuang* ("urban communities") and *chumchon chanmeuang* ("suburban communities") refer to settlements that are less congested than *chumchon eh at* but are still self-constructed. *Chumchon kheha* ("NHA apartment communities") refers to specific groups of occupants of the NHA-built apartments. Finally, *Chumchon banjadsan* ("distributed communities") refers to pre-planned developments of townhouses for upper lower- to middle-income households (Endo 2014, 41). The categorization of *chumchon*, while encompassing a variety of different types of settlements, notably excludes higher income neighborhoods. While residents of condominium buildings or higher-income neighborhoods. *Chumchon* was thus formally established as an administrative category for lower income settlements, "reflecting the fact that Bangkok communities, in the eyes of government agencies of the time, mainly comprised slums" (Endo 2014, 40).

The changes in government policies over the course of the 1970s and 1980s away from the direct building of high rises and towards community-based governance and on-site upgrading reflected many trends, both domestic and international. On the international side, organizations like the World Bank held significant sway over the policies of so-called "developing nations."

On the domestic front, however, in the 1970s a broad-based grassroots movement of the country's poor was growing, due to a number of factors, from the return of former communist insurgents to mainstream society to the availability of international funds to support NGOs, to new urban community organizing techniques that were making their way through Asia. In the subsequent sections I will review these trends and how they came to influence urban politics and housing policy.

3.3 The Rise of the Slum Movement

From the 1980s onwards, a growing slum-based movement began to grow in Thailand's urban areas, especially in Bangkok. This movement was comprised, at first, of piecemeal attempts to resist violent eviction and to organize communities. These early efforts, which were conducted by a variety of different organizations, would coalesce by the end of the 1990s into nationwide network called the Four Regions Slum Network (FRSN). Along the way, it would establish ties to nationwide movements to unite the urban and rural poor to make demands of the government, as well as with international networks of urban community-based organizations.

3.3.1 Early Slum-Based Organizations

The predecessors of the community-based movement in Bangkok began in the 1970s, primarily through nascent NGOs and faith-based organizations seeking to provide charitable services for the urban poor. Much of this early work in slums was focused on Khlong Toei, as the largest and most conspicuous slum in the city. Prominent figures of the era that would endure in the ensuing decades include Father Joseph Maier, a Catholic Priest who arrived in Bangkok in late 1960s. He began working in the area of Khlong Toei known as *rong mu* (literally the pig factory, or as Father Joe calls it, "The Bangkok slaughterhouse (Maier and Hopkins 2005). After several years of ministering to the residents of *rong mu*, Father Joe moved in to Khlong Toei, where he still lives today as he continues to work with his organization, the Human Development Institute (check). The HDI remains primarily an educational and social service institution, a place for women and children in the slum to meet their basic needs and improve their chances for a better future. However, Father Joe himself comes from a more activist background, having been motivated to join the priesthood and take an active role in improving the lives of the poor doing the heady mobilizations in the United States in the 1960s and was influenced by the teachings of Paulo Freire and liberation theology from early in his career. At some points during his time in Khlong Toei he has been involved in political mobilizations to resist eviction. However, he has always put the welfare of the residents at the fore of his work, and as a foreigner there are limits to the extent to which he can engage in political activity. Nonetheless, his work and writing about the lived realities of those who inhabit the slums of Bangkok have gained international attention for their attention not only to the hardships and indignities of living under such conditions, but also the inner strength of the residents who endure them. The work of Father Joe also set a precedent for what it means to work in the slums. He lived among those he worked with, but not until they invited him to do so after he had demonstrated consistency and dedication to the cause (Maier and Hopkins 2005).

Another person working in a similar vein during this ear was Prateep Ungsongtham, known as Kru Prateep. Kru Prateep, who has been called "The Slum Angel," was born and raised in Khlong Toei. While still a teenager, she worked to put herself through higher education. While still a young woman, she opened schools in Khlong Toei and became a spokesperson for her neighbors during an eviction threat (Boonlert 2003, 71). She eventually founded the Duang Prateep foundation (The Duang Prateep Foundation n.d.). Duang Prateep, like the HDI, remains

a prominent organization in Khlong Teoi and elsewhere in Bangkok. Also like HDI, its focus is more charitable than political, a stark contrast to later organizations (Ekkaphonat 2016, 31). However, the foundation played a prominent role in fighting the eviction of the Seventy Rai community in Khlong Toei in the early era of slum mobilization (Boonlert 2008, 49). On top of this organizing work, some of the important actors in later mobilizations would get their start by working with Kru Prateep at the Foundation. One of these activists was Suwit Wattanoo.

3.3.2 The CPT-inspired Strains of the Slum Movement

Suwit Wattanoo represents one of the two key strains of political influence on what would eventually become the Four Regions Slum Network. Suwit had been a dedicated forest ranger in the southern province of Surat Thani during the communist insurgency in the 1970s and early 1980s. While he is considered an Octoberist (Kanokrat 2016), he was not a student during the October protests of 1973 and 1976. At the time, he was already an instructor at a vocational school, leading students in their organizing efforts. After the 1976 massacre, he fled to the forests, but unlike many of the students, he was *not* ambivalent about the communist cause. He had long been steeped in Marxist literature and became more so during his time in the forest, reading the origin texts of Marx, Lenin, and Mao religiously. In describing his engagement with these thinkers in book written in tribute to Suwit after his death in 2007, a friend notes that he knew these texts "to the extent that Antonio Gramsci has only surface knowledge"[25] (Nitirat 2007).

A genuine belief in Marxist ideology was not the only way in which Suwit differed from many of the Octoberists. He also stayed in the forests, working with rural communities much longer than many others, demonstrating a commitment to working in the field that would remain with him in his later career. In 1985, several years after most of his comrades had taken advantage of government amnesty to return to mainstream society, Suwit finally left the forest. However, his reason for leaving was not that he believed in CPT's cause any less, merely that it had become apparent that the movement had been so diminished that there was no way forward, and they needed another way to fight. He left the forest, but he refused to register with authorities to receive amnesty. This initially made it difficult for him to find work. He made ends meet through odd jobs in Bangkok for a period of time and eventually friends invited him to come work at the Duang Prateep Foundation through recommendations from friends. There he wrote newsletters and worked alongside others who were thinking through the issues of slums. They called themselves the "slum problem study group,"[26] and together they began to network with others in the city who were working on similar issues. Over this period of time, Suwit was growing increasingly dissatisfied with the approach of Duang Prateep, which emphasized charity (Nitirat 2007, 33). However, others in the city were more aligned with his beliefs in popular mobilization. Many of these others were initially trained in different, but complementary, tradition of mobilization.

3.3.3 The Community Organizing Strain of the Movement

Besides Suwit and his background with the CPT, the other primary intellectual strain the influenced the urban slum movement was what is known as the community organizing strain, called "C.O." (*si oh)* in Thai. This strain has decidedly global origins. According to organizers of the Human Settlement Foundation, the first person to practice C.O. in Asia was an American

[25] ขนาดอันโตนีโอ กรัมชียังรู้แค่ผิวเผิน

[26] กลุ่มศึกษาปัญหาสลัม

Presbyterian Minister named Herbert White. White had been a student of Saul Alinsky in the 1960s, and around 1968 he traveled to Korea to spread Alinsky's method of organizing. He experienced little success in Korea initially, however, because of the difficult domestic political situation there. So, he left Korea and moved to the Philippines, where a small group of young organizers, including a woman who would later become his wife, took up the strategies and began an organization in the Tondo district of Manila. After the Philippines, he continued to influence the training of community organizers throughout Asia, sometimes directly and sometimes through his students, who began traveling to other countries. For example, a student of his began an organization called PROUD (People's Responsible Organisation of United Dharavi) in Mumbai. In Thailand, organizers from the Philippines trained the original members of an organization called POP (People's Organization for Participation). Multiple organizers from POP would later come to play a prominent role in different aspects of slum movement and government policy, including Abhayut Chantrabha and future high-ranking officials in the Community Organizations Development Institute (Nitirat 2007).

3.3.4 The Coming Together of the Two Strains

While POP was getting up and running, Suwit was joining with other NGO organizers that he had come to know through the Slum Problem Study Group. One of these organizations was the Community Relations Group (*glum chumchon samphan*), led by Jamnong Jitaranarat. The Community Relations Group had been working with communities for several years, and organizers within it had been mentors (*phi liang*) to a nascent group called itself the Community Development Center (*sun ruam phatthana chumchon*). The Community Development Center was not an NGO, but rather an organization that connected slum communities from different locations together to work on their problems, particularly the problem of eviction. It operated under the principles that that community members themselves were the main actors in the movement. The role of NGOs was to supplement and support them. Suwit was impressed with this approach because it wasn't charity (*sangkhom songkhraoh*). It approached people living in slums as though they could be the engine of a true people's movement (Nitirat 2007, 33).

In 1988, Suwit joined up with the Community Relations Group, and in 1989 the group changed its name and formally registered as the Human Settlement Foundation (HSF). Over the next few years, the HSF and its associated community networks would attract members of POP, including Abhayut Chantrabha, who were skilled community organizers but had grown dissatisfied with the POP's focus on individual communities. With that, the skills of C.O. organizers were joined with the networking and movement-building of Suwit and Jamnong.

3.3.5 Early Community Networks and Activities

While the HSF and the other NGO activists in the city were instrumental in helping to construct community networks and the movement they would become, the communities themselves and their leaders played the primary role when the rubber hit the road. From the beginning, community leaders disagreed on how best to proceed in pursuing their political objectives. The Community Development Center was eventually the first network to be mentored under the umbrella of the HSF. However, the 11 communities that eventually constituted the Community Development Center had originally been 13 communities called the Slum Center. Within the Slum Center, internal fighting emerged over whether or not they should work with NGOs. Some community leaders felt that the NGOs had undue influence, and the communities should remain independent, working directly with the government. The community leaders could not resolve these differences, and in 1986 they split, with the remaining 11

changing their name to the Community Development Center and maintaining a relationship with the organizers of the HSF (Ekkaphonat 2016, 89).

Within the Community Development Center, individual leaders emerged to take charge of different aspects of the networks' work. Women played a prominent role, and Nugaen Inthajan became a spokesperson for the network. She had been leading her own community since before the networks came together. The first organizing the women did took place during eviction threats when authorities were using violent methods. When the community members stood before the soldiers to protest the eviction, the women and children would be strategically placed in front because the soldiers would not dare to hurt them (Ekkaphonat 2016).

Beyond fighting the immediate threat of eviction, the network started to organize to make small demands to improve their lives and environments. Based on collective decisions about their priorities, the communities, in conjunction with organizers, began to advocate for a variety of things. Some were able to get housing registrations that would allow them to send their children to school and access social services. Others were able to get authorities to extend formal municipal water and electricity into their settlements, which either providing them with the services for the first time or greatly decreased their monthly expenses because they no longer had to pay the prices demanded by neighbors to branch the services secondhand. From these early experiences, the communities and NGO organizers began to hone their methods of direct action. They figured out the most effective forms of rallies and demonstration (*kan chumnum*), which they used to open up negotiations with government officials (Ekkaphonat 2016, 49–51).

Another key aspect of the work that emerged was the importance of creating collective resources. Women were again the leaders in this respect. Over time Nugaen came to lead the women's homemaker group within the network (*glum maeban*). A small group of women traveled to India in 1988 to *du ngan* (literally, "watch work") with women's savings group. When they came back, they started a savings groups of their own, in which the members contributed one baht per day. The savings could then be used to make small loans to members in cases of emergency, so they would not have to borrow from loan sharks at interest rates of up to 20 percent. Some communities also used tools like recycling cooperatives to raise internal money that could be used to pay for collective expenses (Ekkaphonat 2016, 22).

3.3.6 The Next Generation of Networks and Organizers

As the Community Development Center grew in its capacities, the HSF, in coordination with members of an organization that would eventually be called the Urban Poor People's Working Group, began to expand its work to people living under bridge. In 1989, when the BMA announced an intention to clear the areas under 500 bridges, the HSF started to gather information about the people in these settlements. With very little base to start from, they began by driving motorcycles around the city to figure out which bridges had settlements and to collect some basic demographic information, which they initially withheld from the BMA for fear it would be used to speed up the eviction process (Suwit, Abhayut, and Nophaphan 2003, 17–21). Once they had a better idea of where the bridge settlements were located and the organizers had established a tenuous trust with the at least some of the residents, they set to work expanding both the quality and quantity of the movement.

Expanding the movement of the network that would be called the People Under Bridges, (*khon tai saphan*) involved pursuing many lines of work simultaneously. Even though the residents were faced with possible eviction, one aspect of the work was improving some of the physical conditions in the settlements, like building better bathrooms and creating community signs. These tangible improvements created a sense that things were getting better because of

their collective work and helped to build feelings of solidarity. Then there was the administrative aspect. Having monthly meetings in each *chumchon* and of the leaders of network was of the utmost importance. To demonstrate how to conduct these meetings and their importance, the HSF arranged to send leaders to observe the meetings of the Community Development Center. The function of the meetings was to serve as a forum in which to establish common goals and strategies. However, even though the different communities held common goals, the work of the People Under Bridges was uneven. Some communities had greater capacity than others for a number of reasons. People living in those conditions have all kinds of obstacles. They may not have had anything to hope for a long time, so they may not be able to think about the future. They may have cognitive impairments. They may have drinking problems. Part of the work was to not necessarily get everyone working in the same way, but to get people to be able to do work according to their abilities (Suwit, Abhayut, and Nophaphan 2003, 29–32).

During the early 1990s when the work under bridges was getting under way, the HSF was also getting help from a younger generation of student activists. At Ramkhamhaeng University, a group of students had started what was formally called the "Dilapidated Areas Study Club" (*chomrom seukhsa laeng seuam som*) (Suwit, Abhayut, and Nophaphan 2003, 17–20). However, the members called themselves "The Slum Study Club." The reason for the different appellations was that "slum" had by that time been re-appropriated by progressive movements in the city to the extent that officials considered it to be a signal of leftist ideology and "dangerous." While the Slum Study Club members appeased their university administration with politically correct terminology, they nonetheless joined with the efforts of the HSF, the Community Development Center, and the People Under Bridges, learning the core skills of community organizing that many would take with them to become the mentors of future networks after they finished at Ramkhamhaeng University—which in most cases meant dropping out.

This coalition of communities, two generations of organizers, and academics and progressive bureaucrats in the NHA, gradually moved forward a proposal fairly house the People Under Bridges. They divided the participating communities in four zones for the purposes of savings and collective management. At the same time, they identified three tracts of land not far from the center of the city where the communities could rebuild. Since the communities could not afford to buy the land, they negotiated with the NHA to purchase the land first and let the communities rent it from them. The initial rental proposal from the NHA was 500 baht per households per month, but they were able to negotiate it down to one baht per square meter. The final proposal for this relocation was approved in 1995. However, took until 2001 for all of the zones to relocate and to get construction underway in earnest (Suwit, Abhayut, and Nophaphan 2003, 6–7; 40–44).

3.3.7 Lessons Learned, Organizing Principles, and the Emergence of a Community Organizing as a Professional Practice

The delays experienced in during the process of the People Under Bridges negotiations and construction served as important lessons for the community members and the organizers alike. They would not necessarily be able to avoid these obstacles in the future, but they would be more prepared. The most important obstacle was that the demands they were making did not align with the normal ways of working of the NHA, the BMA, and a number of other government agencies. Getting the proposals through involved developing key allies inside who had the power to push their proposals forward and create bureaucratic workarounds. The second obstacle was the byzantine nature of governance in the BMR. Getting an approval through in one agency did not mean that it would be recognized by another. Even if the BMA or a national

agency approved a deal, district-level officials may not recognize a policy change, which would necessitate returning to the BMA to mediate between the community and the district to help district official understand how to proceed under new protocols (Suwit, Abhayut, and Nophaphan 2003, 40–44). What the community leaders and organizers learned through these many delays was the importance of patience and persistence. As the movement developed, these practical principles would come to define it, alongside a number of other consistent practices and beliefs.

As these early community networks took shape, so did the *chumchon* themselves. Settlements were no were no longer a collection of neighbors. When organizers entered the settlements and began to work with residents, they emphasized the necessity of building a collective identity and of creating shared goals communal resources. *Chumchon* identities were strengthened through the establishment of community names, if they did not already exist, and the announcement of these names through signage. Shared goals were thought up and reinforced at regular meetings at the levels of both the individuals chumchon and the network. Finally, collective resources were built through savings groups and group enterprises. These practices were honed through trial and error, but they were influenced by other movements, both domestic and global. Some elements, including the necessity of connecting communities as elements of a larger movement, were taken from the lessons learned by Suwit Wattanoo during his days with the CPT. Others, such as the gradual pursuit of small victories in order to build community strength, were learned from organizers trained in the methods of Saul Alinsky. The use of collective savings was learned from trips abroad by community members themselves.

This amalgam of replicable practices that were borrowed and localized were spread partially by members of *chumchon* themselves. However, much of the networking and training taking place was facilitated by another phenomenon on the 1980s and 1990s—the emergence of community organizing as a field of professional practice. Through the influences of the Suwit, the former CPT ranger-turned urban activist, and the Alinsky-inspired methods of the CO-trained organizers, a number of principled practices emerged among a small but significant group of professional organizers.

The first of these principles was the importance of fieldwork. This meant spending significant time with communities, working alongside them, and developing close relationships in order to build trust between the organizer and community members. Suwit famously spent nearly every day out in the communities he was working with. This was the way he had worked when he was living out in the forests as a ranger for ten years. The first community he became close with made their livings primarily as trash pickers and collectors. So he would work alongside them, picking through trash in the midday sun. He enjoyed telling younger members of the movement the story of his wedding day, when he got married in the morning and went back to work out in a community in the evening (Suwit, Abhayut, and Nophaphan 2003, 34–35).

Second, community members themselves were the primary actors in the movement. The community organizers of the HSF and POP held their methods in contrast to the charity work of organizations like Duang Prateep (Ekkaphonat 2016, 31; Nitirat 2007, 33). In principle, at least, the community members themselves were to develop their own goals and strategies, relying on their own capacities to carry out actions. The role of the NGO organizer was to mentor and assist according to the needs of the community.

The third practice derives clearly from the principles espoused by Saul Alinsky. This involves a strategy for guiding community members to begin their work together by tackling small grievances in order to get easy wins and establish confidence in the organization (Alinsky

1989 [1971]). Following these principles, the slum movement started with NGOs and students and academics going in and working with communities, suggesting the first thing they should do is to come together as a group. They started by asking for small attainable things, like housing registrations and formal connections to water and electricity. If they were being evicted from private land, they would ask for an extended period of time. If they were on government land, they would try to reach an agreement to improve the land and stay in place with a formal rental arrangement (Ekkaphonat 2016, Citing interview with Abhayut Chantrabha). In short, they focused on building up the organization, gradually taking on bigger and bigger challenges as it grew stronger.

Finally, following Suwit's background in movement-building, the organizers never worked in communities in isolation. Rather, they sought to connect *chumchon* in formal networks, creating committees at the level of the network so that the network could move forward in a coordinated fashion. In this way, the organizers were not only working to improve the lives of individual community members; they were working to make structural change at the level of policy. In order to this, they also joined together with larger movements in what was becoming known as the *phak prachachon,* or People's Sector (Boonlert 2003, 73).

3.4 The NGO Movement and the Rise of "Good Governance"

The slum-based movement of *chumchon* that was gathering steam by the early 1990s was hardly happening in isolation. During the same time period, a nationwide community-based movement based on principles of participation and justice had been taking shape, primarily in rural areas. The slum movement would ultimately join up with these others in what became known as the Assembly of the Poor.

3.4.1 The Assembly of the Poor and the Formation of the Four Regions Slum Network

As the HSF was expanding its work to networks beyond the original Community Development Center in the mid-1980s, other networks of communities were forming throughout the country with the help of NGOs, primarily in rural areas. Some of these NGOs included Thai Development Support Committee, as well has the NGO Coordinating Committee on Rural Development (NGO-CORD). All of these larger organizations allowed for the establishment of national and even global networks that extended far beyond the local communities. In rural areas, a lot of the activism was around environmental issues (Missingham 2003, 31–32), and as communities worked in concert with NGOs and academics, they articulated what one community rights scholar described to me as "new social principle" of the community rights movement along the way. This principle, inspired by many of the theories of "alternative" and "appropriate development" that were emerging in the 1980s, emphasized "villagers' organizations" (*ongkon chaoban*) as the vehicle for promoting a different kind of development that recognized the rights of indigenous populations, including the rights to land, culture, and political participation (Missingham 2003, 31). In this sense, the movement combined different elements of both community culture and community rights their rhetoric, with different NGOs emphasizing espousing the beliefs of the two schools to different extents.

The Octoberist generation played a primary role in driving the NGO movement forward. After the failure of the radical movement of the CPT, many Octoberists, just like Suwit Wattanoo, returned from the forests in search of a purpose and a livelihood. A great number found this through working with communities to pursue peaceful reform under the auspices of a growing number of NGOs working in rural development (Kanokrat 2016, 192; Missingham 2003, 29). Under these organizations, their ideologies and practical approaches changed the

hard-line leftist principles of the CPT to include many of the more liberal ideologies that many Octoberists had held along, including those of direct and participatory grassroots democracy (Kanokrat 2016, 194). After several years of working in this new way, the NGO activists working in rural areas, like the slum-based movement they were connected to, had developed clear methods of working for political change at different levels. Missingham (2003, 34), describes this approach as "three-tiered": "they continued their grassroots work with villagers' organizations and networks; they sought to build alliances with academics, the media, and other sections of middle class; and they campaigned for state policy reforms at a national level."

Because of his experiences and personal connections dating from the insurgency, as well as his status as an Octoberist, Suwit was especially adept at building connections between the slum movement and these other movement in the People's Sector (Nitirat 2007, 37). By the mid-1990s, the HSF, POP, and other slum-based movements in the north, northeast, and south of the country were connecting to these rural-based networks. In 1995, this nationwide movement of communities and NGOs coalesced under a name: The Assembly of the Poor.

The Assembly of the Poor was kicked off in earnest on December 10, 1995, with meeting at Thammasat University entitled 'Assembly of the Poor: The consequences of large-scale development projects" (*Samacha khon chon: an neuang ma chak phonkrathop khong khrongkan phatthana khanat yai*). The meeting included representatives from rural and urban networks throughout not only Thailand, but other Asian countries, as well. Throughout the duration of the multi-day conference, delegates traveled to different locations to learn about the challenges of different communities and listened to panel discussions on a variety of topics, including "Democracy, Human Rights, and the Poor today" (Missingham 2003, 39). As the Assembly coalesced into a movement, it pursued the following stated goals, as expressed by member organizations: "the Assembly of the Poor is a 'platform (*wethi*) for mutual learning and exchange of knowledge about our problems by poor an disadvantaged people in society.' The Assembly aims to 'build the power and cooperation of the poor at the local, national, and international levels to convince the public that states must manage resources in ways that ensure equity and fairness for all people, free rights, and popular participation and self-determination'" (Missingham 2003, 39).

The principles of human rights and democracy would remain important to the Assembly as it eventually mounted increasingly aggressive protest campaigns In early 1996 they enacted a demonstration with about 12,000 people at the Government house for five weeks, gaining concessions from then-Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh. This created momentum for a much larger and protracted protest that included 25,000 people and lasted 99 days. They demanded compensation for the impacts of state development projects. By the end of the protest and subsequent negotiations, the Assembly of the Poor had won concessions totaling 652 million baht in compensation for thousands of families displaced and economically impacted by dams and other construction projects. Perhaps just as important as these tangible concessions, however, was the establishment of the establishment of a precedent for the inclusion of direct action and participatory democracy in public sphere (Missingham 2003, Chapter 6). In other words, the People's Sector gained power legitimacy.

Though the movement won unprecedented concessions from the government, these were quickly lost after the East Asian Financial Crisis hit and the Chavalit government fell apart. When Chuan Leekpai reneged on prior deals when he took office. However, the movement continued for the next several years, In 2000 they succeeded in gaining concessions for residents affected by the large Pak Mun Dam project (Missingham 2003, 4–5), and they were instrumental

in helping to forward negotiations for land acquisition for the People Under Bridges (Suwit, Abhayut, and Nophaphan 2003, 40–44).

The Assembly of the Poor also served as a catalyst for the multiple semi-coordinated slum movements taking shape throughout the country to congeal under a single banner. At the time of the of Assembly, they participated as a network under the name The Slum Organization for Democracy (*ongkon salum pheua prachathibotai*) (Boonlert 2003, 70). However, this quickly changed, and within a year they took on a new name to reflect their nationwide reach, The Four Regions Slum Network (*khreua khai salum si phak*). As the FRSN, they worked under a two-phrase motto (see Figure 5). The first, *samakkhi khon salum* (unity of people of the slum), reflects the specificity of their network. The second, *ruam phalang khon jon* (poor people join forces together), was a prominent slogan on signs during the protests of the Assembly of the Poor (Missingham 2003, 156), reflecting the FRSN's connection to this larger popular movement.

Figure 5: The Flag of the Four Regions Slum Network

3.4.2 The Role of "Good Governance" in the Rise of NGOs in Thailand

Numerous factors contributed to the size and success of the Assembly of the Poor. The same types of large infrastructure projects that had fed rural unrest in the era of the communist insurgency had continued unabated in the subsequent decades. This, on top of the trade policies that were leading many poor rural dwellers to pursue work in urban areas, created shared sense of disadvantage between the rural and urban poor that was ripe for mobilization (Missingham 2003). Then there was the presence of the Octoberist generation, whose skills in working with

communities, education, political savvy, and social connections to the middle class perfectly positioned them to serve as intermediaries between villagers and state entities (Kanokrat 2016, 172). But these factors alone likely would not have been enough to mount the sort of sustained resistance the Assembly of the Poor achieved. For that, financial resources were necessary.

These resources were made available through a flow of money to NGOS that, by the late 1980s, was flooding Thailand and many other "Third World" nations due to the growing influences of "good governance." The Octoberists that were creating and working for NGOs in the late 1980s and 1990s were able to do so because they could sustain themselves on what some estimate to be 300 million baht of annual contributions from international donors (Missingham 2003, 29, citing Rueng 1995). This money boosted the number of NGOs in the country from 20 in the mid-70s to 200 in 1997 and 1,557 by 2001 (Kanokrat 2016, 171, citing Simplins 2003). These donors took many forms from small faith-based agencies to national development funds to the World Bank Social Investment Fund (Ekkaphonat 2016; Elinoff 2013, 712). Donors of these funds sought specifically to bypass the national government under the beliefs that NGOs were better equipped to handle grassroots development and that such development of civil society actors was necessary for the state to govern effectively (Missingham 2003, 29).

3.4.3 The Global Spread of Good Governance

Ideas that an active civil society is necessary for a government to function have been around for some time, but in the 1980s a specific discourse began to arise that posited that governing itself was not only the purview of the state government. In this conceptualization, "governance" should replace "government" in the management of public resources and populations. As opposed to government, which only encompasses the actions of state entities, *governance* incorporates the actions and practices of many other types of organizations, all of which are necessary for material development and the promotion of democracy. Discourses around "good governance" began percolating in the early 1980s however, the notable first public expression of the principles appeared in 1989 in the World Bank's The exact meaning of good governance can vary greatly depending on who is deploying it. However, the key principles were most clearly articulated in the 1989 World Bank report entitled: Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Development (Chairait 2017, 85–97). Over the course of the next several years, numerous intergovernmental organizations, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the European Council would all publish reports dealing with good. These various documents would define the term in different ways, with some, like the World Bank, defining the term in administrative and managerial terms, meaning an appropriate and efficient use of state resources throughout the incorporation of entities outside the government in the process of governance. Others, including many western governments, used the term in more political ways to mean the practice of democratic politics as pivotal element of sound administration governance (Leftwich 1994, 370–71). In any case, good governance generally incorporates four key principles: accountability, legitimacy, transparency, participation by an active civil society (Chairait 2017, 85–87).

In Thailand, the good governance was translated as *thammarat*, a s term which means roughly "just state" or "fair state." The enactment of this "just state" could happen through the invigoration of another relatively new term that began gaining popularity in the late 1990s and early 2000s, according to one of the organizers associated with the slum movement. This term was *prachasangkhom,* or "civil society." In the view of *thammarat,* civil society was to be "used

as a bridge between the government and the people"[27] (Chairait 2017, 87), language reminiscent of the early rural development interventions by the U.S. And the Thai government, which sought to use community organizations as a "bridge" between the people and the state (See Chapter 2). However, the idea of *prachasangkhom* as a bridge between the people did not necessarily align with all that was happening in the NGO movement.

The NGO movement that resulted in the Assembly of the Poor did not use the language of *prachasangkhon.* Instead, they retained another term, *phak prachachon*—the people's sector. Chairat (Chairait 2017, 126–27) describes the people's sector as a distant element of that arose not only in Thailand, but in other social movements of the Third World that arose during the era of New Social Movements in the 1990s and early 2000s. What distinguishes the people's sector from other conceptualizations of civil society or "the private sector" is that it does not incorporate the private market and even stands opposed to business interests.

This is quite different from the function of civil society in good governance discourse. While attempting to correct the worst effects of earlier structural adjustment approaches to development that reduced the resources of state, good governance also aligned well with the neo-conservative trends set forth in the era of Reagan and Thatcher. These policies still emphasized decreasing the role of government and increasing the power of private actors because under good governance, anything the state wasn't doing well could simply become the domain of other sectors. Providing for the public good was not solely the domain of the state; it could be accomplished by communities, the public sector or civil society, through 'participation' (Chairait 2017, 106–7). In this way, good governance was not as great a departure from structural adjustment as it is sometimes characterized. Rather, it is just a way of describing the type of politics and society necessary for markets to function in order to achieve "development." This meaning of good governance amounts to what Chairat (2017, 91) calls the "instrumentalist" view of the politics of good governance and falls in line with what Leftwich (1994, 365–66) considers the "administrative and managerial" meanings of the term.

Because of these different meanings, the rhetorical distinction between *phak prachachon* and *prachasangkhon* would remain in the ensuing decades for many involved in the NGO movements; however, the practical distinctions between the two would often be blurred, causing conflicts among communities and NGO organizers (Elinoff 2014b). The difficulty in maintaining a distinction between civil society and the people's sector lies in the very ideas of good governance that made both possible. Good governance shares with new social movements the idea that citizens' groups should have a larger role in society and government. In the pursuit of good governance, the Thai government would create many new avenues for participation by the communities that were being formed. Whether or not to take part in these programs and on what terms would become a source of tension for many in NGO movement, particularly in urban areas, as the lines between participation for political ends and participation to relieve the government of responsibility began to blur.

3.5 The Slum Movement Meets Government Community-Based Urban Development Policy

At the same time that the Four Regions Slum Network and the Assembly of the Poor were creating community organizations to make demands of the government, elements of the Thai government were also making efforts to pursue community-based solutions. They received

[27] ใช้เป็นสะพานเชื่อมระหว่างรัฐบาลกับประชาชน

support in these endeavors from international organizations, who were eager to fund programs aimed such efforts that broadly fit within the rubric of good governance. Nowhere was this government effort at community promotion more apparent than in the case of urban housing. However, as the use of *chumchon* as a unit for housing provision moved into government policy, it took on new meanings and functions, often having more to do with finance and management than with political action.

3.5.1 The Progressives Wing of the NHA

While the slum movement that ultimately coalesced into the FRSN was gradually gaining in its capacity to make demands of the government for land, infrastructure, and housing, another movement was occurring within government agencies provide resources to communities, albeit from a very different political position. Starting in the early 1980s, young architects and bureaucrats in the Thai government, particularly within the NHA, were recognizing the failures of the NHA policies and how they failed to meet the needs of the communities they were attempting to assist. Of this cohort of progressive NHA staff, one young person in particular would come to play a defining role in the future of Thai housing policy: Somsook Boonyabancha.

An architect educated in Denmark in the 1970s, Somsook had been exposed to Scandinavian models of collective housing early in her career. She would carry these ideas with her after she returned to Thailand, where she began working as an architect with the NHA. As a young government employee, she was charged with the on-the-ground work of rehousing settlements that were slated for eviction. One of the early settlements she worked with proved pivotal in her view on how to approach community housing policy.

The community of Ban Khrua is Bangkok's largest Muslim community. While not formally a member of any of the networks of the slum movement, Ban Khrua, like Khlong Toei, has played a prominent role in the city's policies. This is both because of its size and the collective identity as a Muslim community. The community would ultimately become as an example of community rights in action in the urban context because of its success in fighting a planned expressway construction project (Chonthira and Saneh 2000). When this project was proposed, Somsook had been part of a team charged with handling the eviction and rehousing of the community. During a visit to the community in 2018 over thirty years after her first engagement there, Somsook recounted to younger architects and government workers how she had been charged with explaining to residents how the project entailed razing the community, and that they would be rehoused in high rises in order to facilitate the building of the expressway. After she detailed the plans for the project, a local leader stood up. He made a very short statement, and in the end said "We are Muslims, and we do not agree with this project." At that, he began ululating, and the approximately 100 residents in attendance followed suit. They then stood up in unison and walked out of the meeting, single file. In Somsook's retelling, she stood there as they walked out in stunned silence, wanting to cry. Somsook would eventually work with Ban Khrua for several years as they fought their proposed evictions, and they eventually completed a project in which they would upgrade the community's infrastructure and re-block and upgrade some of the housing.

Ban Khrua was one of five pilot communities in which the NHA, with guidance and funding from the World Bank, pursued on-site upgrading, though without legal land tenure arrangement to assure that the communities would not be evicted. Somsook began to study the problems of slums in Bangkok more thoroughly, in coordination with the prominent planning and development researcher Solomon Angel. Eventually, Somsook and her colleagues were able

found a research entity on these issues within the NHA called the Center for Housing and Human Settlements Study with funding from the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies in the Netherlands. This center would serve as a sort of action research center, where staff members could engage in experiments with different kinds of programs to implement housing upgrading, particularly using methods of collective tenure and finance. In the early 1980s, this research entity, in coordination with NGOs and communities that were part of the slum movement, the first land sharing agreements were reached with government land owners in communities.

3.5.2 Land Sharing: The Intersection of the Slum Movement and Government Slum Policy

Over the course of the 1980s "land sharing" emerged through coordination between communities, NGO organizers, and the progressive wing of the NHA. Land sharing involved a compromise between communities at risk of eviction and landowners. In a land sharing, communities typically agree to condense their settlement to fit on a much smaller portion of the original lot through the re-blocking and reconstruction. Land sharing, unlike earlier on-site upgrading efforts, involves establishing legal long-term land tenure agreements. By sharing the land, the owner can still profit from developing part of the land to rent or sell at a market rate, but they can also avoid the political issues entailed with evicting the existing community (Angel and Somsook 1988; Boonlert 2008, 46–48; Ekkaphonat 2016, 86; Somsook 2018). Because the threat of negative attention if the community is evicted constitutes much of the incentive for owners to agree to land sharing, the agreements are most effective when the community is organized through strong leadership with the support of external organizations (Angel and Somsook 1988, 120). It has also been successful almost exclusively on government lands, such as those belonging Crown Property Bureau, the Treasury Department, and the King's personal property. This is because government entities are much more sensitive to political backlash than private owners.

Histories of land sharing have been written from the perspectives of both the NHA and international consultants (Angel and Somsook 1988) and activists and the academics who study them (Boonlert 2008; Ekkaphonat 2016). In these different accounts, the authors emphasize the roles of their respective organizations in originating the idea. Exactly who originally had the idea for land sharing may never be settled, but what does become clear from the different accounts is that the organizations played quite different roles in the process. While the NGOs and community leaders did the organizing on the ground and led the more controversial direct political actions that were sometimes necessary to open negotiations with government entities, the NHA wing concerned itself with obtaining the finances to perform the upgrading.

The initial land sharing and upgrading projects were financed on a one-off basis, but it quickly became clear that for this to be a more widespread solution for communities, new financial models would be necessary. Continuing collaboration with the Netherlands, one of the first communities to do land sharing, Sengki, received funding from the Dutch Habitat Committee in the amount of three million baht. This three million was deposited in Bangkok Bank as a guarantee fund, and the bank then lent the money to the community. In later agreements, money from other donors was used to guarantee loans. In some cases, Somsook herself and other involved in the projects would sign as guarantors on loans. Somsook describes this era of piecemeal financing as "the search and struggle phase" of developing what would ultimately become the *Baan Mankong* model. The key challenge of this time period was getting potential financiers of projects to recognize the communities as potential borrowers. The

challenge was both because of the perceived poverty of the individuals involved and the fact that the loans would be going to a collective, not an individual.

3.5.3 Chumchon *as a Legal and Financial Unit*

The problem of finance would ultimately be solved through a combination of inspirations. The first was housing cooperatives. The cooperative structure was something Somsook had become familiar with during her studies in Scandinavia. From this she came to believe in the importance of establishing the community as a "legal entity" (*nitibukkhon*). This legal entity serves the practical purpose or representing the community to the government and banks. However, for Somsook, this new legal entity also serves a symbolic purpose, of the community coming together, becoming a unit that owns their housing together. The second source of inspiration for solving the finance problem came from the practice of savings groups. Like Nugaen Inthajan and the members of the Community Development Center, who had learned the practice of creating women's savings groups from visiting similar groups in India, the NHA wing studied models of savings groups and revolving funds from groups like Mahila Milan. The appeal of the savings groups was that it could allow for the inclusion of people with multiple income levels. The final influence on the financial model also came from South Asia in the form of the growing influence of the Grameen Bank and the concept of microfinance. This aspect of the model came derived from the international finance expertise of an important new partner in the effort to build collective housing and land sharing, Phaiboon Watthanasiritham. Phaiboon had held multiple high-ranking roles in the government, including minister of the Department of Human Security and Social Development. He had also studied finance at internationally. Phaiboon and Somsook studied these various finance possibilities, eventually combining different elements into a model that would work as a revolving fund for community-based savings and loans.

The manifestation of this model would take the form of the Urban Community Development Fund, housed in a new office of the NHA called the Urban Community Development Office (UCDO). The creation of the UCDO represents the successful coordination of the more radical slum movement, who campaigned for the creation of a fund to assist with housing and infrastructure for the urban poor (Boonlert 2008, 42–43), the successful lobbying of Somsook, Phaiboon, and others with connections inside the government, and a desire on the part of the government to find a new solution to urban poverty. Which element was most important depends on whose is telling the story. What is certain which was initially capitalized to the tune of 1,250 million baht ($30 million) in 1992 and began offering loans as part of an "integrated credit system" that offered loans of varying interest rates for income generation, housing improvements, community enterprises, and the establishment of network-level revolving funds (Somsook 2001, 12). What all of these different loans had in common was that they were all made to communities, not individuals.

3.5.3 Differences between the Slum Movement and Government in the Role of Finance

While the creation of the Urban Poor Development Fund was pushed for by both the slum movement and government representatives, these groups had different reasons for advocating for it. For those in the slum movement, such a fund represented a way to access government resources that had previously been denied to the urban poor in order to pursue a quality of life and material improvements that a government should provide for its citizens equally. The ability to access these financial resources was both a right and a tool for furthering the movement.

However, for those on the side of the government, collective financial management was not a tool but a catalyst. It was a way to create community:

> Community-managed savings and loan programmes have emerged as one of the most powerful tools to draw together the many people and disparate groups that exist within poor communities. Because they are controlled and operated by community people themselves, savings and loan programmes build a community's own resource base. People can develop themselves and provide for their own needs, both individually and collectively, through the ongoing process of regular, concrete decisions that are inherent in the collective management of a savings and loan programme. (Somsook 2001, 9).

This view of savings and loans as central to the formation of communities represents a reversal of the role of savings groups in the slum movement. Instead of collective savings being something that a strong community pursues in order to meet its needs, savings, in the UCDO model, was the central element around which a strong community, represented by a formal legal entity, could be created. The role of finance in the creation of community would remain a point of contention between the slum movement and government community development institutions. But first, this model of financial management would be imbued with cultural primacy and virtue through the advent of a new approach to development by the government: sufficiency economy.

3.6 Sufficiency Economy as a Response to an Overly "Efficient" Market

Beginning in the 1990s, the concept of sufficiency economy, espoused by then King Bhumibhol Adulyadej, rose to fore of Thai consciousness and become enshrined in numerous policies. Rooted in the belief that the worst excesses of capitalism could be avoided through moderation and personal virtue, sufficiency economy aimed to lay out a new, more sustainable path for Thai development. The rhetoric of sufficiency economy would eventually be taken up by many community groups and included in the practices of the new government institute that the UCDO would eventually become. That sufficiency economy should play a prominent role in housing policies emphasizing community is fitting, considering a quite different approach to housing played a leading role in creating the financial collapse that led to the promulgation of sufficiency economy in the first place.

3.6.1 Market Enabling and Its Discontents

In the 1980s and 1990s, as the slum movement and NHA were gradually developing one set of solutions to the problem of housing in the city, the government was simultaneously pursuing another, as well—market enabling. Enabling policies emphasized the creation of the conditions under which housing markets could thrive, including clear systems of land tenure, transparent laws and regulations regarding the transfer of property, adequate infrastructure to facilitate construction by developers, and, perhaps, most importantly, the development of an efficient system of mortgage finance (Malpezzi 1990, 979; World Bank 1993, 26). This approach reflected growing attitude on the part of development experts that financial development was a key to the overall development of a country, and that "Housing finance is a non-negligible share of total finance in many countries. Housing finance needs to be considered in the light of its importance as finance as much as its importance for housing" (Malpezzi 1990, 979).

Beginning the 1980s, the Government Housing Bank (GHB) played an important role in providing mortgage loans at low interest rates, which enabled the growth of private-sector

developers. After private lender entered the market, the dominant presence of the GHB forced interest rates to stay low, heating up the housing housing sector (K.S. Yap 2002, 39). By 1989, when David Dowall conducted a study of the housing sector in Bangkok, he published it with the subtitle, “A Profile of an Efficiently Performing Housing Market,” declaring that “The Bangkok story is a 'happy' one, and it should be of considerable interest to those committed to improving third world housing conditions." (Dowall 1989, 339). He based this assertion on the fact that “The slower growth of slum and squatter settle-ments suggests that the private, formal market is beginning to respond to the needs of Bangkok's lower income residents and that, as long as present conditions continue, the share of slum and squatter settlements in the overall market can be expected to decline over the next five years" (Dowall 1989, 330). While he was correct that slums would decrease as a share of the housing stock and population, their absolute numbers would remain constant for many years to come (Sopon 2003). Nonetheless, Thailand’s housing policies and their emphasis on the development of financial markets as means to stimulating development would become a model for the rest of the world. In the report that enshrined enabling policies in World Bank policy, “Housing Enabling Markets to Work,” Thailand was held up as an example of the success the could be achieved if such policies are put into action (World Bank 1993, 17).

This “success” of the housing market, along with a general liberalization of the Thai economy done at the urging of the World Bank, led to enormous economic growth from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, leading to Thailand’s inclusion as an “emerging market” and part of the “East Asian Miracle.” However, this growth was not to last. As Pasuk and Baker (2014, 158) “By 1995, the cracks were visible.” These cracks involved a faltering stock market and clear bubble emerging in the Bangkok property market. Yap (1996), citing the earlier work of Dowall and others at the Bank, called attention to the fact that many of the new housing units being created by the mid-90s were sitting empty. Not long after, the bottom fell out. Exports dropped precipitously, and the government was forced to float the baht, which had previously been fixed to the U.S. Dollar. The devaluation led a massive crash that spread throughout East Asia in 1997 (K. S Yap and Kirinpanu 2000; Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit 2014, 158). What was known as the East Asian Financial Crisis was underway, though locally it was known as *wikrit tom yam kung,* or ‘The Tom Yum Kung Crisis, ‘emphasizing Thailand’s role in creating it by naming it after the famous sour Thai soup.

3.6.2 Sufficiency Economy

In the face of the crash, King Bhumibol, stepped in to provide a direction for the country. The King had long been known for his experiments in small-scale agricultural practices to promote the development of rural areas, and as early as 1974 he gave a speech laying out a philosophy of the nation’s development that emphasized the need to proceed in gradual steps, first creating a foundation through which all people’s basic needs could be met before pursuing more advanced economic goals (Priyanut 2004). In December of 1997, when the country was in the throes of the economic crisis, he returned to this theme in his annual birthday speech by laying out the core principles of was called “sufficiency economy” (*setthakit phaw phiang*).

Sufficiency economy, which has, from the beginning, been deeply intertwined with movements toward sustainability thinking by international development agencies, posits that individual greed is at the core of the inequality and suffering of the world. This greed, which has become rampant in the era of toxic capitalism is not a symptom of capitalism itself, but rather an immoral culture that leads people to act in self-serving ways and exploit the capitalist system for their exclusive gains, with no thought given to the good of society. In *Sufficiency Thinking,* a

number of Thai scholars, nearly all from the fields of economics and business administration, along with western editors, summarize the lessons of Sufficiency Economy and give case studies of how it has operated on the ground in Thailand. In it, they describe the core of Sufficiency Economy as capitalism that is fundamentally grounded in the teachings of Buddhism. Part of these teachings center around the importance of communal life:

> Buddha Dhamma preaches that a good human life can be obtained not through having more sophisticated technologies and materials to support life, but through a good balance between communal life and the ability to understand everything in its own nature. Continuous and rigorous training of one's mind, instead of chasing greed and accumulating wealth to satisfy a basic sense of insecurity, can lead to happiness derived, for example, from giving or helping others or being useful to others (Avery and Bergsteiner 2016, loc. 123).

Extended to the society scale,

> Sufficiency thinking within the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy seeks to balance the economic, societal, environmental and cultural spheres by following a middle path characterised by decisions and actions that are moderate, reasonable and prudent. The presumption is that individuals, families, communities and societies will embrace virtuous values that, when coupled with appropriate knowledge, enable them to decide and act with wisdom (Avery and Bergsteiner 2016, 3)

If individual minds are appropriately trained and society adopts these "virtuous values," then capitalism can flourish for the collective good, since "Capitalism is not inherently destructive, and certain forms of capitalism actually manage to balance social, economic and environmental outcomes. Among these moral forms of capitalism are some containing sufficiency thinking" (Avery and Bergsteiner 2016, 10).

Sufficiency economy, seeks to maintain the capitalist system, making it more sustainable by tempering the desires of the individuals and collectives that comprise it. Or, in Elinoff's (Elinoff 2014a, 91) analysis, "The sufficiency formulation…did not focus on issues of national policy or economic structures. Instead, it located the roots of the crash in the collective psyche of the nation." This problem with this collective psyche was that it had attempted to leap forward to quickly, abandoning the solid foundation that the King had been advocating since the 1970s. This is why, in his 1997 speech emphasized that the country had to "move backwards in order to move forwards" (Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit 2014, 260). Moving backwards meant, in one sense, returning to core Buddhist values of moderation and pursing the "middle path." But the movement to the past was more than just this. It also meant returning to an imagined essential Thai-ness based in self-reliance (*pheung ton eng*) (Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit 2014, 214) and communal living, themes that have long characterized elite views of Thailand's history, regardless of evidence to the contrary (Kemp 1988; K. Bowie 1992).

It was on these points of moderation, self-reliance, and communalism that sufficiency economy resonated with the theories of the community culture school. Through sufficiency economy the greater Thai public came to embrace a version of Thainess in line with the theories of scholars like Chatthip Nartsupha. However, sufficiency economy took the idea of an inherent community culture and twisted it in one important way. Community culture posited that self-

reliant communities represented a form of anarchism that existed instead of the nation-state. In sufficiency economy, though, self-reliance and communal life became the defining traditional culture of the nation, serving the development of the state. As building self-reliance and sufficiency came to guide the policies of the nations, they easily folded into the developing infrastructure to support community-based urban housing. However, the next institutional advancement on this front would not come directly from any initiative of the King, but from a wave of populist sentiment that would usher in the rise one of the most controversial figures in Thai politics today.

3.7 The Creation of CODI

3.7.1 Thaksin and the Rise of Populist Politics

By the late 1990s the UCDO had been up and running for several years, providing loans for a number of community-based activities throughout the urban areas of the country. In the early 2000s, with the stability of the UCDO proven, the office was restructured and expanded. Over the next several years, it would be expanded further, and the processes pioneered by the slum movement and progressive NHA employees would be institutionalized under these new structures as the *Baan Mankong* program. This entire process would be helped along by the populist fervor of Thaksin Shinawatra.

In 2000, the UCDO merged with its rural counterpart, the Rural Development Fund. This expanded the overall size of the fund and necessitated a new institutional location for both funds, since the NHA was primarily an urban agency. The solution agreed upon was called the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI). CODI is located under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. The creation of CODI was significant in two important ways. The first was its status as a government entity. It is what is known as a Public Organization (*ongkon mahachon*). At the time of its creation, this was a fairly new designation. Some have described CODI as "para-statal" (Herrle, Ley, and Fokdal 2015), while others have described how it operates with a greater deal of autonomy than other government agencies (Somsook 2004; Kioe Sheng Yap and De Wandeler 2010) . The key significance of the new designation is that much of CODI's funding from the central government comes in the form of loans to the central fund that it then on-lends to communities, charging a below-market rate interest rate to cover its operating costs. The remainder of the government funding does operate in the traditional way, as subsidies, mostly for housing construction.

The second way in which the creation of CODI was significant was that it moved the two of the government's vehicles for community development in urban and rural contexts under the same roof. As Somsook describes, "This was an important change. It wasn't an urban issue. It was an Urban and rural issue. No boundary for community."[28] Under CODI then, poor populations, regardless of their location, could access funding and support, but not as individuals, only as part of community organizations.

This type of support for community organizations fit well with the platform of Thaksin, who was elected in 2000. Thaksin eventually became known as a populist whose popularity surged with a large base of support from the poor rural communities and NGOs that had strengthened their influence throughout the 1990s (Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit 2014, Chapter 9). However, he was not always so concerned with the welfare of the poor. He was, at first, a "modernist," more concerned with helping the businessmen like himself who had been taken

[28] มันเป็นการเปลี่ยนที่สำคัญ มันไม่ใช่เรื่อง urban. เป็นเรื่อง Urban and rural. No boundary for community.

down by the financial crisis (Pasuk and Baker 2008). He would eventually become known for seemingly contradictory national development policies that emphasized, on the one hand, massive investments in social welfare, but on the other, a deepening of international financial entanglements that can be described as neoliberal. The dual character of his approach can be seen in the famous three-tier platform that won him such widespread support among the nation's rural poor. The three tiers included first, the 30-baht scheme, a universal healthcare policy that allowed citizens to access almost all healthcare services for 30 baht ($1). The second tier was debt relief for farmers. The third was a vehicle for new forms of debt through "village funds," which were government-sponsored microfinance institutions operated at the local level (Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit 2014) that actually increased levels of household debt (Endo 2014, 75–76).

Under Thaksin, low-income housing policies also took a bifurcated path, on one end pure subsidy, on the other, a new financial model. The pure subsidy end took the familiar form high rise public housing constructed by the NHA, often on the outskirts of the city. This program was called *Baan Ua Arthorn*, often translated as "We Care" Housing (Somsook 2004, 24). The second was *Baan Mankong*, proposed by Somsook and Phaiboon to Thaksin shortly after he took office and enthusiastically approved by the new prime minister.

The *Baan Mankong* model, as it was designed through the trial and error of the collaborations between the slum movement and Somsook and other NHA workers, involves several phases of social, legal, and financial work. While it is designed to be flexible, all projects must proceed through some set processes. First, communities must form savings groups. Through these savings groups, they save ten percent of what they intend to borrow for physical upgrading, with an initial loan limit of 300,000 baht per household that has gradually been raised over time. In most cases these savings groups are eventually formalized as a housing cooperative, registered with the Department for the Promotion of Cooperatives. All loans for upgrading and land purchase are made from CODI to the cooperative at base interest rate of four percent. The cooperative then on-lends to individual households, tacking on an additional interest rate, usually two to four percent, to cover their operating costs. It is through the cooperative that communities gain legal rights to occupy land. In some cases, this occurs via rental agreements with landowning government agencies, preferably on 30-year lease terms, though sometimes shorter terms are allowed. In other cases, communities purchase land through the cooperatives, facilitated by additional loans. In some cases, these land tenure agreements are for the land the community already occupies, as is the case in land sharing agreements. However, in other cases communities relocate. Officially, there are four options for upgrading: on-site upgrading, re-blocking, full reconstruction on site, and reconstruction with relocation (Somsook 2005a, 2009). The process, on paper, is facilitated through a series of institutional arrangements in which local governments, NGOs, and "community networks" (see Figure 6).

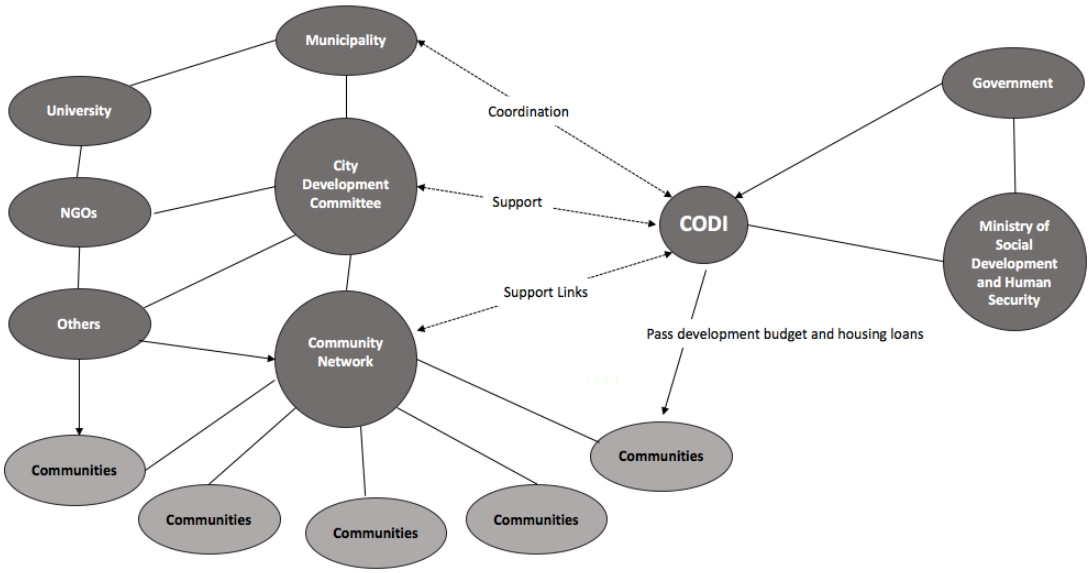

Figure 6: The Baan Mankong *mechanism, replicated from (Somsook, 2005, 32)*

The concept of the community network had, by the time *Baan Mankong* was approved, become a we'll-established form through the many organizations associated with the Assembly of the Poor, including the FRSN. When *Baan Mankong* began, some of the early projects were associated with the FRSN. However, others were not.

Thaksin's approval of *Baan Mankong* came with ambitious targets to meet. In 2003 ten pilot projects were selected, comprised of 1,500 units. However, within the first five years the program was set to complete nearly 300,000 unites in almost 2,000 communities across 200 cities (Boonlert 2008, 51; Somsook 2005a, 22). To facilitate this massive up-scaling, CODI started its own network of communities apart from the FRSN. This network, called the National Union of Low-Income Community Organizations (NULICO), was started by the leaders of the some of the first *Baan Mankong* communities, many of whom disliked the confrontational approach of the FRSN and their reliance on NGOs. As opposed to the FRSN, NULICO had no relationship to NGOs, instead working directly with CODI and other government entities. As *Baan Mankong* grew, the majority of new projects, if they did not join the FRSN, would be folded into NULICO. Despite the fact the *Baan Mankong* would fall well short of its targets, completing less than 80,000 units by 2008 (Boonlert 2008, 51), this still meant a huge initial growth of the NULICO network.

The concept of the community network clearly derived from the nationwide organizing practices pioneered during the 1990s during the era of expansion of NGOs throughout the country. In the specific case of *Baan Mankong*, as Boonlert (2008) as argued, the NULICO represents the copying of a strategy originated in the people's sector for use in a government policy. In the first fifteen years of *Baan Mankong*, the FRSN and NULICO would both come to play prominent roles in shaping and sustaining the policy, albeit in very different ways.

3.8 Conclusion

Many accounts of *Baan Mankong* in the English language literature begin with the founding of CODI and discuss its role in facilitating community networks. In this chapter, I reversed this order, narrating the rise of community organizing and community networks and describing their role in ultimately paving the way for the creation of *Baan Mankong* and CODI. Along the way, I have highlighted the importance of global discourses of development and state policies in setting the stage for local mobilizations. This is no way to diminish the importance, however, of the individuals who have worked at the local level to get movements and policies off the ground. In telling this extended and multi-stranded history of the creation of *Baan Mankong,* I have brought together narratives of broad structural and discursive change with stories of people exercising their own agency to shape the future. I the following chapters, I build upon this strategy to show how narratives, institutions, and individuals interact to maintain and expand the *Baan Mankong* program in the present day through an analysis of NULICO and the FRSN.

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, the origin stories of these networks are quite different in many respects. While NULICO mainly derives from CODI and the *Baan Mankong* policy itself, the FRSN can trace its roots to a much longer history of activism and maintains close ties to NGO organizers. However, the networks cannot be said to come from entirely different sources. They have both come into being as a result of the same amalgam of urbanization pressures, good governance rhetoric, and policies that came to view *chumchon* as a unit of urban governance jurisdiction. In addition, the NGO organizers and state agency employees who work with the networks have long been in conversation with each other. As a result, the practices around community that they espouse share certain commonalities. Both establish community committees that serve the purpose of self-governance and representation of the community to the larger network. Both create savings groups and cooperatives in order accumulate collective resources to serve the needs of the community. Both rely on outside professionals to assist them in organizing, connecting to other communities, and navigating complex government bureaucracies. Finally, for the past 15 years, they have both come to rely on the resources of CODI and the *Baan Mankong* program, in particular, in order to meet the material needs of their members.

Given these many similarities, it is easy to see why many scholars and practitioners alike have tended to discuss the community networks of *Baan Mankong* as a monolith. However, as I will demonstrate in the following chapter, the differences between the FRSN and NULICO remain stark and reflect their origins. The contrasts in their network structures, political strategies, organizational affiliations, and the practices of the professionals who organize them have substantial consequences for both their own members and the *Baan Mankong* policy. Ultimately, these differences also reflect and perpetuate difference notions of *chumchon* itself and its role in the larger political system.

Chapter 4: Participation: Democracy and Development

4.1 Introduction

By 2015, when I began my preliminary fieldwork on *Baan Mankong*, the policy had been up and running in earnest for over a decade. Over those years, multiple community networks had arisen to push the policy forward. Some of these were smaller networks exclusive to communities on particular forms of government land, most notably those living on Crown Property Bureau (CPB) land. [29] Rural networks formed as the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI), the government agency that is in charge with implementing the policy, began to expand its housing program beyond the urban-focused *Baan Mankong*. However, within the core *Baan Mankong* program, two networks loom largest, either because of their size—the National Union of Low-Income Community Organizations (NULICO)—or their political influence—the Four Regions Slum Network (FRSN). I opened this dissertation with a scene of these two networks attempting to work together but struggling because of their vastly different approaches to organizing and negotiating with authority. In the previous chapters, I demonstrated how these two networks and *Baan Mankong* arose through the varied histories of the word community/*chumchon* in Thailand and the numerous local and global forces that have influenced Thai urban housing policy. The FRSN was shaped out of a combination popular movements throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, including the insurgency of the Communist Party of Thailand, Saul-Alinsky-inspired community organizing, and the mass movement of the Assembly of the Poor. Meanwhile, NULICO formed much later as a result of the *Baan Mankong* policy itself. While NULICO certainly draws some inspirations from the currents that informed the FRSN and even from the FRSN itself, as will become clearer in this chapter, it is much more influenced by the community development discourses of the international development agencies and the Thai government.

4.1.1 Participation from a Comparative and Relational Perspective

In this chapter, I move from the broad historical narratives of *chumchon* that have informed the creation of *Baan Mankong* to a contemporary examination of two cases—two networks—that are embedded within the larger extended case study of the *Baan Mankong* program. I discuss these cases with respect to a central discourse that both employ, that of "participation." Over the course of the chapter, I examine how the two networks conceive of and structure the participation of their members through three central features of the networks: their rhetoric, their organizational structures, and their practices on the ground.

In analyzing these two cases, I make two distinct but related contributions. First, I look at the networks through a comparative lens. Parsing the differences between these networks enriches the majority of the literature on *Baan Mankong*, which frequently speaks of "community networks" as a monolith (e.g. Somsook 2005, 2009; Boonyabancha and Kerr 2018) or at best makes a passing distinction as to some networks being "rights-based" while others are not (Herrle, Ley, and Fokdal 2015). In comparing these two cases, I demonstrate the differences between these networks are substantial and consequential. In short, I show how participation that is demanded from outside of state institutions looks quite different from participation that is recruited or even commanded by state agencies.

[29] The CPB is the agency that oversees land and assets held by the monarchy.

My analysis does not end at comparison, though. On a broader level, what is most interesting about the cases of the *Baan Mankong* networks lies not in their comparison but in their relationship. Despite rarely working together, the two likely would not exist without each other. This is because of the particular political role each plays with respect to the policy, the government agency that administers it, and other agents of the central state. In analyzing the symbiosis between the two networks, I argue that in this context a de-politicized form of participation serves to open the space for more political forms, and vice versa.

4.1.2 The Present State of Baan Mankong

Since the early days in the 1980s, when the slum movement and a handful of government staff were working with communities to resist eviction, establish land sharing agreements, and search for affordable finance models, Thailand come to be a model of successful participatory slum upgrading throughout the world (e.g. A. K. Das and Takahashi 2009; Bhaktal and Lucci n.d.; A. Das 2018). Over the past 15 years, *Baan Mankong* has grown in scale and reputation. International praise often emphasizes its flexibility and allowance for "self-determination" on the part of communities (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2004). The program is also deemed successful because of the scale of its implementation, with over 2,000 communities made up of nearly 105,000 households now living in communities that have upgraded through *Baan Mankong* (Community Organizations Development Institute 2017).

Despite the emphasis on flexibility and self-determination, over the years the program has established certain common practices and parameters for communities taking part. When communities initially express interest in a project, they must start a savings group. In the early years, financing was done through these savings groups, alone, but increasingly, because of the types of land tenure arrangements demanded by government agencies and private sellers, the communities must create a formal housing cooperative that becomes the legal entity that represents the community. Through the cooperative, communities save ten percent of what they intend to borrow, up to a maximum of 330,000 baht (about $11,000) per household for housing reconstruction or upgrading. In addition, communities receive subsidies for infrastructure construction, which have ranged from 25,000 to 45,000 baht per household over time. A small subsidy is also made available for travel and administrative expenses. Depending on the current land tenure situation of the community, they may be able to stay in place. However, in recent years it has become more and more commons for communities to have to relocate. The communities that are able to stay in place are most often on government land, and they negotiate a long-term rental agreement with the government agency who owns the land. However, being on government land is by no means a guarantee that such an arrangement will be reached, and many communities are still forced to relocate. When private land is involved, relocation is nearly always the outcome. This generally involves the community having to find a new plot of land to purchase, for which they generally take out additional loans as a cooperative. In sum, there are four possible housing outcomes for *Baan Mankong* communities: minor on-site upgrading, re-blocking of housing and partial reconstruction, total reconstruction on-site, or resettlement with total reconstruction. No matter what the final and tenure arrangement is, the community holds the land rights collectively through their cooperative.

If a community is able to form a cooperative, save the requisite amount, and reach an agreement to purchase or rent land, they then receive financing through CODI. These loans are made are made from the CODI fund and extended to the cooperatives at an interest rate of four to six percent on a fifteen-year term, lower than most commercial loans. The cooperative then on-

lends to individual households, generally adding a margin of two to four percent for its operating costs.

This technical explanation of the program, however, belies myriad complexities. Forming the discrete "communities" that ultimately become the cooperatives; negotiating for land rights; navigating the numerous bureaucracies involved in formalizing those rights, extending infrastructure, and giving construction approvals—these are messy, political processes. The networks guide communities through this confusion.

4.1.3 Fieldwork Failures as Finding

The analysis presented in this chapter is based on 18 months of ethnographic research conducted with the networks and CODI over the course of three years, from 2015 to 2018, with the bulk taking place between June 2017 and September 2018. The core of this research was participant observation in the form of internships with the different organizations, supplemented with dozens of interviews with staff, leadership, and community members. However, the shape and extent of the participant observation varied across sites due largely to the nature of the organizations themselves. This, in and of itself, was a finding.

A first internship phase took place with the FRSN in the summers of 2015 and 2016. During the first summer, I stayed at the FRSN headquarters, tucked back in a small *soi* (alley) in eastern Bangkok. As an intern, I shadowed organizers, attended network and community meetings throughout the city, and assisted with projects when I was able, usually through translating or giving technical assistance on proposals by making basic maps and diagrams. This experience of living in the middle of FRSN activity 24 hours a day gave me a sense of the diversity and flow of their work, the relationships between members and organizers, and their positions with respect to other networks and agencies. During this time, I interacted with CODI staff and leadership frequently and came to understand how the FRSN and their member communities related to and viewed this government organization.

After spending several months primarily looking at *Baan Mankong* from the perspectives of the FRSN and their member communities, CODI graciously allowed me to come on as an intern with their central *Baan Mankong* team. In this capacity, for over three months, I primarily worked out an office in CODI's airy headquarters, just down the street from the National Housing Authority, also in eastern Bangkok. At CODI, I attended numerous meetings with staff and community members, as well as with NULICO representatives. I also shadowed staff as they went on community visits or carried out workshops in different parts of the country. By building relationships with staff and leadership, I got to know what the different networks look like from the staff perspective and what it is like to work with each of them. I also discovered the vast differences between how the networks and policy in general look from the perspective of on-the-ground staff versus CODI leadership.

Early in my fieldwork, I intended to do a separate phase of participant observation with the NULICO in the same way I had with the FRSN and CODI. I attempted to initiate this by asking NULICO leaders I met during meetings at CODI when there would be an NULICO meeting I could attend. The meetings they pointed me to were invariable at CODI, and when I arrived I would find that it was, in fact, a CODI team meeting of some sort in which NULICO representatives were taking part. Unlike CODI and the FRSN, there is no separate, central headquarters for NULICO. Their headquarters, for all intents and purposes, is CODI. Therefore, in order to do participant observation with NULICO, I continued my engagement with CODI, but through projects in which NULICO members were most heavily involved. Initially, this came as a frustration to me, as I felt that I would not be able to adequately compare NULICO and the

FRSN if I had not done the same kind of research with both of them. What became apparent over time, however, as I interviewed more and more NULICO representatives and attended meetings with them at CODI, was that my inability to work with them in the same way as I had with the FRSN was, itself, a finding. It indicated, on one hand, an organizational structure that had been laid out intentionally in the hopes of avoiding some of the characteristics of the FRSN that both NULICO and CODI leaders found undesirable—namely, a hierarchical structure tied to NGOs. On the other hand, its looseness had become a major obstacle to the network's functioning and pointed to a key challenge in the *Baan Mankong* policy.

In what follows, I unpack the relationships between the rhetoric, organizational structure, and practices of the two networks, summarized in Figure 7. I demonstrate how the point to different forms of participation that serve different purposes with respect to the policy and urban politics more broadly.

Four Regions Slum Network	Dimension	NULICO
Rights	**Motivating principles**	Basic needs
Basic unit of organization to unite the power of the poor	**The main function of community**	Build "sufficiency"/reduce reliance on the state
To unite the power of the poor	**The main function of networks**	Knowledge exchange
Follows the movement's own strategies, self-selected membership	**Structure of network**	Follows government jurisdiction, assumed membership
To support the network and push the movement forward	**Role of professionals**	To work with the network to get projects done
Moderate	**Level of "reach" into communities**	Low
Diverse, regular, strategic and responsive to community needs	**Participatory practices**	Piecemeal, largely administrative and advisory, based on CODI staff direction
~80 communities, 1 cancelled project	**Results in terms of co-production**	Over 800 communities, over 20% cancellation rate

Figure 7: Summary of the core beliefs and practices of the FRSN and CODI/NULICO

4.2 The Principles and Rhetoric of The Four Regions Slum Network: Fairness, Rights, and Democracy for the People

As discussed in the previous two chapters, the FRSN can trace its history back activists involved with Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) in the 1970s, as well as a movement to spread Saul Alinsky-inspired community organizing throughout Asia. Along the way, the network has incorporated a number of other influences to varying degrees, including the rural activists, NGOs, and intellectuals working in the vein of community rights who led the charge in the massive demonstrations of the Assembly of the Poor in the mid-1990s. While these various influences align in many ways, they do not constitute a single, coherent ideology. The various influences on the principles and practices of the FRSN often lead to a diversity of opinion, both among the community members themselves, as well as among the professional organizers that support it. However, it is perhaps the allowance for such dissent that most explains why the

movement has endured for over twenty years. Despite this diversity of thought, a few major themes remain constant: fairness, rights and democracy, and mutual aid.

4.2.1 Fairness/Justice

An oft-repeated phrase at the FRSN headquarters is that the group is struggling for a just and fair society (*sangkhom thi pen tham)*. Members will often react to decisions by government agencies by explaining that what is being done is "not just" or "not fair" (*mai pen tham*). This sense that the movement's ultimate goal is to create greater fairness and equality is manifested in many initiatives. For example, in 2018, the network began work with allied groups to push for expansion to the welfare system, including improved healthcare provision and social security. However, the primary way in which the FRSN struggles for greater justice in society is by pursuing more equal distribution of land. The just distribution of land is motivated by both immediate and pragmatic rationales. The first rationale, which is the primary motivator for most members of the network, is that gaining access to urban land is the only way in which *chaoban* ("villagers") will be able to create secure housing (*ti yu asai mankong*), which is a prerequisite for meeting all other needs. The deeper rationale is often clearly articulated by leadership but is unevenly held or understood by *chaoban* below the leadership level. This is that inequality in landholdings is the fundamental source of injustice and inequality in wealth and power. Land holds a fundamental place in many of the larger policy initiatives of the FRSN, such as the one illustrated in Image X.

Figure 8:A t-shirt from a 2015 land reform campaign called Four Laws for the Poor that the FRSN carried out in conjunction with its allied network, the People's Movement for a Just Society (P-MOVE). The t-shirt's logo reads, "Whose land is Thai land?" and contains numerous statistics about the inequalities in land holdings in the country.

4.2.2 Rights and Democracy

Though the FRSN is known by the other networks—not to mention bureaucrats and elected officials—for its confrontational style, over the years it has become decidedly less radical and more pragmatic. Despite the remaining focus on land redistribution against the accumulation of and wealth by the rich, not all leaders would necessarily even claim that theirs is an anti-capitalist organization anymore, which it most certainly was twenty years ago. What everyone can still agree on, though, is that it is a movement that works toward rights (*sitthi)* for poor people. This is the key distinction between the FRSN and other networks—the primacy of rights in their organizational principles and their mission to gain access to rights through mobilizing to negotiate with the government. The exact rhetoric of rights takes on many flavors. In some moments, members talk about the right to housing as a human right (*sitthi manuthsayachon*). In other moments, rights are invoked as belonging to "the people" or "citizens" (*prachachon*).[30] At other times, rights are specifically articulated as an element of democracy.

The type of democracy promoted and practiced by the FRSN extends far beyond having elections to choose officials and representatives, though they do actively campaign for this. As one FRSN leader explained it to me, they practice and advocate for three forms of democracy: 1) representative democracy (*prachathipotai baeb tua thaen)*, 2) participatory democracy (*prachathipotai baeb mi suan ruam)*, and 3) direct democracy (*prachathipotai trong)*.

Given Thailand's long history of coups and frequent curtailments of electoral rights, representative democracy is often not an option. However, in cases like the 2016 constitutional referendum and the eventual 2019 elections following five years of overt military dictatorship, the network encourages members to vote and makes efforts to educate members on the issues. However, they do not tell members how to vote. This is a part of a longstanding commitment to avoid affiliation with any particular political party. They hold this commitment for two reasons. The first is the pragmatic fact that politicians come in and out of power, and allying the movement with one party will mean that when their candidates are out of power, they will not be able to move forward. The second reason is a matter of principle. They assert that a people's movement should remain separate from government and elected politicians so as not to fall under their sway and to retain the capacity to hold whoever is in power accountable. This principle was put to the test in the early 2000s when founding network mentor and former communist party ranger Suwit Wattanoo decided to take the step of starting an "alternative political party." After much consideration and debate, he decided to step away from the FRSN and related NGOs in order to avoid entanglements between the party and the movement. Unfortunately, he passed away before the party could come to fruition (Nitirat 2007)

By participatory democracy, they mean using avenues already in existence to voice their opinions and call upon their rights, such as taking part in public forums, voicing their opinions in legally condoned ways, and meeting with public officials in formal meetings. By direct democracy, they mean pushing for rights they do not yet have through means that have yet been

[30] As Elinoff (2013) has discussed, "citizen" has more than one translation in Thai, and each version carries a somewhat different connotation. *Prachachon,* the version most often used by the FRSN, equates most closely to "the people." Meanwhile, *khon thai* literally means "Thai person" and can imply citizen of the Thai state, but it can also carry ethnic implications. *Phonlameuang,* on the other hand, is closer to "population" and has bureaucratic connotations. However, despite the absence of one single term that equates to "citizen," I agree with Elinoff that the English word citizenship is still a relevant concept that captures the many claims made by activists.

condoned, such as through protests, demonstrations, or simply refusing to move when commanded. This distinction between participatory and direct democracy harkens to Miraftab's (2009) description of insurgent planning as working in both "invited and invented spaces." In the framing of the FRSN, the principle of participation is related to rights in two ways. First, participation is in and of itself a democratic right. Second, participation through the exercise of rights is a means of achieving other rights.

A final rights-based discourse surrounding the work of FRSN is that of community rights. This comes primarily through the network's associations with affiliated community rights movements in the north and northeast who were pioneers of the concept in the era leading up to the Assembly of the Poor. Organizers and members of the FRSN sometimes sport t-shirts touting community rights-based events and initiatives or post about them on Facebook. An example of such an initiative is the Four Law for the Poor, discussed above. These community rights initiatives explicitly aim to recognize various forms of collective land tenure. The most concrete manifestation of community rights for FRSN members occurs for those communities who achieve tenure through a community land tenure deed (*chanod chumchon*). The community land tenure deed is a new form of land agreement that was passed after many years of lobbying by community rights groups. It allows communities, as a collective, to remain on government land with certain use rights, provided the community takes care of the land. The classic form of the community land title deed applies to community-managed forests; however, some communities of the FRSN have also used this form of land tenure in urban areas.

4.2.3 Mutual Aid

This belief that the government should provide for the rights of citizens is accompanied by the belief that in practice, rights must be realized through work. One professional organizer with the FRSN explained when asked what new communities need to understand before joining the FRSN, he replied,

> Before joining the FRSN, they need to know that this is not a social service organization. This is not the Department of Social Services that will cover your expenses. Second is that you have to do things yourself. No one can do it for you. The FRSN is an organization that can advise you on the way forward, tell you what to do, help you on your way, supplement your efforts when you lack what you need. But we are not the primary doers. Communities need to do things for themselves. The third thing is that you have to help your friends. After we have helped you, you need to go help others.[31]

Doing things for yourself and helping others, like other aspects of the FRSN's work, is both a matter of principle and practicality. In principle, the network is concerned with building a movement that is independent from the government so that it can hold the government accountable. This means needing to be able to sustain its work without total reliance on the

[31] เขาต้องรู้ก่อนสลัมสี่ภาคไม่ใช่องค์กรส่งเคราะห์ ไม่ใช่ว่าเรียกร้องอะไรต้องได้ทุกอย่าง เราไม่ใช่กรมประชาส่งเคราะห์ ที่คอยลดแลกจ่ายแขมให้ อันที่สองคือ คุณต้องทำเอง จะไม่มีใครทำแทนคุณ สลัมสี่ภาคจะเป็นองค์กรที่แนะทางให้ บอกทางให้ เสริมทางให้ ขาดเหลืออะไรเพิ่มเติมให้ แต่จะไม่เป็นคนทำหลัก ชุมชนต้องทำเอง อันที่สาม ต้องช่วยเพื่อน นะคับ นอกจากว่าเรามาช่วยเขาแล้ว เขาต้องรู้จักช่วยคนอื่นด้วย

government. This is why the different communities and sub-networks within the organization maintain their own dues and collections to fund travel for leaders and other administrative expenses. As a practical matter, the movement cannot endure if its members' basic needs are not met.

Meeting needs in a way that sustains both individual members and the larger movement is the motivating factor behind creating savings groups to protect against disasters and starting small group enterprises around handmade goods to be a source of supplemental income. This principle of mutual aid as both individual and group sustenance became clearest to me through a practice of a sub-network for the homeless, who in 2015 and 2016 would hold weekly events at in a public park space near Sanam Luang, a prominent royal and governmental space. At these events existing members of the homeless network would hand out bowls of rice to other homeless people in the area, make announcements and hold a public forum, and then show a movie on a portable screen. The act of handing out rice met the immediate needs of potential members. The announcements and feedback sessions helped the network understand the needs of the homeless people who attended and gave those in attendance information on how they could take part in the network's political organizing. Finally, the showing of the movie provided a much-needed diversion, as well as sense of belonging in a space symbolic of state power where they are frequently hassled by police.

In the FRSN's rhetoric, fairness, rights, and mutual aid are tied together as crucial elements of building a movement that hold the state accountable to "the people." However, these lofty goals are constantly checked by the practical necessities of meeting the basic needs of a poor population and working in a context where democratic rights are constantly being curtailed, and government turnover occurs frequently. At certain times, these practical elements can overshadow the more radical and democratic rhetoric of network, particular for members of the lower echelons of the network's organization. Nonetheless, these higher-level discourses have been maintained for over twenty years by a dedicated group of organizers and community leaders.

4.3 The Principles and Rhetoric of NULICO: Sufficiency Economy towards Participatory Development

While the FRSN played an important role in the creation of *Baan Mankong, Baan Mankong* is that raison d'être of NULICO. The first members of NULICO were leaders from some of the first *Baan Mankong* communities. The primary purpose of becoming a network was to exchange knowledge and support about challenges they faced getting projects off the ground and to advise newer communities who were just beginning the process. From the beginning, NULICO was facilitated by CODI. Thus, its rhetoric closely aligns with CODI's. The key elements of this rhetoric are savings and finance as principle organizing element; cooperation and basic needs in lieu of rights; and city-wide upgrading.

4.3.1 Savings and Collective Finance

In the rhetoric of CODI and NULICO, the role of savings and collective finance is nearly the reverse of what it is for the FRSN. In the FRSN's view, the activity of saving together serves to meet the needs of members and protect against emergency. It is a practical necessity. However, for CODI and NULICO, as well as their associated higher-level networks, savings is where everything begins. The act of creating a central fund is what brings people together, forces them to establish methods of collective governance, and "unlocks" their potential to better their situations (Archer 2012).

A second key aspect of collective finance is that it is supposed to serve as a means to unite a community despite difference. This comes from the acknowledgement by the policy architects that within settlements, there are people of different means and who hold different statuses within the community. But when everyone has to commit to saving together, it unites their interests, reducing hierarchies. This union is not only financial; it is legal. In conversations with leaders and advisors to CODI and the FRSN, the FRSN emphasizes that community does not need to be a legal entity, that it is about a sense of commitment that is not enforced from the outside. However, CODI leaders emphasize the need for community to become a new legal entity through housing cooperatives. It is this legal entity that secures the community and creates a sense that they are one.

In the initial establishment of the CODI model, many potential financial models were considered, including the Grameen Bank model of microfinance that promotes access to credit for the poorest of the poor. However, they decided against this. The CODI model is not about just reaching the poorest of the poor, but about uniting people of different means as way to extend "flexible finance." Having people of higher incomes in the mix allows for the extension of credit to more people. And once you get credit extended to a community, it is up to the community to manage it. They can decide how to allocate it, and the forced deliberation over how to manage money is key to building community. Once this community is established financially, legally, and, in this logic, morally, then the members are able to advocate for themselves through their collective power.

4.3.2 Cooperation against the "Rights-Based Approach"

The way in which community advocates for itself, however, is quite different from how the FRSN conceives of advocacy. The CODI and NULICO emphasis on savings and collective finance as a key element of bringing community together is accompanied by an assertion that collectivity is appropriate to the Thai context and that such forms of cooperation and mutual aid can provide for "basic needs" (*pajjai si*) without necessarily appealing to the concept of rights. The eschewing of the rhetoric of rights, in the CODI doctrine, is grounded in the belief that Thai culture is fundamentally cooperative and that claiming rights represents a confrontational approach that is inappropriate to the That context. It also posited as disempowering because it relies on the state to provide for the needs of citizens.

While some of the leaders of CODI worked hand-in-hand with rights-based groups such as the FRSN and the HSF during the experimental period of establishing collective land agreements in the 1980s and early 1990s, by the late-1990s, a schism emerged among community members and professionals between those who believed that communities should exercise their power by negotiating with the government as collective of citizens outside the government and those who believed that way forward was to encourage communities to work with the government. With the establishment of CODI, the latter group became the staff and leadership of CODI and the NULICO.

While avoiding that language of rights serves the strategic end of avoiding what is believed to be unnecessary conflict, it is also based on the belief that the individualistic nature of the Western thought that produced the idea of rights is actually the source of inequality and unfairness, as one prominent CODI leader explained to me in an interview:

> The rights-based approach is going to be concerned with the rights of people. Specific groups. This person should have the right, this person shouldn't. But the word community, if we try to understand the work community, it's the coming together of

> people who are very poor, people who aren't that poor, or are moderately poor. Community is something that mixes, it's an integrated unit, in which people who aren't equal can come together and be a part of a setting. *This is a community. It's not really an issue of rights*. But they can come together and help each other and take care of each other. *Community is a social system based on the concept that people can be equal or unequal, but everyone can be part of the system* (emphasis added).

In this interpretation, community is social form that can tolerate inequality without having that inequality become a source of conflict. Rights, on the other hand, draws attention to inequality, which leads to conflict. The leader went on:

> The rights-based approach has several issues, and I include housing rights in this. One issue is that in the housing rights based approach, we must protect the rights of the have-nots, all of the people who don't have rights. But sometimes it's really more of a theoretical way of thinking. It's real, but *it's a theoretical way of thinking in that people who don't have rights should have rights.* But if we use the community approach, in this way people should be one part of a system, should have access to resources, should have dignity. If it's a story of community, then we use the words dignity as human beings. And we also employ religion. For example, housing is one of the basic human needs. Everyone needs security in life. Everyone certainly has basic needs. The way you explain needs, human needs, dignity, human being, this sort of thing, you do not elaborate in terms of rights. You elaborate in terms of needs and what human beings need to have.

Thus, rights, in this way of thinking, can only draw attention to inequality and help to point out what should "theoretically" be equal. Rights themselves cannot actually be used to improve material conditions. "Needs," on the other hand can be worked toward in tangible ways. The leader then explained how this understanding of needs, based in religion and culture, was also a way of opposing the imposition of Western ideology:

> Asian societies elaborate needs in this way. So we don't spell out rights. Rights is a Western concept, right? In the Oriental concept, the Eastern concept is more on human needs. Integration. Accept everybody as humans whose need to exist equally. Equally, yes, sometimes we use it—equally—as human beings, as people of the society. You can say that, but you don't use rights very much. Rights is understandable, and people should have rights, but it's a Western concept. So, [if you say] 'we have to secure rights for the people,' suddenly Oriental society feels awkward. Secure rights means what? You know?

Not only are rights ineffective and theoretical, then—they are also illegible in the Thai context. In tying sufficiency and communalism to Thainess and Asian culture, this CODI leader discursively twists rights from being a means of making democratic demands to an imposition of Western thought. The leader went on to explain a further problem with the rights-based approach. This is that when you demand rights from the government, you are then dependent on the government to provide for those rights. This is how you can lose your independence through rights. Thus, rights, far from being emancipatory, can be oppressive.

The insistence that community is appropriate to the Thai way of life *and* that community can serve to meet the necessities of life without need to resort to the state combine to create a discourse that strongly harkens back to the community culture school, which envisioned community as a form of libertarian anarchism made up of self-sufficient communities (see chapter 2). This may seem ironic, given that it is state program espousing these beliefs. However, as Thongchai (2008) has argued, the self-sufficient aspect of the community culture school of thought can readily be appropriated to serve neoliberal agendas. This become especially apparent through CODI and NULICO's use of the core principle of Sufficiency Economy.

4.3.3 Sufficiency Economy

The assertion that individualism is antithetical the Eastern way of life makes itself apparent in the concept of sufficiency economy, which is infused in many aspects of CODI's and the NULICO's work. Sufficiency economy, first fully elaborated by King Bhumibol Adulyadej in 1997, in the wake of the East Asian Financial Crisis, serves as a response by the monarchy to social ills that led to the crisis (see Chapter 3).

One manifestation of sufficiency in CODI and NULICO rhetoric comes through in the common saying "communities must be self-reliant" (*chumchon tawng pheung ton eng).* This insistence on self-reliance and self-sufficiency makes its way into CODI and NULICO both institutionally and in rhetoric of community leaders. The most recent program aimed at development *Baan Mankong* in rural areas goes by the name "Sufficient Housing." On the ground floor of the CODI offices, there is a store touting hand-made "sufficient" products from communities. The English motto embroidered on the backs of CODI staff's polo shirts reads "Our goal is Self-Reliance Communities (sic)." However, in the Thai written above this line on the shirt, a closer translation would be "CODI aims to build *strong* communities." An emphasis on building strong communities is something that CODI and NULICO share with the FRSN. However, what they mean when they stay a "strong community" is quite different. It is impossible to say why this English translation was chosen exactly. However, the equation of strong (*khem khaeng*) and self-reliant is revealing as to CODI and NULICO's conceptualization of what constitutes a strong community.

Figure 9:CODI staff shirts. Note: The English Translation reads "Our goal is Self Reliance Communities. However, the closer translation of the Thai written above would be "CODI aims to build strong communities."

The discourses of sufficiency economy, with their focus on moderation and self-reliance, have clearly disciplining effect. As Elinoff (2013, 2014a) has demonstrated, sufficiency, as a discourse, seeks to discipline the desires of poor residents, limiting the kinds of demands they can legitimately make as citizens. While Elinoff also points how that poor citizens can dispute and manipulate this logic to make political claims, in the context of CODI and the leadership of NULICO, sufficiency discourses are generally employed as a means to promote discipline both of the self and of the community. This line of thinking clearly operates among NULICO community members, as well. At one planning meeting, an NULICO leader described the problem of debt in her community as being caused by the fact that "people lack knowledge about how to live according to sufficiency economy."

4.3.4 Participatory Modernism through City-wide Upgrading

The highest goal of both CODI and NULCIO is "city-wide upgrading" with the belief that this is how "systems change" occurs, by many communities in a jurisdiction sitting down to negotiate with local authorities, thereby creating a "shared power" (*amnat ruam*) among the community members and the authorities. In contrast to the rhetoric of independence and self-reliance of communities and the network, this aspect of CODI's work emphasizes cooperation and collaboration with government agencies, even to the extent of copying their structure so as to work better together. In the city-wide model, communities will come together as a network within a jurisdiction and establish a joint committee with local authorities and relevant NGOs. They will do a survey of the communities and land in the area to identify who is at risk of eviction and where vacant lots are located. Then everyone will sit down together and make a housing plan for the whole area. This kind of planning process, where community members have a seat at the table, is what CODI leaders mean when they speak of systemic and structural change. It has been carried out in a couple of smaller cities throughout the country, most notably the town of Chumphae in the northeastern province of Khon Kaen. Community leaders in these initial city-wide efforts have become some of the most prominent figures in NULICO.

The city-wide approach, while emphasizing structural change, also demonstrates a desire on the part of policy leaders to plan at the level of the whole city, to see the city from a birds-eye perspective, allocating land from above and pushing forward large-scale plans. In this sense, the vision of city-side upgrading shares much in common in more modernist planning approaches. The difference is that this bird's eye vision is to be carried out by community members themselves, rather than the government. In this sense, city-wide upgrading presents a kind of participatory modernism. This seemingly oxymoronic term demonstrates the paradox of the vision of city-wide upgrading. It is a vision of top-down planning supposedly put forward by the "grassroots." As I will demonstrate in subsequent sections and chapters, in practice, the forms of participation this type of vision engenders have a tendency to emphasize labor, management, and public performance over democratic practice.

4.4 Organizational Structure of the FRSN

4.4.1 Four Regions Slum Network

The structure of the FRSN reflects its self-conception as a social movement (*khabuan kan khleuanwai thang sangkhom).* Perhaps reflecting its communist party roots, its organizational structure is quite formal, in the sense that it is well understood and strictly maintained. However, the FRSN is not registered in any way through the government.

In principle, the FRSN is a movement of *chaoban* ("villagers," which they continue to call themselves, despite living in the city). The professionals who support the network are not considered members. The primary unit of organization for the FRSN is the *chumchon* ("community"), just as it is for both networks. The next level of organization is the sub-network. The functions of the sub-networks are carried out by a committee of one or two representatives from each *chumchon*. It is up to the sub-networks and their member *chumchon* these representatives are to be selected. Some of the subnetworks predate the FRSN, and some have been added since its founding. Unlike the NULICO, the subnetworks of the of the FRSN do not follow existing governmental boundaries. Instead, the they reflect a shared interest and at least some level of self-selection. For example, one network is communities living on land belonging to the State Railway of Thailand (SRT) in different regions of the country who banded together nearly twenty years ago to negotiate 30-year rental agreements. Another is people who live in the Rama 3 area of Bangkok, which was one of the first focus areas of the CO activists and began not with eviction cases, but with efforts to gain housing registrations and legal access to basic services. In some cases, new member communities join with existing sub-networks. In other cases, new networks are formed. The two most recent are a network of the homeless and network known as *Kao Nah* ("progress"). The homeless network was started as an effort to include the most marginalized members of society into the network and build forms of collective housing suitable to their needs. *Gao Nah,* on the other hand, is a group of communities that are moving near to land near to each other on the eastern fringe of Bangkok, where the network was able to find large amounts of affordable land.

In total, the FRSN is made up of nine sub-networks with a total membership of nearly 100 total communities comprised of over 3,000 households (see Figure 9). Because of the way they have been constructed and added to over time, at first their formation might seem organic or piecemeal. And while it is true that the FRSN leaves sub-network formation to be an open-ended process, there is a definite logic behind them. Each sub-network represents a particular strategy being pursued at a particular time, and the member communities have a clear shared interest.

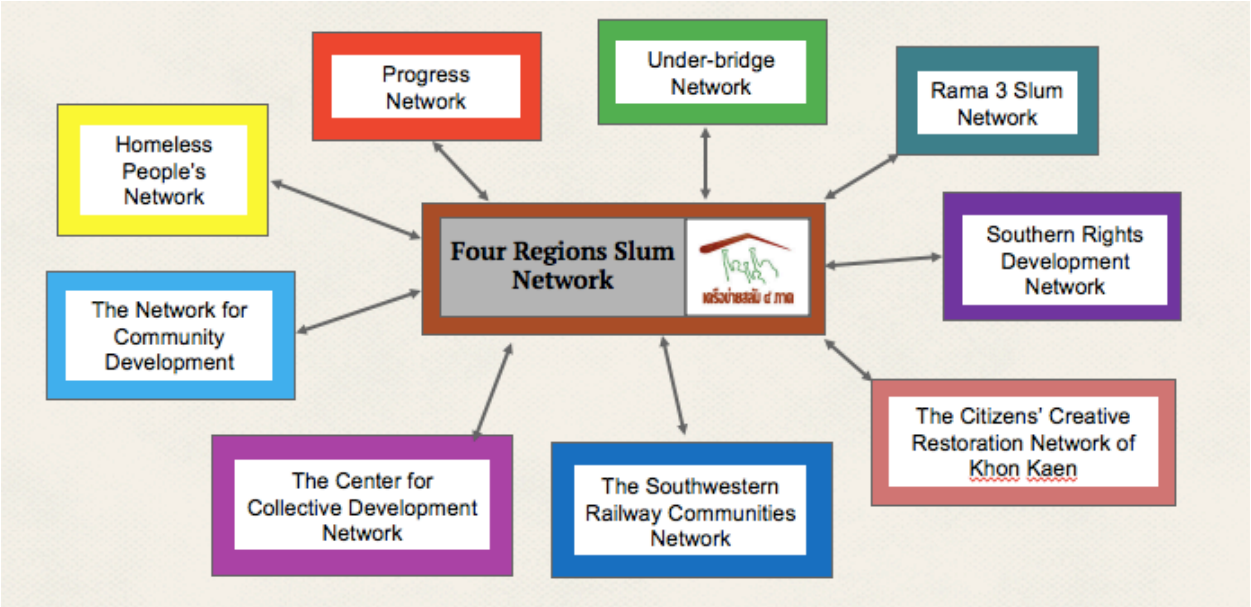

Figure 10:The Structure of the FRSN Network

4.4.2 Organization of the Central Committee

At the highest level, the sub-networks come together to form the FRSN. Each network sends at least one, but up to a handful of representatives to monthly meetings in Bangkok. The central committee of the FRSN is made up of a representative from each network, which each network chooses through a process that they determine once a year. This can be a a competitive election, but in practice the number of interested people are usually few, and subnetwork committees are able to reach a consensus. The new committee is announced at a yearly multi-day assembly of the whole network that rotates location throughout the country. At the end of the assembly a new president is chosen through an election in which each network gets one vote.

Representatives to the FRSN at the national level split up responsibilities by dividing into teams that are in charge of the different facets of their work. These include the land team, the housing development team, the quality of life development team, the network coordination team, and team HOTLINE (in charge of responding to urgent eviction cases). Central committee members also serve on work teams, but any member of an FRSN community is welcome to join, as well.

4.4.3 Larger Networks

The FRSN itself is also a member of two other networks. The first, and most active, is a national movement called the People's Movement for a Just Society, or P-MOVE. P-MOVE is made up of several grassroots networks from rural and urban areas throughout the country. Most of the goals of P-MOVE correspond to those of the FRSN, including creating a more fair and democratic society and land reform. P-MOVE also has monthly meetings that the FRSN sends representatives to. The other larger network in which the FRSN holds membership is a supranational network of urban community networks called the Leaders and Organizers of Community Organizations in Asia, or LOCOA. This network consists of organizations formed by the effort to spread CO throughout Asia. At present, there are fairly active member organizations in Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia. There are efforts to build a group in Burma, and Cambodia has gone through phases of having a network, though the network is difficult to maintain because of the violent oppression of the Hun Sen regime. The activities of LOCOA are less regular than those of P-MOVE. However, they do have a yearly meeting, and generally at least once or twice a year one national network will travel to another country to observe the work (*du ngan)* of another network.

4.4.4 Connections to Professionals

These networks make up the official structure and relationships of the FRSN. However, the network is unofficially supported by a team of professional organizers who are themselves employees of NGOs. The most significant of these is the Human Settlement Foundation (HSF), which was founded in the 1990s and whose first secretary general was Somsook Boonyabancha, before she left to form CODI. The HSF is now lead by Nopphon Phomsri, better known as Pi Tui, who has been at the helm for several years. The HSF funds several full-time organizers. Its sources of funding have varied over the years. In prior eras it received funding from international agencies, but more recently it has relied on domestic sources, including the Thai government's Department of Pubic Health Promotion, which has a reputation among activists for being quite liberal with its definition of public health. Any project that works toward improving the social determinants of health is fair game for its resources, making it a government agency that occasionally provides funding to groups that are quite critical of the government. The HSF receives funds from other government sources, as well, most often through the various pots of

money available from CODI. Aside from the HSF, a couple of other organizers are supported by the NGO, Community Organization for People's Action (COPA).

These professional organizers serve a significant function for the FRSN. They facilitate meetings, guide communities through the *Baan Mankong* process, do much of the writing and documentation for public advocacy work, educate community members about the underlying causes of their challenges, and guide policy priorities. They have assigned networks and communities that they are in charge of. However, while one organizer from COPA serves as the secretary of the FRSN, he is not considered a member. The other organizers have no documented function with the network.

4.4.5 Entry into the Network

Communities join the FRSN through a very intentional process. Most often, communities become aware of the FRSN through referral. This occurs most often in cases of threatened eviction, and the ways in which communities are referred can be surprising. While occasionally it is a mutual acquaintance who passes on the HOTLINE number to at-risk communities, in many cases it is actually government staff. The police or district officers put in charge of issuing eviction notices might tip off residents that the FRSN may be able to help them. In a few cases, lower-level CODI staff might do the referring, understanding that the community is in a particularly complicated or politically charged predicament. The two on-the-ground CODI staffers who work with both NULICO and the FRSN explained to me that the FRSN is more adept at organizing new communities quickly and navigating complicated land issues, so they are the better network for handling cases where eviction seems imminent.

When a community is considering joining with the FRSN, they must do so through an existing sub-network or create a new one. To do this requires that all parties agree to work together. Before the new community joins, it must prove itself by sending representatives to meetings and events, paying dues to the network, and generally demonstrating an understanding of the network's goals and functions. While the FRSN's goal is to grow the movement, and it readily admits communities that demonstrate a sincere desire to join, the demands the network places on member communities to participate in organizing and political activities that do not directly benefit them means that the network has stayed relatively small compared to NULICO.

4.5 The Organizational Structure of NULICO

4.5.1 Structure

The structure of the NULICO is paradoxically related to its own ideology, but reflects its close relationship with CODI. In terms of rhetoric and practice, CODI and NULICO are difficult to tease apart. However, at least in theory, the network has a structure that is entirely independent of CODI, and leaders pride themselves on this. In meetings, NULICO and CODI leaders often remark on the close relationship between NGO staff and the FRSN, arguing that the communities are strongly under the influence the NGOs, making them less of a community-based movement.

Like the FRSN, the NULICO operates as a system of nested networks. NULICO's structure, however, is at once simpler and more complex than the FRSN's. Its simplicity lies in the fact that networks all levels are determined by geography and follow pre-existing government jurisdictions. Its complexity lies in the multiple layers of subnetworks it uses. At the most basic level, communities belong to their city network. In Bangkok, because of its size, the district (*khet*) serves as the city. Bangkok has 50 districts. At the level above the city, there is a provincial network. Above the province is the region, of which there are five. Finally, the five

regions form the national network. The process of joining the NULICO is vastly different from that of the FRSN. While communities joining the FRSN must be accepted by a particular subnetwork or begin a new one of their own, new NULICO communities are assumed to be a member of the subnetwork that corresponds to their location. The result is much larger network. In contrast to the FRSN's 88 communities and 7,000 households, the NULICO has over 400 communities containing approximately 50,000 households. This structure aligns with the approach that CODI takes to city-wide upgrading because it mimics government structure.

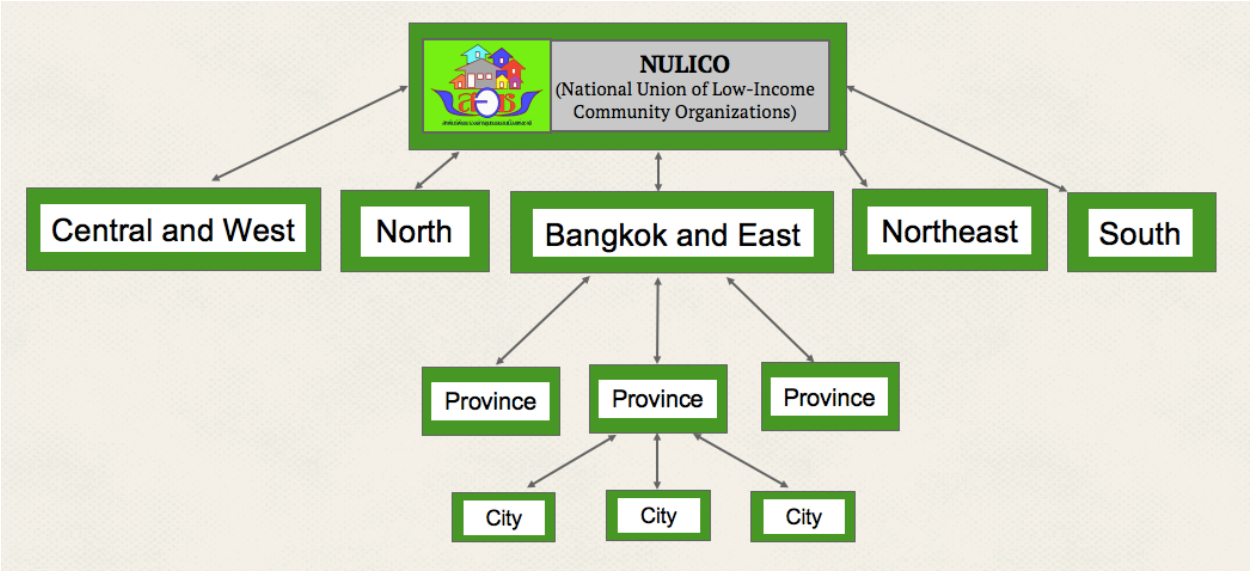

Figure 11:NULICO's network structure

When *Baan Mankong* began, the FRSN was the largest network of slum communities in the country. However, the rise of NULICO presented another option. Leaders from both the FRSN and NULICO acknowledge that in the early years of NULICO some communities left the FRSN because they preferred the less confrontation approach of NULICO. One NULICO leader also explained to me that they didn't like the centralizing structure of the FRSN. She said that one of the things the NULICO stands for is being a leaderless movement and that the communities work together, but no one is in charge. However, in practice this means that original members become *de facto* long-term leaders.

These *de facto* leaders serve on many of the committees and work teams for CODI initiatives. Their appointments typically occur through invitation or through agreement of the leaders of a region. Some of the committees have regular functions, such as the *Baan Mankong* central committee or the project approval board. However, many others are ad hoc, determined by current needs, usually determined by CODI. These work groups are rarely entirely populated by NULICO members, almost always including either local government officials or CODI staff in some capacity.

4.5.2 External Networks

This approach to building "collective power" is shared by the other members of the (somewhat ironically named) Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR). Though the ACHR works toward city-wide upgrading in all of its member countries, Thailand is the sole country

with a government institution to support such efforts. Though members of the NULICO participate in ACHR activities, CODI is the member, and activities are facilitated through the Institute. This is not the only aspect of the NULICO's work that is led by CODI.

4.5.3 Connections to Professionals

NULICO leaders pride themselves on the fact that they are a movement of *chaoban* ("villagers"). The implication is that, unlike the FRSN, they are not controlled by professional NGO staff. However, in practice, CODI staff and leadership step into some of the same roles as the NGO staff—guiding agendas, setting work plans, and educating. However, as I will demonstrate in the following section, when CODI staff operate in this capacity, they are often doing so while being under the demands placed on them as government staff to move projects forward quickly and efficiently.

4.5.4 Entry into the Network

The growth of NULICO differs from that of the FRSN both in terms of how communities come to learn about the network and the process through which communities join it. While most communities who later join the FRSN learn of them through personal referral when they are faced with immediate eviction, a relatively large number NULICO communities do not begin *Baan Mankong* through such urgent situations. In many cases, localities who have an interest in upgrading the housing in their area work with CODI to create city-wide upgrading plans in which communities are gradually brought in to the process more or less voluntarily. In other cases, communities who are threatened with eviction might encounter both the FRSN and the NULICO. Though there is no formal process for determining which network the community will go to in such cases, often what happens is that representatives from both networks will make a pitch to the community and it will be up to the community to decide with whom it would like to work, if either (there certainly exist cases in which communities decide that they do not wish to do *Baan Mankong* and simply disperse when faced with eviction). In other cases, communities are simply referred to CODI or the NULICO by local officials or landowners wishing to develop their land and never hear from the FRSN.

From the point of view of CODI and the NULICO, every community not handled by another network may be a member of the NULICO. However, the assumption of membership does not always go in both directions. Not every community is necessarily aware of its own membership in the NULICO. At a meeting to plan the "city-wide" upgrading process in the Yannawa district of Bangkok, I spoke to a leader of a community that was just beginning the *Baan Mankong* process. I asked her if she was a member of the NULICO. She said no, that members of the NULICO had come to advise them, but they were not officially members. Overhearing this conversation, a CODI staff member sitting nearby stepped in to correct her. In fact, she was a member of the NULICO because everyone was a member of the NULICO who worked with them and did *Baan Mankong*. There was not official process for joining. At this both women laughed. However, as will become apparent in the next section, the looseness of many members' sense of affiliation with NULICO has increasingly become a problem, not just for the network, but for the *Baan Mankong* policy.

For both networks, organizational structures enable and foreclose the possibility of the participatory practices of community members. However, the extent to which network structures and the principles that underlie them function in practice varies greatly between the two networks.

4.6 Participatory Practices of the FRSN

The participation of individual members of the FRSN can be described as taking place at the different levels of the network itself. On the most fundamental level, they participate in their own communities. Then, they participate at the level of the sub-network, and then at the level of the FRSN. Through membership in the FRSN they participate in ways that attempt to create larger societal change. At each level, participation is uneven across community members, and the intensity of participation at different levels waxes and wanes for individuals and entire communities.

4.6.1 Participation at the Level of the Community

The most basic way in which participation takes place at the community level is through attendance at meetings. Organizers and leaders constantly stress that without meetings there is no *chumchon,* and without *chumchon* there can be no movement. That being said, scheduling meetings and getting people to attend them is much easier said than done. Schedules rarely align, and even when they do, the life of a slum dweller is unpredictable and often determined by emergency. From the perspective of leaders and organizers, meetings may be a priority, but for the average *chaoban* they are just one of a litany of obligations that fall below putting food on the table. Though regular meetings with good attendance are usually achieved in moments of struggle, such as when fighting eviction or in the early phases of *Baan Mankong,* when communities become more stable this most basic form of participation loses its sense of urgency.

Other ways in which community members participate is through the collective management of resources, mostly financial. This occurs through managing savings groups or *Baan Mankong* cooperatives. The most basic responsibility of each household is to send their money monthly to pay off loans and contribute to the collective pot. Despite the progressive rhetoric and efforts of the FRSN and its leaders, for many *chaoban* this financial transaction is their most common and significant way in which they contribute to community life. Many of the financial resources that FRSN communities manage come from CODI. Increasingly the demands of CODI's bureaucracy and the complexity of the cooperative system mean that an outsized portion of the FRSN's time is actually spent doing work that is both enabled by, and serves the demands of, this government agency. The practical demands of financial management play an especially outsized role for community members who do not take on leadership positions.

The level of knowledge and enthusiasm of the average *chaoban* about the work of the FRSN drops off significantly after for those who do not serve in leadership. However, when asked if they know who they FRSN is, with very few exceptions people are able to tell you who they are and what their role is with respect to the community. In many cases the role described is something along the lines of "it's an organization of poor people who help each other solve our problems ("*Chuay kan keh panha*" or "*chuay kan ha thang awk*") they help us get housing," or "they are our mentors (*Pi Liang*)". If they have not participated in larger actions of the network themselves, they probably have a family member who has. Only a few community members I spoke to who had not served in some leadership capacity articulated the rhetoric I had come to associate with the FRSN—fairness, rights, democracy, land—but their presence was generally known in the communities.

4.6.2 The Participation of Leaders

The case is quite different, however, among a select few in each community who take up the reigns of leadership. Each community has a committee, usually of seven to thirteen members, that are in charge of running things and representing the community to the networks. Some

committee members' participation is mostly nominal. It is a constant complaint of leaders that far too few people are willing to step up to do the collective work.

The committee members who represent their communities to subnetworks have, as their basic responsibility, the obligation to attend monthly meetings. Professional organizers attend these meetings when there is need, but in cases where there is a strong competent community leader at the helm, the meetings are *chaoban* only. In these meetings, each community reports out on its current issues, and information from the larger network is passed down. If there are any issues that require attention, teams will be created to go out to member communities or attend meetings with or support negotiations with local governments. A common topic of conversation is how to settle community disputes.

At the level of the larger FRSN network and its partner networks, community members and leaders take part in a variety of strategies and activities. As described above, representatives from each subnetwork attend monthly meetings at the FRSN. These are almost always facilitated, at least in part, by the professional organizers. However, at the HSF headquarters and locations throughout the country, meetings occur throughout the month among the regular work teams, as well as many ad-hoc groups that are formed to address particular issues or carry out planning for initiatives. These ad-hoc groups are typically comprised of members of leadership or professional organizers, but they might also include community members involved in a particular land dispute or negotiation.

4.6.3 "Invited" Spaces of Participation

Aside from meetings of the network and its organizers, members of the FRSN meet and negotiate with a variety of public officials under more and less confrontational circumstances. Most community committee members have made at least one trip to CODI to discuss their issues with their project. CODI staff also frequently work with the FRSN to negotiate with local government officials or large landowners when projects hit snags. By virtue of being a public agency, CODI is often able to schedule meetings with these groups with relative ease. On contentious issues, higher ranking CODI officials may even lead meetings, acting as mediators. In these situations, *chaoban* are always accompanied by FRSN leaders and organizers.

An example of such a situation is a case where a nearly 100-year-old community was threatened with eviction by a prominent university. In the original land bequest to the university several decades prior, the wealthy owner had stipulated that the community living on the land that was to become the university's should be allowed to stay. However, the university asserted that they were no longer obligated to honor that request because the actual people living on the land at the time of the bequest had long since passed on, and only some of the current residents were the descendants of the original community members. As is the case in most "original communities" (*chumchon dang deum*),[32] influxes of new urban migrants had come to settle in the community, and some of the original households had moved on. In this case, it had already been determined that the law was on university's side.

At a meeting with the university in early 2018, three members of CODI staff and the deputy director met the community and a contingent of FRSN organizers and leaders at the university for a meeting. I had come with a member of the CODI staff, and during the car ride she had briefed me on the situation. She explained that the eviction was certain, and this meeting was about negotiating the timing and nature of the relocation. However, when we sat outside the

[32] For a full discussion of the term *chumchon dang deum* and its implications, see Herzfeld (2016).

building where the meeting was to take place, Nophaphan Phromsri (Pi Tui), secretary general of the HSF, and Nuchanarot Thaenthong (Pi Mam), then-president of the FRSN, began discussing the agenda with the CODI staff. They made it very clear that they wanted to start the meeting by stating their case against eviction. The first choice of the community was to stay. They would only discuss relocation if the university made a truly compelling case for it.

In the conference room, the university official charged with handling the situation and the CODI deputy director sat at the head of the table. One side the table was filled with other university representatives, and the other with FRSN leaders and community representatives. Behind them three rows of additional chairs were filled with members of the community, the FRSN organizers, and other CODI staff. When the meeting opened, the conveners gave opening remarks summarizing the situation, and each side was allowed to describe their position. The leader of the community spoke forcefully and at length. He described the poverty of the community and the problem of debt that comes with a cost of living that increases while wages stay stagnant. After a few minutes, an organizer stepped up and whispered in his ear. He spoke just a couple more sentences and closed his remarks. This same dance was repeated one more time during the meeting, as the community leader, frustrated and impassioned, spoke in ways that were combative or potential damaging to their position. Debt is a particularly sensitive topic. It is no secret that debt is a huge problem in nearly every echelon of Thai society. In poor communities, debt is most often informal, or "outside the system" (*ni not rabob*), with loan sharks charging interest rates of 20 percent or more per month. However, despite the problem being so widespread, such debt is still perceived as an individual failing, sometimes even by people who otherwise consider themselves pro-poor. Furthermore, the presence of a large amount of existing debt makes investing in poor communities seem risky to those who might work with them, not least of all CODI. This combination of factors makes trying to discuss debt as a systemic hardship a poor strategy for communities.

At the end of the meeting, the result was that the university agreed to come up with a concrete alternative plan for working with the community that included a proposal for land they might reasonably buy or obtain a long-term lease for. The community was to collect detailed information on their current demographics, including how many houses had formal registrations. A follow-up meeting was scheduled for the next month.

This case represents the work process between the FRSN, CODI, and local officials or landowners. CODI helps to call meetings and mediate. The community members themselves, along with FRSN leadership, represent the side of the *chaoban.* Organizers take a back seat, stepping in when they perceive the *chaoban* to be miss-stepping or when information is needed that the *chaoban* cannot provide. In the case above, the information was whispered to the *chabahn.* In other cases, the organizers will actually raise their hands and make statements, and occasionally they will ultimately pull a chair up to the table.

At the end of the meeting at the university I walked down the stairs from the conference room with Pi Tui. I asked her what she thought would happen or what they should do. She said she didn't know. The community would have to discuss the situation and come up with their own way forward. They would have to decide whether they wanted to keep fighting the eviction or whether they wanted to pursue relocation. The decision was ultimately theirs. When we exited the building the community was already gathered in a circle, speaking animatedly with Pi Mam and another NGO organizer facilitating the discussion.

I left with the CODI staff member I had come with to attend a meeting with another FRSN community at a district office. There, a similar scene would play out, this time between a

community and a handful of different district officials. These civil encounters between *chaoban* and local governments or landowners constitute a large portion of the participation of FRSN communities in planning and local governance. The interactions between the *chaoban* and officials are simultaneously both direct and mediated. They represent themselves at the table, but their remarks are structured by the groups that support them. Most leaders have been coached in some way as to what to say prior to the meeting, and the professionals, both from CODI and from organizers, occasionally step in on their behalf. Moreover, established FRSN leaders often do as much talking as the community members directly affected. Thus, their participation, while still being an expression of their own agency, takes place within a specific institutional framework that is determined by the FRSN, CODI, and other powerful institutions.

According to the framework of the three types of democracy, meetings like the one described above fit squarely in the participatory democracy bucket. They use established channels and "invited spaces" (Miraftab 2009). However, such spaces are not always sufficient to settle the issues communities face. At this point, the FRSN takes a more direct approach.

4.6.4 Inventing New Spaces of Participation

Protests, demonstrations, and rallies are another important tool in the FRSN's toolbox. There is great variety in terms of where, how, and how long these actions take place. Based on my own observations, as well as conversations with organizers and participants, I believe these actions serve three main purposes for the FRSN: pragmatism, symbolism, and solidarity. Different actions serve the three purposes to greater and lesser extents.

Actions that are high in pragmatism but low on the other two functions are those that take place to apply pressure to government officials or landowners. Such actions occur when these power holders are slow to respond to community or network requests, fail to deliver on promises, or conduct business in a way that is inconsistent with established policies. Actions only take place when other, less confrontational means have failed. The size of these actions may be as small as a dozen or so people at a district office or as large as 2,000 people at a ministry headquarters. The goal of such an action is nearly always to push for a meeting to negotiate the issue at hand, and the office or individual that is the target of the action is notified beforehand that the action will take place. A written statement of the demands is prepared. Because of the advance notice, often the target of the action is prepared to meet, and the demonstration aspect of the action does not take long. If the official agrees to meet that day, community leaders, FRSN leaders, organizers, and as many representatives from the community as can fit in the room sit down to negotiate. Unsurprisingly, CODI is not involved in these meetings. In cases where the official cannot meet that day, the demonstrators stay until a meeting is at least scheduled. In the relatively rare cases that the target of the action refuses to meet, demonstrators have been known to sleep multiple nights in front of office buildings.

At a minimum, a successful action ends with an important pragmatic and symbolic process called *kan yeun nangseu* (see Figure 11). The phrase translates awkwardly into English, but it means the presentation of a letter or written statement. It is the public presentation of demands—or, in the case that an agreement is reached that day, a signed copy of the agreement reached. This is done in front of the gathered crowd, and photos are taken of a community leader handing the statement to the official. This small ceremony and the photos taken of it provide proof for the future that the official has seen, acknowledged, and in some cases agreed to, the demands. It is also a gesture of civility, as presentations and photo ops of a similar vein occur when bestowing honors in a variety of Thai contexts. When an official has accepted the statement, the leader of the demonstration opens the floor for the official to make a statement to

the crowd. To close the ceremony, the network makes a formal statement of thanks on behalf of those gathered and assures everyone that the network will follow up on the issues discussed that day.

Figure 12:Pi Mam presents a government official with a list of demands as part of a kan yeun nangseu *ceremony in front of the United Nations on World Habitat Day in 2017*

It is rare that an FRSN demonstration does not end in a *gan yeun nangs*eu ceremony. They occur even at the most symbolic of demonstrations, such as the one that happens annually on World Habitat Day in front of the United Nations building in Bangkok. Large gatherings such as this are the most common venue for less active *chaoban* to participate in issues outside their own communities. Thus, they also serve the purpose of building solidarity. These demonstrations have a festive atmosphere, with demonstrators waving paper flags with statements that range from expressions of their values, like "housing rights are human rights" to the specific goals of current initiatives, such as "*Baan Mankong* must provide sufficient funding for basic services." At the end of the World Habitat Day demonstration in 2017, the ceremony ended with Pi Mam and other leaders presenting a statement to the Minister of Social Welfare and Human Security, the ministry that oversees *Baan Mankong.* After the action at the UN, smaller groups of demonstrators split up to go to smaller actions at the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration.

Large FRSN rallies tend to coincide with other actions. In some cases, these actions are larger, conducted by P-MOVE for issues such as increased public welfare or land reform. Associated networks often schedule actions on the same day so that they can achieve larger numbers. For example, on one July day in 2015 the FRSN demonstrated at parliament with P-MOVE for a land reform package called "Four Laws for the Poor" in the morning and then went to the ministry of natural resources in solidarity with another P-MOVE subnetwork advocating for communities being evicted from land that had been declared a national reserve.

The networks always try to obtain permits for their rallies, and they are mostly successful at obtaining them. However, even when permits are not granted, it is rare that the government uses force to remove demonstrators, as the optics of violently removing or publicly arresting poor citizens would prove politically damaging, even to a military junta. Arrests and can do happen, nonetheless. Most of the professional FRSN organizers and many of the leaders have

been arrested on at least one occasion, and there are plans in place for how to deal with arrest cases. Funds are saved, and a small number of sympathetic legal advisors provide pro-bono assistance. It is rare for *chaoban* not in a leadership role to be arrested, though. In meetings leading up to actions, leaders and organizers explain to *chaoban* that they need not be afraid because the vanguard of network leaders and professional organizers will take the heat. In my three years with the FRSN this was always the case. For the typical *chaoban* who comes to an action, the experience is one of festivity and solidarity.

For the FRSN, solidarity is constructed both through pragmatic victories and symbolic expressions of their mission. This kind of solidarity is most obvious at large demonstrations, which are frequently conducted P-Move and other allied movements. Direct actions draw together large numbers of community members, particularly community leaders in visible displays of the network's solidarity and provide opportunities to shout out the movement's principles over loudspeakers. These demonstrations that serve to make demands of the state on behalf of communities are facilitated by a cadre of elected community leaders, with the guidance of a team of experienced NGO organizers. However, these same leaders and organizers also spend a significant amount of time working at the community level. In this capacity, they are often doing the work advising on the administration of cooperatives, helping communities comply with the bureaucratic demands of CODI and other government agencies in order to gain access to state resources. In this sense, the line between making demands of the state and carrying out its functions becomes blurred.

Despite this blurring of boundaries with respect to the practical aspects of moving projects forward, what distinguishes the FRSN from other networks involved in *Baan Mankong*, especially NULICO, is its willingness to take a confrontational stance against government agencies. When some element of government policy is not serving communities' interests, the FRSN is willing and able to mobilize its members to make strategic and public interventions through direct actions and negotiations. Even though the FRSN often works with CODI in the interest of communities, CODI is not exempt from the FRSN's efforts to hold government agencies accountable. CODI leaders have been on the receiving end of direct actions and *kan yeun nangseu* ceremonies on numerous occasions, and monthly meetings between *Baan Mankong* staff and FRSN leaders are often marked by debate. This type of stance toward CODI and government agencies stands in stark contrast to the practices of NULICO.

4.7 Participatory Practices of NULICO

In the early days of NULICO, new communities worked closely with CODI staff and government officials on pilot projects, which sometimes turned into city-wide upgrading processes in smaller cities. The leaders of these early communities became close allies, and they all enjoy sharing stories of learning from each other, alongside early CODI staff and leadership, as they tried to figure out how to create something new together. However, as *Baan Mankong* has chased the dream of "going to scale" (Somsook 2005b), the enthusiasm and capacity to innovate has waned. Nonetheless, NULICO has remained the face of *Baan Mankong* in many ways, both to outside researchers and to other state agencies, and the cooperative stance of their members toward government officials has played a role in pushing the policy forward.

4.7.1 Lost Below the Top

An example of the current state of NULICO efforts is the meeting at which the new member in the Yannawa city-wide process was informed of her own membership in the network. At this meeting, there were no members of the NULICO present beyond the communities

directed affected. This was not on purpose. The previous day, CODI staff and several NULICO representatives had conducted an outreach event in district, giving a large presentation on *Baan Mankong* and the proposed city-wide process and then sending teams out into five different communities to collect preliminary data and spread awareness of the effort and of a planning meeting that would take place the next day at the district office. At the end of the day, CODI staff asked the handful of NULICO representatives who would be attending the meeting. They all replied that they could not, mostly because they did not have the time.

An important aspect of the NULICO structure not mentioned in the above section is the extent to which it is theoretical. When asked to describe how the network works, multiple NULICO leaders described the city, province, region, nation structure in the same way. However, when I began to probe as to how the different layers of the network work in practice, the accounts began to diverge, albeit with some common themes.

There is large agreement that, in principle, each community should send representative to the city network, the city to the province, etc. In a meeting where I presented the preliminary results of my research to CODI and NULICO leadership, I pointed out that there seemed to be no system of internal democracy. One leaders responded that there was at the beginning and that they had that intention, but that it had gone by the wayside.

It is widely understood that many of the networks no longer meet regularly and that they have "been lost" or "gone away" (*hai pai).* At one CODI meeting a staff member was asked how the network was handling an issue with a project, and she described the network as *phaew*-- "faint" or "weak"—and at meetings there is frequent talk of the need to "restore" (*feun fu)* this network or that. One CODI leader acknowledged in an interview the need to reform the network, describing it as "clumsy" and "top-down."

However, in some respects the NULICO is not so much top-down as top-only. In lieu of a representative leadership team, a class of quasi-professional participators has solidified at the top, most of whom come from the early projects. These NULICO leaders are called upon when staff or leadership requires help on a community visit or to attend a conference. In some cases, the leaders themselves respond to calls from CODI, and in some cases they call members from other communities. During a break in a meeting at CODI, I asked a small group of NULICO members how they decide who will go on community visits or go to certain meetings. The group generally agreed that in theory, the NULICO should be organizing how and when its members work, perhaps in conjunction with CODI staff. However, in practice the NULICO as an organization is bypassed. The decisions as to who should attend a given meeting are generally made through ad-hoc referrals. One man said that just the week before he had gone on a community visit after being called directly by a CODI worker. In the absence of any distance from CODI, there is also no independent agenda setting. Work teams and initiatives are set by CODI staff and leadership.

4.7.2 Blurred Boundaries

If the community-level work of FRSN leadership and organizers blurs the boundaries between state agencies and a people's movement, for NULICO the blurring is even more extreme. This is most clearly demonstrated in an anti-eviction mapping project taken on by NULICO in 2018. As part of this effort, NULICO would partner with the FRSN for the first time, under the recognition by both networks that they have different ways of working and different strengths. The FRSN would take the lead on organizing policy action, as this was their strength. To this end, they organized the demonstration at the Ministry of Transportation discussed in the opening scene of Chapter 1. NULICO, for their part, would do a study, as it was

agreed by all parties that their their strength was their large numbers and skills in documentation and data collection.

With the rate of evictions increasing rapidly as the central government has committed to numerous large infrastructure projects, including massive canal redevelopment and the extension the sky train and subway, the central leadership of CODI believed it necessary to document all current and probable evictions throughout the country. I volunteered to perform the GIS component of the project. The data was supposed to be collected by the NULICO, so a team of eight or so (attendance at meetings was inconsistent) community leaders from the different regions was assembled. A consultant with ties to CODI leadership who frequently works with communities was lead on the project. A fair amount of data on existing communities had been collected by region two years prior, but there was no geodata, and the information was deemed not detailed or reliable enough. It needed to be checked, updated, and made mappable. Each team member was initially charged with checking the information in their region, either by calling the leaders of the communities or by going on site visits. In a subsequent planning meeting a couple of weeks later, the team members had done this with varying levels of success, as the contact information for all communities was not up to date. At this meeting, though, the project head decided that it was not sufficient to just map the communities as points, which could be done by looking at maps. In order for the data to be really useful for negotiations, it was reasoned, the exact boundaries needed to be mapped by going out into the communities with GPS units. There were over 400 communities. The project lead believed this could be done in under two months.

CODI had held trainings on how to use GPS units the previous year. In theory, many community leaders knew how to use the technology. The team made a list of who knew how to use them throughout the country, and from that it was decided who the extended work team would be. Unfortunately, this extended work team did not materialize.

Throughout the process, from the incomplete attempts to confirm the preliminary data to the failure to mobilize a larger team to do the geographic survey, the project lead bemoaned the fact that the community members were "rising up" (*luk kheun*) as they must in order to fight evictions. In a conversation before one of the meetings, he explained to me at length the many forces of eviction in the country, from the national infrastructure projects, to the Chinese investment in the Eastern Economic Corridor, to the Special Economic Zones that were attracting large amounts of foreign investment. He recognized the need for a movement of communities to rise up to fight these larger political and economic forces.

In the meeting, he posed the question to the group of why they were facing more and more evictions each year, and why the number of projects that they were able to do each year had stalled, even though they had plenty of funding, and the network had grown larger, so they should be able to support more people to go through the process. The team members responded with practical responses: they don't have time; they have to take care of children; they have to work to pay of their loans; the cost of living is going up. To this, the project lead responded that they may have loans now, but the cost of their water and electricity had gone down because they were no longer to siphon it from someone else under the table. And as for the other costs of living, almost everyone had a TV, and he had even been to communities were almost everyone had air conditioning! No, the problem was not these practical things. The problem was these days the community members were not stepping up the way they had in the past. They were living beyond their means, and they were not working together, collectively.

In a rare show of defiance, the team members pushed back. They were not getting paid for this work. They barely even got the costs of their travel covered. For the work they did within their own districts, they got nothing. For overnight trips, they got a per diem, sure, but that was also a day that they were not working in their own occupations. Participating in these projects cost them time and money.

And in this case, their labor resulted in no tangible benefits. The team reported back that people who were supposed to be on the extended work team did not understand the project and how it would benefit them or did not have the time. The project fizzled and got put on the back burner. Community members, while sitting at the same table with a government employee, were not permitted to set the agenda. When they expressed concerns or voiced their needs, they were met with a disciplining rhetoric. They were expected to carry out a project of mapping out the boundaries of communities at risk, but what actually occurred was a blurring of the boundaries between state employees and a supposedly independent community network.

4.7.3 Participation in Pubic

Despite the frustrations expressed in private meetings by some NULICO leaders and the absence of a mechanism for new communities to take an active role in shaping the network, NULICO plays a significant role in representing the community networks of *Baan Mankong* to those in power, both inside Thailand and outside. This type of representation and the message of cooperation and self-sufficiency spread by leaders have facilitated the popularity of the program and helped to pave the way for its expansion.

A handful of NULICO communities who have leaders who are prominent in the network have served as examples to other communities and to outsiders. One such community is discussed in the following chapter. Some of these communities have been profiled in more than one academic case study and have had their stories told in English-language materials produced by CODI partner organizations, such as the ACHR.

In addition, these leaders directly represent *Baan Mankong* on the international stage with CODI. An example is the U.N. World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur in 2018, where several NULICO leaders traveled with CODI representatives as part of the ACHR coalition. At sessions, leaders stood up to speak about their experiences. However, like the FRSN members who are coached by NGO organizers, these NULICO members' speech is also structured by professionals. The difference is, in this case the people coaching them are government staff from CODI, who are charged with promoting the policy. Many of these NULICO leaders have presented their communities as cases many times and have well-rehearsed narratives about their experiences, lessons learned, and how others can replicate their successes. These lessons include the importance of cooperation with local officials and doing their part through self-documentation, collective financial management, and mapping.

These same types of presentations by CODI leaders happen in many ways within the country. NULICO leaders regularly appear at public events with government officials to present their communities as success stories. Along with CODI staff, top leaders also have the opportunity to sit at meetings with government officials to discuss elements of the policy. However, as described by the NULICO leader in Chapter 1, the network leaders take a compromising and conciliatory tone in these meetings, and much of the talking is done by the CODI staff who accompany them.

The sum of these forms of participation by NULICO leaders amounts to a form of participation in public in which these community members do pay an active role in the promotion of the policy, but they have little say in the program's direction. Though their network

is ostensibly independent, in practice it is tied to the professional staff at CODI. In addition, because the structure of their network is tied to government jurisdictions, their own network structure blurs with that of the government. Thus, the network and its leaders are constantly being shaped and coached by representatives of state agencies. While this proves frustrating to leaders at times and prevents new members from feeling connected to the network, it nonetheless has paved the way for *Baan Mankong*'s "going to scale."

4.8 A Comparative and Relational View of NULICO and the FRSN

4.8.1 Comparison of the Two Networks

At the heart of the differences between the FRSN and the CODI is the issue of rights. Rights of many varieties form the core of the FRSN's motivating ideology. The unequal access to land rights lies at the heart of inequality and societal injustice. This deprives the poor from their basic human rights to housing and a reasonable quality of life. The means to achieving this a more equal distribution of land is to form new types of land tenure that grant land rights to communities, not private property owners. In order to achieve this, they deploy their rights to expression and assembly in order to influence the government. When these rights are not granted to them as citizens by the authoritarian government, they are asserted as human rights and used to push for greater democracy, which, it is believed, will allow for a more just distribution of rights to land and other resources. Rights upon rights upon rights.

However, for CODI, the rhetoric of rights is used only in the technical sense, such when speaking of the rights to plots of land within the cooperative. A right, in this sense, has no moral content, but is rather something that is distributed by the collective. Rights in the larger democratic sense that the FRSN uses them are, in the basic needs framing, a source of conflict, a block to getting things done. The justification for this is the assertion that calling upon rights is equivalent to asking the government to do something for you and ceding the power and responsibility to them to get it done. The more productive approach, under this logic, is to work with the government to create alternative ways of doing things, calling for the opportunity to meet one's own basic needs. This basic needs argument reflects the long-standing image of *chumchon* that is most evident in the community culture school of thought and sufficiency economy. It puts forth a vision of Thai communalism in which the poor live on what is "sufficient" and do not ask for more. Demanding rights, then, is un-Thai.

Under these two logics, the purpose of the community is quite different. Under the rights-based approach, the community is the basic unit of organizing in order to cultivate the only sources of power the poor have: their numbers. Under the basic needs approach, on the other hand, the community is a source of self-sufficiency, a unit for collective provisioning and support in order to meet needs without having to rely on the government. However, in practice, NULICO is more closely tied to state structures than the FRSN.

The network structures of the FRSN and NULICO reflect, in different ways, their different rhetorics. The FRSN views itself as part of a citizens' sector whose role is to hold those in power accountable. It has therefore maintained the separation between the network and the government. In the FRSN's logic, it is only through being a coherent outside group that the poor can have the power to negotiate with those as power. NULICO and CODI also tout the need to negotiate with those in government. However, they believe that negotiations can take place by establishing a "shared power" in which community members and officials are part of a network together. This collective power amounts to a "systemic change" in power relations, where

arguing and fighting is no longer necessary, and everyone can solve problems together. This line of thinking makes no mention of why existing power relations should change simply because everyone is in the same room. And in practice, they do not. NULICO members frequently sit in rooms with powerful people, only to be told how to become better communities, as was the case in the eviction mapping project. On the other hand, when FRSN representatives sit at a table to negotiate with officials, they often do so with rows of people behind them and sometimes hundreds of others outside.

In the cases of both networks, however, interactions with officials are highly mediated. NULICO prides itself on being independent from the influence of NGOs. It is true that the professional organizers behind the FRSN have considerable influence on the direction of the network and even the public actions of the individual members. However, it is not the case that NULICO is free of such influences. In practice, CODI staff and other government officials step in to serve a similar role, but with very different results.

The FRSN professional organizers serve a vital function for the network. To hold together a network of thousands of communities and move it in any coherent direction takes an immense amount of coordination. It is not just *a* full-time job, but many. The capacity of community members to take on this task on their own is limited by the need to feed and provide for themselves and their families. An obvious solution might be for an NGO to pay community leaders to lead the network themselves. However, if some community leaders were paid while others weren't, this would likely result in internal conflicts. And a considerable amount of the organizers' work is mediation. So, while the professional organizers with the FRSN do have considerable influence, and the FRSN cannot be said to be a "pure" community movement, they play an important role in keeping the movement going. In addition, despite the fact that their opinions often carry considerable weight, their influence is not unchecked. As is evident from the example of the funeral savings group, their capacity to sway popular opinion has its limits. Communities and the larger network are under no obligation to follow the organizers.

In theory, the functions served by the professional organizers in the FRSN are served by the community leaders themselves in the NULICO. However, in practice the absence of this professional role merely creates a vacuum that CODI steps into. Much of the community-level coordination that is done by organizers for the FRSN must be done by CODI staff in the case of the NULICO. Unlike the professional organizers, though, the CODI staff's primary responsibility is not to develop the network, but to move projects forward and promote the broader, city-wide vision of CODI leadership. The CODI ground staff includes architects, engineers, and "workers" (those in charge of general project management). Most are under 30, few have any training in law or political issues, and all face enormous pressure to get projects approved, disburse budgets, and get houses built. They call upon NULICO members when they need assistance without consideration for any overarching goals or strategies of the network. The role of NULICO members then becomes to back up staff in their efforts to push projects along and carry out CODI's ultimate vision of city-wide upgrading. In addition, leaders of prominent communities within NULICO often serve as the public face of *Baan Mankong,* sharing their stories as case studies to the rest of the world and to the government.

The difference in these two approaches amounts to what I call demand-driven versus command-driven participation. Whereas demand-driven participation mobilizes community to call upon rights from the government, command-driven participation utilizes community as a unit of governance. The vision of participation in command-driven participation comes from the top, expressed most clearly in through CODI's emphasis on city-wide upgrading. The city-wide

initiatives, which I have described as participatory modernism, express the desire for large-scale urban development carried out from below by residents. NULICO's emphasis on self-reliance, financial management, and cooperation with government serve as rhetorical and practical mechanisms to push this large-scale vision forward. However, both networks have played a role in creating the conditions for *Baan Mankong*'s expansion and "scaling up."

4.8.2 A Relational Perspective on the Two Networks

This is not a story of one network being purely emancipatory and another being purely oppressive. Far from it. Many members of both networks are deeply committed to their work and acknowledge that the other network has strengths that they lack. This is why the networks chose to attempt to work together to fight eviction. However, I argue that the differences in the networks complement each other in other ways, as well, which are not articulated or immediately apparent to those involved. The networks and CODI exist in a complex symbiosis, and these mutually beneficial, if tense, relationships are what have kept *Baan Mankong* going and growing for over a decade.

At numerous points during fieldwork when FRSN members became frustrated with CODI policy, I asked why they continued to work with CODI, if they disagree with them so strongly on many issues. The answer is that, despite these frustrations, the FRSN is materially and politically reliant CODI. Funding in the form of both subsidies and loans from CODI allow the FRSN to help member communities meet their material needs. CODI also provides an "in" for many forms of negotiation for the FRSN. This financial support and mediation support the material successes that give the movement momentum.

CODI could not provide this type of support if it did not maintain the non-confrontational rhetoric of self-reliance, sufficiency, and development, exemplified by the practices of NULICO. The large size of the NULICO, theoretical as it may be, creates the image of an organization building up an association of urban poor that develops good citizens working toward the development of the nation. Thus, the NULICO serves an important role in maintaining the government support of CODI.

This is not always enough, though, and in stickier political situations, CODI becomes reliant on the FRSN. After the 2006 coup that put the Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva in power, CODI came under the budgetary chopping block. The government wanted to largely privatize CODI, passing the role of credit provider over to private banks. Leaders of the two networks tell different stories of how CODI was saved during this time. The NULICO leaders will talk about how they held a massive protest on World Habitat Day, and this persuaded the government to continue its support of CODI. Leaders of the FRSN tell a different story. In this version, both networks put forward proposals. NULICO called for a modest budget for CODI that would be extended entirely as credit to CODI, and which CODI would have to pay back through the interest on loans. The FRSN called for a much larger budgetary concession and insisted on keeping the existing funding model, in which the budget is given to CODI. The FRSN mounted a smaller, but more persistent protest and gained entry to negotiate. It was this proposal that was ultimately accepted. The NULICO rally on World Habitat Day took place, but it was merely a show of numbers of those who had benefited from the policy. It did not gain them entry into the halls of power. It was the FRSN who had done the negotiation and won concessions from the government.

Thus, CODI at least in part owes its existence to the FRSN, and the FRSN largely owes its success to CODI. NULICO serves an instrumental role in maintaining state support for *Baan Mankong* policy by presenting the image of a large and cooperative movement of self-sufficient

chumchon. The participation of both networks is essential to ensuring the continuing existence and expansion of the policy.

The widely-shared ideal of participation manifests in many forms. In the case of *Baan Mankong,* two networks of communities representing divergent ideologies coexist and occasionally interact within the context of a single policy. By examining how these two networks came to be, how they are structured, and how they operate in conjunction with the professionals that guide them, I have demonstrated how these different elements flow from one another and how they produce very different sets of participatory practices.

In comparing these two networks, I have shown how participation conceived of as a democratic practice based on the principles of rights and strategic interaction with the state can produce significant and sustained policy change, even when the number of participants is relatively small. On the other hand, participation called for by representatives of the state can easily come to serve instrumental purposes, placing burdens and responsibilities on citizens without a corresponding increase in voice. What is interesting about these two cases is not merely their comparison but in the political roles they play in the sustaining the *Baan Mankong* program and paving the way for its expansion. In the following chapter, I demonstrate how this expansion impacts participants at the level of the community and how the two networks differ in how the changes that come with the increasing scale of the policy.

Chapter 5: Commoning or Being Commoned?

5.1 Introduction

Baan Mankong communities function within the institutional structures of their networks, CODI, and other state agencies involved in the governance of land and municipal services. In the previous chapters, I have detailed the emergence of these larger institutions and how they have formed alliances in order to produce the *Baan Mankong* program. However, the ultimate aims of *Baan Mankong* and the many organizations involved it are to improve the material living conditions of the urban poor and to increase the possibility that they might have a voice in the plans that impact them. To understand the outcomes of the program, it is therefore necessarily to see how *Baan Mankong* projects play out on the ground. In this chapter, I look at how *Baan Mankong* operates at the level of the community through four case studies. I begin by looking at the different community-level institutions that residents use to manage their collective space, resources and debts. Then, I analyze how local practices relate to the larger institutions and organizational politics of which the communities are a part. To do this, I use the concept of the urban commons as a framework for analyzing the relationships between institutional arrangements and political motives of different commoning movements.

The "urban commons" has been invoked by scholars across the many disciplines of planning and urban studies as an alternative to the market-based system of private property. The most well-known conceptions of the urban commons draw from the broad, Lefebvrian view that the city itself is a collective work, with "commoning" referring to acts of appropriating space for collective use (e.g. Harvey 2012; Blomley 2008; Maringanti 2011). Though the work of Elinor Ostrom is frequently gestured to in urban commons literature, researchers have rarely employed an institutionalist lens to understanding the urban commons (Huron 2018). Taking inspiration from Huron's effort to emphasize the labor involved in commoning, this chapter employs both institutional and broadly political conceptions of the commons to investigate how the work of the commons is done in *Baan Mankong* in Bangkok. In doing so, I argue that for early *Baan Mankong* commoners, the process of producing the institutions to support the commons, regardless of the ideologies and rhetoric employed, proved to be empowering and emancipatory. In this sense, they were true examples of commoning. However, as time has gone on, the state has recognized the usefulness of these commons institutions for governing the poor populations of the city. Thus, more recent participants in *Baan Mankong* projects have the sense of "being commoned," as they are pushed to adopt pre-existing institutions of self-governance. However, in analyzing how two recent communities who belong to different community networks with different sets of politics and internal institutional arrangements, I show how active, emancipatory, bottom-up commoning can still exist, providing resistance to the top-down commoning efforts of the state.

In what follows, I examine the case of *Baan Mankong* through both institutionalist and broadly political conceptsions of the commons, discussed in Chapter 1. I draw from the institutionalists and their attention to the details of commoning practice. However, I also look to the larger political projects of those involved in the *Baan Mankong* program. This dual perspective allows me to draw conclusions on several level. First, the institutional lens permits the comparison of communities on several levels, demonstrating how certain commonalities in form and appearance emerge across different commoning movements. Second, it allows analysis of how political motives influence institutional differences between the different movements.

Finally, it points to how institutional arrangements can enable or foreclose certain kinds of political action.

5.3 Case Studies

In this chapter, I present case studies of four *Baan Mankong* communities. Two communities are members of NULICO, while the other two are members of the FRSN. For each of the networks, one community is well established, having begun the *Baan Mankong* process nearly ten years prior to the research, while the other two were in the early stages of the process at the time of fieldwork and had not yet begun home construction when fieldwork was completed. Figure 13 illustrates the general characteristics of the four communities and the names by which I will refer to them. All communities are also located in the Bangkok Metropolitan Region (BMR), so the larger urban context and municipal governance structures they operate in are quite similar. The selection of these communities was intentional, so as to be able to compare the processes of establishing and maintaining these urban commons across the two networks. While I focus narrowly on the individual communities at certain points, the selection of these communities and my interpretation of them is guided by having visited over forty communities over the course of fieldwork, from 2015-2018. They are illustrative of larger trends and processes operating in the policy.

Network / **Age of community**	*National Union of Low Income Community Organizations (NULICO*	*Four Regions Slum Network*
Well established (At least ten years old; houses are nearly all fully constructed)	NULICO A	FRSN A
New (*Baan Mankong* was begun less than two years prior to fieldwork, and no housing construction had begun prior to the end of fieldwork)	NULICO B	FRSN B

Figure 13: Characteristics, network memberships, and aliases of the four case study communities

Throughout the case study descriptions, I will highlight a number of themes that arose throughout the research process and which are relevant to analyzing the commoning processes of the communities through both the political production of space and institutionalist lenses. To begin, I discuss the commonalities between the four communities in terms of physical forms, collective life, and formal institutions of collective governance. I describe how the higher-level institutions of CODI, other government agencies, and networks result in these commonalities. The case study descriptions are organized along the first set of themes, I then discuss the case studies individually, beginning with the oldest communities of each network and ending with the more recent ones. This comparison across network and time allows me to demonstrate how the *Baan Mankong* program has changed across time and how the differences between the networks impact how communities adapt to these changes.

5.4 What is Common to All

This section discusses the physical forms, features of collective life, and institutions of governance that are now common to nearly all communities and have produced as a result of the policy. It also demonstrates why those concrete productions of the policy occur.

5.4.1 Physical Forms

Once one has visited a few *Baan Mankong* communities, picking them out amidst the complex urban forms of Bangkok becomes quite easy. Though the program is touted for its flexibility in meeting individual community needs, the resulting settlements nonetheless bear striking similarities. These similarities do not necessarily come from any single person's or group's aesthetic taste, but rather from an amalgam of legal requirements, economic and space limitations, and construction constraints. It is within these institutionally-determined constraints that residents and architects express both aesthetic tastes and beliefs about ideal communal life.

The first notable characteristic of *Baan Mankong* communities is that they contain single-family homes (see Figure 14) and rowhouses (Figure 15). The emphasis on having low-rise homes is what distinguishes *Baan Mankong* from the multi-story public housing (*Ua Arthorn)* developments. Many residents express that *Baan Mankong* is preferable to public housing precisely because they can have their own home. The reasons for this preference vary. For some, it is a matter of livelihood. Selling goods from home is easier when you have a space out front to sell from. Storing construction materials or motorcycles requires having space on the ground. On top of this practical consideration, though, is an element of values. Having your own home is a matter of status for some. For others, they have never lived in an apartment-style home, and that option would not be appealing. In the rhetoric of both networks and CODI, however, this style of low-rise settlement more resembles what a village community looks like. It is what people are used to, and it facilitates the possibility of living as a cohesive group, whereas high rise apartments isolate and atomize. In this sense, single family home laid out in clusters represents an ideal physical form of a *chumchon*.

Figure 14:A resident of an early-stage case study community considers a proposed home design, taking a photo to show residents who could not attend the meeting.

The second feature of *Baan Mankong* communities is that their Most communities only have two or three different home layouts that residents can choose from, usually a cheaper version and a larger, more expensive version. The uniformity in this sense is due to the fact that the structures must be conform to district zoning and building codes in bulk. It would be too onerous and expensive to gain approval for many different designs. The community architects that work with residents to design the overall layout of the communities must also take into consideration the often-limited space of the settlements, as well as cost. While residents do have a level of input on the designs, consideration such as available space, cost, ease of infrastructure installation, and legal requirements as to the width of roads and lots, often carry at least as much weight in designs as resident desires (see Figure 16).

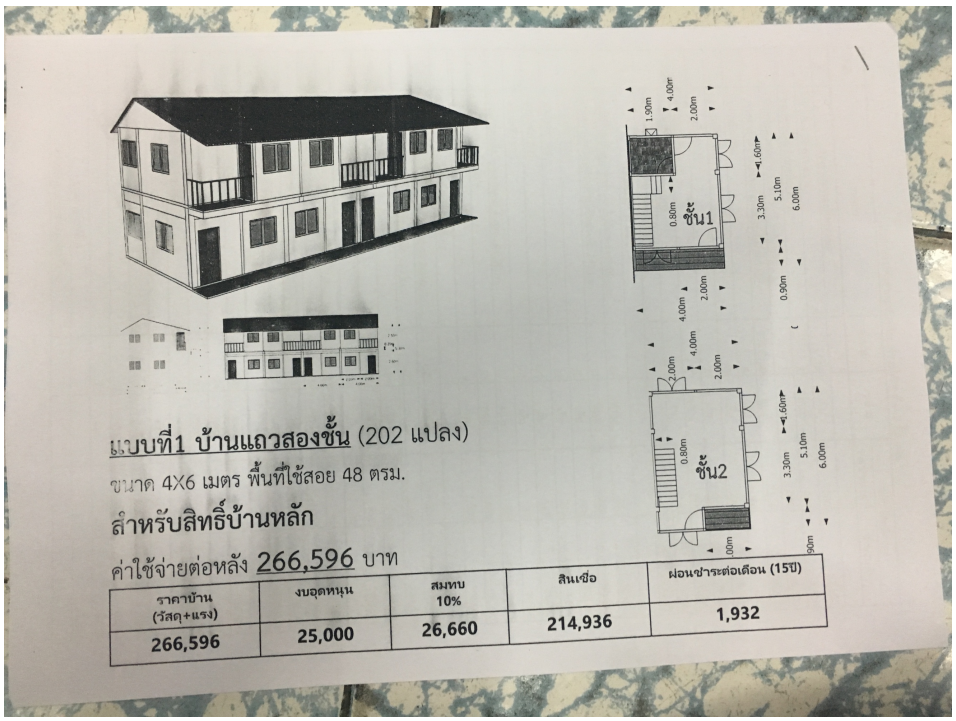

Figure 15: A draft of one option for a rowhouse layout for a case study community.

Figure 16: Residents of an early-stage community gather around a proposed layout. Homes are clustered together into zones along neat alleyways.

The third feature of *Baan Mankong* communities is the individualization of each of the homes (see Figure 17). While there is little diversity in terms of the layouts of the houses, the

facades are nearly always meticulously painted and decorated by hand, often with brightly-colored textures or faux brick. Residents use planters, small statues, and door mats to express their individual tastes and care for their new homes. Variations in doors and window dressings demonstrate differences in both aesthetic preferences and financial status. These differences in the details of the homes reflect the building process of *Baan Mankong*. Whereas the approval process requires a certain element of mass production, the actual construction is highly individualized. Within the communities, some residents of means often hire contractors to build their houses quickly, allowing them to move in when the homes are finished. Meanwhile, others use their own labor and sometimes supplies from their original homes, building their homes slowly and frequently moving in long before construction is finished.

Figure 17:A resident walks through a Baan Mankong community. Houses have the same design, but they are brightly painted and individually decorated.

The physical forms of *Baan Mankong* communities bear similarities to, and yet are visibly distinct from, two other forms of development one encounters frequently in Bangkok. The first form is the *chumchon eh*—"congested community", colloquially called a slum—which nearly all *Baan Mankong* communities were originally. Like the congested community, *Baan Mankong* communities contain houses that are located close together and painted or decorated in distinct ways. The homes are frequently constructed slowly and constantly evolving, representing what Endo (2014) calls "housing as process" and Holston (1991) and Caldeira

(2017) have called "autoconstruction. They also have some of the structures common to many congested communities that are registered with their local districts, included a central meeting space, or *suun*. These central meeting spaces are frequently funded through the local districts, which provide monthly community development subsidies for registered communities of 100 households or more. They provide space for community committee meetings, occupation group activities, and public health events, such as well child checkups or disease screenings. Higher income developments generally do not have such central meeting spaces and do not register as *chumchon* with the districts. However, in other ways *Baan Mankong* communities are more similar to higher income developments than to congested communities.

The most common higher income development that *Baan Mankong* communities bear similarities to is the *muban jadsan*—literally "arranged village," or planned development. *Muban jadsan* are generally constructed developer-constructed and contain many identical homes along long, wide streets. The layouts are frequently described as *riab roy,* or orderly. This type of construction is frequently used in more suburban areas, though some developments are local near the central city. *Muban jadsan* are generally considered to be middle class developments. The layouts are quite similar to *Baan Mankong* communities, and the homes are likewise of a similar design. However, they lack the personalization of *Baan Mankong* houses and often all the same or similar colors, reflecting the fact that they are built wholesale by developers. They also generally do not have central meeting spaces, as middle class residents of *muban jadsan* generally do not apply for the government assistance that is used to build such structures, nor do they have need of the types of public services that are often provided at them. Similarly, they do not bear evidence of occupations conducted at home—small homes-based shops or construction materials—that are present in front of many *Baan Mankong* houses. These elements of difference reflect the process of construction, the class of the residents, and the types of either private or government institutions those residents interact with.

The physical forms of *Baan Mankong* projects reflect a distinctive blend of class-based processes and institutions. The necessity to comply with government regulations and to produce a sufficient quantity of housing at a reasonable cost leads them to resemble middle class pre-planned developments. However, at the same time, the layouts of the communities and the style of low-rise housing reflect values and images of a traditional *chumchon* on the part of many of the actors in involved. The process of building and the resulting aesthetics are likewise a hybrid, falling somewhere in between the middle class *muban jadsan* developments and the symbols of poverty, the *chumchon eh at*, from which residents hail. In the end, *Baan Mankong* communities have a hybrid form, falling somewhere in between mass production and autoconstruction. As the physical manifestations of common ownership, they represent an interaction of the active construction of residents and the institutions off urban governance with which they must interact, or "carve out" space from (Huron 2018).

5.4.2 Features of Collective Life

The physical features of *Baan Mankong* communities enable both sociability and mutual monitoring. These aspects of collective life are present in both FRSN and NULICO communities, and residents belonging to both networks describe them in similar ways, even though other elements and purposes of "community-ness" (*khwam pen chumchon*) are conceived of differently across the networks.

The homes of *Baan Mankong* communities are clustered together with streets or alleyways (*soi)* that are wide enough to accommodate pickup trucks and easy ingress and egress in the case of emergency but narrow enough that residents can easily yell across the street to

each other their homes. Since traffic is generally light in the communities, the alleys are also used as a public space for socializing, selling goods in carts, and playing. The alleys do not so much separate homes as link them. My own assessment of *Baan Mankong* communities echoes Endo's (2014) description of many informal settlements, in that the functional lines between public and private do not necessarily follow the visible cues of doorways and other physical boundaries. The fronts rooms of houses often function as semi-private spaces that bleed into public areas of the street. Residents generally do not have individual yards or porches. Instead, many of the houses have large front doors that are often left at least partially ajar. It is common for groups of men to gather in a front room with the door open to watch football matches or for home-based production activities to spill out of a front room and into the street. Even when doors are closed, passers-by yell greetings in to their neighbors. The layout of the community, as well as the design of the homes, facilitates a communal social atmosphere. It also allows for social monitoring.

The monitoring that community members do of each other has both positive and negative valences. On the positive side, members of multiple communities express the layout and sense "brothers and sisters" (*phi nong*-literally "elders and youngers") makes keeping children safe and out of trouble. One leader of a FRSN A credits the layout of the community and the relationships among its members with the fact that they don't have a drug problem, and their kids graduate from secondary school at a much higher rate than in many poor communities. She explains that if a kid tries to sneak out late, someone is bound to see them and let their parents know. Also, everyone is so close, no one is shy about disciplining other people's children. "We're all brothers and sister," she says. "Living in a community can be fun." Community leaders of NULICO A also reported that are able to observe community members' actions. They know if people come home late or are bringing drugs into the community, and they can intervene with the family. In a severe case, they have even had to evict one household because of this. Even though that was viewed as an unfortunate outcome, many community members across the different networks express that it is important to be able to watch out for each other and maintain "transparency" (*khwam prongsai)* among the members. This type of informal monitoring is part of that.

The flip side of the ability to monitor, though, is living under observation. A few community members, including the NULICO A leader who extolled the virtues of being able to monitor others, expressed that being constantly visible leads some people to feel they are being judged. This is especially true in cases where residents from multiple settlements come together to form a new community. When people do not know each other, they are likely to spy and judge each other, at least for a time. Organizers from the FRSN, as well as leaders of NULICO, described to me that this always happens at first with new communities that come together, and it can take many years to gain each other's trust.

The collective sociability that occurs in communities is enabled by physical form, but it also follows from the habits of life that many residents carry with them from life before *Baan Mankong*, when they lived slum settlements. The physical layouts of the communities are, at least in part, the result of the explicit desires of networks, CODI, and community members to create an atmosphere where the type of sociability they enjoyed before can be maintained or even strengthened. Along with this sociability comes the capacity to monitor and surveil the activities of others. Many residents have mixed feelings about this. However, what is certain is that the informal socializing and monitoring often works as a handmaiden to the more formal elements of collective governance that communities must enact.

5.4.3 Formal Institutions of Collective Governance: Where the Work Begins

In Chapter 3, I discussed the emergence of a series of practices that arose around the governance of community through the efforts of the slum movement and the rise of community-based housing efforts on the part of government agencies. These practices have endured to form the most widespread institutions that *Baan Mankong* communities use to govern their commons land, resources, and debts. These practices include savings groups to create collective financial resources, as well as the use of elected committee to govern community affairs. Through *Baan Mankong*, in association with other government agencies, these institutions have been highly formalized (see the institutional arrangements of communities in figure 19). In addition to these formal institutions, communities are frequently encouraged to break their communities into zones to delegate work and make communication and money collection more efficient. These common practices constitute the core common institutions of *Baan Mankong* communities.

Regardless of the network, a huge part of being a *Baan Mankong* community revolves around the practical necessity of managing collective finances. As outlined in Chapter 3, communities began creating savings groups around the late 1980s, when the practice was learned through visits to communities in India and the global spread of community organizing techniques. They became integral to many of the first land sharing agreements, and they have endured to this day. Having a functional savings group is the first step for most communities in the *Baan Mankong* process. Savings groups work through regular, usually monthly, deposits into a common bank account. Communities vary in how they make these collections and deposits, but a few techniques are most common. The first technique is to schedule a specific day of the month on which community members drop off their contributions to the leaders of the savings group, who holds the bank account. This is the technique used by NULICO B, who holds an event in their community center on a Sunday morning each month. The second technique is to divide the community into multiple zones. One person on the community committee is then in charge of each zone and must collect all of the money from their zone and pass it on to the account holder by a certain day of each month. This technique is used by FRSN A and two of the sub-communities that make up FRSN B, NULICO A when they were beginning their project, and several other communities observed during fieldwork. The final technique is generally used by smaller communities, including the other sub-communities of FRSN B. This is simply to have communities drop off their savings to the account holder by the set day of each month.

Some of the early *Baan Mankong* communities, including FRSN A, have managed to go through the entire upgrading process with using only a savings group. However, in more recent years, nearly all communities have had to register their savings groups as housing cooperatives with the Department for the Promotion of Cooperatives (DPC) in order to have a legally-recognized collective entity that can own or rent land and interact with financial institutions. To do this, the community must go through an onerous process of registration, which includes having all intended members of the cooperative (the official rights-holder of each household) attend three separate trainings on functions and management of the cooperative. Rallying members to attend these meetings and finding times that work for 100 percent of upwards of fifty working adults to attend is an onerous task for community leaders. However, the trainings are also necessary, as operating a cooperative is a much more intricate task than maintaining a simple savings group. In many ways, it is akin to running a bank.

CODI's vision and that of the DPC, a housing cooperative is also supposed to serve as financial resource for the community, similar to what in the English literature would be called a community development financial institution (CDFI). In the case of land purchase, the way Thai

housing cooperatives work is that each household first saves ten percent of their share of the cost of the land plus ten percent of what they intend to borrow for their home. These loans are issued to the cooperative by CODI at a rate of 4 percent, and the cooperative purchases the land. The individual households are responsible to repaying their share of the loans taken out by the cooperative, plus a margin of interest charged by the cooperative, typically two to four percent. In addition, each household holds at least ten shares in the cooperative, more if they would like to use the shares as a way to save. As the community gradually repays loans and collects on the monthly share fees, the cooperative builds capital, which it can then loan out to members for things like additional physical upgrading, small business investments, or covering shortfalls. In this way, the *Baan Mankong* cooperatives become not just vehicles for enabling housing security; they are a source of savings and credit for a population that is seldom served by traditional financial institutions. They can also generate a profit for the community, which they can invest back into the community.

The management of the cooperatives is performed by a committee, usually made up of at least three or four, but up to a dozen or so members, depending on the size of the community. When the cooperative is up and running, the committee meets regularly to count and deposit debt repayments, discuss the status of loans, and strategize as to how to deal with delinquent members. In addition to working with the DPC, once cooperatives are registered, they must go through regular audits with the Cooperatives Auditing Department (CAD), which is a completely separate bureaucratic entity from the DPC. All of these tasks requires a significant amount of ongoing labor. However, in the early stages of *Baan Mankong*, the work load is even greater. The committee must collect large amounts of documentation for each member, including temporary housing registrations, national ID cards, marriage certificates, and spreadsheets detailing approximate incomes and the intended loan amounts for each family. In addition to the basic requirements of DPC registration, cooperatives leaders are generally charged with overseeing early design and construction processes, which means negotiating with land owning agencies, registering their new collective landholdings with local authorities, and navigating the complex bureaucracies involved in infrastructure provision.

All of the work on behalf of the community often means that committee members have less time to carry out their own livelihoods. All early-stage community leaders I spoke with reported that community work cut into their own incomes. This intense work echoes Huron's (2012) emphasis on the labor involved in creating the urban commons and Endo's (2014, 190) observations regarding one *Baan Mankong* community, reporting that "The saying 'no rest for the weary' perfectly encapsulates the reality that is lived at these sites of community development. We must never forget that the principle of respecting residents' agency and community independence always carries the dangerous possibility of crossing an invisible line, wherein financial and bureaucratic limitations may result in the entire responsibility for project implementation being dumped into the laps of the residents themselves."

In addition to cooperative committees, many communities govern aspects of their collective life through a separate community committee that is registered with the local district, which is described above. The community committee is elected through elections held by the district officers. Community committee members are often also active in community financial management, and there can be overlap between the community committee and the cooperative committee. However, in practice the community committee is not accountable to CODI and operates as a separate entity. As mentioned above, it is through the community committee that residents can access monthly community development funds and take part in other municipal

programs. Being registered as a community with the local district also enables the community to send representatives to their local community assembly. Community assemblies represent an effort to create an avenue for district-level organization of all communities within a jurisdiction. The functioning of community assemblies is However, not all *Baan Mankong* communities are able to achieve this registration with the district and access these resources because in many locations only communities of at least 100 households can register. This is a source of frustration for many smaller communities.

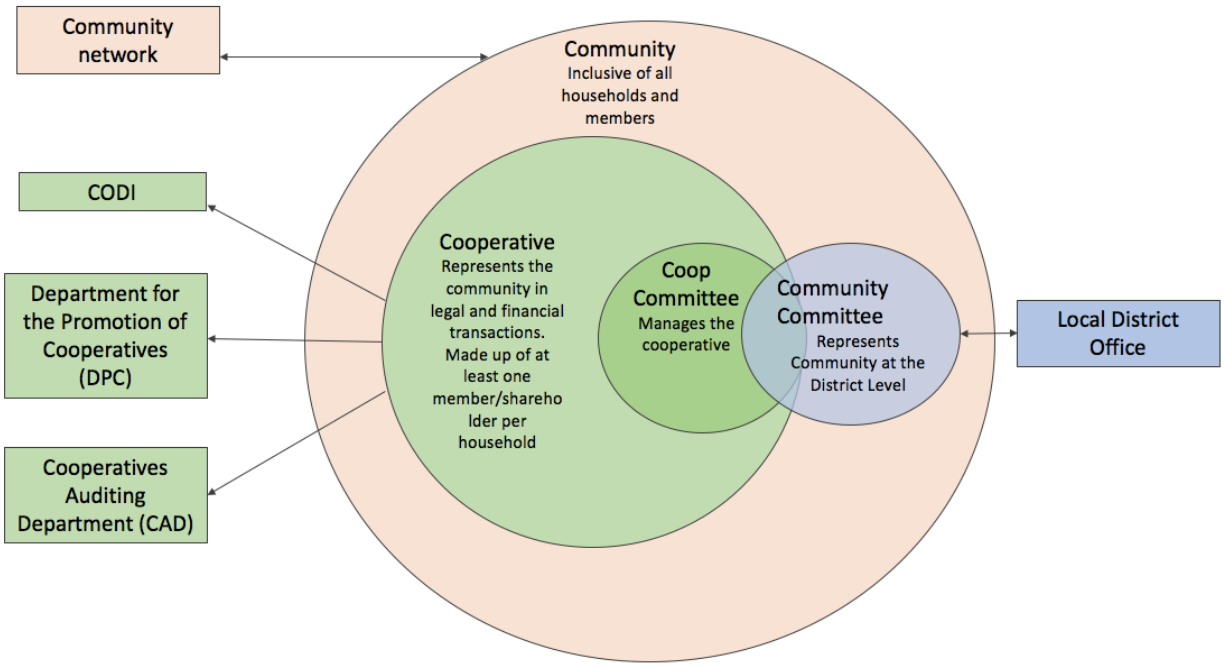

Figure 18: Community-level institutions and their connections to larger institutions

These formal institutions of collective governance are what make *Baan Mankong* projects possible. This is because they enable the community to be legally recognized, which lets them interact with institutions of finance and municipal government. Beyond this, however, these institutions perform another task that is key to the pushing *Baan Mankong* projects forward. While part of the claims of empowerment of *Baan Mankong* rest on the fact that the projects are led by communities themselves, this also means that most of the work of the projects must be completed by residents. An important task of these formal community-level institutions is to provide a framework for organizing the labor of community members.

5.4.4 Similarities Can be Deceiving

In this section, I have outlined the commonalities that are visible in nearly all *Baan Mankong* communities. These commonalities have arisen for many reasons, many of which have to do with the necessities of producing large numbers of homes and getting approval and financing from government agencies. Some of the commonalities also reflect common aspirations for a collective life on the parts of residents and their associated networks. These commonalities are not the end of the story, though. Because so many *Baan Mankong* communities look similar in terms of their physical results, the collective activities that take place in them, and the institutions that govern them, it is easy for those researching and writing

about the policy to assume that the networks organizing these communities are doing similar work. This assumption underlies many sweeping claims about "community networks" in general. However, as I will demonstrate in the following sections, while certain institutions and forms are common to nearly all *Baan Mankong* communities, other practices and the political valences that institutions take on vary considerably depending on the communities' connections to another higher-level institution—their network.

5.5 Early Communities

In the following sections, I narrate the histories and practices of four communities. Two of the communities began their *Baan Mankong* projects in the early years of the policy, while the other two were at the early stages of organizing their projects during fieldwork and had not yet begun construction as of the end of fieldwork. For each time period, one community belongs to the FRSN, whereas the other belongs to NULICO. This comparison across both network and time permits an analysis not only of the differences between the networks, but also of how the processes of going through the *Baan Mankong* have changed in the past 15 years. Ultimately, it allows me to draw conclusions about how the politics and institutional structures of the networks influence the capacity of communities to maneuver within an increasingly rigid set of regulations as the program has been scaled up over time.

5.6 NULICO A: Becoming an Example

Nearly fifteen years after its inception, NULICO A has distinguished itself from most other communities. It is among a handful of *Baan Mankong* communities in the BMR that are frequently used for site visits by researchers and other communities. NULICO A also often partners with local NGOs and researchers to pilot new research or community development ideas. I became acquainted with the community through just such an activity with other foreigner researchers. It has won numerous awards and recognitions from government and private organizations because of the effectiveness with which it runs its cooperative, as well as the myriad activities community members have undertaken as part of a local development plan based on the principles of Sufficiency Economy. A few of the leaders of NULICO A also play prominent roles in the larger NULICO network. Because of these distinctions, in some ways NULICO A is unique compared to the majority of *Baan Mankong* communities and not representative of most *Baan Mankong* communities. However, as I will argue, it is precisely these distinctions that have led it to be held up by CODI and NULICO to the outside world, making it, along with just a few other communities in the BMR, overrepresented in research on the policy. In this section, I do not question the overall success of NULICO A. Rather, I highlight the factors that have led NULICO A to become successful, including the presence of a strong leader and the fact that it was an early community that received a great deal of attention from CODI.

5.6.1 History

As is often the case with *Baan Mankong* communities, NULICO A was assembled out of several different settlements. Its members originate from six settlements across four districts in Bangkok. The community was formed through the initiative of CODI, who had identified the different original communities as being at risk of eviction during the era of the *Baan Mankong* pilot projects in the early 2000s. Though NULICO A was not itself a pilot project, it began shortly thereafter. According to Pi Jim, a prominent leader and administrator of the NULICO A

cooperative, one of the impetuses for starting NULICO A was that a tract of reasonably priced land had been identified that could house a large number of households. The target group for the project had originally been 300 households. Through of process of meetings and mutual community visits, CODI and a group of community leaders began to organize the households in these disparate settlements into savings groups so that they could later form a cooperative and move to the new tract of land. However, in the end it was not financially or logistically feasible to create such a large new community all at once. It was decided that the households in the most "hot water" (*deuad ron)* would move first, and the remaining would form a different community.

This first group included a settlement of households that was living on private land in which the owner wanted to sell to a hotel developer. The community was negotiating for more time to relocate, such situations can be especially precarious because of the risk of "accidental" fires that might force immediate evacuation even when an agreement to delay eviction has been reached between the community and the owner. Other communities were also on private land, and one group of households was living in an apartment building near the new site that was being demolished to make way for a new development.

The NULICO A officially registered its housing cooperative in 2006 with 153 households.

As one of the first *Baan Mankong* communities, the members NULICO A played an active role in working with the architects that helped to design the layout of the community and the houses in it. After brainstorming with designers and coming up with a number of possibilities, the community settled on the possible designs for their homes. They created a small field at the front of the community to provide space for festivals and regular evening aerobics, and the cooperative office and health station occupy a centrally-owned and centrally located house. This is where meetings take place and people come to make their monthly payments and update their account books. There is another centrally-owned house off the main alley into the community where various groups produce and sell locally-made products.

One of NULICO A's leaders, Pi Jim, describes the community as "one house with 153 rooms." This image family succinctly captures the ethos of NULICO A. The leaders strive to build a community that functions in many ways as an extended family. However, it has not always been this way. Many of the main sources of conflict throughout the first several years of NULICO A revolved around the differences between the groups of people deriving from different settlements. People arrived in the community with six different sets of norms and existing relationships that had to be reconciled in order for everyone to live together. The community does not operate by formal administrative zones anymore, but when people selected the locations for their new houses, people who already knew each other tended to cluster together. There were disagreements about petty things. Pi Jim recalls a time when some of the adults stopped speaking to each other because of arguments between families. She says that she and other community leaders decided that the way around some of these adult conflicts was to unify people around the children. The community committee sponsored a futsol tournament. The first year, it began small, and the teams were based on their original communities. However, organizing the tournament involved adults from multiple groups working together, and everyone came together to cheer on the kids. Even though it played on the competition between the different sub-groups, the larger activity provided a platform for working together. The futsol tournament has now grown over four years, and most of the conflicts between the internal groups have dissipated.

While these internal issues have been solved through interventions by the community's internal leadership, much of the founding of NULICO A took place through the facilitation of CODI. CODI helped to find and negotiate for the land purchase agreement and facilitate the coming together of the different settlements. During this early phase of the program, community architects worked quite extensively with community members to create the first designs and layouts of the new settlements. Residents and leaders of NULICO A recall with fondness the process of designing their new homes. However, many also expressed that they had doubts throughout the process as to whether or not the project would come to fruition. It was so new that they had few examples to draw from and were really creating this new type of community from scratch. At that time, there was no real NULICO to speak of, so the leaders of NULICO A were part of the group of *Baan Mankong* communities that formed the network, helping and advising each other through this new process and creating friendships along the way. The presence of strong leadership is one of the enduring keys to NULICO A's success.

5.6.2 Leadership in the Shaping of Ideology and Institutions

NULICO A has one of the most well-functioning housing cooperatives in all of *Baan Mankong*. They have rarely had issues balancing their accounts, and several years ago they won an award from the Department for the Promotion of Cooperatives (DPC) for their consistency in accounting, saving, and building up the cooperative not just as a means of securing housing, but also as a CDFI.

The NULICO A cooperative functions well largely because a consistency of personnel has enabled institutional adaptation. Pi Jim, NULICO A's most vocal spokesperson, was the first president of the cooperative. As one of the most educated members of the community, she took on the role early in the process. Over time, as the demands of the job increased, her devotion to her own community and the cause of creating sustainable development based on the principles of sufficiency economy grew commensurably. Even after her term with the committee ended, she continued to be the main force behind the cooperative. Over time, she cut back on her hours at her day job at a textiles business. By the time we spoke in 2018, she had been managing community affairs full time for several years and was quite happy to do so, despite the cut in pay compared to her previous life. The community provides her with a monthly stipend for managing the cooperative accounts, and she makes some additional income through speaking and training engagements and by selling her locally-produced goods. Mostly, though, she learned to live more modestly and reduced expenses through home-based production.

The installment of Pi Jim as a long-term accountant who is compensated for her work represents a unique arrangement among *Baan Mankong* communities. Most communities are encouraged to run the cooperatives through the voluntary labor of the cooperative committees with rotating memberships. However, this institutional adjustment on the part of NULICO A has allowed for the build-up of institutional knowledge that facilitates easier transitions of leadership on the committee, since she is constantly there to advise. Her expertise and dedication has also enabled her to exert influence on higher-level institutions.

Over the past decade, Pi Jim's devotion to the NULICO A cooperative has manifested in changes in the practices around cooperatives more broadly. According to Pi Jim, in the early years of *Baan Mankong*, there was a lot of confusion as to who was responsible for "closing" the accounts at the end of the year.[33] Many communities thought that the CAD was supposed to do

[33] "closing" accounts (*pit banchi*) refers to a process of auditing accounts at the end of a fiscal term and ensuring that they balance.

this for them. Because there were so many problems with community accounts, this is, in fact, what frequently occurred. However, through meetings in which CODI, community leaders, and the CAD sat down to figure out the policies, they were able to clarify who had responsibility for each step in the accounting process, and they were able to institute trainings for community members on how to carry out the processes.

This solution, which emphasized the training of community members to do more of the work of management themselves, is common to Pi Jim's approach. She takes the idea of self-sufficiency in the community very seriously. She views her own lifestyle changes since becoming a leader in the community as a process of learning to live more in line with the principles of sufficiency economy. When she discusses the ongoing issue of residents in her community holding informal debt outside their housing loans, she says the problem is that residents do not have adequate knowledge of how to conduct themselves in line with sufficiency economy principles. In a powerpoint presentation that she often uses in presentations to outsiders about the community, the first slide is an illustration of sufficiency economy imagery, and the long-term community plan is explicitly designed according to sufficiency principles (see Figure 20).

Figure 19: The introduction slide of the NULICO A's community presentation used by leaders to explain their community to outsiders. The slide contains images of small-scale agriculture, the late King Bhumbol Adulyadej, and reads "Sufficiency Economy: A Project of Royal Initiative."

The fact that the community has such a presentation demonstrates the role that it plays in NULICO and the *Baan Mankong* program more broadly. Pi Jim is also one of very few *Baan Mankong* residents in the country who speaks English at a conversational level, making her able to communicate easily about her own community with foreign researchers. She has even assisted researchers by translating in other communities.

Pi Jim is the most prominent leader of the community, but she is not the only one. A handful of leaders have stepped up over the years to run different internal initiatives, serve on the community and cooperative committees, and advise other communities through NULICO. These few leaders play a strong role in the community, running it as a self-sufficient entity. They are also active in the larger NULICO network. However, this is not to say that NULICO plays a

strong role in the community. Outside of these few leaders, when asked if they are members of NULICO, most residents I spoke to said no, they personally are not member. However, the leaders of the community are *jaonathi*--"functionaries"—of NULICO. This word, *jaonathi,* most commonly applies to staff and administrative positions in government agencies and businesses. It is the title of many CODI employees. The word *jaonathi* and its implications in terms of administration and management accurately describe how the NULICO A leaders run the community and encourage leaders of other settlements to run theirs.

5.6.3 Self-Sufficiency at Work

NULICO A does interact with outside agencies. These interactions emphasize cooperation and partnership and are generally focused on different aspects of development in order to create greater self-sufficiency in areas such as the environment, public health, and strengthening supplemental livelihoods. Partners in these initiatives are frequently local universities and the local district. CODI is also a source of these partnerships, referring other agencies who wish to do development work or research to NULICO A. I first came to know NULICO A through just such an initiative, in which domestic university professors, community architects, and international funders were collaborating to pilot a model of a training activity aimed at building greater resilience at the community level in the case of environmental or economic shocks. In the training, the residents in attendance were led through a process of listing their resources and challenges, creating a map displaying what they had listed, and coming up with a plan of how they would respond to certain external shocks at the community level. Participants were explicitly discouraged from thinking about their responses to these shocks either at the individual household level or through appealing to the government for assistance. These acts of making lists and maps to document aspects of the community, as well as thinking about solving problems at the level of the community without reference to larger institutions, are quite familiar to NULICO A.

This training is just one example of an activity that has resulted in a map of the community. More than any other community, NULICO A actively represents the space of its community to the outside. In some cases, these maps serve the straightforward purpose of providing data for service delivery. In the community office building, a professional computer-generated map used by the district denotes the exact dimensions of the community, the sub-parcels of each house, and their addresses. However, most maps used by community leaders to represent the community are hand drawn, such as the one in Figure 21, which plots out the different assets and danger zones in the area. This carefully hand-drawn map, which displays the community's assets and concerns that had been made prior to the training I attended, is one of several that feature in the community's PowerPoint presentation. Others display the genders and ages of the members of the community's households or which houses have members with diabetes and other common diseases. Collecting and displaying this type of data, according to community leaders, helps them better manage the community and care for the needs of different members.

Figure 20: A hand drawn map of NULICO A displaying the community's resources and challenges used in PowerPoint presentations to outsiders.

Careful management of the community's members and finances is key to the success of NULICO A. One of the benefits of having a well-run cooperative is that it provides the ability to meet the needs of the community without having to appeal to outside help. During the initial construction phases, the first major financial obstacle the community hit involved infrastructure. Though *Baan Mankong* now provides a subsidy of, on average, 45,000 baht ($1,350) per household for infrastructure, at the time of NULICO A's initial construction it was only 25,000 baht ($750), which proved much too little. In order to cover the shortfall, NULICO A worked with the CODI staff and the DPC to devise an arrangement whereby the community gradually borrowed against future profits to pay for infrastructure over several years. In this way, the community was able to overcome the shortfall itself, rather than appealing for a greater subsidy. In many other instances, the community has managed to solve its own problems, including dealing with stray dogs by creating a team to lure them out and creating their own plans to deal with the refuse that started to collect in the community because there was no regular trash collection.

When NULICO A runs into a problem, they make every effort to manage it themselves and to cooperate with CODI and the local district. However, in one case this was not possible. After the cooperative had been up and running for several years, NULICO A won an award from the DPC of 100,000 baht (~3,300 USD) for their effective management. The money was to be funneled through the local district office. The district officers decided that the money should be used to plant trees in the community, and they were going to take a margin of the winnings for administration. However, the community leaders did not want trees. They wanted to put the money toward refurbishing their community center, and they did not see why the district needed to take a portion. They thought the money should be transferred directly to the cooperative. It was theirs that they had won on their own. Community leaders, led by Pi Jim, complained tot eh district officers, gradually working their way up the chain of command at the district and eventually demanding to speak to the district head. In the end, they won. The head of the district

agreed with them, and they got their money. However, the incident soured relations with many of the district officers. Pi Jim describes the community as being "blacklisted" for a long time afterward, and that the community used to be the "star" of the district, but no more.

Two aspects of this incident stand out. The first is that when the community hit an obstacle, they confronted the district on their own, without calling upon the help of their network to back them. The second is the response of the district. The backlash the community received when they spoke out against unfair practices speaks to the tenor of their relationship with the local government before. It had been cooperative, but conditioned on the community acting like a "star" and not making demands. This speaks to an inequality of power, a sort of patron-client relationship, that is not a partnership among equals. This two elements of NULICO A's management stand in contrast to how FRSN communities tend to handle issues with government agencies.

5.6.4 An Example Commoning the Self-Sufficient Way

NULICO A serves as an example of a successful *Baan Mankong* program, both to other communities and to the outside world. The types of mapping and development activities that the community engages in is just one way that community leaders and CODI represent NULICO A. International visitors, university students, and government officials frequently visit the community or invite its leaders to events. In this way, the community serves as an ideal commons, representing the manifestation of a particular set of ideologies around community. The community, particularly a few prominent leaders, have actively created this commons, in terms of the physical layout and the institutions that govern it. By having strong leadership and managing their collective resources well, they have gained recognition and established good cooperative relationships with many external institutions. The strength of their community allows them to occasionally push back against unfair governmental practices. However, the "rules of the game" of their relationships with institutions have largely been based on cooperation. This means that their taking a stand is viewed negatively, creating a backlash for them.

As an early and successful *Baan Mankong* community, they leaders also played an active role in the creation of NULICO and continue to have a voice at CODI through their involvement in the organization. It is also through NULICO that they help to train other communities to become self-sufficient in similar ways. In this way, NULICO A serves as an example of this type commoning, both to other communities and to those outside organizations.

5.7 FRSN A: Struggle Before and Beyond *Baan Mankong*

5.7.1 History

FRSN A has been active in the FRSN for many years, since before they took on their *Baan Mankong* project. Through their affiliation with the FRSN, they have successfully fought to stay on their original land and struggle alongside the network for greater access to democratic rights. However, this has not been their only struggle. They have also faced difficulties in their internal management, and rifts between different factions in the community have arisen over the years. Despite this, they have managed to stay together by relying on mentors from the network to mediate disagreements and adapt both external and internal institutions to better suit their needs. An ongoing struggle, however, comes from a portion of the residents of their original land who chose to affiliate with NULICO.

FRSN A is located along a canal in the Rama 3 area of central Bangkok. The community began approximately 40 years ago with just a few scattered houses along the canal. Over time, it grew and became more congested. Because of the of its proximity to the canal, each morning at 10 am parts of the houses would flood as the waters rose, and then in the afternoon the waters would recede. Despite this hardship, the land was quite desirable because of its proximity to schools and jobs.

For the first 20 years of its existence, the members of the community lived together but had no real collective organization. They were not under threat of eviction, so there was no immediate need for it. Their land, though located along the canal, is owned by the State Railways of Thailand (SRT), which holds an enormous amount of undeveloped land throughout Thailand.

FRSN A first started to come together as a collective organization around the year 2004. At that time, the FRSN was working with communities throughout the Rama 3 area, some of which were under threat of eviction and others who were not. In the case of communities not being evicted, community organizers that were working as part of an active movement supported by NGOs were going into communities and using techniques base on Saul Alinsky's principles to work on small projects to improve living conditions of the urban poor in order to gradually build solidarity. In the case of FRSN A, they had two main pressing concerns. The first was the cost of utilities because of thy way they were forced to branch water and electricity from nearby houses. The second was their lack of housing registrations, which prevented many community members from being able to access basic medical and welfare services and send their children to local schools. With the help of the organizers and the leaders of other communities in the area, which form the Rama 3 subnetwork of the FRSN, FRSN A was able, over the course of a couple of years, to press local authorities to extend some basic services to them and to provide temporary housing registrations. However, because they fell under the 100 necessary households to register as a community with the district, they were not—and are still not—able to access some municipal resources.

Before they could build all of the infrastructure they were aiming for, however, the community was served a notice of eviction. The BMA had made a plan to have a company develop The SRT a water treatment plan along their area of the canal. Because they had already formed a basic community organization with a committee and institutional connections to their subnetworks and the larger FRSN movement, they were well situated to launch a fight to stay on their land.

Pi Som, who was one of the main leaders of the community at that time and who continues to play a prominent role in the Rama 3 subnetwork and FRSN, describes the time of fighting the eviction with a mixture of emotions. It was a prolonged process, and they had to launch active protests both in the community and at the ministry of transportation. They joined together with 60 other FRSN communities from throughout the country that were trying to call for long-term land rental agreements from the SRT. She recalls it as a period of intense stress, but also as an exciting time. They had to be patient, but their "mentors" (*phi liang*) in the FRSN "never abandoned [them]." The organizers, many of whom were college students at the time, slept in the community, blocked the way of construction vehicles, and pointed the way when things seemed grim. For their part, the community members, particularly the leaders, sacrificed their own well-being and incomes. Pi Som had to stop doing the sewing that had been her livelihood in order to do the community's work. She had to rely on help from the network to get by.

Eventually they were able to reach an agreement. In 2008, The SRT agreed to extend 30-year leases to 61 communities following a multi-day protest of 3,000 FRSN members outside the ministry of transportation that forced the opening of negotiations. FRSN A was then also able to get the BMA to adjust their plan. Their agreement entailed land sharing, meaning they would move their community onto a smaller section of the original land that was farther away from the canal, and the company would be able to build its plant on the other side of the canal and construct fortified embankments. As part of the agreement, FRSN A would reconstruct their homes through *Baan Mankong*.

5.7.2 The Beginning of Baan Mankong

The community faced a number of challenges throughout the *Baan Mankong* process having to do with technical construction issues, external conflicts, and internal management issues. Throughout all of these obstacles, they have relied on their network to negotiate amongst themselves and with outside entities.

The first problem the community ran into involved the filling in and level of the land prior to construction. Because of the community's proximity to the water, the land was soft, so they had to use expensive piles for the foundation. A more significant problem arose when they went to drive the piles was that they discovered an oil company had run pipes through the land. Without telling either party, the SRT had granted rights below the soil to both the oil company and the community. With the FRSN's support the community waged a multi-year legal battle ensued before an agreement could be reached to let the community install the necessary infrastructure to build.

Other obstacles FRSN A has faced are financial. Like many communities, including NULCIO A, FRSN A exceeded their infrastructure subsidy provided by CODI, and they had to use savings or other borrowed money in order to pay for the installation. The time and expense of this process led some people to drop out, so they had to recruit new members. Because of the delays, a handful of houses in FRSN A are still being constructed over ten years after the initiation of the project. They also have a partially constructed house and a nearly vacant lot that have been abandoned by owners that ran out of money or who promised to find someone to take their place but never came through. Another partial construction is their central meeting hall in the middle of the community. They got a grant to make it from the district, but it wasn't enough to cover all of the construction. It has a roof and a concrete floor, so it is sufficient for holding meetings, but one of the goals of the community is to somehow get the money to finish it so that that it looks nice.

FRSN A has struggled to find a workable system to manage its finances. Because it started in the early days of *Baan Mankong*, it was not a *Baan Mankong* requirement that communities form cooperatives. Since their land tenure was a rental agreement with the SRT, they were able to do their finances through a savings group. They could have converted their finances to a cooperative model, but they have not. There are a couple reasons for this. The first is practical. Starting the cooperative is an arduous process, and they were busy fighting other battles to get their land and start construction. By the time they were able to get settled in their houses, they had already been using the savings group model for a long time, so no one particularly wanted to switch. The second reason is ideological. Unlike CODI, the FRSN does not believe that having an official legal entity is an integral part of being a community. In addition, the goals of cooperatives are to create a profit. The goal of the FRSN is to create models of occupying land that do not follow a market logic, so using the community to produce a profit is anathema to their ideology.

There has also been another problem with finances, which has caused a significant rift in the community but is spoken of only circumspectly by the members. Several years ago, there was mismanagement of the collective funds. Pi Som herself admits to having made mistakes. Others say that mistakes were made by multiple parties. More than one person described the situation as one of "cheating." Though people are reluctant to talk about exactly what happened or to assign specific blame (at least to an outsider), what is clear is that community was eventually able to reach a solution. This was only possible through the mediation of the FRSN. Organizers and other members of the Rama 3 network held meetings in which the community could air grievances and deliberate on a way in which people could continue to make their payments and trust that those payments would be deposited in the proper accounts at the proper time. The solution reached involved splitting the community into three different payment collection groups. They decided on these groups themselves, based on who they felt they could trust. This way everyone could feel that they were not being forced to have their money pass through the hands of someone they didn't trust. This arrangement has solved the practical problems of the community's finances. However, the rifts in relationships remain.

5.7.3 Ongoing Struggles

FRSN A developed a tremendous *esprit de corps* during their struggle against eviction. However, even though they ultimately won the right to stay on their land, the fight was not without its costs. "Everyone was tired," Pi Som says of the era after they reached a deal with the SRT. It started to get harder to get people to come to meetings, and with all of the difficulties they had during construction, money got tight at the household level, and people left. Like many other communities, household-level financial hardship on the part of people handling the community money created an environment ripe for mismanagement. The cheating created rifts in the community that have been hard to overcome. When asked about the overall atmosphere of the community, one older said succinctly, "there are good people here. There are also bad people."

Rifts and fatigue have led to a laxity in internal management. The community no longer has regular monthly meetings. Pi Som laments that when she and other leaders try to call meetings, no one shows up. This does not mean that there is not community administration, though. When their mentors from the FRSN come to hold meetings, everyone shows up. Even though trust in some of the community leaders has broken down, the residents maintain a level of trust in and commitment to the FRSN. They also send three to our representatives (*tua thaen)* to meetings of the Rama 3 subnetwork each month. Since these meetings rotate location, every few months they are held in the community, which provides as opportunity to deal with broader community issues through the mediation of the subnetwork.

Unlike the majority of communities who have a cooperative committee that reports up to CODI, the DPC, and the CAD, FRSN A's institutional connections are, first and foremost, with the FRSN. Since their small size precludes them from being registered with the district and they do not have a cooperative, the committee of FRSN A is primarily nested within the institutional infrastructure of the FRSN. This means that, although finances do occupy significant amounts of energy for the community's leaders, the management of that financial institution is simpler. Consequently, a much larger portion of their sense of collective identity comes from interactions with their political movement. The fact that the community's primary institutional allegiance is to a social movement, not a government entity also means that community interactions with the state and other communities are quite different. When they meet with CODI officials or government entities, it is quite often with the assistance of FRNS organizers or leaders of their

subnetwork there to support them. The most recent case of the community needing this support has come in a case of the community struggling against a NULICO community.

Not everyone on the original land of the settlement along the canal near Rama 3 joined FRSN A. Some people left on their own for a variety of reasons, moving in with family or returning home to the provinces. A more significant group, though, was on a portion of the settlement adjacent to FRSN A that was further away from the canal. This community shared the same plot of SRT land. However, because they were farther away from the canal, their land was not slated to be developed as part of the water treatment plant, so they were not being evicted. There was considerable conflict between this group and the FRSN, and this group decided not to join the FRSN, but rather to go with the NULICO. In the end, though, they never organized to do *Baan Mankong* upgrading. However, since they occupied the same piece of SRT land, they did sign on to the lease with FRSN A. The conflict between this NULICO community and FRSN A continues to play out to this day, long after most of the new homes have been constructed and the majority of the loans have been paid off.

The problem is that the NULICO portion of the settlement has become delinquent in their payments, putting the entire settlement at risk. NULICO has lost track of this community entirely, and it is unknown whether they have any form of coherent organization anymore. Efforts by CODI to reach the leaders of this portion of the settlement have gone unanswered, and none of the leaders of NULICO are connected to the group. Since both CODI and NULICO have been unable to organize this portion of the residents, FRSN leaders and organizers are now working with FRSN A to split the lease to the land under the recognition that the FRSN portion should not be punished for the delinquency of the NULICO portion. As of the end of fieldwork, it appeared that the FRSN and SRT were well on their way to agreeing to a split in the lease.

5.7.4 Politics, Daily Life, and the Role of the Network

Although the FRSN is well known and supported in FRSN A, now that the community is well established, being part of a social movement rarely permeates daily life. I interviewed Pi Deng, another leader in the community and FRSN, outside her house, which is located at the front of the community, on a Sunday evening. She talked about the community's long struggle and the importance of the FRSN, but other realities of life continually injected themselves into the conversation. Her nieces and nephews and their friends ran in between her house and their neighbors'. Motorcycles whizzed by, their drivers occasionally yelling greetings or asking where so-and-so could be found.

Nonetheless, the FRSN remains a consistent presence in the community and forms a significant part of their collective identity, if not each individual's identity. I visited the community a couple of weeks before a large planned action by the FRSN at the ministry of transportation to aimed at negotiating granting 30-year leases on SRT land to more than just the original 61 communities that had gotten them in 2008. Even though this action did not directly affect Four Regions A, when I spoke with residents in casual conversation as they were going about their day, preparing dinner or watching a muay Thai match, they were aware of the action said that they would be sending representatives to it. They also knew the importance of such actions. As one woman told me "you can fight alone." Another woman described the FRSN as organization where poor people help each other to get secure places to live. They also said that they, individually, and their community were members (*samachik)* of the FRSN.

FRSN A's is not a story of unbridled success. They have faced numerous challenges, both internally and externally, and they continue to face existential threats to their ability to maintain their land and collective strength. However, despite the fact that they have been far

from perfect in their own management, their affiliation with the FRSN has kept them together. The ability to appeal to a higher-level mediator allows them to persevere through internal conflicts and lapses in trust. Furthermore, being part of a larger movement continually provides a reason for community residents to come together, either through meetings of their sub-network or through larger political actions. While participation in the leadership roles at the community and network level vary greatly among the residents, everyone is aware of the FRSN and their affiliation, and this creates a sense of collective identification with the larger movement. FRSN A has continued its efforts in commoning across nearly fifteen years, not only through its own efforts to carve out the chance to manage collective land in a way that benefits its residents, but also through its larger involvement in seeking to expand similar access to other poor urban residents.

The endurance of the community despite their challenges appears most striking when compared with the NULICO portion of the land they inhabit. Despite nominally belonging to NULICO, that community has completely lost touch with its network, and it has fallen apart with respect to its lease agreement. This is not the type of story commonly told about *Baan Mankong* or NULICO. Instead, most of the narratives more closely resemble NULICO A.

5.8 Early Community Lessons

The physical settlements of NULICO A and FRSN A, as well as many of the observable day-to-day aspects of the community, look quite similar. The processes they went through to construct their communities also have some shared elements. Both have leaders that had to make tremendous sacrifices in terms of their own livelihoods in order to make *Baan Mankong* happen. Both ran into obstacles in construction having to do with insufficient funding for infrastructure, making it necessary for the community to shoulder some of the cost. Both have faced problems of divisions and lack of trust among residents that required mediation. Most importantly, both were embarking on a new process was they undertook *Baan Mankong* upgrading, which necessitated creating new practices and institutional arrangements, new ways of being a *chumchon* in the city.

Because of their active involvement in this creation of collective land and assets, which in both cases was motivated by a particular set of political beliefs, I consider both communities to be practicing *commoning*. However, the institutions and practices they created were quite different and reflect the differences in their political motivations. NULICO A, under the financial focus of CODI and the rhetoric of sufficiency economy, focused on running a strong cooperative that can sustain the community while minimizing reliance on the government and higher level institutions. Somewhat ironically, however, NULICO A has a great deal of contact with higher level institutions, as it often serves as an example of effective management and testing ground for pilot programs aimed at community development. The nature of these relationships, however, makes it difficult for NULICO A to push back against practices it deems unfair. FRSN A, on the other hand, has made pushing back a key part of its collective work. They fought to stay on their original land; they resisted moving to the cooperative model and instead remained a savings group; and they regularly participate in larger FRSN efforts to expand access to collective land rights for other communities and hold government agencies accountable. While FRSN A has struggled more on the management front than NULICO A, they have been able to rely on their network and the professional organizers that serve as their mentors for guidance and mediation. NULICO A, while having member who are leaders of their network, mostly relies on these strong leaders internally to solve their problems, while the average community member has little to do with NULICO. This is most clearly expressed through the language community members

use to describe their relationships with the network. While NULICO A members below leadership do not consider themselves "members" (*samachik*) of the network and call their leaders "functionaries" (*jaonathi*) of NULICO, FRSN A residents consider the whole community to be members of the network, with their leaders who serve roles in the higher-level network functions are their "representatives" (*tua thaen*).

5.9 Newer Communities

When the early *Baan Mankong* communities began their projects, they were embarking on a process that had not yet been determined. By working with CODI, their networks, and government agencies, they established internal institutions and relationships with external institutions that allowed them to legally occupy land collectively and manage communal resources, as well as debts. In the more than ten years since these early communities started *Baan Mankong*, a lot has changed. While the program still represents a department from business as usual for many of the government entities communities interact with, for others, especially CODI, there is now a system in place for carrying out projects. There is also a vision for upgrading communities on a larger scale through city-wide upgrading (see discussion in Chapter 4). Both NULCIO B and FRSN B are part of efforts to undergo upgrading alongside other communities. However, the ways in which they undertake these larger projects and their capacity to voice their opinions differs greatly because of the larger institutional arrangements and political goals of their networks.

5.10 NULICO B: Working toward Someone Else's Vision

5.10.1 History

NULICO B is located below a busy highway overpass in the Rama 3 area of Bangkok, not far from FRSN A. Despite the settlement being approximately the same age as FRSN A, NULICO B is a fairly new *Baan Mankong* community. At the time of fieldwork, it had just begun the process of registering as a cooperative and making concrete physical upgrading plans. This process of becoming a *Baan Mankong* community has involved interactions with numerous organizations and state entities that seek to mold the residence into a particular type of collective entity.

Due to its central location near the large Khlong Teoi slum, NULICO B has been part of numerous development projects by charity organizations, local government, and NGOs that over the years, which have resulted in extensive documentation of its existence. In an interview with Pi Nara, NULICO B's current president, she presented me with a thick folder full of a long narrative of the community's history and present issues, as well as maps or the present layout and *Baan Mankong* upgrading plans. The documents details of how the community was originally built as housing for people working at Shell and Esso plants in the 1960s and 1970s. The initial settlement was split between private and land belonging to the Department of Treasury, another major landholder in Bangkok.

Pi Nara says that in the early days people lived in way that was "to each their own" (*tang khon tang yu*). However, in the 1990s the residents of the private land were evicted. The people in the area started to come together to fight the eviction, In the end, they lost, though. Some left the area, but others moved onto the Treasury land, making it more congested.

Aside from the overall crowded conditions of the community, residents suffer from a number of environmental hazards. The area experiences an extremely high level of air pollution from the nearby factories, as well as dust and car exhaust issued from the busy overpass and a

four-lane access road beneath. Many community members suffer from respiratory diseases. I myself came down with a respiratory infection after spending a weekend in the community. In addition to air pollution, the ground pollution is so severe that when it floods—which is frequently during the rainy season, due to the lack of permeable surfaces in the area—the water is coated with a layer of froth.

Despite these poor environmental conditions, many of the residents in NULICO A have made comfortable interior living spaces. Since they have been there such a long time, many of the established households have well-constructed two-story homes that they are loath to demolish in order to re-block the community. However, re-blocking the community is a prerequisite of staying in place. CODI established a deal with the treasury giving several communities the opportunity to obtain 30-year leases to the land they occupy if they significant efforts at "development." Development, in this case, means forming a cooperative to officially take on the lease and create a more orderly physical layout through *Baan Mankong*. As one community put it, they need to become more like a *muban jadsan.* According to the agreement with the Treasury department, NULICO B has two years to demonstrate that they are making progress.

NULICO B is in a better position to begin the *Baan Mankong* process than many other communities. It began a savings group in 2006 at the encouragement of charity-based NGOs working in the community and the local district, and a significant portion of the community has contributed savings on and off over the years. They have never had problems with cheating. Pi Nara has made sure of it. She has been in the community for 30 years and has taken the lead on many of their initiatives. The established savings group and the presence of an active leader is one of the reasons NULICO B was chosen to be one of the first of the 18 communities in their district initiate a *Baan Mankong* project.

The agreement with the Treasury is just one of the larger initiatives NULICO B is part of. The other is the first effort at city-wide upgrading that CODI has attempted. City-wide upgrading has gone on in several smaller cities throughout the country, a process that includes partnering with local government to perform a survey of all slum areas, identify possible land sharing arrangements or new plots of land, create a comprehensive housing upgrading plan for all slum communities in the area. However, because of Bangkok's size, CODI leaders have determined that city-wide efforts should be conducted at the district level. The Yannawa district, in which NULICO A is located, has been identified as the first district in which a "city" (i.e. district) committee has been established with local officials, academics, and community leaders. Preliminary efforts at collecting data on slum communities in the area has found that there are 18 total communities in the district, locating on a variety of different types of land. Four of these communities have begun the *Baan Mankong* process as part of the NULICO network. As of the end of fieldwork, the farthest along had just begun construction. As one of these communities, NULICO B finds itself in the position of trying to initiate its own community upgrading while simultaneously serving as an example to other communities as part of the city-wide effort.

5.10.2 Searching for Support at the Community Level

The primary work of NULICO B revolves around getting their own project off the ground. Despite being a large community, Pi Nara and a handful of other community leaders, nearly all women, have struggled to recruit help to do the administrative work of registering the cooperative. It is difficult to even get people to attend meetings. On top of this challenge, they often struggle to get adequate support to guide them through a process that seems to have pre-determined steps that they must follow, either from NULICO or CODI. Mostly, staff and

NULICO leaders just tell the community members that they need to "rise up" (*luk kheun*) and drive the project forward. All the while, when they encounter higher level government officials, they present themselves in particular, acceptable ways in order to prove themselves deserving.

Pi Nara does her best to rise up in her own community. There is a great deal of work to do, though, and not many people volunteering to do it. There are four women in the community who regularly coordinate the community activities, but it is hard to even get people to come to meetings. One meeting had to be rescheduled after the CODI staff arrived because too few people were there. Getting people to meetings has been the greatest obstacle to moving the *Baan Mankong* process forward for NULICO B. Because of the failures of so many *Baan Mankong* communities to manage their cooperatives according to regulation, the DPC started requiring that every single member of a cooperative attend three three-hour trainings on how the cooperatives work and what their responsibilities will be. In the case of NULICO B, this would mean that over 150 people who work irregular hours would have to be in the same place at the same time for nine hours, spread across at least two days. Because this hurdle is seemingly insurmountable, the community has decided to begin the *Baan Mankong* process with just 50 households.

At the advice of CODI staff, they have divided the community into a total of 18 zones, with each zone having a leader. Only a few of the zones are doing the upgrading. For these, the leaders must collect formal documents, including ID cards, marriage licenses, and housing registrations. They must all sign numerous agreements and present estimates of their incomes and assets, demonstrating that they are financially stable and responsible enough to follow through with the project, but at the same time, that they are poor enough that they could not access housing through other means. At the same time, everyone must decide on the different floorplans. Collectively, they need to come up with just three or four options for people to choose from. The few active community leaders had some input on the designs, but the CODI architects who are helping with the projects all have many other communities to work with. They do not have time for an extensive design process. Most of them are young and have worked for CODI for less than three years. They work according to the advice they have received from those who trained them and they do their best with limited time and resources. They lay out housing plots as a sort of jigsaw puzzle in order to fit the most units into the space, and the community members have to negotiate with each other to form themselves into pieces that will fit.

By May 2018, it had been over a year that NULICO B had been organizing to try to form its cooperative and move forward with *Baan Mankong*. CODI staff was getting anxious because they needed to disburse the funds that had been approved for the project or they would disappear. An event was held in the community to publicize the district-wide effort and push the project forward. The community put on a celebration with sponsorship from the district and other government health and welfare agencies. They made "traditional" (*boran*) food and showcased projects in the community that represented how "strong" (*khem khaeng*) they are, as well as how responsible, such as how the community is a "white community" (*chumchon si khao*), meaning that they are drug free.

The honored guest of the event was the chief advisor to the mayor of Bangkok. He arrived flanked with military officers and sat at the head of a large oval of tables, where numerous CODI and district officials were also seated. Pi Nara was the only community member to sit at the table. The rest of the community filled several rows of chairs behind the main table. No representatives from the NULICO were in attendance, only CODI staff.

Pi Nara was given the chance to describe the community and the current state of the project to the Chief Advisor. She focused on how they were having difficulty starting the

cooperative because of not being able to find a time when all the people could do the trainings. She also said that many people were not interested in doing the project because they were not willing to take on the additional debt and did not think they would be able to pay the rent once they were formalized.

The Chief advisor responded to her issues. He asked for, and received, the cooperation of the DPC and the district in scheduling times on weekends for the trainings, even though this would mean the staff members would have to work outside of their normal hours. On the issue of the reluctance to take on debt, he was less amenable to complaints. He explained that this was not all debt-financed. They were getting subsidies from the government for infrastructure, and the government was helping them in the process and providing them with the opportunity to live as legal residents and not squatters. The government needs for them to do their part. He explained that in this case, "Debt is responsibility… Debt is an investment. Debt is the right to build a house. You should not think of it as getting into debt. You should think of it as making an investment. It is debt that creates a benefit." [34]

This kind of speech imploring the community members to take responsibility, to "rise up," has become a common refrain for Pi Nara. She says that they need a "mentor" (*phi liang*). The CODI staff are nice enough, and she appreciates them. But they are so overworked, they barely have time to help with the administration of the project. When asked who is helping them to do the project, most community members say CODI. None mention NULICO, and when asked directly if they know who NULICO is, outside of a few leaders, they either do not know or have only a vague sense of having heard the acronym before. And the NULICO advisors just come by every once in a while to give advice with CODI, yet more people urging the community to "rise up" and be "strong."

5.10.3 The City-Wide Effort

The Yannawa district in which NULICO B is located was the first district to establish a city committee to do *Baan Mankong*, and the district head has enthusiastically endorsed the project. With four communities already underway, in February 2018 CODI staff held a workshop in the paved sports field just outside NULICO B. The workshop was slated to take two days and was supposed to include dozens of community members from all of the communities. The morning of the first day was an introduction to CODI and the proposed process of city-wide upgrading, as well as how *Baan Mankong* worked. An important first step in this process, according to CODI, was the collection of data about the community and the creation of a community map. In the afternoon, the workshop attendees would break up into groups to go out and do an initial survey of three additional communities. On the second day, they would gather at the district office with all of their data to discuss how to move forward.

On the first day of the workshop, a team of eight CODI staff members and five NULICO representatives arrive at the sports field under the overpass with rolls upon rolls of vinyl sheets. On the sheets are printed enormous aerial image maps of the district and each community that is to be surveyed, as well as posters explaining the process of *Baan Mankong*. The process, according to the posters, begins with a community data collection. The images on the posters demonstrate the surveys that must be conducted and show pictures of the GPS units used to create maps of community land.

The process overview sheets were hung on a chain-link fence, and one blank sheet is set up in front of a projects. Around 9 am community members start to arrive to fill several rows of

[34] "หนี้เป็นความรับผิดชอบ…หนี้เป็นการลงทุน หนี้เป็นสิทธิ์ที่ได้สร้างบ้าน ไม่ควรจะคิดว่าเป็นหนี้ นี่เป็นการลงทุน หนี้ที่เกิดประโยค"

plastic chairs arranged in a semi-circle around the projector. The vast majority of attendees are older, even elderly. Many lean on their canes as they listened to the presentation. As the staff take turns explaining different aspects of the Yannawa city-wide plans and the *Baan Mankong* process, a handful of attendees begin to nod off. A few more conduct side conversation, and several of the younger ones look down at their phones.

One of the staff leaders of the Bangkok region explains how *Baan Mankong* is another kind of social welfare, outside of what is provided by the central government. But it's not provided to individuals, only to community organizations, so communities have to "rise up and manage themselves" (*luk kheun jad kan ton eng*). They emphasize how the communities here "are in hot water" (*deuad* ron) because they don't have legal rights to their land. They are likely to be evicted, so they all to need to "step up" and "help each other solve their problems" (*chuay kan keh panha*). The lead They a staff member explains how they need to get long-term leases, and through *Baan Mankong* they can get access to 15-year loans. He says that If they have to move, a district-wide survey can help them to identify new land they can move onto.

This same staff member, in a conversation in the car on the way to workshop, had bemoaned the fact that if they are working at the district level, it is unlikely that any community that gets relocated would be able to find a place inside the Yannawa district. The land prices are simply too high, and the head of the district does not have control over the government land in the area. That power lies with the national government agencies like the State Railways of Thailand (SRT) and the Treasury Department.

Other obstacles to the CODI city-wide strategy reared their heads over the course of the two-day workshop. As the formal presentation gave way to questions on that first day, one older man stood up and asked them who they were to tell him that he was in hot water. He had been living on his land for decades. They had been told that they would be evicted many times, but it never materialized. Why should he start paying rent and go into debt? The next day, at the meeting at the district office, another older man would bring up the point that many of the people in the community were so old that uprooting themselves and building a new home would be physically taxing, if not impossible. Plus, many of the people who lived there would not live another 15 years to experience the benefit of owning their homes outright, and the payments on a loan would be a huge burden in their old age.

The initial presentation proved uninspiring to many of those in attendance. After lunch was served and CODI staff started to rally the troops to divide into groups to go out to survey the three communities, most of the attendees disappeared, a few explaining apologetically that they "were not up to it" (*mai wai*). Many more said nothing and simply walked off.

With the few community members remaining, the CODI staff and NULICO representatives divided into teams, first doing an interactive mapping exercise with the aerial photos, marking off the limits of where they were going to survey and identifying key landmarks. Then the teams split off. They knocked on doors and called into houses. When the residents emerged, the staff and NULICO members explained what they were doing and asked to administer the survey, which included a few brief questions about the household. After the survey, they had the person hold up a sheet of paper with their name and address for a picture in front of their house. Some of the people did this willingly, telling the staff about issues in the community and generally making friendly conversation. Others were not so pleased. They asked who the surveyors were with suspicion. One older man even asked outright if they were going to evict them. Most people wanted to know if they were with the government. The CODI staff, ever patient, explained that they were an institute that the government had created to help poor people

get more secure housing. One CODI staff member worked on drawing up a preliminary map of the community as they walked, only to discover halfway through that a detailed map of the lots and fire escape routes in the community was posted outside a store at one of the main intersections.

By late afternoon, when the three different survey groups came back together at the sports field, only a few members of the target communities remained. Pi Nara was among them. An announcement was made about the meeting the next morning at 9am at the district office. As the work group cleaned up, the CODI staff tried to coordinate who among the NULICO volunteers would attend the meeting in the morning. They were all busy, they said. They had already given up an entire day of their weekend.

The following morning, by 9 o'clock just over a dozen people gathered in a meeting room in at the district headquarters. Though the district had arranged for the meeting facilities, the only representative of the district office at the meeting was the facilities manager who unlocked the door. Pi Nara was there, along with a just a handful of members of the other communities. They spoke about the general challenges going on in the community, the different landowners they were dealing with and what the state of the projects were. I asked Pi Nara if she was a member of NULICO. She replied, no, her community hadn't officially registered as a member, but the NULICO had come to the community a few times to advise them. At that point, a young CODI staffer interrupted politely to correct the women. Actually, that actually NULICO B was a member. There was no official process to register, it's just that if you do *Baan Mankong* and you're not part of another member, you belong to the NULICO. At this, both women laughed, and Pi Nara jokingly corrected herself, saying "So we're members and we didn't even know it!"

As the meeting began, the CODI project lead acknowledged that they had not gotten the level of participation they had hoped for the previous day, but they would proceed, nonetheless. They gave a presentation on the information that had been collected two years prior by CODI and the district, which now needed to be updated. They had mapped out the locations of the 18 communities, whose land they were on, and the state of their tenure. The staff described the various levels of eviction threat the communities were under. When it came time for a discussion of the next steps, the community members raised a number of issues. First and foremost, one man said, was the issue that many of the people in the community do not see themselves as "in hot water." In most of the communities, no one has come to tell them that they have to leave. And if they are not being evicted, why would they voluntarily take on debt and start paying rent? Even the community leaders, in many cases, were not convinced that this was necessary.

The project lead emphasized the process would not be easy, but that community leaders needed to "step up." They only needed a few strong leaders, maybe ten percent of the community, for it to get started. And the leaders of the project did not need to be the official leaders of the community committee. Once they got started, it would spread "like a germ" (*meuahn cheua rok*). And they needed to do it now, even if they were not under the immediate threat of eviction. "If you do it now, CODI can help you. If communities wait and come to CODI in a couple of years when they are being evicted, we will try to help, but there will not be much we can do." This is why they needed to "rise up."

Though she continues to work on behalf of her community and wants to do the upgrading, Pi Nara is tired of being told to rise up, in particular with the issue of the city-wide project. She explains that CODI and the district want the communities to lead the projects, but the community leaders don't know how. It is hard enough to organize their own projects. They

have so little help and direction. Ruefully, she calls the thought that she has the ability to somehow lead the process "funny" (*talok*).

5.10.4 Working in a Pre-Established System with Little Support

The case of NULICO B demonstrates several important points. The first is the overall stress and labor involved in coordinating a *Baan Mankong* project. In NULICO B, just like FRSN A and NULICO A, the leadership is mostly, if not entirely, female. Second, it demonstrates how the larger goals of CODI and other government agencies do not necessarily align with the needs and capacities of the communities. For this reason, the network of community support that is supposed to lead the city-wide process does not materialize, and community leaders are lectured for not rising up to lead the process. Community members, and even leaders of the NULICO, see the city-wide coordination as extra work for which there is no clear benefit for them. Third, the threat of eviction is subjective. In some cases, CODI, the district, and other government agencies play up the threat in order to move *Baan Mankong* processes along. Providing collective leases and extending group credit are mechanisms that place the burden of making the city look more "orderly" (*riap roi*) and "developed" on communities, both financially and in terms of labor. As evidenced by the city-wide effort, the emphasis of these upgrading interventions is on getting community members to document and map themselves, making their settlements more legible and amenable to management. It is not always clear whether the opportunity to upgrade is being extended because the threat of eviction is already there or if the knowledge that there is a program that can upgrade an area in a politically expedient way creates the opportunity for government agencies to threaten communities with eviction.

For all of these reasons, even though NULICO B residents are doing a great deal of labor in order to create communal land and resources, the actions that they undertake do not have the ethos of *commoning.* There is little political motivation behind their actions, and the institutions that they are working within are setting the terms of their practices.

5.11 FRSN B: Finding Room to Maneuver

FRSN B, like NULICO B, is going through the *Baan Mankong* process during a period in which there is a pre-defined process for carrying out projects. They area also undertaking the project due to government, not private, development projects. Unlike NULICO B, though, I. Because of their association with the FRSN, they have taken part in larger commoning practices that are quite different from those of NULICO A. Also, despite the fact that they are going through the *Baan Mankong* process in same time period as NULICO B, they have ample guidance and have been enthusiastically engaged in initiatives at the city and even national scale.

5.11.1 History

Like NULICO A, FRSN B is a community produced for the purpose of doing *Baan Mankong*. Unlike NULICO A, though, the original FRSN B settlements were all originally located on public lands, not private. Their evictions stem not from a direct market-based desire to develop land for profit, but from state efforts improve infrastructure or beautify the city. The four original settlements were located throughout the city, mostly along canals or lands owned by agencies controlling the canals, such as the treasury. The plans for their original land are either to redevelop the banks of the canal for flood protection or to create public parks.

The original settlements of the four communities that have together to form FRSN B are located throughout the city. They all came to the FRSN through referral; the FRSN did not seek them out. These referrals came from a variety of sources, from district staff to police officers to friends. The FRSN's Team Hotline, a working group that responds to urgent eviction cases, went out the communities to investigate the situation and explain their work. None of the original settlements had savings groups, and only one had any kind of formal governance structure. Even in the case of the settlement where people had lived together for nearly 100 years, the leader described their way of living as "to each their own" (*tang khon tang yu*).

As is the case in nearly all *Baan Mankong* communities, only a portion of each original settlement actually joined the project. At the time that FRSN B created their cooperative, they had 144 households combined. This number has gone up and down as some people drop out while others who may have been skeptical at first, after seeing the progress being made, decide to join.

5.11.2 Uniting with a Network and Pushing Back at the Community Level

FRSN B has faced many of the same challenges as NULICO B and most early-stage communities. It is difficult to recruit enough people to do the necessary work to get the project off the ground, and some of the requirements of completing the project do not meet their specific community's needs. However, unlike NULICO B, who has limited help from their network and relies mostly on CODI staff to advise them, FRSN B has extensive contact with their network. Because of this association, they have been able to push back against some policies and practices that government institutions impose on them, and they have had a great deal of help in navigating the bureaucracies they must operate in.

Prior to working with the four settlements that would become FRSN B, another two communities had recently joined the FRSN and were settling on unused and agricultural plots on the eastern edge of the city the district of Minburi. There were a few large plots in the area for sale, so the organizers and community leaders of the FRSN began working with the FRSN B residents, the owner of the land, and the local authorities of Minburi and the home districts of the communities to facilitate the project. The leaders of FRSN B also started to get to know the leaders of the other two new communities who were resettling on the nearby land in Minburi. Together, the leaders of these new communities, along with their NGO mentors decided that since they were all in similar situations and settling on land close to one another, rather than join an existing sub-network of the FRSN, they would start a new one. This newest sub-network is called *khreua khai kao na,* or "the progressive network."

The early phases of the careting the community required working on multiple levels and in multiple places at once. Leaders and organizers had to first negotiate with the land-owning agencies and home districts of the original settlements in order to forestall eviction long enough for the communities to plan and save enough money to do *Baan Mankong*. Thai law only provides for 30 days' notice prior to eviction of informal settlements. In two cases, though, they were able to negotiate for the communities to stay for as long as it took to prepare for relocation, provided they continued to demonstrate to the district that they were making progress on *Baan Mankong*. In another case, they got nearly a year of extension. In the worst case, they were only able to negotiate for a few months.

Though immediate eviction had been forestalled, the leaders of all four settlements had to begin the rapid work of creating functioning communities out of collections of people who had lived together in loose harmony for years. In each original settlement, one or two people stepped up to lead. These leaders had varying levels of education, confidence, and time to contribute to

the cause. Many of the community leaders encountered significant obstacles to organizing enough people to participate.

The first major hurdle to getting people to join is a disbelief and distrust of the process. Many slum residents had been promised upgrades and welfare from the government before, only to have those promises broken. Even if they believed that the government would come through on its end, residents doing *Baan Mankong* have to have confidence in the other people they are doing it with. They have to trust that the time they are putting into the process will produce a tangible result, meaning that all those who join in will stick it out and the project won't fall apart. Even more significantly, they need to trust that the money they are putting into collective accounts will not be mismanaged. In the case of FRSN B, one original settlement nearly fell apart when the leader spent a large amount of money on her personal expenses. Remarkably, though, her fellow residents forgave her and arranged a timeline for her to repay them. The rationale that allowed them to forgive this misstep was the knowledge that one of the reasons she misused the money was that she had been doing so much work organizing the community that she had not had time to run her food stall for several weeks, meaning she had had virtually no income. Another reason this issue was able to be settled was through the mediation of FRSN organizers, who facilitated a meeting, spoke with community members, pointed them in the direction of an agreement that would allow the leader to pay back what she owed, as well as putting another person on the account that everyone could trust.

Though organizing community members and getting them to make savings payments on time may have been the most personally stressful aspect of the process for community leaders, they hit a number of other obstacles. However, with the support of their network and NGO organizers, they did not have to resolve these issues by accommodating existing practices or institutions. Instead, they sought changes.

The community members and leaders were all dissatisfied with the initial housing designs by the architects CODI had assigned to them. The mockups they were given early in the process did not even indicate where the doors would be, and they did not take into consideration the fact that many of the residents were elderly or disabled. One community leader described the designs as looking "like an intern made them." With the help of the FRSN, they responded by working with CODI and securing funding from an existing fund to support the elderly to create new blueprints based on universal design principles.

The leaders and members of FRSN B have also played an active role in designing their future community environment. However, they have not done so alone. The current leader of the Progressive Network, Pi Dam, though new to the FRSN, has taken on a prominent role. He has taken to heart the FRSN's political mission of furthering democracy and seeking justice and fairness for the poor. Having already moved to temporary housing on his community's plot while they begin construction, he has begun several of the livelihood projects he hopes will help to sustain the community in years to come. They are fortunate to live in close proximity to a public lake, from which they can catch fish for consumption and to turn into *bpla raa*, a fermented fish-based seasoning common in northeastern Thai food. There is also an area for raising fighting cocks, as well as space for gardens.

Because NULICO B was able to get a good deal on their land, they will have more communal space than many other communities. They aim to develop it in steps. At one of only a handful of full community meetings in which all four settlements came together, one thing nearly everyone agreed on was the need for a community market. Other ideas for how to use the land was an extended space to grow crops or a playground for children. However, since they would be

located far from existing markets, and many of the women made their livings selling food and other small items, it was determined that this was necessary both for the livelihoods of residents and for the life of the community. They wanted a place to buy things and socialize. As of the end of fieldwork, the space that is slated to become the market has begun to be developed, but it will not serve as a market just yet. Instead, the shelter will serve as temporary housing for the first sub-community of FRSN B, since they had to vacate their land prior to their new houses being built. With the subsidy they received for building the temporary housing, they will be able to install some of the basic infrastructure that will then serve the market once they have moved on to their permanent houses.

Creating their housing cooperative and getting their *Baan Mankong* project off the ground was a considerable hurdle for FRSN B. However, unlike NULICO B, they had significant support doing it. The Progressive Network has one professional organizer from the FRSN who is designated as their main "mentor," and he works in consultation with the other NGO-based organizers when things get complicated. During the initial phases of forming the cooperative, negotiating with authorities, and purchasing land, at times FRSN B would go to meeting accompanied by three organizers plus members of the FRSN leadership and other members of the Progress Network. This support allowed them approach authorities with confidence, mediate internal conflicts, establish a feeling of solidarity with other communities, and create changes to better suit their collective needs.

5.11.3 Creating Larger Institutional Changes

FRSN B, with the help of their network and NGO mentors, has been able to adapt some of the established practices of *Baan Mankong* to their own needs. However, their involvement in the network has also extended beyond the bounds of their own community. Community members, and leaders in particular, have been active in mobilizing for larger changes that will benefit the movement and the urban poor of the country more broadly.

Despite being relatively new to the network, multiple FRSN B leaders have begun to serve on the FRSN work teams, including the all-important housing and land teams. This incorporation of newer members into leadership roles is an explicit part of the FRSN's mission. Work teams and leadership roles rotate on a yearly basis, in some cases through elections and in other cases through consensus approval of volunteers. This allows the network to have central leadership without allowing power to concretize in the hands of an established strata of old-guard leaders. It also permits new members to feel that they have a voice in the direction of the movement, rather than simply being advised by more experienced leaders.

One area where FRSN B as a community has been at the vanguard of the network's work is in an effort to solve the perennial problem of insufficient subsides for infrastructure. As both of the early communities demonstrate, insufficient funding for the public water pipes, electricity, roads, and other basic services has long been an issue for *Baan Mankong*. Unlike the early communities, however, who found a way to fund their infrastructure themselves through their own cooperative profits, FRSN B has been part of a broader FRSN effort to solve the problem without pushing the costs onto communities. After a long process of negotiation and coordination with numerous government agencies on the part of FRSN leaders and organizers, FRSN B is now a pilot community for a new program in which local authorities and government service providers will assist with the construction of community infrastructure, covering most of the gap between the *Baan Mankong* subsidy and the actual cost. CODI, the FRSN, and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration are all looking to this work on infrastructure by FRSN B to be a model that can be used in other communities, as well.

FRSN B members have been active in the larger activities of the network, as well. Like FRSN A, FRSN B sent numerous members to the protest at the Ministry of Transport described in the introduction. They have also been involved in discussions among the FRSN and some CODI staff regarding the need to reform the *Baan Mankong* cooperative system so that they are less complicated, easier to manage, and do not result in the need for communities to run themselves like businesses. Unlike FRSN A, FRSN B was not able to resist forming a cooperative entirely because of the necessity of having a legal entity with which to purchase land. However, they have come up with their own principles for running the cooperative. As opposed to NULICO A, which prides itself on running the cooperative and views it as a key way to support the self-sufficiency of the community, Pi Dam, the leader of the Progress Network, explained in interviews and at community meetings that cooperatives are just one tool of their communities for creating the collective resources they need to push for greater fairness and a more open democracy. In these ways, FRSN B is actively molding institutions at the local and beyond to better serve both their immediate needs and the purpose of a larger political project.

5.11.4 Commoning with a Purpose

FRSN B has faced many of the obstacles that NULICO B has in the process of starting their *Baan Mankong* project. They are working within a set of established institutions and have been pushed to initiate their projects because of the development projects of state agencies. However, FRSN B, because of their involvement with the FRSN, has been able to push back on prescribed practices that do not work for them and have been active in adapting institutions or building new ones. In this way, even in an environment where communities are "being commoned," they have initiated and carried out their own commoning.

This commoning process is not necessarily one of unambiguous triumph. FRSN B will still be located on the outskirts of the city, making way for parks and new infrastructure at the sites of their former settlements for remaining residents of the central city to enjoy. The residents were still pushed into doing *Baan Mankong* by actions of the state, and the project has not been without its costs. Performing the work of creating FRSN B has caused leaders lose a significant amount of income due to community work while also facing blowback and personal animosity from their fellow community members. The stresses of organizing showed themselves in the leaders over the course of the process. One was hospitalized with a serious illness that it is believed was stress induced. Others showed up to meetings visibly exhausted, having lost or gained significant amounts of weight. When asked what the biggest obstacle they had faced during the process was, all of them answered their fellow community members. However, when asked what the best part of the process has been, multiple leaders responded that their new "family" of other leaders within the FRSN has been the most rewarding aspect. Others described how meaningful it has been to be part of the movement, to do something bigger than themselves. Many of the leaders of FRSN B and the Progressive Network, in describing the work they are doing, articulate its significance not just in terms of creating concrete housing outcomes, but in terms of taking part in democracy and creating a society is that is fair to people like them.

5.12 Discussion

Baan Mankong projects meet many of the criteria of a uniquely urban commons, according to the description put forth by Huron (2018). They are attempts to create ways to live and reproduce life that are alternatives to private property, a capitalist market, and the state. However, in order to do so, they must negotiate with the existing capitalist system in a densely-populated area with intense land pressures, as well as the regulations and projects of the state.

The ways in which the four case studies do this face many of the same struggles. However, their responses to challenges vary according to the ideology of their networks and the particular conditions under which they take on their *Baan Mankong* projects.

5.12.1 The Commoning Projects and Practices of the NULICO and FRSN

In some ways, the *Baan Mankong* projects of the NULICO and the FRSN have much "in common." Both of the community networks that support the majority of communities in carrying out their *Baan Mankong* projects must operate within the same market and state regulatory structures. In addition, the physical structure of the communities looks very similar on the surface. They have modest, mostly two-story homes whose floorplans are fairly uniform but whose facades reflect the individual tastes of their owners. Daily life looks quite similar, as well. The designs of their communities allow for informal monitoring of neighbors. This helps to keep kids in line and prevents bad influences from entering, but it also creates a sense of being watched, which residents have mixed feelings about. Finally, the collective work of managing the people and finances of the community falls disproportionately to women, reflecting Federici's (2011) observation that the commons can create new burdens even as they emancipate.

Despite these similarities, the networks differ in that they produce commons for vastly different purposes, employing different rhetorics that ultimately result in diverging practices among communities. NULICO, dominated by CODI, employs the rhetoric of self-reliance characteristic of the sufficiency economy principles that have long guided state discourses with respect to communities. This rhetoric is especially visible in the self-promotion of the NULICO A community in its interactions with outside entities, be they foreign or domestic, local authorities or private agencies. This same rhetoric is applied to NULICO B, but it comes less from the community itself and its leadership than from the various entities that come to advise and regulate it. A key aspect of this sufficiency economy rhetoric is the idea of being satisfied with what one has, not demanding more than what is strictly needed, and cooperation with outside agencies. It is a rhetoric that eschews confrontation and continually calls upon communities to "rise up" to do the work of organizing. The purpose of having community networks is to create a base of support to encourage self-sufficiency so that poor people do not have to rely on the state. Meanwhile, they work under the regulation and determination of state agencies. This includes local agencies, whose jurisdiction determine the membership in city-level sub-networks, as well as CODI, whose staff face the pressures to move projects along in order to meet funding and contract deadlines. When NULICO members take part in efforts to take action at a scale beyond the community, it is usually under the direction of employees of state agencies, who offer a disciplining rhetoric but little sense of direction or solidarity.

The FRSN, on the other hand, views the creation of these common property communities as a practice that provides an alternative to the capitalist private market, and they have created internal institutions to support this political motive. Their purpose in working as a network is to build a network that can hold the state accountable to its poor citizens. To do this, they maintain a smaller but more active network, assisted and guided by a team of NGO mentors who act as mediators both within communities and between communities and outside agencies. They have also instituted practices of regular turnover in leadership and work teams to allow newer members to play an active role in the network rather than only being on the receiving end of advice from those who went through the process before. In addition, the ability to adapt the larger network to the needs of new communities through instituting new sub-networks of self-selecting communities permits new members to develop a sense of solidarity with others who

share their interests and exercise self-determination. Finally, the communities that are part of the FRSN take part in larger policy movements that do not directly affect them. This is evident in the protest at the Ministry of Transportation to open the lock on the number of communities able to rent SRT land. Both FRSN A and B sent a significant number of representatives to the protest, which successfully opened negotiations on the issue. Through actions like these, community members are continually exposed to the possibility that solidarity with other poor people can yield large-scale institutional change.

5.12.3 New Communities: Navigating a Hardening Institutional Context

NULICO B and FRSN B are both embarking on the *Baan Mankong* process in an era when many more of the institutional relationships of the policy have been established than had been in the early years. As opposed to the early communities, who had no choice but to be pioneers of the system they were building, these newer communities face an existing set of institutions and practice that were established by those who came before them. In some ways, this makes the process of easier, as more and more government agencies are now familiar with the concept of collective ownership, and many of the legal categories necessary for carrying out *Baan Mankong* projects have already been created. However, fact that these categories, institutions, and practices have a precedent presents its own challenges. These newer communities are expected to mold themselves into a model that has hardened over time. The capacity of these two communities to adapt the existing model to suit their own needs and desires varies depending on their network affiliation.

Despite the fact that NULICO B is taking part in an effort to do city-wide upgrading in Bangkok for the first time, they do not have the sense of being pioneers. Instead, leaders have the sense of being pushed to follow an agenda set by CODI and the local district leadership. Their relationship with the larger supposed movement of the NULICO is largely as advisees. When NULICO representatives come to meetings and events, they do so in a capacity of consultants, rather than peers. When residents interact with the local authorities, it occurs through events that are constructed by the authorities, where the community puts on a show of a being "strong," "traditional," and "self-reliant." They have little power or support for adapting the institutions, even though employees of state agencies are constantly urging them to "rise up" and lead. In sum, the community is being pushed to shape itself to an existing set of nested institutions that govern the greater project of creating communities that can manage themselves and foot a large portion of the bill for city beautification that is being led by state agencies. While they are doing the work of creating a commons, there is little sense that they are actively constructing a commons. Rather, the commoning project is being led by state agencies, and they are *being commoned.*

FRSN B has had a much different experience than NULICO B. Being part of the FRSN has, in some ways, imposed another set of institutions on them. In order to receive the help and support of the FRSN for their individual commons, they must fulfill certain responsibilities to the larger commoning project. However, the strictures come with guidance that bolsters their ability to create and mold institutions to meet their needs. Like FRSN A, organizers and leaders of the FRSN take an active role in internal mediation and enforcement when needed. They also provide the knowledge and support that allows the community to call upon local officials to create new plans and policies, as is evident in the case of the universal design of their houses and the pilot project to extent free basic services infrastructure to *Baan Mankong* communities. This would not be possible without the experience and advice of leaders of established communities in the FRSN. In addition, because the FRSN B joined together with other new communities to form a

new subnetwork, they are able to maintain a sense or peer solidarity with the other communities, a feeling that they are figuring things out together. Beyond their own local projects, FRSN B also takes part in national initiatives to shape the larger institutional and political context in which they can create new spaces of common ownership. In this sense, they are able to practice commoning, even in at a time when the institutions of collective ownership are increasingly being utilized to serve state interests.

5.13 Conclusion: Commoning Versus Being Commoned

Fifteen years ago, a slum-based social movement and numerous government agencies created alliances to create the *Baan Mankong* program. Early communities, regardless of their political beliefs or network affiliations, had the sense of creating something new. They worked with government officials to shape new institutions and legal entities that could support the collective ownership of land and housing. In doing so, they also created ways in which communities in the urban poor take on a large amount of the labor and cost of producing new, more "orderly" housing. Many of these physical forms, features of collective life, and institutions have been replicated over and over again as the program has grown, giving a particular, recognizable shape to the *Baan Mankong* commons.

The experience of doing *Baan Mankong* projects, however, has changed over the past 15 years. In some ways, communities starting *Baan Mankong* now have an easier time of it than earlier pioneers. There is a clearer process for establishing a collective legal entity (the cooperative); there are advisors who have been through the process, and local officials are more likely to be aware of the *Baan Mankong* program. However, with that established track comes a loss of the sense of collective figuring-it-out that was so integral to the initial community building of the earlier communities. Now they are not fighting to establish this new program. They are struggling to fit themselves into the form that previous commoners established. And they are doing so in a climate where the state is well aware that *Baan Mankong* can be a politically acceptable way to deal with communities that stand in the way of its "developments." The continual expansion of *Baan Mankong* and use in the state-making projects of the government reflect McShane's (2010) warning that a self-governing commons can easily fall in line with neoliberal agendas. This echo's Rose's (1999) assertion that community has become a space of neoliberal self-responsibilization. Communities that fall into this trap, far from engaging in active commoning, end up going through *Baan Mankong* because they have little other choice. In this way, they are not so much commoning as being commoned. No where is this more evident than in the case of city-wide upgrading.

I argue that the existence of institutions to support the commons does not necessarily mean that the commons produced are emancipatory or empowering for those involved. In fact, a pre-existing framework for supporting collective ownership of land and housing can easily be appropriating by the state to push marginalized groups into self-governance, decreasing the responsibility of the state to citizens and pushing the costs of urban development onto them. I cases where this happens, I argue that those involve are "being commoned" rather than "commoning." However, when non-state institutions exist to continually push back against this appropriation by the state, commoning can still exist. As the experience of FRSN B demonstrates, the active movement to continually reshape institutions, a critical aspect of the type of incrementalism described by Ostrom (1990), also serves the purpose of re-territorializing that advocates of commoning as democratic practice (Blomley 2004; Harvey 2012b) would advocate. In their commoning efforts, community is used as a political unit to engage with the state, as described by Chatterjee (2004).

This continued commoning against the odds is enabled by particular set of institutional arrangements in the form of a community network that can both support and adapt to new communities. These institutions permit certain types of political action, and they did not arise by accident. They are, themselves, the product of political motivations, which include internal democracy and independence from state agencies in order to hold the state accountable to citizens. The network is mentored by NGO organizers whose main motivation and duty is to the network, not *Baan Mankong*. By contrast, NULICO has emphasized self-sufficiency at the community level and cooperation with state agencies. It has shaped its network to mirror their jurisdictions. In addition, projects are advised not by NGO mentors, but by CODI staff, whose primary responsibility is to the government, not the network of the member communities. This means that at every level, NULICO communities are open to cooptation. The comparison of FRSN and NULICO communities over time thus demonstrates the interplay between political motives and the institutions that govern the commons, showing how the institutional arrangement of the commons enable or foreclose certain kinds of politics, and vice versa, that the political intent of commoning drives the institutional arrangements of commoning movements.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 The Merits of a Policy in Motion

Over the past five years that I have been investigating *Baan Mankong*, first by reading existing literature on it, then by following community members and staff of various organizations to all corners of Bangkok and beyond as they struggle to implement it, I have been plagued by a nagging question. It has been posed to me by others on numerous occasions, usually after hearing an elevator-pitch version of the research project. But more often I ask it of myself, over and over again in a constant, nagging refrain: "So…is it a successful policy or not?"

This is not among the questions I set out to answer in this dissertation, for obvious reasons. As a research question, it would be impossible to answer; it lacks nuance and specificity and would require the type of blanket normative proclamation that scholars are loath to make. And yet it is impossible to dismiss. There is too much at stake. The issues that *Baan Mankong* seek to solve are so fundamental—insecurity of land tenure, lack of access to basic services, the inability to be seen and heard by those in power—that to completely ignore questions of whether the policy "is successful" or if it "works" in favor of a more intellectually interesting dilemmas would be glib. These fundamental questions of success underlie what Tanya Murray Li (2007) calls "the will to improve," the genuine desire to better the conditions of existence. The will to improve lies at the heart of planning as a profession. This will brings all kinds of actors into contact in pursuit of programs and policies to solve problems. However, this complex amalgam of actors cannot help but bring about more than just their intended outcomes. The unintended results of interventions can be just as consequential as the intended ones. They therefore merit investigation just as much.

There is no shortage of literature suggesting that *Baan Mankong* has achieved many of its intended results. It has been hailed as an "empowering" process of "self-determination" (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2004) that is led "by the poor" (Somsook 2009) with the possibility of connecting the poor globally (Herrle, Ley, and Fokdal 2015). While I have called into question some of these claims, it is worth considering them in light of the world of alternatives that *Baan Mankong* is often set against. Das (2018) has provided some useful perspective, comparing *Baan Mankong* to several other "innovative" housing policies in Southeast Asia. Against these other programs, it does, indeed seem to be the better option. It looks even more attractive when compared to the many other options for housing the urban poor reviewed in Chapter Three—low-quality high rise apartments on the outskirts of the city, market-enabling policies that never reach lower-income residents, or outright eviction with no reasonable resettlement accommodations. Beyond these arguments attesting to the quality of *Baan Mankong*, though, is the evidence of its achievements in terms of quantity. Above all, it has achieved the elusive goal of "going to scale" (Somsook 2005b), with over 100,000 households taking part to date (Community Organizations Development Institute 2017).

The quantitative achievements of *Baan Mankong* flow logically from the qualitative ones. While advocates of *Baan Mankong* often use more complex language to describe its merits, what the praise amounts to is the proclamation that it is "successful"—or at least, it represents improvement. The impulse to declare whether something is successful or not is followed by an impulse to expand upon success. The cousin of the will to improve is the will to grow, to replicate, once improvement is deemed to have been achieved.

In this dissertation, I conclude not by discussing *whether Baan Mankong* is successful, but on how the quantitative expansion of a program enabled by declarations of success have changed the "successful" qualities it is purported to have. Namely, the celebrated qualities of openness and flexibility have hardened into concrete categories, forms, and institutions. In the first half of this dissertation, I illustrated the origins of many of the categories that *Baan Mankong* relies on, analyzing the intellectual trends and social movements that let to their creation, propagation, and institutionalization through the policy. In the second half of the dissertation, I look at how concepts like "community," "participation," and "rights" have been used in different ways by the various actors involved in the policy, focusing on two of community networks that have played prominent roles in its fate. Through this analysis, I show how these networks use these categories to either mobilize members to change the institutions of the policy or to manage the populations that take part in it, molding them to the institutions.

6.2 Conflict, Cooperation, and Cooptation

In Chapter Two, I traced the emergence of *chumchon* ("community") in Thailand, both in practice and in the popular imagination. I demonstrated how the word and the practices around it were influenced by global currents of communism and efforts to suppress it. These conflicting efforts were not merely ideological, but they also played out on the ground in remote areas of the country, as young insurgents and government community development workers attempted to form the rural populace into collective units to serve opposing political interests. Out of this era, intellectual traditions arose that solidified *chumchon* in the Thai lexicon, but in paradoxical ways. It became both "natural" and "traditional" to Thai culture and the Thai way of life, while at the same time being defined as space in need of professional intervention. These interventions came from both the state and forces opposing the state.

In Chapter Three, I showed how *chumchon* came to be the focus of urban housing policies, culminating in the creation of *Baan Mankong*. While the locations and predicaments of *chumchon* in the city are quite different from the rural settlements in the era of the insurgency, trends in interventions around urban *chumchon* bear certain similarities to that time. First, some of the same people who had worked to mobilize rural inhabitants as supporters of the Communist Party of Thailand were now working to create a movement of the urban poor to make demands of the state. This movement was met by state policies that created *chumchon* as a category of local governance and emphasized locally-based sustainable development in the form of the late King's model of sufficiency economy. Just as in the era of the insurgency, local efforts were bolstered by global trends. In this case, international development agencies' focus on good governance and the funding of civil society organizations met with the global travels of techniques of community organizing and models of participatory development. These popular movements and government efforts began to overlap in the form of land-sharing agreements and one-off projects that became the prototypes of *Baan Mankong*. In the process of developing prototypes, certain practices around *chumchon* solidified. These included the use of savings groups to manage collective finances, community committees as a basis of local governance, and networks for the purpose of knowledge exchange and building up bargaining power. These practices were spread, in part, by community members themselves. However, they were strongly guided by a field of professionals working for both state agencies and NGOs. While the numerous actors involved in these prototypes worked together to create many of these practices, they differed significantly in the importance they placed on key practices and values, including rights, democracy, and the importance of finance. By the time *Baan Mankong* came into being,

these different groups had established ways of working together while remaining distinct within the policy.

In the Chapter Four I analyzed how these different philosophies are visible at the level of the community network. I demonstrated how the political motives of the FRSN and NULICO manifest themselves in different rhetorics and organizational structures, which in turn lead to different ways of working on the ground. These constitute contrasting forms and conceptions of participation. While the participation of the FRSN reflects ideals of democracy through struggling to demand justice and rights from the state, NULICO emphasizes the achievement of basic needs through self-reliance and compromise with government entities. Furthermore, the FRSN's highest goals are building the national movement itself so that it can represent the interests of the urban poor on the highest level. However, the goals of NULICO follow CODI's mission to do city-wide upgrading. Both networks consider themselves to be a movement of communities, in some way more independent of outside influence than the other. However, in both cases, the influences of professionals are profound. They influence the communities to work in very different ways, though, due to their affiliations and political commitments. The organizers of the FRSN, employed by NGOs, drive communities to make demands of state entities—including, at times, CODI—through well-established practices and hands-on involvement on the ground. NULICO, on the other hand, expects that the role of organizing should fall primarily to community members. However, in practice, CODI staff and leadership frequently step into this role, calling on NULICO members to provide labor in carrying the projects initiated by CODI. This work often takes the form of data gathering, carrying out the bureaucratic aspects of projects, or traveling to other communities to encourage them to do the same. In the end, these practices do not reflect the "demand-driven" process touted by CODI advocates (Somsook 2005b, 27), but rather a "command-driven" participation that places responsibility but not power in the hands of participants.

The coexistence of these two very different forms of participation, I have argued, is not incidental to the maintenance and expansion of *Baan Mankong*. The cooperative, even acquiescent form of participation practiced by NULICO maintains the policy's attractiveness to the highest levels of government. If all communities adopted the defiant manner of FRSN, government officials would be unlikely to continue to support it. However, the FRSN also serves an important function, which is to prevent state actors from pushing too much of the burden of the policy onto communities. This was most clearly evident in the protests the FRSN launched to prevent the privatization of *Baan Mankong* funding, but it occurs in smaller ways on a regular basis. In this way, these two forms of participation exist in tension, but also in symbiosis. This symbiosis has paved the way for the expansion of the policy. However, as I demonstrate in Chapter Five, this expansion has consequences.

In Chapter Five, I examined the experiences of individual communities through the lens of the commons. In doing so, I looked at how communities have been affected by the political motivations of their networks, the higher-level institutions their communities sit within, and the time at which they began their projects. I demonstrated that early communities, no matter their networks, speak about their experiences in *Baan Mankong* in terms of creating something new and changing processes and institutions with the help of their mentors, be those mentors FRSN organizers or CODI staff. In this sense, I argue that these early communities were "commoning," or actively determining the ways in which they would inhabit their collective land and govern themselves. However, as time has gone on and *Baan Mankong* has gone to scale, institutions and practices have become more concrete. There is less room to maneuver, and all new communities

must re-form themselves to the pre-set categories and processes set forth by their predecessors. While all communities experience this to some extent, new FRSN communities are able to push back to a much greater degree. This is because of their political emphasis on holding government accountable to citizens and their institutional arrangements. These institutional arrangements include a network organized around own political strategies, not government jurisdictions, and their connections to experienced NGO mentors. NULICO communities, on the other hand, are guided primarily by CODI staff, who are beholden to the demands of their government employer to grow the policy, approve and complete projects in a timely manner, and above all to form communities to fit a pre-set model of a self-governing, financially sound *chumchon*. Residents who go through this process are not so much creating institutions to manage their collective land and resources as being molded to fit a set of institutions that have placed on them. As opposed to "commoning," I describe this process as "being commoned."

This phenomenon of being commoned becomes clearest in efforts to carry out the much-touted "city-wide" upgrading. As I have argued, city-wide upgrading represents the ideal of decentralizing governance to the local level while incorporating a totalizing view of the city. This amounts to a utopian vision I have called participatory modernism, or the expectation that central planning should somehow be conducted by the spontaneous "rising up" of the disenfranchised. This belief places the responsibility for solving the inequalities of the city on the shoulders of the urban residents who experience those inequalities most acutely without a theory as to how existing power imbalances between the poor and government officials are to be overcome. In short, city-wide upgrading espouses a theory of *government by the poor* that is devoid of a theory of *politics of the poor*. I argue that the presence or absence of a larger theory of politics constitutes the fundamental difference from the practices of government of the FRSN and CODI/NULICO.

6.3 The Struggle over the Meaning and Use of *Chumchon*

Baan Mankong and its associated networks work through the formation of a specific type of social unit called a *chumchon*—a community. As I have demonstrated, this unit has long history in Thailand—but perhaps not as long as many assume. I believe Chairat (2017, 153) has perhaps said it best in explaining that,

> In the Thai studies circle that is interested in the Thai village/rural Thailand, we have not yet managed to settle whether a thing called a 'village' or a 'Thai village community' ever existed in the real world of rural Thai society...and through discourse analysis, one can see that the thing that is called "village" or "Thai village community" is only the construction of a discourse. And as a discourse, it is therefore an open platform for struggle over the definition/determination of its meaning. There is no fixed meaning.[35]

This is a similar sentiment to what the community rights professor expressed to me in the interview described at the beginning of Chapter Two, when he said that "community is not settled. It's dynamic, it's fluid." Over the course of this dissertation, I have traced the path of

[35] ในแวดวงไทยศึกษาที่สนใจเรื่องหมู่บ้าน/ชนบทไทย ยังหาข้อยุติไม่ได้ว่ามีสิ่งที่เรียกว่า "หมู่บ้าน" และ "ชุมชนหมู่บ้านไทย" ในโลกแห่งความเป็นจริงของสังคมชนบทไทยหรือไม่...และในขณะที่การวิเคราะห์วาทกรรมเห็นว่าสิ่งที่เรียกว่า "หมู่บ้าน" หรือ "ชุมชนหมู่บ้านไทย นั้น เป็นเพียงการสร้างขึ้นมาของวาทกรรมชุดหนึ่งมากกว่า และในฐานะที่เป็นวาทกรรมจึงเป็นเวทีเปิดสำหรับการต่อสู้เพื่อช่วงชิงการนำในการนิยาม/กำหนดความหมายให้กับสิ่งเหล่านี้ จึงไม่มีความหมายที่หยุดนิ่งและตายตัว

chumchon through many decades, from the countryside to the city and into its current life as the core unit of intervention of the *Baan Mankong* policy. This is, indeed, a history of fluidity, of struggle over meaning. But the struggle is over more than just meaning; it is also about the possibilities for action, for as Rose (1999, 9) explains, "concepts are more important for what they do than for what they mean. Their value lies in the way in which they are able to provide a purchase for critical thought upon particular problems in the present."

Community has provided just such purchase for different groups involved in *Baan Mankong* to address problems as they see them. The problems that groups like the FRSN, NULICO, and CODI see are similar enough for them to work together—shelter insecurity, inadequate infrastructure, government officials who do not listen to the poor. However, they are they are not identical. As one FRSN organizer put it succinctly to me at the beginning of my research, "For CODI the issue is housing; for us it is land." Likewise, the ways in which they imagine solutions through community look similar, but bear important distinctions. The awkward alliances arising from these not-quite-aligned understandings and priorities have produced the *Baan Mankong* policy and created the conditions under which it has been able to expand. Within this expanding policy, these different groups continue to use community in different ways and to different effect. I conceive of these differences in terms of management and mobilization.

6.4 Management and Mobilization

In the introduction, I discussed how two scholars, Partha Chatterjee and Nikolas Rose, have described potential relationships between community and government. Rose (1999) points to the possibility of "government through community" in the era of advanced liberalism, where NGOs perform many of the actions of "governance" that occur beyond the auspices of the state. Meanwhile, Chatterjee (2004) provides examples of how "the governed," who are excluded from the narrow confines of *civil society* can engage in what he calls *political society* by imbuing what had previously been a mere population group the "moral attributes of a community." I argue that within the case of *Baan Mankong*, community acts as both a means of government and a route to politics, but to differing extents depending upon the network affiliations of participating communities.

Following an understanding of government as "all endeavors to shape, guide, direct the conduct of others" (Rose 1999, 3), both networks exercise government of their members. As Elinoff (2013) has argued, both the FRSN and CODI-affiliated networks approach potential member communities under the assumption that they are not yet proper political subjects and are therefore in need of formation. This formation occurs through acts of government. On one level, this government takes the form the repetition of rhetorics—be they about democracy or sufficiency economy—to motivate members to act in ways that align with the values of the larger organization. In even more concrete terms, it takes the form of acquiring the identity of a *chumchon* and performing the tasks associated with being a "strong community." These include establishing a community committee, forming savings groups and cooperatives, and creating a physical environment amenable to collective living. All of these aspects of being a strong community involve the mutual monitoring of community members to ensure that they are acting in line with the prevailing values and rhetorics of their networks.

While both the FRSN and CODI/NULICO exercise government of member communities, they differ in their emphasis. For CODI and NULICO, the emphasis is on management (*kan jad kan*). The primary focus of this management is financial. As has been argued by CODI's main spokesperson,

> If people can manage finance collectively, it means that they have the power and independence to do anything. *This capability to manage finance as a group is not something that falls out of the sky – it is something that has to be learned and practised and strengthened and matured.* Finance is so crucial – once people are able to do it as a group, to manage finance as a group, then they are free. It is a kind of maturity, which means that communities no longer have to be looked after by outsiders, by somebody else (Somsook 2005b, 45–46) (emphasis in original).

The financial element of management is supplemented by a rhetoric of sufficiency economy, which Elinoff (2013, 13) has astutely argued acts as a "'managerial intervention' (citing Ong 2000) into the affective lives of these citizens by attempting to substitute moderation for politics and temperance for more radical economic critiques."

The combination of collective management and sufficiency reflects a long-standing belief about community established through the anarchic visions of self-sufficient settlements espoused through the community culture school of thought. That financially self-sufficient communities are "free" and not in need of being "looked after" fits with Thongchai's (2008, 586) critique of community culture, that "The anti-statism is, of course, particularly useful in neoliberal times: the poor Thai peasant can conveniently be portrayed as too upstanding to need state handouts (and those who do need them can conveniently be portrayed as not authentically Thai)." While the members of *Baan Mankong* communities are not peasants, they are, just the same, portrayed as a class for which community is a primordial social form, as "It is always easier and more natural for poor people to deal with the collective land approach than for better-off groups." (Somsook 2009, 326). In this logic, poor people, if properly trained, are well suited to manage and provide for each other, without needing help from the state.

It is no wonder, then, that the interventions of *Baan Mankong* have been met with such enthusiasm by so many state leaders. Replicating the model, 'going to scale,' means that the poor will carry the majority of the burden of providing better living conditions for themselves, both in terms of labor of finances. On top of this, they also learn to practice moderation, to not want more, to meet their own needs. Through the city-wide upgrading vision, community is imagined as a systemic way for poor populations to manage themselves in the city.

The managerial aspects of community are not absent from the rhetoric and practices of the FRSN. To adhere to the demands of the policy, they also monitor the finances of members and encourage the accrual of collective resources. The difference, though, is that this management is viewed not as an end in and of itself, but as a means of meeting the material needs to members so that they can then continue to advocate for greater reforms. Management, in this view, is a necessary step in mobilization.

The capacity to unite people, to centralize the energy and demands of members, allows the FRSN to achieve concessions from state agencies that are disproportionate to the size of their network when compared to NULICO. This is, in part, due to the appeal of their rhetoric, but it also has to do with the power of their methods of government. The FRSN also carries on the beliefs and practices of its forbears, but the practices are not around community culture or sufficiency. They are in a particular style of mobilization reminiscent of their roots in the community organizing and the tactics of the Communist Party of Thailand, which also achieved outsized victories for their size. This was due to a centralizing structure, internal discipline, and more careful selection of members (Morell and Chai-anan Samutwanit 1981). In the logic of the

FRSN, community is the smallest unit through which mass mobilization happens. Creating *chumchon* allows the poor to act politically.

For both the FRSN and CODI/NULICO then, government is exercised through community. However, the end goals of that government are quite different. For one, government acts as a means to greater self-management of poor populations, so that they take on more of the functions and costs of the state. For the other, government is a necessary aspect of creating a movement that can make greater demands of the state. The purposes of community and their associated networks in these different visions is nearly opposite. However, they work through many of the same forms and categories. In the context of *Baan Mankong*, they even work through many of the same institutions.

In Chapter One, I described a scene in which these two networks attempted to work together, only to find that their differences ran deeper than even they had appreciated. The presence of these different visions and practices is not incidental to the growth of *Baan Mankong*. While one network makes the practices of community acceptable to state leadership, the other keeps the state's impulses to pass more and more of the costs of the program on to communities in check. The much-touted successes of *Baan Mankong*, then, are not the result of a single policy intervention, but of decades of movements and ideas, often opposed, that have produced this particular set of institutions through disagreements and uneasy alliances. Those same sets of "frictions" continue operate within the policy. What they produce is physical forms of communities that look remarkably similar considering that the processes and politics that underlie them are often starkly different. The deceptive similarities that exist in the case of *Baan Mankong* demonstrate the need for a type of policy analysis that goes beyond assessing whether or not programs are meeting their stated goals. More engaged investigations of where policies come from and how they operate within complex political fields have the power to reveal how planning actually takes place and the many unintended consequences planning interventions produce.

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Appendix A: Frequently used Thai words and phrases and their translations

Thai	English
amnat	power
Baan Ua Arthorn	public housing, literally "We Care" housing
ban	house or village (colloquial)
boran	traditional
chanod chumchon	community land title deed
chaoban	villager
chumchon	community
chumchon dang deum	original community
chumchon eh at	congested community
chumnum	a public gathering or direct action
du ngan	to go on a site visit, literally "watch work"
jad kan ton eng	manage oneself
jaonathi	functionary or low- to mid-level administrator
kan patthana	development
kan yeun nangseu	the presenting of a document or letter (in this case, a list of demands)
kanphatthana chumchon	community development
khabuan kan khleuanwai thang sangkhom	social movement
khao pa	go into the forests
khem khaeng	strong
khet	district in Bangkok
khon deuan tula	Octoberist
khreua khai	network
luk kheun	rise up
meuang fai	system of collective irrigation management
mi suan ruam	participate
muban	village (administrative)
muban jadsan	pre-planned residentail development, literally "arranged village"
ni not rabob	informal debt
nitibukkhon	corporation or legal corporate entity
ongkon chaoban	villagers' organization
ongkon mahachon	public organization
pen tham	fair or just
phai khao	whtie menace
phak prachachon	the people's sector
phatthanakon	community development worker
pheung ton eng	self-reliant or self-sufficient

phi liang	mentor
phi nong	siblings, literally "elders and youngers," commonly used like the English expression "brother and sisters"
Prachachon	citizen or "the people"
prachasangkom	civil society
prachathibotai	democracy
riap roi	orderly or proper and complete
sahai	comrade
sakdina	system of labor similar to feudalism
salum	slum
Samacha khon chon	Assembly of the Poor
samachik	member
sanibat yaowachon	young communists
setthagit nok rabob	informal economy
setthakit phaw phiang	sufficiency economy
si-oh	Community Organizing, "CO"
sitthi chumchon	community rights
sitthi manuthsayachon	human rights
soi	alley or small street
tambon	commune or subdistrict
tang khon tang yu	to each their own
thammarat	good governance
ti yu asai	home, literally "place to live"
tua thaen	representative
wikrit tom yam kung	East Asian Financial Crisis

Appendix B: Acronyms

CPT	Communist Party of Thailand
BPP	Border Patrol Police
ARD	Accelerated Rural Development program
USOM	United States Operations Mission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
CDD	Community Development Department
NSCT	National Student Council of Thailand
DPP	Democracy Propagation Program
ARPA	Advanced Research Projects Agency
VIST	Village Information System
RTG	Royal Thai Government
BMR	Bangkok Metropolitan Region
BMA	Bangkok Metropolitan Administration
NHA	National Housing Authority
FRSN	Four Regional Slum Network
CODI	Community Organizations Development Institute
HDI	Human Development Institute
POP	People's Organization for Participation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
HSF	Human Settlement Foundation
ACHR	Asian Coalition for Housing Rights
CPB	Crown Property Bureau
SRT	State Railways of Thailand
UCDO	Urban Community Development Office
UCDF	Urban Community Development Fund
GHB	Government Housing Bank
DPC	Department for the Promotion of Cooperatives
NULICO	National Union of Low-Income Community Organizations
P-MOVE	People's Movement for a Just Society
COPA	Community Organization for People's Action
CDFI	community development financial institution
CAD	Cooperatives Auditing Department