The Politics of the NGO Movement in Northeast Thailand

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the struggle of the NGO movement in northeast Thailand (Isan) during the 1980s and 1990s. The paper begins with analysis of the differences between the NGOs in the 1970s and in the post-1970s era. This analysis gives the background to the debate within Isan NGOs between the political economists, who engaged in political mobilization, and the community culturalists, who refrained from any kind of political mobilization. In the 1990s, the differences between the two sides were resolved in the course of struggle.

INTRODUCTION

NGOs are increasingly seen as important agents for socio-political change and vital components of a thriving civil society. They “play a significant role in the politics of many developing countries and they have become significant political actors in civil society in Asia, Africa, and Latin America” (Clarke, 1998: 23). This paper examines the struggle of NGOs in Isan (northeast Thailand) during the 1980s and the 1990s. The paper is comprised of three main parts. The first part looks at the development of NGOs in Thailand. The second part examines debate within Isan NGOs. The third part looks at conflicts that had important impact on the strategy of Isan NGOs.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THAI NGOs

The first non-governmental development organization, the Thailand Rural Reconstruction Movement (TRRM), was founded in 1969. The central idea of the TRRM was that “rural reconstruction is human reconstruction” (Suthy, 1995: 99). The TRRM rejected government development policies which emphasized economic growth at the expense
of equity and development of the cities at the expense of the countryside. Another important NGO was the Komol Keemthong Foundation (KKF). Based on Buddhist values, the KKF advocated improving the quality of life through self-reliance (Pasuk and Baker, 1995: 384–5). From the 1970s to the 1990s, the NGO movement experienced changes in terms of ideology, organizational structure, and strategy. The account below focuses on the differences between the NGOs in the 1970s and in the post-1970s era, as a background for understanding the dynamics of NGO movements, and the debate within Isan NGOs.

According to Banthorn Ondam, a veteran NGO leader, in the early period the majority of NGOs were large organizations run by academics, bureaucrats, members of the upper class, or foreigners. Their work focused on rural poverty and social welfare, and their outlook was borrowed from the west. During the 1970s, there was no cooperation among them. As a consequence, they did not turn into a movement; they were mere non-profit groups (Wasant, 1993: 20).

During the “democratic period” of 1973–1976, NGOs represented a middle force, which advocated gradual improvement within the existing system. As a result, they faced hostility from the left and right. According to Rosana Tositrakul, a veteran NGO leader, NGOs were not popular among social activists, who were committed to socialist revolution. For them, NGOs were unable to bring about meaningful changes because the scope of their activities was too narrow and did not address the causes of social problems. Therefore, NGOs were not considered agents of change but were branded as “reactionary” organizations that obstructed the wheel of history (Bangkok Post, 10 October 1993: 20). Despite being cold-shouldered by the left, NGOs were mistrusted by the right. Before the 1980s NGOs, like other social movements, were viewed by the right as communist agents set up as legal organizations to operate on behalf of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). After a military coup on 6 October 1976, their activities were suppressed by the ultra-right government (Amara and Nitaya, 1994: 27, 56).

Revival of NGOs after the 6 October Coup

The revival of NGOs was a result of changes in government policy. NGOs were able to actively expand their activities again after the Kriangsak government (1977–1980) decided to compromise with the left by re-opening political space for them. The compromise was designed to prevent the growth of the CPT. After the 6 October coup, some 3,000
leftist activists, who were assaulted by the military, gave up their peaceful struggle and joined the armed struggle of the CPT. The new recruits not only strengthened the insurrectionary forces, but more importantly, they legitimized the party’s armed struggle. More and more Thai viewed “the CPT as the only credible alternative to the status quo” (Bowie, 1997: 137). To prevent the victory of the party, Bangkok introduced new policies to win over the left and so isolate the CPT. According to Kasian Tejapira, a political scientist at Thammasat University, “the government tried to encourage NGOs to grow as alternatives for idealistic people who were disillusioned with socialism and yet were distrustful of the government” (Wasant, 1993: 20). By the mid-1980s some fifty new NGOs had been set up all over the country (Suthy, 1995: 102). In 1985 the Coordinating Committee of Non-Governmental Organization for Rural Development (NGO-CORD) was set up both at national and regional levels, with a total membership of 220 organizations (Amara and Nitaya, 1994: 46).

The development of NGOs in the 1980s was not just a response to new opportunities by the old NGOs when political space opened to them, without any meaningful change in their scope of work and political orientation. Actually, NGOs in this period differed from NGOs in the previous decade in several respects. The political composition of NGO members in the 1980s was more diverse than that of the 1970s. While most of NGO workers in the 1970s were moderate activists, NGO workers in the 1980s included both moderate and radical activists. The radical elements within NGOs came from the ranks of former left-leaning social activists, who were disillusioned with socialism but still held on to their desire for social justice. These groups of radical activists included not only those who returned from the jungle after the collapse of the CPT, but also idealistic youths who were searching for a better society (Bangkok Post, 10 October 1993: 20).

The influx of these radicals into the ranks of NGOs had a significant impact on the development of NGOs in the 1980s and 1990s. Some veteran NGO leader such as Rosana tended to believe that the presence of the radicals did not produce any meaningful changes within NGOs, since the newcomers worked under the existing NGO philosophy (Wasant, 1993: 20). Yet in reality, when the radicals joined NGOs, they transformed themselves and the old NGOs at the same time. This transformation resulted in a more radical and more diverse NGO movement. While the radical-turned-NGO activists rejected the centralized organization and confrontation strategy of the social
movements of the 1970s, and searched for a new strategy (Callahan, 1998: 99–106), some of them still appreciated the value of political mobilization as a means to defend the interests of the poor, and were willing to adopt such a strategy when the political situation required. In the early 1980s, they followed the non-political involvement strategy of the NGOs of the 1970s, and concentrated their work on micro-issues such as alternative livelihoods, health, education, and so on. However, from the late 1980s when conflicts over natural resources and environment in the countryside escalated, they turned to radical tactics of mass mobilization (see below). In the city, they engaged in a variety of political activities such as campaigning for human rights and greater democracy. They assumed the role of the democratic movements of the 1970s, even though they were not as radical as these earlier movements.

As a result, from the late 1980s onwards NGOs divided into two main factions. The first faction comprised NGO workers who followed the “old” strategy of the NGOs in the 1970s. The second faction was made up of NGO workers who engaged in political mobilization. Because of the nature of their work, the former were known as the “cool” faction, and the latter as the “hot” faction. The “hot” faction had its strong base in rural Isan (Sanitsuda, 1994: 33). The relationship between these two factions was not static. They both accepted and rejected the ideas of each other in the course of continued debates and practices (see below).

The NGOs of the 1980s also differed from the NGOs in the 1970s in other respects. According to Banthorn, large organizations were replaced by small, issue-based groups. Their activities were not concentrated in Bangkok. They spread into every region of the country. Moreover, they set up networks to coordinate their work all over the country. As a result, they did not function as an isolated group but as a broad social movement (Wasant, 1993: 20).

Development of NGOs in Isan

In 1980 NGOs began expanding their works into Isan (Isan NGO-CORD, 1998: 11). In the early period they concentrated their efforts on the so-called “cool issues”—non-political activities such as community development. They focused on “fertilizer, jute, wells, toilets, meetings, training, seminars, study tours, rice and buffalo banks, revolving funds, cooperative stores” and then developed into alternative agriculture, handicrafts, and community businesses (Isan NGO-CORD, 1998: 19). According to Bamrung Boonpanya, a prominent figure among Isan NGOs, in the early period NGOs activities in Isan were not different
from those of the state except that they emphasized people’s participation (Bamrung, n. d.: 5). In 1987 there were forty-nine NGOs working in Isan and all of them were involved in rural development projects (Chatthip, 1991: 131). These activities were completely different from the activities of the popular movements of the 1970s. Such differences did not arise from tactical moves, but reflected the strategic shift of the new movements. The activities of NGOs in the 1980s, according to one of their leaders, contrasted with the activities of the popular movements in the 1970s “which had adopted a single confrontational strategy for social transformation that had proved unrealistic in the context of Thailand” (Srisuwan, 1995: 69–70, emphasis added). During the 1970s, according to Pornpirom, popular movements believed that “social transformations and creation of a just society could only be the result of a revolution”, and the revolution would be achieved only under the leadership of a centralized political organization of the working class (Pornpirom, 1987: 14). The new strategy, by contrast, emphasized long and gradual progress based on “consciousness-raising”, rather than political mobilization or any kind of political organization. Such a strategy derived from the idea of community culture.

DEBATE WITHIN ISAN NGOs: COMMUNITY CULTURE VERSUS POLITICAL ECONOMY

During the 1980s, there was a fierce debate among Isan NGOs over the strategy and tactics of the movement. The debate was later known as the debate between the “community culture” and the “political economy” approach.

The idea of community culture

The idea of community culture is a variant of populism. According to Brass, populism, in different forms and guises, “has emerged and re-emerged periodically as a reaction by.... farmers to industrialization, urbanization and capitalist crisis” (Brass, 1996: 154). Central to populist ideology is an advocacy of a return to a traditional community. Populism, argues Brass, shares the anti-capitalism stand of Marxism. It criticises “big business, political injustice, and the effects of capitalism generally”. However, populism “does this not in the name of the common ownership of the means of production (as does Marxism) but rather in the name of individual, small-scale private property”. Moreover, while Marxism emphasises the importance of class
differentiation, populism "denies the existence of class and accordingly essentializes the peasantry". It "casts them in the role of 'victims', uniformly oppressed by large-scale institutions/monopolies located in the urban sector (the state, big business and 'foreign capital')" (Brass, 1996: 155).

The community culture approach emerged in Thai society in the 1980s, after the failure of the CPT's socialist revolution. The idea was elaborated by NGO leaders from their experience, and developed by academics in Bangkok and in the regions. It has now become an important approach in examining development issues (Yukti, 1995: 75–8). The community culture approach argues that Thailand's form of economic development, which was imported from western countries by the state, destroyed the economy of the village community. According to Bamrung Boonpanya, a prominent Isan NGO leader, such capitalist economic development benefited only the rich and westerners, and made the poor poorer (Chatthip, 1991: 121).

Kitahara labelled this argument "anti-modernism" (Kitahara, 1996: 78). "At the economic level", argues Kitahara, the community culture theorists criticized the commercialization of agriculture by modern technology, such as the use of "chemicals and machine, limited kinds of marketable crops, and large scale management", on the grounds that it "often results in total bankruptcy, in particular for farmers who work at it hardest". The community culture theorists, according to Kitahara, also pointed out the negative aspects of commercialized farming at the social level. For them, the introduction of the market system "broke down the traditional mutual help and fraternity of the community", and "substituted the egoistic competition and resultant rivalry among fellow villagers". Furthermore, at the cultural level, they bitterly attacked capitalism for having "stimulated materialist values and caused mental dissatisfaction and instability associated with anomie, by stirring up greed" in order to "make more profit and to get more consumer goods". At the political level, they rejected state-led rural development schemes implemented under the hierarchical orders of the central government (Kitahara, 1996: 78–9).

According to Bamrung Boonpanya, to avoid the negative effects of the market economy mentioned above, farmers should withdraw from the market economy and rely on the subsistence economy as they had done in the past. He felt that they could return to self-reliance because the village community had its own culture and way of development. As Chatthip (1991: 121) has pointed out, Bamrung believed that:

No matter what outside circumstances have been and how they have changed, the essence of a village or a community, its economic,
social and cultural independence, has remained for hundreds of years. The village community thus has its own independent belief systems and way of development.

For Niphot, another community culture theorist, if the community culture is strong, it is easy for farmers to organize themselves into groups to carry out various work. In addition, the strong community culture “also makes it possible to resist external exploitation” (Chatthip, 1991: 119).

Since the strength of the farmers lies in their community, their history, and their way of life, new forms of organization or any progressive ideas are unnecessary. The farmers, argue the community culture theorists, can rely on local wisdom, indigenous culture, traditional technologies, and Buddhist values (Pasuk and Baker, 1995: 387–8). In other words, for community culture theorists, “the answer is in the village” (Isan NGO-CORD, 1998: 18).

Nevertheless, there is a contradiction in the argument of the community culture school of thought. While community culturalists believed that farmers are able to solve their problems by relying on their own culture, they also proposed that to achieve strong communal culture, the villagers needed some help from outsiders (“development workers”) to recover their forgotten cultural consciousness (Chatthip, 1991: 139). Such a contradiction reflected the incompatibility between theory and reality. As Bamrung admitted, farmers had succumbed to the influence of “the cultural domination of the money culture”. They had given up their “cultural roots”, and turned to western culture (Sanitsuda, 1992: 31). Under such a situation, it is clear that villagers were unable to regain their roots, their own culture, without some help from outsiders. NGO workers were introduced to perform that role. On the one hand, this helped to solve the theoretical difficulty, and, on the other hand, it justified the presence of NGOs in the villages.

The role of the outsider in “consciousness-raising” in the community culture school of thought is quite similar to that of the Leninist theory of organization, which also argued that workers had an inherent class consciousness but were unable to achieve such consciousness by themselves. To raise their consciousness, they need some help from intellectuals (Lenin, 1969). However, there is also a big difference between the two schools of thought on this issue. While Leninists believed that intellectuals could help workers gain their class consciousness by introducing them to the revolutionary ideas of Marxism which had developed outside their everyday lives, the community culturalists, on the contrary, believed that the knowledge
necessary for villagers’ self-consciousness was generated within the community itself. The task of intellectuals was to discover it, and then help farmers to regain the folk wisdom which was part of their communal lives.

The political economy approach

The community culture line of thought, according to Nakhon Sriwipat, the present secretary general of the Small-Scale Farmers’ Assembly, was contested by another group of NGOs and school teacher activists, who called themselves the “political economists”. Although they agreed with the community culture theorists that the western-style development had had devastating effects on the rural economy, they rejected the solutions proposed by the community culture approach. For them, the self-reliant economy was a kind of utopia which was impractical in real life. Since capitalism now penetrates deeply into rural areas, it was impossible to return to a subsistence economy. Moreover, many kinds of problems within villages are caused by outside factors rooted in politico-economic structures beyond the control of villagers. The solution to the problems, therefore, lies not in trying to escape from capitalism but trying to live with it, and to develop greater bargaining power. The bargaining power of farmers lies in political organization, not in local wisdom as the community culture theorists believe. Efforts to solve farmers’ problems within the villages based on communal culture without engaging in “hot issues” or political struggle outside the villages is hopeless (Nakhon Sriwipat, interview, 14 December 1997).

However, among political economists there were differing views about the nature of the political organizations they needed to found. The majority, according to Son Rubsung, a leading figure among Isan political economists, proposed that they should set up a farmers’ organization and then develop it into a strong political organization with a wide mass base for bargaining with the state. This group of political economists rejected the idea that farmers should have a political party of their own. For them, to set up a political party was impractical and undesirable for a number of reasons. Firstly, running a political party needed a huge sum of money which farmers were unable to afford. Secondly, it was very difficult to supervise or control party members in the parliament; after being elected they would seek to advance their own interests rather than working for the masses. Nevertheless, a minority disagreed with this view. They contended that only a political party could assert influence on policy-makers effectively.
The idea of becoming involved in electoral politics was bitterly criticized by the community culturalists. For them, all politicians were corrupt and insincere; they offered help to the poor only to serve their political interests. In addition, the community culturalists also branded the idea of building a strong mass-based organization as an “out-of-date political strategy that failed to understand the new political environment” (Son Rubsung, interview, 10 July 1998). For them, as Bamrung Kayota pointed out, organizing protests was alien to the culture of community. Such activities belonged to workers, or to western culture (Naruemon and Nitirat, 1999: 101).

To strengthen their organizations, the political economists suggested that farmers should have a high level of political consciousness, learn to think scientifically, and apply modern knowledge to their work and production. Although believing that some communal traditions are useful for farmers, they insisted that superstition prevented farmers from developing their ability to cope with the modern world (Nakhon S riwipat, interview, 14 December 1997). The community culture theorists, on the contrary, ferociously attacked the efforts to convince villagers to give up their superstitious practices as “brain washing”. For them, local tradition including superstition is useful for strengthening the village community (Volunteer for Society Project, 1984: 241–2).

According to the Isan NGO-CORD (1998: 18), “no one won” in the debate between the two sides. However, during the 1980s the NGO movement in Isan operated under the influence of the community culture school of thought. The popularity of this approach reflected the ideological atmosphere at that time. Disappointed with socialist ideas, most activists were searching for a new orientation and strategy. While the political economy approach shared many assumptions with the popular movement in the 1970s, the community culture perspective offered them a new and experimental perspective. Even though the community culture school of thought prevailed in the 1980s, the changing situation in Isan rural areas in the early 1990s undermined its validity.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT AND THE RADICALIZATION OF ISAN NGOs

The non-political involvement strategy of the community culture approach was put to the test by the intensification of the penetration of capitalism into the countryside and associated changes in state policy.
The aims of this section is to show how industrialization led to environmental conflict in the Isan countryside, and how this conflict impacted on the strategy of the community culture approach.

Unequal development and environmental conflict

In the late 1980s, Thailand was experiencing rapid economic growth. Between 1987 and 1991 the country’s GDP increased by 10.5 per cent annually. According to Hunsaker, the source of economic dynamism came from the ability to access foreign markets, foreign direct investment, and “the conversion of Thai natural resources into exportable goods” (Hunsaker, 1996: 1). The country’s modernization drive was based on the exploitation of the countryside. The wealth created by the agricultural sector was channelled to finance industrialization and growth in Bangkok (Missingham, 1996: 193). According to Medhi, since the first Economic and Development Plan (1961–1966), the agricultural sector has been the source of cheap labour, cheap food supply, and government revenues. However, the most important role of agriculture in industrialization has been in earning the foreign exchange necessary to purchase technology and industrial inputs (Medhi, 1995: 43–50). It is not surprising to find that after more than three decades of development the income of the agricultural sector lags far behind that of the non-agricultural sector. In 1990 the income ratio of the non-agricultural sector to the agricultural sector was 11:2. Moreover, in 1992 Thailand had the sixth worst income distribution in the world (Pasuk et al., 1996: 12–14).

Unequal development not only resulted in extreme economic disparities between urban and rural areas, but also in environmental degradation and conflict. Economic growth led to conflicts over natural resources in the countryside between farmers, on the one hand, and the business sector and the state, on the other. According to Ubonrat (1991: 299), disputes over the rights to control the use of land, forest, river, and water ways have become the focal point of conflict. In the early 1980s, there were only two protests concerned with environmental issues. However, after the economic boom in 1987 the number of such protests increased sharply. In 1990 the number of conflicts over natural resources rose to 58 cases. Between 1994 to 1995, there were 1,742 protests in Thailand, in which 610 cases involved the use of natural resources. In Isan alone, there were 187 conflicts over natural resources in the period mentioned (Praphat, 1998: 30, 39–40). Politicians, bureaucrats, police, and businessmen tried to suppress popular protests by using force or
intimidation (Fairclough, 1996: 20). Between 1993 and 1996, ten protest leaders were killed and nine protesters were injured. In addition, twenty NGO and village leaders were arrested (Naruemon et al., 1996: 31).

Radicalization of Isan NGOs

The changing situation invalidated the basic assumption of the community culture approach. In many cases, the conflicts in their areas forced NGOs to join protests. According to Sompan, a committee member of Isan NGO-CORD, "NGOs do not want to involve in 'hot issues' but they had to be involved because these issues happened in the areas where they worked. Sometimes villagers and students asked NGOs to help them bargain with the government. Sympathetic to the villagers, NGOs decided to get involved" (Sompan, 1990: 107).

In April 1990 about a thousand villagers from Mahasarakham, Roi Et, and Srisaket provinces protested against rock salt mining in Mahasarakham. The protest demanded that the government close down salt mines which had discharged salty water into the Siew river which runs through the three provinces (Bangkok Post, 8 April 1990). NGO workers in the area who normally refrained from involvement in political conflict decided to join the protest (Sompan, 1990: 108). During the same period, in Ubon Ratchathani, students and NGOs from Bangkok, especially the Project for Ecological Recovery, organized a protest against the construction of Pak Mun dam. The protest arose from various reasons. The dam would flood 5,700 rai of farmland affecting 903 families. In addition, the dam would, according to research, have caused health problems along the river and "create new habitats for certain species of disease-carrying snails" (Bangkok Post, 23 September 1991: 3). Another negative effect was that the dam would cut the reproduction routes of fresh water species, which would result in a sharp decrease or even extinction of some species (Atiya, 1991: 21).

Another important event was the protest against the National Farm Council Bill. In April 1991 the Anand government planned to pass a bill establishing an agricultural council. However, NGOs and farmers, mainly in Isan, opposed the bill. According to Bamrung Boonpanya, the council represented the interests of agro-business, instead of farmers. The objective of the bill was to subjugate small scale farmers to big corporations. Such a policy, for him, would push small scale farmers to bankruptcy (Bamrung, 1991: 15). The conflict between NGOs and the Thai state intensified when the army implemented the Khor Jor Kor project.
**Khor Jor Kor and farmers’ resistance in Isan**

*Khor Jor Kor* was an effort of the Thai state to evict farmers from their lands in the so-called “degraded forest reserves” for commercial reforestation. The reasoning behind the implementation of *Khor Jor Kor* was that farmers are primarily responsible for deforestation in Thailand. Their presence in forest reserves areas was illegal, and therefore they had to be evicted from the areas for reforestation. It was estimated that there were more than 10 million farmers living in degraded forest reserves (Handley, 1991: 15). Under the project, the military was to relocate 970,000 families (9,700 villages) from 1,253 forests all over the country (Pasuk et al., 1996: 45). Isan was chosen as the first region in which to implement the project. Environmentalist NGOs believed such a decision was made because Isan was the poorest region and also the region which was considered by Bangkok as inferior (Pasuk et al., 1996: 46). Between 1991 and 1995, the military planned to move more than one million farmers (250,000 families from 2,500 villages) living in degraded forests in various parts of the region and resettle them on other degraded land (Hirsch, 1993: 21).

The effort to drive farmers off their land began a new chapter of state-farmer conflict over land rights in rural Isan, right up to the present day. Farmers, who believed that they had rights on their land, waged strong resistance to *Khor Jor Kor*. The anti-*Khor Jor Kor* movement was an important event of rural activism in Isan. It was the first major farmers’ movement in the region after the collapse of the CPT. The movement marked a new phase of radical grassroots movements in Thailand.

In March 1991 the military began to evict farmers from various villages in Isan (*Bangkok Post*, 16 October 1991: 29). Threatening force against any resistance, the military succeeded in evicting farmers from their land during the early period of the project. However, when farmers were able to organize themselves, they began to resist *Khor Jor Kor*. To pressure the government to abandon *Khor Jor Kor*, on 25 June 1992 affected farmers from all over Isan held a meeting in Khon Kaen and decided to march on foot from Nakhon Ratchasima to Bangkok (about 160 kilometres). Some 4,500 farmers moved from Nakhon Ratchasima Provincial Hall along the Friendship Highway to Pak Chong district, the border between Isan and the central region (Pasuk et al., 1996: 74). They demanded to meet the Prime Minister or his representative. When the government refused to negotiate, they blocked the highway for three days. This measure proved effective; after the road blockade the government’s negotiation team flew from Bangkok to meet them on 5
July and agreed to cancel the *Khor Jor Kor* scheme (*Bangkok Post*, 30 June 1992: 2; 3 July 1992: 3; 5 July 1992: 1, 3).

The campaign against *Khor Jor Kor* had a profound impact on the Isan grassroots movement. According to Bamrung Kayotha, a leading figure among the Isan political economists, the anti-*Khor Jor Kor* activities not only helped to strengthen unity among farmers, but also healed the rift between the community culturalists and the political economists. Both sides worked together against *Khor Jor Kor* (Naruemon and Nitirat, 1999: 101). However, after the anti-*Khor Jor Kor* campaign, the relationship between the two sides was not stable. Sometimes differences emerged over political strategy and over the scope of activities. But cooperation was the main form of their relationship. The founding of the Assembly of the Poor (AOP) in 1995 signified the new phase of cooperation when both sides joined the same organization. The AOP was a network of NGOs and people’s organizations. Mobilization was its main strategy in campaigning for social justice. In Isan a number of NGOs, who worked under the philosophy of community culture line of thought, joined the AOP because they realized that without political mobilization the state would not respond to their demands (field notes, 16 November 1997). Nevertheless, the AOP did not work only under the influence of the political economists, but was also influenced by the community culturalists. The AOP’s campaign for alternative agriculture was evidence of the influence of the community culturalists within the Assembly (see Praphat, 1998).

**CONCLUSION**

This paper has examined the struggle of the NGO movement in Northeast Thailand during the 1980s and the 1990s. NGOs in the post-1970s era were more diversified than the old NGOs of the 1970s. Diversification within the movement led to differences in the movement’s strategy. The difference was known as “the political economy vs. the community culture approach”. However, the conflict between the two sides was resolved in the course of struggle. Their ability to settle their conflict through the course of the struggle showed that the political economists and the community culturalists were pragmatists, who did not strictly follow their doctrines. In retrospect, we can see that the community culture approach was a one-sided strategy, insufficient for solving the problems of the farmers. The farmers needed
political mobilization for bargaining with the state, and needed alternative agriculture to reduce their dependency on the market.

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