In the Name of Civil Society: Land, Peace Initiatives and Environmentalism in Muslim Areas of Thailand and the Philippines

Fadzilah Majid Cooke

Introduction

This paper deals with peace-related initiatives at the grassroots level in the southern provinces of the Philippines and Thailand, where Muslims are a minority in terms of national demographics and politics, but are majorities in areas they consider to be their homelands. In both regions there is widespread experience of violence from war or conflict. An additional, though less immediately obvious reality for many people in both regions is the issue of how to cope with or survive "slow violence".

Rob Nixon (2006-2007), describes "slow violence" as a "violence of exclusion". It emanates from large-scale loss to livelihoods, accumulating over time, as a result of top-down development practices such as mining, industrial development and commercial agriculture. "Slow violence" may emanate from legitimate (legal) acts that may yet be ethically or morally suspect, or via covert practices such as discriminatory employment practices which generate cumulative effects that may be felt years or even decades later.

Against a background of exclusion, and strengthened by a widespread lack of faith in the state system of maintaining peace and order, conflicts in Muslim-dominated regions of the Philippines and Thailand have escalated. In Mindanao, the Philippines, the prevalence of *rido* (clan feuds), sometimes involving killings, has been much written about (Torres 2007). Similarly, the violence in southern Thailand in the three mainly Muslim provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat has escalated since 2004, triggered by what is perceived by Muslims to be human rights abuses by the state (Mullins 2007).

Poor Muslims in both countries share a lack of trust in government enforcement agencies to resolve conflicts and often perceive the state as partisan, at best, or antagonistic to their quest for autonomy. Nevertheless, many continue to work within the system to try to support peace, by working alongside government agencies, or by aligning themselves with non-government agencies (NGOs), often simultaneously. In some cases, NGOs can be viewed as filling a niche created by a relative absence of government.

Within Maranao society in Lanao Del Norte and Lanao Del Sur in the Philippines. one of the major causes of *rido* is land disputes dating back to the 1900s (Durante 2007, Abreu 2008).

Two initiatives have emerged from NGOs seeking to promote peace which have also resonated with local communities that are tired of war. One is the formation of formal clan associations, based on genealogy. The second is the formation of clan-based community cooperatives, in Lanao Del Norte and Lanao Del Sur. Both initiatives require new forms of leadership that may or may not incorporate the old systems in which leadership came from *datus* and sultans, who form part of Maranao royalty. Cooperatives introduce new methods of accountability and transparency that can be empirically tested as the ventures develop and begin small-scale commercial activities. Both kinds of initiatives can provide new ways of thinking about clans and new methods of organizing relationships within them. This work is deserving of greater policy support.

In southern Thailand, discourse around environmental care and rehabilitation includes the issue of livelihoods loss. It is sometimes argued that environmental networks involving villagers as community researchers, working together with researchers from local universities, have provided avenues for expressing dissent. Yet, such avenues may also dampen anger against marginalization and exclusion, by asking villagers, "what can we do ourselves to solve our own problems?"

The experiences of communities in the study area are resonant of Joan Martinez-Alier's description

of "environmentalism of the poor," which refers to the struggles of the poor to maintain access to the natural resources on which their livelihoods depend. Most involved in such struggles would not refer to themselves as environmentalists if environmentalism were equated with struggles in defence of pristine nature, or against the effects of industrial pollution, as in earlier forms of environmentalism in northern countries (Martinez-Alier 2002: 11,12). The communities may use the language of environmentalism in order to advance their interests. Nevertheless, issues of socio-economic marginalization and the unequal sharing of environmental costs from deforestation, pollution, water contamination and other problems are shared by both the environmental justice movement of the north and the livelihoods movement of the south (Martinez-Alier 2002:10-11).

Method

Fieldwork in both countries took place during the first half of 2012. Similar field strategies were used at both sites, namely, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and observation. In the Philippines a focus-group session in May 2012 was attended by 15 community leaders from two clans, the Moriatao Tara of the municipality of Pantaoragat and the Baesa Radapan of the municipality of Poona Piagapo. Both locations are in the province of Lanao Del Norte, although clan members also spread into the province of Lanao Del Sur (see Map 1). Supplementary interviews with key respondents were carried out before and after the workshop. In all, close to 50 interviews were held. Key respondents included two clan representatives, two NGO facilitators and one academic researcher. The two clans were the focus of study because they have been active in genealogy and in forming cooperatives as a form of social, cultural and economic activity. Although these activities were facilitated by NGOs, the clans were nevertheless initiators and implementers of their own visions and plans. Focus group participants were actively involved in genealogy tracing and in forming cooperatives. They were nominated to attend by other clan members. Of the 15, three were women. The group included five sultans, one *datu*, a former *barangay* captain, farmers, retired

Map 1: The Provinces of Lanao de Norte and Lanao del Sur in the Island of Mindanao

government employees, and school as well as religious teachers (*ustaz*).

In Thailand the area of study involved a network of twenty villages from the coastal lowland to the uplands of the Saiburi river. Together with researchers from the Prince of Songkhla University (PSU) in Pattani and Mahidol University in Bangkok, the villages were members of a group of community and university researchers involved in the Research Project for the Development of Peoples' Participation to Manage the Saiburi Wetlands (henceforth: the Research Project). The wetlands stretch across the provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat.

The Research Project had a dual objective of firstly, addressing environmental degradation and loss of livelihoods resulting from development or State conservation projects, and secondly, enhancing community capacity to participate in decisions concerning local land use. Community researchers were unpaid village volunteers who observed and reported on the environmental and livelihood changes taking place in their areas on a bi-monthly basis. Community researchers attended meetings at village sites or occasionally, at the PSU. They were allocated small travel allowances and small per diems for this work. The meetings were both fora for sharing information about environmental and social change, livelihoods issues and places where people could access moral support. Since the Research Project was linked to other NGO and government networks, village researchers had access to a rich portfolio of support services.

From January to March 2012, I attended three network meetings and made field visits to village sites including in the districts of Bachok, Ruso and Sukhirin of Narathiwat province (see Map 2). A total of 80 interviews were conducted with community and university researchers, supplemented by interviews with village key respondents as well as an academic researcher who has been working with all the villages for more than fifteen years and who was one of the original founders of the Research Project. In view of the nature of the insurgency in Thailand where the insurgents create fear by remaining unknown (Mullins 2007), the names of villages and key respondents in this paper are not revealed. No such restrictions in revealing village names needed to be applied in the Philippines where clans were happy to be named and their activities looked into by the researcher.

Map 2: Provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat in Southern Thailand Showing Districts

Contextualizing Clan Cooperatives in Lanao Del Norte

The emergence of interest in clan cooperatives among the Maranao took place in the context of displacement as a result of sudden violence (war) as well as "slow" violence. Slow violence in this context dates back to land disputes during the 1900s, when ancestral lands were given to settlers from elsewhere. Later, a system of land registration, known as the Torrens system, was introduced. The Torrens system of land registration introduced extensive land titling and privileged private property. This system was alien to Maranao forms of land acquisition and access which were based on territorial access rights and inheritance (Durante et al 2007). In addition to descent lines, continuous possession was one of the bases of rights to land in the traditional system. Although sale of land was allowed, there were guidelines and conditions under which such sales were permitted. In most cases, upon wide consultation, sale was only made to relatives or to the in-group (Dumarpa 1984)... This contrasts with sales made through contracts among strangers.

The context in which rido has taken place in the contemporary era has been ascribed to a complexity of geopolitical and socio-economic factors, including the diminishing of the ancestral domain due to the opening of "public" lands to settlers from Luzon, the Visayas and other parts of Mindanao (Durante et al 2007, Abreu 2008), and the changing (reducing) value attached to kinship (Doro 2007). These changes led to what has been called the "moroisation" of landlordism. "Moroisation" here means the changing role of rural elites who shifted from systems of wealth distribution to wealth accumulation through various means, including pushing for personal land claims over existing customary ones, using fake titles for generating personal wealth, or through partnering with multinational corporations (Doro 2007, Durante et al 2007, Fianza 2004).

As discontent over land increased, so did attempts at achieving peace. Cooperatives should be seen as one of the many mechanisms for achieving peace that have been attempted in recent years (Gaspar et al 2002). Moreover, solving disputes over land via cooperatives working on genealogy tracing is new.

In terms of future prospects, the sustainability of new forms of social and natural resource management depends on a host of factors, especially structural ones, including institutions of leadership, and the building of new skills and capacities to negotiate economic and political obstacles (Timenez 2005).

Genealogies and leadership

New skills, as seen from the narratives in the later section of this paper, are leadership by example (of hard work, efficiency and sacrifice). This kind of leadership is different from the warlordism of old, and has the potential of attracting a different group of followers. This new nascent form of leadership finds support from local non-government organizations (NGOs) which provide moral and some (limited) financial input as well as guidance in the basic rules of cooperative management. As well, the participation of hundreds of unpaid volunteers in tracing genealogies is a sign that the activity has grassroots support, which could be a strength that could be further enhanced through capable leadership. Nevertheless, the "moroisation" of landlordism remains a potential obstacle and a dilemma that communities themselves are fully aware of and are trying to address.

A major motivation for organizing clan members to trace their lineage is to prevent misunderstandings that could lead to full-blown conflict or rido.

> "It is hoped that if we know how we are related, and whether we share the same ancestors, we would hesitate at killing one another,"
>
> *(interview at focus group discussion, May 22, 2013)*

Another motivation is for working in a broader way towards peace, which is a signal for wanting to overcome marginalization, poverty and loss of livelihood as well as a desire to uphold spirituality:

> "We work for peace so that we have a common goal. Some of us were not united. Now we know people that we didn't know we were related to, or how we were related".
>
> *(a woman leader and a school teacher at focus group meeting, May 22, 2012)*

The statement above reflects the feelings of many among the younger generation who are no longer interested in the kinship system (Doro 2007), or who might know who they are related to but might not be aware of how closely linked they might be.

In a later interview, the woman leader informed us that she wanted peace, and was tired of war. She wanted school children to have language training (Arabic and English) and access to computers. She wished for teachers who did not leave their jobs because they were demoralized by war, and by a lack of facilities and support. She wanted her students to be competitive; instead, the reality was that many were not able to compete when they found themselves in schools in the city (interviews, Iligan City, May 24 and 26, 2012).

The Muslim religion is a cause for some to volunteer time:

> "In our religion, everyone is mandated to work for good and avoid what is bad. We should help our community and provide voluntary service to people. Our forefathers … they succeeded as leaders of the Bangsa Maranao or the Bangsa of certain families of the Baesa Radapan. It is obligatory for us to service our people because the benefit is in the *akhirat* (judgement day)".
>
> *(Interview with an ex-sultan, at focus group meeting, May 22, 2012)*

Such sentiments about "being rewarded by God," is also shared by Magindanao and Christian communities which Gaspar et al (2002) worked with in the Dinas municipality of Pagadian.

Further, according to Gaspar et al (2002) the sustainability of peace efforts depends on leadership qualities embedded in the community. So, for aspiring leaders, a major first step is to create trust in the leadership, which could eventually be shaped into people's trust for one another.

As has been pointed out by Mednick (1965), tracing lineage to the original shariefs who spread Islam to Mindanao is a useful claim to leadership status. A sultan in the focus group explained his lineage, tracing it back to the three *shariefs* who intermarried with Muslims in Mindanao; Sharief Alioden settled in Sulu, Sharief Alawi in Lanao del Norte, particularly in Tagoloan, and Sharief Kabungsuan in Maguindanao.

However, in contemporary times high status could also be earned via other means, including being a religious teacher or a school teacher, in addition to being a sultan or *datu*. Being of high status may not in itself be sufficient to attract followers. Persons should also show a track record of being dependable and capable of working hard for the community. Modern leadership success may depend on the ability to mobilize by example.

> "People look at our performance record. I devote my time for the good of the clan, for them to have close relationships to understand each other, to minimize *rido*. About 60 percent of my retirement money goes to the people. I don't just talk, I organize the clan, there are 50,000 clan members, it's not easy to organize".
>
> *(Interview, clan leader and sultan, Iligan city May 18, 2012)*

The sultan's leadership by example has motivated clan members to volunteer time to trace genealogies, and they painstakingly proceeded with the job for close to 15 years. Modern tracing of genealogies requires dedication, time and systematic information-gathering and filing skills. Community tracing of genealogies translate into paper what used to be mental maps of clan relations held by some elders in the community. The labor involved in the forming of clan cooperatives is intensive, skilled (especially in lineage and ancestry), and time-consuming, and worse, unpaid (funds are unavailable to pay workers). Consequently, the two large bound books of genealogies occupy a pride of place in the sultan's living quarters.

Clan cooperatives: a training ground for new leadership?

At the time of fieldwork only the Baesa Radapan Consumer Cooperative had been formed. It had up to 100 paid-up members and 13 representatives on its board of directors. The Moriatao Tara Consumer Cooperative, which at the time of fieldwork in early 2012 was at the planning stage, was successfully formed in October 2012 and had more than 200 paid-up members and 30 members on the board of directors (personal communication, Monalinda Doro, October 20, 2012).

There are two steps in the process of forming a cooperative. Before clan associations can be registered, the prior work of tracing genealogies is essential because clan members are the foundations for the formation of clan associations, upon payment of formal membership fees.

The Baesa Radapan Consumer Cooperative wants to open a school for the teaching of Islamic principles, language training, in addition to the selling of consumer goods similar to that of the Moriatao Tara. Schools create jobs for teachers, canteen workers, security guards, cleaners, and other workers.

The woman leader interviewed (mentioned earlier) looked upon enhanced knowledge of Islamic principles through higher education, as a positive force in the management of *rido*. She maintained that Maranao inclination to resort to *rido* as a sign of a lack of understanding of Islamic principles (interview Iligan May 26, 2013).

Upon the formation of the clan association, work begins for the registration of a community cooperative. Rules of cooperatives harbor ideas of transparency and equal treatment among members. The cooperative is to be run by a board of directors (BOD) that represents all family groups in the clan. Management is to be transparent and accountable according to by-laws and adopted accounting as well as auditing procedure. Working for the good of the clan and the cooperative (not the reverse) are new ideas. The plan is that the cooperatives would be a place for buying and selling basic needs, such as rice and fertilizer, at members' price. To enjoy the benefits of the cooperatives, clansmen have to become members by paying an association fee.

At a broader level, the motive for the formation of cooperatives is partly driven by the question: "where will we be as Maranao five years from now?" (Interviews with clan leaders, May 18, 2012). It is a question that underlies fear of continued marginalization. Among the many reasons, a driving factor is the "economy of hope"—the hope among poor Maranao that cooperatives could provide one avenue for redressing widespread poverty, generalized exclusion and landlordism within their own society, as well as manage *rido*.

"Conflict among Maranao is not only about land, but especially about hereditary land, land boundaries, selling of land that others claim as theirs. Leaders in Maranao acquired land and brought it to the bank through fake titles, got money from the bank because they had collateral and started businesses for personal wealth".

(a second ex-sultan, at focus group meeting, 22 May 2013)

Moreover, education in Arabic or English language are viewed as a positive force;

"I agree that education is important and ultimately the solution to conflict is education. English, Arabic, both are needed. Only 10 percent of Poona Piagapo people are educated. I don't know whether, if you have knowledge of Arabic or English, there will be no conflict. Although our main demand is education, in rural areas we cannot afford education. We cannot afford tuition fees, we cannot communicate to government that we cannot afford to pay. There **is** *rido*, land conflict and we do not know how to settle the conflicts. There are financial problems caused by *rido*., We cannot go to our farms, because we are protecting our family. Better to die than run away because of *martabat* (family honor)"

(a farmer, focus group meeting, 22 May 2013)

The hope of finding peace through being "educated" and of achieving a viable alternative livelihood via education as expressed by the workshop participants becomes significant if contextualized. When conflict escalates into full blown *rido*, farmers lose their livelihood. Farming families not being able to attend to their farms because of war is a common experience in war torn zones of Mindanao (BALAOD *Mindanaw* 2010). The burden is greater if there is *rido* and farmers are involved in the defense of family honor. If family members are killed, due to *rido*, then the norms of *martabat* must be upheld or the family risks being labeled "low class" or "a disgrace" for failure to seek redress (Torres 2007: 20). Hence, a dilemma is created between the desire for peace and being able to earn a living versus the norm of upholding family honor.

The question then is whether new forms of leadership in the formation of clan cooperatives run according to new systems of responsibility and accountability, could provide sufficient buffer against an institutionalized defense of family honor and violence. In response, cooperatives form the surface of an underlying grassroots movement for change, as seen in the thousands who volunteer time to genealogy tracing and become involved in the process of cooperative formation.

Muslim Discontent and Environmentalism Southern Thailand

The three Muslim provinces of Narathiwat, Yala and Pattani (see Map 2) of southern Thailand have a history of distrust in and resentment of the Thai Buddhist State. With the escalation of violence in recent years, statistics show that from 2004 and 2009 more than 3,000 individuals have been killed (Mullins 2009) and the number has increased even further since then. The brutal official handling of the Kru Se and Tak Bai incidents, in which nearly 200 Muslims died and, subsequently, the failure to prosecute officials responsible for the incidents (International Crisis Group 2008 cited in Mullins 2009:925) has often been regarded as the trigger for the escalation of the violence in recent years. There has been much research on the possible causes of discontent, both at the macro and grassroots level (Wattana 2006, McCargo 2006, Mullins 2009; Sri Sompob and Panyasak 2006). Research has pointed to historical socio-economic marginalization and national and international geopolitics, resulting, at the micro level, in human rights abuses. Research has also pointed to national and international discourses on Muslim separatism and terrorism with implications for how Muslim groups are viewed by officialdom and the Thai public (Wattana 2006; Castro and Masbud 2012).

Such analysis draws attention to how certain issues are underplayed, especially how some Muslim and non-Muslim actors benefit from the insurgency in the form of increased military budget and spending in the South, how political and military careers

are built from "managing" the insurgency, and the commercial gains made by many in arms trading, smuggling and drug dealing in war zones (Wattana 2006:123).

There are some similarities in the socio-historical and geopolitical causes of conflict in both southern Thailand and southern Philippines. There is one clear difference however, in the standard operating procedure in the two countries. In southern Thailand, unlike in Mindanao, the insurgency movement is clandestine. No one comes to the fore to claim responsibility for actions (including frequent bombings and the killing of targeted individuals, especially those seen to be linked with government), but it is on everyone's minds in the three provinces (Mullins 2006).

In a village bordering the Budo-Sungei Padi National Park (henceforth the Park) where I went to interview a community leader who was actively mobilizing village action in regaining access to village lands that have been inadvertently included in the Park, Khun Muso (not his real name) first and foremost talked about the insurgency, followed subsequently by his mobilization of active village committees.

> "They asked me whether there are separatists in my area. I said I don't think there are any, but there are people demanding justice, for example, organizations of *imam* (religious clerics), or *ketua kampung* (village heads). They are all negotiating with the government, separatists usually do not want to negotiate… Some *ketua kampung* have been shot if they are seen to be cruel, unjust or too close to the government".
>
> *(Interview with Pok Muso, in a village bordering the Budo-Sungei Padi National Park 26 February 2012)*

In two or three sentences within the first few minutes of meeting someone unknown to him, Pok Muso had set the scene for the discontent of his village with government, as well as with local leadership within the Muslim communities.

So, if the insurgency is in the minds of everyone (especially community leaders such as Pok Muso), and defending land, environment and natural

resources is second, why act on the second? Or do people do both (by supporting the first clandestinely)? A tentative answer to this question can be gleaned from comments made by community leaders and researchers at the numerous bi-monthly meetings of the Research Project.

Environmentalism – a method for avoiding conflict?

Through the participation of villagers in monitoring their environment and regularly attending meetings to report on progress, the Research Project is creating among its participants a discourse about conservation that comprises a respect for the land and of active participation. At every meeting, after lengthy discussions, inevitably a question will be raised that can be summarized as, "what can I (not the government) personally do for the land, and what can I do to maintain livelihoods, despite having lost access to natural resources?"

Activities that are supported by the network can be gleaned from the bi-monthly meetings. At the January 2012 meeting of the Project, five young men who were from a coastal village of Pattani explained why they were involved.

> "We work in house building, and we have remained in the villages and not migrated to look for other work elsewhere. Of the six villages in the area, our village is the only one that is interested in the wetland project. We are community researchers. We get a small allowance for attending the meetings—plus the cost of transport. But our main hope is we can be an example to the other villages".
>
> *(Interview at Amphur Ruso, Narathiwat province, 27 January 2012)*

Similarly, two villagers from the mountainous part of Narathiwat explained why they had volunteered to be community researchers.

> Khun A: "I am formerly from Nakhon Si Thammarat. I came 40 years ago. At that time fish was plentiful. Now the water is dirty. In one day it is difficult to get even 10 fish… I have informed the government

department, they did not pay attention. I was appointed a security guard by the council that is supposed to protect the hills and wildlife, but the officials themselves are selling the animals. I was sacked. Thank God there is this project, we try and join".

(Interview, Narathiwat, 27 January 2012)

Khun B. "The river … The people did not care… they use electric shocks to stun the fish so that they can catch a lot of fish. We took our own initiatives: we introduced our own system, to safeguard fish species, to clear the river of rubbish. The initiatives started before the project began. After the project there are many places that are protected by people".

(Interview, Narathiwat, 27 January 2012)

The emphasis on what communities can do for themselves is clear from the responses above. At the meetings, frustrations were also expressed at the draining of wetlands without proper consultation with people who then have to abandon their rice fields and live with the disappearance of valuable breeding grounds for fish (among the roots of sago trees), and the loss of wallowing grounds for buffaloes.

An academic at PSU who has been working with the network of villages for twenty years, explained the relationship between the villages and the university:

"We never failed them. They wanted exposure and education. They wanted ways to make their frustrations known. We exposed them to the outside, took them to Malaysia, (Terengganu) to see how others live and to Indonesia. We started with exposing them to the university. They make the decisions about what they want to do. Through the bi-monthly meetings, the exposure and some actions that they have initiated themselves, they saw how strong they can be if they are united... Some villagers are also generating new knowledge through observation. One village is rejuvenating the river near their place. While doing so they make observations and learn about the habits of specific types

of fish, their habitat and food habits. They then tell me what they have observed. They are my teachers, but they say I am theirs".

*(Interviews, key respondent,
25 January 2012, 12 February 2012)*

The tentative conclusion that could be drawn from the above narratives is that discourses about the environment provide an avenue for channelling frustrations resulting from top-down development and from socio-economic marginalization. The Research Project has become a forum for channelling discontent as well as for social learning.

In the network, there are active and less active villagers.

"Among the active villagers there are no bullets or firearms that affect their lives. Villagers who volunteer to participate as community researchers in the Project are considered active villagers".

(Interview, key respondent March 5, 2012).

Conclusion

The paper has shown the experiences of Muslims in both countries as a process of "slow violence" through covert or overt practices, often legally sanctioned and ultimately marked by displacement and loss of access to ancestral domains (Fianza 2004, Wattana 2006). Their responses in defending livelihoods or regaining access to natural resources have been described by Joan Martinez Alier (2002) as "environmentalism of the poor".

The attempt at achieving clan unity among Maranao and to dare to hope for a better future through cooperatives resonates strongly with the history, grievances, and quest for self-determination of minority groups elsewhere, including the Maori of New Zealand, the Bogainvillean of Papua New Guinea, the Inuit of Canada and the various indigenous groups of East Malaysia. In East Malaysia, disenfranchisement caused by large scale harvesting of natural resources through logging from the 1960s to the 1980s, and then oil palm plantations in mostly untitled lands claimed under customary rights by indigenous peoples, have led to similar

alliances among indigenous peoples and NGOs (Majid Cooke 2003, 2004, 2006 and 2012).

In Mindanao, cooperatives may effect change slowly and this requires leadership with new kinds of skills, of uniting not dividing the clans, of being transparent and accountable. Clearly it is change for the long term. Genealogy tracing and forming cooperatives require a stamina and support of a financial, moral and political nature because of the need to cope with the increasingly divergent interests of the Maranao community. That genealogy tracing is done by unpaid volunteers for the last 15 years is a sign of internal (grassroots) commitment. Learning by doing through the management and running of cooperatives could provide a practical training ground for new leadership.

Sociologically, genealogy tracing and the formation of cooperatives could be viewed as a process inscribed with social learning and healing, both essential for a recovery from "slow violence".

In Thailand, discourses of managing environmental degradation provide an avenue for expressing anger, frustration and socio-economic marginalization and loss of livelihoods. Enduring alliances with networks that are environmentally and socially aware have generated new knowledge and partnerships. An important outcome from such alliances lies in a new awareness about what communities themselves could do to help manage their environments and livelihoods. Similar to the Philippines, community development in Thailand relies on social learning, in which new forms of local leadership plays an important role since it is an attempt at transparent decision-making and institutionalizing leadership by example.

In Thailand, the sustainability of community development depends on whether discourses of environmentalism continue to support the strengthening of community capacities when the Research Project ends, as it is bound to in the near future. Community strength, if not supported, could prove to be tentative.

For both countries, community peace initiatives are taking place in the broader context of the political economy of militarization and violence, and are remarkable for their resilience. The question for future research and policy is how to avoid routinization from setting in so as to render meaningless initiatives built on hope and the practical embrace of the new. An additional practical question for policy then, is how to avoid elite capture.

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