

RESEARCH BRIEF

## Policy Networks in Land Problem-Solving in Chaiyaphum Province, Thailand

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All Thai governments bear the brunt of complaints regarding land issues. This is an ever-present problem, with populations demanding fair, consistent, and compromising solutions. Therefore, to resolve differences, the Federation of Farmers, the Assembly of the Poor, and the Assembly of Small-scale Farmers of the Northeast were established. The causes of the land dispute problems resulted from the declaration of various types of protected forest and conservation areas as national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, national forests, watershed areas, public interest areas, and government reserve areas which overlapped onto local village settlements. The people suffering from this issue are those who were living and working in the areas before the promulgation of the new laws. In addition, the affected areas are unclearly delineated, and the government operates illegal procedures to tackle the problems by arresting landlords and residents who were living in the area long before the announcement of these various types of forest conservation measures. The policies and laws empower only the state to deal with land disputes, and this is unfair to the people and has caused serious conflicts (Kraiylwong et al., 2005). Historically, Thai National governments have always considered the problems arising from the land policy to result from the number of affected people growing every year. The limited land areas available cannot be

distributed fairly to the public. However, this is not true because there is 130 million *rais* of land in the country with the correct documentation and of that, 100 million *rais* belong to only 10% of the people in the country, or just 6.5 million people out of a total population of 65 million. More than 60 million people have to share the remaining land. These figures relate to land tenure in the area with legitimate documents; they do not include the illegal possession of land without legitimate documents by influential capitalists. This concentration of land has been caused by the inept policies of land management by successive governments, not by the increase in population or the invasion of the land by small-scale farmers as claimed by the ruling politicians (Pinthong, 1992). However, problems arise from the public policy on land designated by the government which lacks participation from various sectors. In addition, government mechanisms to deal with these problems through a top-down management system have failed to address the key issues. This has resulted in long-lasting and still unresolved conflict.

This article summarizes the historical aspects of land issues and investigates the formation and public policy-making regarding land by the Chaiyaphum policy network to solving these problems. The government forest policy has had a severe physical effect on the people in the area, and some local

residents have been kidnapped and threatened with legal consequences and violence. Some were detained and sentenced by the courts, and these problems still persist until the present day.

Interesting points in the study included the emergence and structure of the Chaiyaphum land policy problem-solving network and the various methods of interaction with other groups and organizations outside the network to integrate the policy-driven approaches and address these land problem issues in Chaiyaphum Province, Thailand.

### **Literature Review, Related Concepts, and Theories**

This study was based on the concept of the coalition of policy networks and policy advocacy as the active, covert, or inadvertent support of a particular policy. Marsh and Rhodes (1992) defined the meaning of policy networks as many groups or organizations linked to conglomerates based on the reliance on each other's resources. Prominent groups can inhibit diverse opinions by controlling the structure and nature of dependence on the existing available resources. Wright (1988) stated that policy networks manifest themselves as the diversity of companies that are linked to other cartels by exchanging resources and dominating their business associates by controlling the structure and methodology of the exchange of resources. Smith (1997) described policy networks as referring to a series of relationships that exist and are followed among groups and governments. Policy networks are utilized when there is an exchange of information between groups of people and the government (or among different groups in diverse sectors of the government), and the exchange of such information leads to understanding, acceptance, and interest in the benefits of a policy area. However, when considering policy formulation as a map of resource use within the state, Hecló (1978) discovered that policy formulation is a complex objective which is subdivided into many separate areas with a large variety of actors in the policy processes of each specific arena/policy area. The old methods of policy analysis that followed the *iron triangle* of policy decision-making and included the government, government agencies, and interest groups

are not sufficient to adequately explain the diverse scenarios because problems related to irrigation, agriculture, and other public policies are multifaceted and complex, with an increase of actors involved with the machinations of state/government policies (Hecló, 1978). Therefore, the concept of policy networks has been intensively studied by scholars, in particular regarding the politics practiced since the 1970s. The idea of adopting policy networks relates to studying the relationships between political actors both inside and outside the government who attempt to promote their own interests in policy formulation or the relationships among these actors (Compston, 2009). Nowadays, an increasing number of diverse actors in modern societies result in weakening the power of public administration. Thus, the emergence of policy networks may be divided, following the suggestion of Rhodes and Marsh (1992), into five types lying on a continuum from integrated policy communities through professional networks, intergovernmental networks, and producer networks to loose issue networks as follows:

1. Policy communities. These involve the integration of members who have a common goal to solve the social problems they have faced to promote development. The members have a common and united understanding of the problems and issues, and they often perform activities in similar directions. The relationship between the members of policy communities is strong. They meet to exchange information regularly. The number of members has not greatly changed, and the existence of policy communities is highly stable. Dependence within the network is high, vertical, and the connection is limited within the network; it rarely expands to other networks or groups.
2. Professional networks. These are networks of people who have knowledge and professional expertise in areas such as the National Health Service and Water supply which provide public health and water services. These groups are comprised of people who have similar interests in policy issues. A distinctive feature is the specificity of the professionals who

can explain the issues and offer clarity with clear solutions. Sometimes this may have a strong and significant influence on the policy decision-making.

3. Intergovernmental networks. These comprise the networks based and operated at all levels of government agencies that coordinate and provide similar services. They are limited and specific, with restricted vertical dependence but extensive horizon articulation to provide corporate services. Relationships between these types of network are at a medium level as they have to work and share information and resources between different corporations.
4. Producer networks. These are networks involving business interest groups (both public and private sectors). If the members of this type of network have strong relationships, they can significantly influence policymaking. The integration between producer networks depends on the benefits and particular service interests of each actor.
5. Issue networks: These involve networks of shared interests. Members originate from a variety of diverse backgrounds. Hecló (1978) noted that there was not a single health policy as “health” which included a variety of issues related to problem-solving approaches such as mechanisms in health care, health insurance, and health nutrition. It is evident that many factors affect the public regarding health policies. Those involved in these issues include academics, doctors, nurses, and patients who provide and share information. The dependence of an issue network is limited and it lacks stability, with a large number of members who interact and participate. This may lead to the institution of policy when issues become public through increased attention; information is constantly exchanged and integration is profound.

Results here aptly demonstrated the problems with the Chaiyaphum land policy solving network as the main issue. The dependence of the land policy was limited, and it lacked stability because the members

were in constant flux. Occasional bargaining to join the group resulted in a bigger network; however, splits when the issue was terminated based on government policies affected accurate network operation. This issue will be discussed in more detail at the end of the article.

## Methods

Qualitative research using descriptive analytical methods was employed. The study is divided into two parts: 1) documentary research—gathering and collecting information related to the concept and theories for implementation from books, textbooks, publications, electronic databases, and interviews with the people familiar with the Chaiyaphum land policy problem-solving network, and 2) field research—studying and collecting data through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participatory observations. The study area was selected by the purposive sampling method and detailed reputable cases from the areas affected by land issues over the past 10 years, with continued activities in solving land problems and participating in possession of land in Chaiyaphum. The Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization) in Chaiyaphum identified two groups of problems in two areas: Sern Basin Conservation Group (SBCG) in the Khon San District and Thung Sum Siew Community Group (TSSCG) in the Kaset Sombun District.

The main informants in the study included three people from each Conservation Group who were selected from the leaders living and experiencing problems in the areas; three people from the Network of Land Problems in Northeast Thailand selected from experienced workers who had been working in the area for at least five years; three people from the Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization), Chaiyaphum; three people from the representatives of Land/Chairman of the Council, Baan Mankong; a representative of the Provincial Community Organization Council, District Representative; a Consultant of Chaiyaphum Community Organization selected from those who had knowledge and understanding of land issues in Chaiyaphum; three people from the Assembly of The Poor, Chaiyaphum; a member from the Northeast Land

Reform Network selected from those working on land issues and living in Chaiyaphum Province; and three people from government agencies involved in land management at the provincial, district, and local levels in Chaiyaphum Province selected from those with knowledge of land issues in Chaiyaphum Province and related issues in the study area.

## Results

Chaiyaphum Province covers an area of 12,778.3 square kilometers or 7,986,429 *rais*. It is the third largest province in the region and the eighth largest in the country. The topography consists of 50% forest and mountains with rocky layers that are unsuitable for agricultural purposes. The allocation of land resources resulted in many problems and conflicts when the forests were first declared as conservation areas according to the National Forestry Policy B.E. (2528). In addition, holding land without a certificate of ownership continued to pose difficulties when the state declared that the lands owned by residents were forest conservation areas according to state policy on forest restoration and conservation. People were forcibly evicted from the “forest” that the government had declared as various types of conservation areas. The meaning of “forest” included the desolate lands that were not owned by individuals.

Many studies have concluded that the key issue of the law on natural resource management in Thailand stems from the proprietary system which consists of the two types of state ownership and private ownership. Other types of resource management such as the customary rights system are not acceptable. The legality of these proprietary systems has caused many problems as the legal ownership system is not fully accepted and is not the only system that the people have used. Local villagers are constantly challenging the law of ownership. Their claims are usually based on historical principles whereby the villagers perceive that they have “righteousness” over the state ownership system (Rukyuttitham, 2008). Back in the reign of King Rama V, a major political change concerning “Land formation” was adopted based on Western ideology. The Royal Forest Department was established to resolve the problems caused by forest concession in the

north of the country. The Royal Forest Department was established under the Ministry of the Interior in 1896 (Unno, 2004) to conserve the forests and control the teak industry in the north of Thailand, with authority covering the whole country. The establishment of the Royal Forest Department during the reign of King Rama V of the Rattanakosin also led to a land survey to issue new title deeds of land ownership under R.S. 120 (B.E. 2445). Maps as evidence were used to issue the title deeds. Land ownership in Thailand was transformed in 1901 to the Torrens system whereby the compilation of land holdings maintained by the state guarantees an indefeasible title to those included on the official register. The ownership certification of the land at that time did not allow the landowners to fully own the land. This marked the beginning of inequality of land ownership in Thailand (Thongphrom & Nakaviboonwong, 2014).

Although the Royal Forest Department was established in 1896, there was no law authorizing the government to clearly define forest areas. Only legal control of wood and forest products was stipulated according to the regulations on Forest Preservation and Forest Management B.E. 2456 (Kraiyulwong et al., 2005). The main purpose of the establishment of the Royal Forest Department was to resolve problems in the teak industry and earn more income for the state by allowing the centralization of forest control by the federal government. In addition, the people could also take advantages of land, forests, and wilderness areas. The tradition and culture of land use were also effective in controlling the society. In other words, “forest,” especially trees, were more valuable and important than “land” in areas under the concession of the private sector because after the trees were cut for logging, there was no use for the land. The people, therefore, used the land for farming as their daily lifestyles.

Under the absolute monarchy until the people’s revolution which heralded constitutional reform in 1932, land ownership remained firmly under the control of government policy. Most of the land was still under elite possession, although the government limited the land holdings of the private sector. The public could hold no more than 50 *rais* each. This was administered to prevent foreigners from holding land. Later, the land ownership regulations were changed according



to the set conditions and government policies in each period. The structure of land ownership was last revised during the government of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat who abolished land holdings by the Revolution Announce No. 19 dated January 13, 1960, to promote private sector use of resources to stimulate economic growth. In addition, the National Economic and Social Development Plan No. 1, B.E. 2504 was launched to accelerate economic growth, and this resulted in the expansion of investment in various sectors. New forest areas were also pioneered to make use of the land resources for economic benefits. As a result, some areas were obtained from this land reclamation. The use of forest and land resources also affected the economic structure and society, while the reduction in forest areas that were not completely separated from the land was used to benefit the economic development policy. According to historical statistics, the forest area in 1961 consisted of 53.33% of the country, and this had decreased to 33.4% by 2008 (Benjachaya, 2012). In 1979, one of the main reasons for the reduction in forest areas was the political coup which accelerated the suppression of communism. In addition, the strategy employed to fight against the communists was to pioneer forest areas and build roads to increase security in the forest areas. Village communities were established as “buffer zones” between the military and the communists (Pinthong, 1992). Moreover, a policy was adopted to move people into the forest areas to increase state security and the need to develop forest areas to promote the economy, especially in the northeast of Thailand where the state encouraged expansion through the planting of economic crops (Bello, Cunningham, & Por, 1999). Later, when the political situation had been resolved, the security threat ended, but the forests were destroyed. The government sector was aware of the destruction of the forest areas and attempted to recover and conserve the forests by launching laws such as the Forest Act to protect and preserve forest areas. However, when the government declared these new laws related to forests and land, the people who had previously been encouraged by the government to live in the forests were classified overnight as invaders according to the new regulations. This situation has remained a controversy until the present day. In addition, the support of industrial capital

by the government to promote exports has now resulted in vast areas of the land falling into private possession. The labors from the agricultural sector were absorbed by the manufacturing sector following government policies aimed at the development of the export industry. Production growth has fallen in the industrial sector, causing farmers to abandon agriculture and join the industrial labor force.

The development of the National Economic and Social Development Plan No. 1 continued until 1980 and two major laws, including the Investment Promotion Act, B.E. 2520 and the Industrial Estate Authority of Thailand, B.E. 2522 were beneficial for foreign countries to invest and occupy land for industrial activities. This resulted in foreign investment accounting for 50% of the total investment. In 1988, the government of General Chatichai Choonhavan launched a policy to change the battlefield into a trading field. Land value was increased up to 10 times (Boonchai, 2014), making the value of land extremely high. When the industrial sector absorbed the labor from the agricultural sector and the value of agricultural land was lower, farmers in the agricultural sector sold their land and became the labor force in the industrial sector. Those who did not own land turned to pioneering the forest to take advantage of the land. Thus, when the forests were pioneered, farming and the residents in the area increased before the declaration of at least four major laws, including the Forest Act B.E. 2484, the Wild Animal Reservation and Protection Act, B.E. 2503, the National Park Act, B.E. 2504, and the National Reserved Forest Act, B.E. 2507. The residents found themselves living in prohibited zones according to these new government declared areas which included 230,280.65 square kilometers of National Forest Reserve, 157.87 million *rais* of forest conservation (2010) split as 45.1 million *rais* of national parks (123 sites and 25 prepared sites), 27.04 million *rais* of wildlife sanctuaries (113 sites and 7 prepared sites), 0.77 million *rais* of Forest Parks (112 sites), 0.05 million *rai* of Botanical Gardens/Arboretums (72 sites), and 84.91 million *rais* of watershed areas Class 1 and 2 (52.52 million *rais* in the forest conservation and 32.39 million *rais* outside the forest conservation. However, the next government decided to promote the policy of conserving the forest land of up to 40%

of the country's land area, which did not take into account the reality that many forest areas had been converted into arable land. In addition, the process of defining the forest reserves had an impact on land rights issues (Pongpajit & Baker, 2003), resulting in conflicts in land resource use and ownership between the government and the local people.

#### *The Beginning of the Conflicts and Establishment of the Land Policy Network*

A major turning point in the conflict occurred when the government enacted the National Forest Policy in 1985 as a guideline for management protection through the forest conservation master plan which aimed to preserve the forests at up to 40% of the country's total land area within 10 years (128 million *rais*). At that time, there were only 102.1 million *rais* of forest or 33.44% of the land area in Thailand. Therefore, an increase of 26 million *rais* of forest area was needed within 10 years (Boonchai, 2014). More than 20,000 communities totaling between 1 to 1.5 million households or around 10 million people were living in the forest areas earmarked to accomplish this 26 million *rais* increase (Benjachaya, 2012). Therefore, the government policy to increase forest areas to 40% of the country area caused conflicts with the 10 million people living and using the disputed areas. The important legislation which was the cause of these problems was the Wildlife Conservation and Protection Act, B.E 2481 which specified the forest as a protected area (forest zone). Previously, only tree cutting was restricted; however, the forest zone was set up as "forest protection" and "forest reserve." If the government desires to protect or reserve an area, the law requires that a survey must be conducted. The law states that "any benefit of any person" living in the area prior to its declaration as a protected and forest reserve zone can be revoked. The provincial committee, district officials, or forest officials had to pay financial reparation to the people whose benefits were revoked.

In the case of Northeast Thailand, the pioneers were poor and they were unable to change their status. After the announcement of the National Economic and Social Development Plan No. 1 in 1962–1963, the number of low-income families were assessed for

the first time. It was found that the income of three-quarters of the households in the northeast was below the poverty line. Very few of the households had a title deed for their land as the government did not extend the land title system to cover the highlands. Also, in 1964, the government determined that 40% of the country's land must be designated as forest zone, and it began a mapping exercise to prevent villagers from making a living in the forest areas. In 1974, 5–6 million people lived in the so-called forest areas and they were branded as invaders. It was impossible for the people to get any certificate of ownership over their land. By 1987, the number of forest invaders had increased to 10–12 million people; more than one-third of the country's population (Pongpajit & Baker, 2014). The problems of land ownership in the northeast region are long and varied, and the conflicts became more intense after the government announced the national forest policy in 1985 that defined the proportion of forest areas in two parts as follows:

1. Forest conservation areas. The goal was to maintain the forest areas at 15% of the area of the country or 48 million *rais* as mangrove conservation, watershed area Class 1, Biosphere Reserves, Botanical Gardens, and Arboretums. These areas were actively protected by the government.
2. Forest economy areas. The government designated these as plantation areas for economic benefits, comprising 25% of the country's land area or 80 million *rais*. It is the remaining forest areas from the forest conservation areas.

In the northeast of Thailand, the Department of Lands was established in 1967 with the issuance of the certificate of land ownership initiated in 1975 and land title deeds were issued in some areas in 1977 (Unno, 2004). The rigors of legal rights and the access to land rights made it extremely difficult to find ways to solve the problems of land shortages and access to land by the people. Therefore, these conflicts between the government and the people in Thailand regarding the ownership of land and forest areas still persist. The management of this proprietary

system states that, “When considering the resources available today, the Department of Lands will take up to 200 years to manage the entire land ownership system in the country” (Leonard & Narongkul Na Ayudhya, cited in Unno, 2004, p. 106). An attempt was made by the new public actors to integrate the groups, organizations, and land problem networks across the country before the Thai Land Reform Network was established. The process of community title deeds was recommended and advanced as a policy measure during the government of Abhisit Vejjajiva, and this was considered as an alternative to the land ownership system.

With regard to the forest problems in Northeast Thailand, the study and survey of the continuing conflicts between the government and the people concerning the arable lands in the forest areas can best be summarized as follows:

1. The declaration of forest areas resulted in zones which overlapped the lands and residences of the people previously living in the area.
2. The issuance of illegal certificates of ownership was a conspiracy between the government and private capitalists to obtain certificates of ownership of the public areas of the community as well as the issuance of different types of certificate of ownership relating to the same land area or for land which overlapped with the complainants.
3. The people did not receive certificates of ownership as the land areas were not included in the land survey which was the basis for issuing title deeds for both arable and residential areas.
4. The private sector was allowed to exploit national forest reserve areas according to the national forest policy, whereby 25% of the total forest area was set aside as a forest economy area. In particular, the private sector rented some forest areas to plant eucalyptus according to Article 16 and Section 20 of the National Reserved Forest Act. Some areas of the eucalyptus plantation overlapped with the land used by villagers. Chemicals were also used on the plantations which resulted in soil degradation.
5. Private companies were allowed to lease land and operate businesses that increased both noise and air pollution, and these resulted in adverse ecological changes in the community through mineral concessions, milling industries, and the salt boiler business.
6. State enterprises were encouraged to rent land for use; however, some land overlapped on the existing areas that had been settled on by the local people. This led to disputes regarding the overlapping areas between the government and the local inhabitants.
7. Military organizations took advantages of the lands which were restricted and reserved as military training grounds which also overlapped on land settled by the local people.
8. Public land areas were utilized by announcing them as animal raising sites or establishment government centers which overlapped on the living areas of the community. Also, the private sector was granted access to areas that the local people regarded as public areas.
9. Certificates of ownership were issued by the government for public land areas which were then traded by organizations and were no longer public areas of the country.
10. There were conflicts regarding land management between the government and the people. The government maintained a monopoly on land management, so access to or the management of land by the public as an alternative form of cherishing and safeguarding the land resources become impossible. As a result, many of these conflicts regarding land problems still persist to the present day.

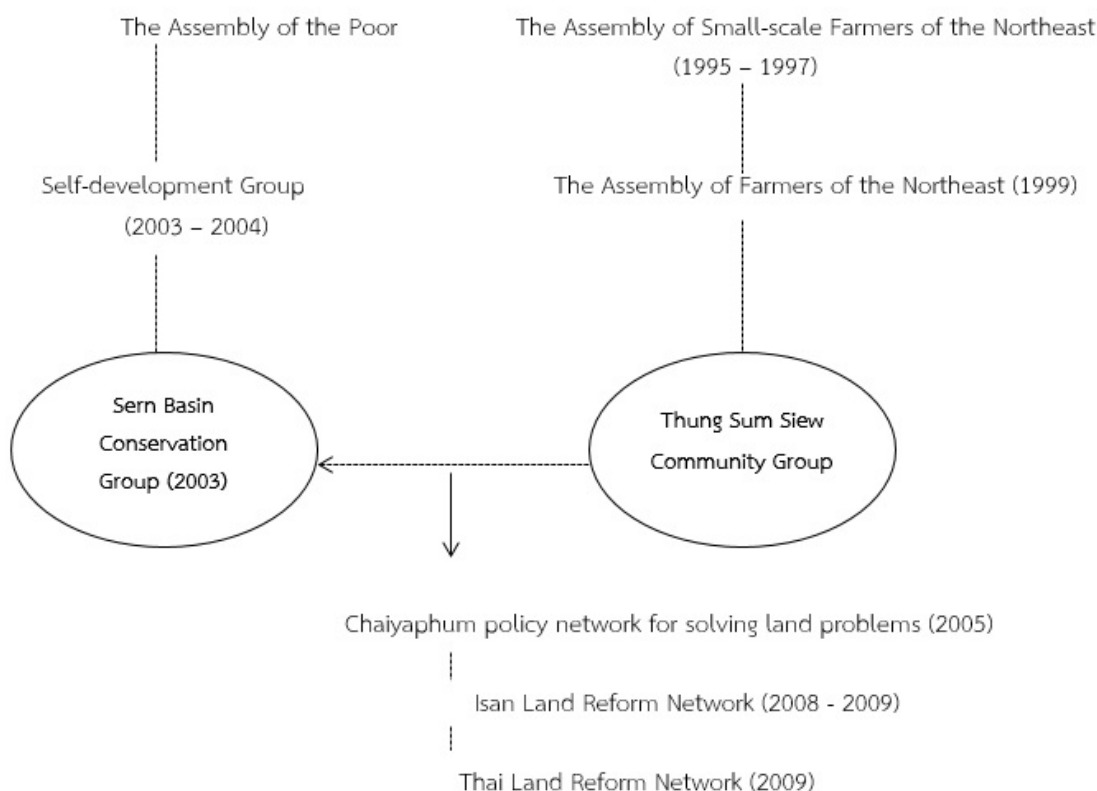
The historical context of the government forest and land reform policy of Thailand was based on Western ideology whereby the land title was deeded by the establishment of the Royal Forest Department to control and manage forest and land resources of the country. The issuance of policies related to forests and lands in each historical period have affected land

ownership and usage to the present day, and they are the root causes of the problems which cannot be separated from this historical context since land is regarded as a useful economic, political, social, and cultural resource. To understand and fully comprehend the origins and sources of the problems affecting this research, a broad perspective is required before summarizing the results. The developments of the forest and land policy in each historical period of Thailand are summarized in Table 1 which presents a simple visualization of the problems faced in the research area from a wide perspective.

This study aimed to assess the efficiency of the Chaiyaphum policy network in solving land problems by focusing on two communities: SBCG and the TSSCG. Both groups were coordinated as the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems in 2005 to present and promote a policy of resolving land issues in the area through a thorough comprehension of the interaction between external partners in the network to respond to land issues.

According to Figure 1, development of the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems was established to assess the diverse problems of the areas affected by the declaration of various types of forest conservation based on the National Forestry Policy in 1985 that precipitated the evacuation of the people from the forest areas. As a result, the villagers dwelling in both areas were affected by the policy as follows:

1. In five sub-districts of Khon San District, Chaiyaphum Province many villagers suffered from the declaration of these conservation areas. They protested and demanded their rights by filing a letter to the government agency in the area to slow down their evacuation from the forest conservation area. However, their grievances were not addressed and resolved fairly. Therefore, the people in the five sub-districts bonded together as one at a larger



**Figure 1.** The characteristics and development of the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems can be summarized as follows.



**Table 1***Developments of the Forest and Land Policy in Each Historical Period of Thailand.*

The policy in each period	Content and approaches	Effects/problems
1. Forest and land policy during the reign of King Rama V	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Implementing a Western-style land management</li> <li>– Establishment of the Royal Forest Department in 1896</li> <li>– Issuing land title deeds from 1901</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– This did not greatly affect the people who were still allowed to use the land freely. Title deeds were also concentrated in the central area due to the limitations of technology and officers.</li> </ul>
2. Forest and land policy after the Siamese revolution in 1932 to 1961	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The need to distribute land holdings to the people in the country was recognized</li> <li>– The Forest Act B.E. 2484</li> <li>– Limited land holdings for both private and public sectors of not more than 50 <i>rais</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– This affected the interests of many land-holding elites which led to negotiation and compromise.</li> <li>– This did not affect people in other parts of the country, despite the issuance of the Forestry Act, B.E. 2484.</li> </ul>
3. Forest and land policy after the National Economic Development Plan, B.E. 2504	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Abolition of limited land holdings of 50 <i>rais</i></li> <li>– Stimulating the economy by expanding the area of cultivation and accelerating the growth of infrastructure through the extensive use of forest resources</li> <li>– Promoting the export industry</li> <li>– Road construction, pioneering the forest and encouraging villagers to set up communities in the forest zone as buffer zones between the military and the communists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Forest areas were reduced</li> <li>– Villagers lived in the forest areas according to government policy</li> <li>– Land reclamation and area relocation occurred after the soil degradation</li> <li>– Industrial expansion resulted in the growth of cities while rural areas lagged behind</li> </ul>
4. National Forest Policy, B.E. 2528	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– National Forest Policy Announcement, B.E. 2528 that 40% of the country was needed as forest area</li> <li>– Forest areas were divided into two parts: 15% was forest conservation area and 25% was forest economic area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Declaration of various types of forest reserve areas which overlapped residential areas of the local people</li> <li>– Evacuation of people from the forests and legal action administered to push people out of the areas according to the declaration of forest reserve areas</li> </ul>
5. Policy of converting assets to capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Accelerating the issuance of individual proprietary rights documents for conversion into investment value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Trading of land ownership</li> <li>– Those with buying power could own a lot of land</li> </ul>
6. Demand for land reform by the community proposed by the people	Land reform in which people participated in the planning and land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Establishing the Chaiyaphum land policy problem-solving network</li> </ul>

level and they joined the Assembly of the Poor to protest their unlawful evacuation. The Assembly of the Poor is a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Thailand which aims to help the people affected by development projects and industrial growth by becoming involved in the process so that they can benefit from the projects and determine a solution to the dispute by accelerating the issuance of certificates of ownership on the land. Later, when the Assembly of the Poor had failed to resolve the problem, the people turned to a self-development group who worked as practitioners to solve the land problems and separated themselves from the Assembly of the Poor. The self-development group moved into the area of Khon San District, Chaiyaphum Province and coordinated with the people in the five sub-districts to establish the SBCG in 2003.

2. The people of Thung Sum Siew community were also affected by the inaccuracy of the demarcation of Thung Sum Siew public places for animal husbandry which had overlapped on 830 *rais* of arable areas since 1932. The villagers submitted an objection letter and requested for a new survey in 1932 but the problem was never addressed, and simply passed on through many successive governments. A number of appointments were made with the committee responsible for administering the new survey. Finally, an announcement by the National Forest Policy in 1985 declared the disputed zone as a public area where no one was allowed to do anything. Fifty households were affected by this announcement. They started to fight by joining the public movement called the Assembly of Small-scale Farmers of the Northeast in 1999 to push the government to end the evacuation of the villagers and expedite the issuance of land title documents to members of the Thung Sum Siew community. Later, the people separated from the Assembly of Small-scale Farmers of the Northeast for a short time before joining together with the

SBCG to find solutions and resolve the land problems in Chaiyaphum Province. This led to the establishment of the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems; and the members joined the Isan Land Reform Network and the Thai Land Reform Network in 2008 and 2009, respectively. This resulted in a common policy for addressing land issues in the form of community title deed in 2010.

This study determined that the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems expanded its mission in 2008 to become a subgroup within the Isan Land Reform Network working out of the Land Reform Office, Khon San District, Chaiyaphum Province. Some public leaders from the Isan Land Reform Network were also linked to the Thai Land Reform Network in driving the activities and promoting and proposing policies for solving the problem of land in 2010. This is summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2 demonstrates how the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems interacts with non-network partners at three levels: the area level or provincial level, the region level which is Northeast Thailand, and the national level as a partner with the Thai Land Reform Network and the P-Move in proposing solutions to the problems to the government.

The results of the study on the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems in Northeast Thailand can be concluded by addressing five main points as follows.

1. Development of the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems resulted from the determination of state policies related to forest and land which affected the dwelling areas of the people. The enactment of the law relating to forests and land adversely impacted the people living in areas declared as forest conservation zones and various forms of public places, causing the people to suffer from being forcibly evacuated and removed from the disputed area. The determination of the enactment of the policies related to forest and land lacked adequate forethought by the government and neglected proper attention

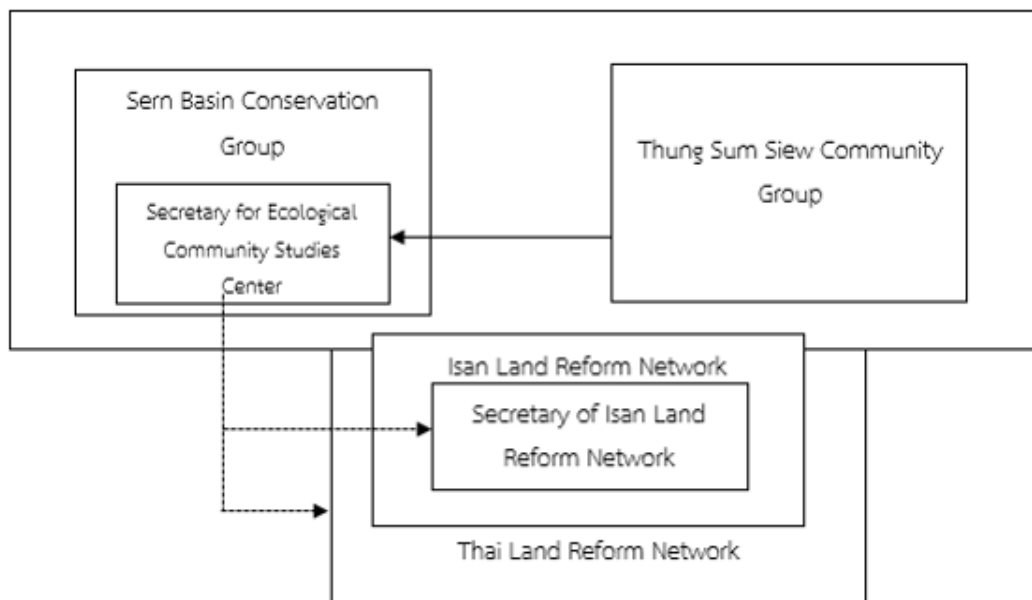


Figure 2. Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems.

to resolving the problems that ensued. The dispute became complicated and exacerbated with the eviction of villagers from the declared areas and neglect of issuance of title deeds for the arable land to the villagers prior to the publication and enactment of the policies relating to forests and lands, the many changes of government and government policy over time, and the transfer of responsibility of this issue to the local government. All these issues resulted in the integration of two problem groups (SBCG and TSSCG ) which linked together to form the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems in 2005, and joined with external partners comprising of the Isan Land Reform Network and the Thai Land Reform Network in incorporating to push the community title deed policy at the national level.

2. The Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems was originated and developed as a result of the removal of the rights of the local people to use arable land, following the government policy that declared three types of forest areas as national forest reserves, wildlife sanctuaries, and public areas. These areas overlapped with the arable lands of the

villagers in six sub-districts of two districts comprising five sub-districts in Khon San District and one sub-district in Kaset Sombun District, Chaiyaphum Province. Initiation of the evacuation of the people from these newly declared protected forest areas began after the enactment of the National Forest Policy in 1985. People who were affected by this evacuation policy started the movement to request the government and government agencies to solve the problems caused by the policy. In addition, the two groups also joined people movements at the national level such as the Assembly of the Poor and the Assembly of Small-scale Farmers of the Northeast. However, these people movements failed to resolve the land problems. Therefore, the people organized movements for those suffering from the land problems which involved people in five sub-districts of Khon San District, Chaiyaphum Province as the SBCG and those in one sub-district of Kaset Sombun District, Chaiyaphum Province as the TSSCG. Later, the two groups joined forces to form the Chaiyaphum policy network to solve the land problems at the provincial level through the Chaiyaphum Community

Council to address the important land issues and respond to the need of the Chaiyaphum policy network to solve the land problems arising since 2005 to the present day.

3. The structure of the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems is in the form of a committee consisting of a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, and assistant secretary, finance and accounting member, and two to five committee members from seven areas having land title issue problems. The consultants and the network secretary are responsible for dealing with incoming information and mobilizing resources. They coordinate with each other to write project requests for budgets from outside sources to support network activities and liaise with external network partners as well as determining network movement. In addition, network rules and regulations are used as a basis for the operation of subgroups of the network, such as land use sharing rules within the neighborhood using community title deeds, prohibition restrictions, and rules of access to common areas, as well as dealing with disputes and the rights to use the land areas. Each subgroup within the network uses the structure of the committee to operate in the area. The structure of each group is similar to that of the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems.
4. The Chaiyaphum policy network interacts with the external network partners to solve land problems following the procedures and relationships existing before the establishment of the Chaiyaphum policy network in 2005. SBCG had a relationship with the Assembly of the Poor which is a large people movement at the national level. TSSCG was involved with the Assembly of Small-scale Farmers of the Northeast which is also a people movement at the national level consisting of members who have experience of the land problems from every province in the northeast. The relationship between the Chaiyaphum policy network and external

network partners involved with the people movements at the national level to solve the land problems has influenced the connection between the group leaders and the external partners. The Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems subsequently joined with the Isan Land Reform Network and the Thai Land Reform Network. The operators of the Isan Land Reform Network and the Thai Land Reform Network who formerly joined with the Assembly of the Poor and the Assembly of Small-scale Farmers of the Northeast have constantly pressured the government to enact the community title deed policy as the solution to the dispute and the use of land as collective ownership. All these networks evolved to attempt to resolve the different approaches and practices used in diverse areas of the assembly. The overall aim was to integrate and cooperate with the external networks comprising the Isan Land Reform Network and the Thai Land Reform Network to push the concept of collective ownership in the form of community title deeds. The incorporation of government policy to ratify community title deeds for the people living in the area is the core concept of the Chaiyaphum policy network to solve these long-standing land issues.

5. The proposed changes in the policy can be summarized at two levels.
  - 5.1 Change at the area level: The implementation of the community title deed concept was applied to and converted into community land management as an action plan in both areas of SBCG and TSSCG. The rules of land use in common areas were proposed to be in the form of common community property for the use of land resources. The committee group of the community considered the use of common land. There was a greater understanding of community land management in the form of community title deeds as a change in policy in the area.

5.2 Change at the national level: Scant policy change was effected after pushing for this change of land ownership as community title deeds. The Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems joined with external partners including the Isan Land Reform Network. Together. These groups pressured the government for change, leading to the filing of an application for registration of community title deeds for the TSSCG and the Kok Yao Community as one of the members of the SBCG. Two out of 35 land areas in the national park have been waiting to be considered for registration of community title deeds since 2010 when the government of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva issued the regulation of the Office of the Prime Minister regarding community title deeds.

## Discussion

1. The Chaiyaphum policy network was established to resolve the long-standing land problem issues generated by the government policy on forest and land that affected the local people and led to common problems on different levels regarding diverse situations of land problems in Chaiyaphum Province. Those people experiencing land problems suffered alone until the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems came to their aid. The two groups experienced land conflicts due to government policies and legislation. There were also other, more relevant and diverse actors including the government, the villagers, state enterprises, local government agencies, sub-district Administrative Organizations, the Royal Forestry Department, soldiers, academics, NGOs, the local press, and the Center to Study and Develop Law for Human Rights.
2. The structure of the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems is classified as an issue network in terms of the network concept by Heclo (1978). Heclo identified the nature of issue networks as not only a single policy but also including a variety of issues related to problem-solving, and, therefore, best considered as issue networks which can be affected by any policy. The concept of issue networks as discussed by Heclo is consistent with the description proposed by Marsh and Rhodes (1992) suggesting that they are unstable and consist of many members with limited dependence. Moreover, the issue networks only solve occasional problems, and they have no bargaining power compared to other types of network policies such as community policies which are more stable with restricted membership. The power to dominate government policymaking has vertical dependence, limited horizontal connectivity, and long-standing status. Therefore, the structure of the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems can be classified as the issue network described by Marsh and Rhodes (1992) and Heclo (1978). In addition, the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems is a policy network that contrasts with community policy which has the power to negotiate and dominate government policy. Also, a small number of the members have multiple resources. Thus, community policy has long-lasting and effective power to dominate and negotiate with the government.
3. The advocacy of the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems is considered both at the area level and at the provincial level. A request was made to suspend prosecution proceedings, and the letter was submitted to the relevant government agencies and external organizations to recognize the problems and help to suspend or terminate the removal of the housing of the villagers in the area. At the national level, the villagers joined the advocacy for community title deed policy as a result of lessons learned in the past by the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems with external network partners. Therefore, the policy advocacy coalition was the result of having a broker. Sabatier (1988) described the condition of policy advocacy



coalition as a broker that connects the network to the learning and work experience. These results from a profound comprehension of the outer layer as the strategies used to solve the problems in the land reform areas and land management by the community. SBCG and TSSCG proposed effective land management in their own areas and they later adopted the inner policy following the principles of community title deeds. Philosophy and strategy or deep-core policy as community title deeds were absorbed at this level of learning.

4. Policy change resulted from the push for community title deeds by the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems and joined as a policy advocacy coalition with external partners including the Isan Land Reform Network and the Thai Land Reform Network. This was a political issue and a push by the “group” who suffered from land problems throughout the country as a result of public policy during periods of unstable government. Thus, the proposal for the government to ratify community title deeds by the Chaiyaphum policy network to solve land problems was superior because it integrated with partners at the national level as the Thai Land Reform Network. The political crisis made the populist Democrat Party, which was the government at that time, more effective in responding to the community title deed policy. With pressure from only a few hundreds of people, the government accepted the community title deed policy as a regulation of the Office of the Prime Minister on the provision of community title deed allocation in 2010.

However, although the regulation of the Office of the Prime Minister has existed on the granting of community title deeds from 2010 until now, only three out of 430 communities have been issued with these documents. This delay has been caused by legal red tape. Thai law is complex and different government departments share overlapping responsibility. The regulation of the Office of the Prime Minister concerning community title deeds has a lower legal order than Acts such as the Forest Conservation Act. Even though community title deeds have been approved for operation in the area, this is contrary to the Forest Conservation Act and

the Wildlife Protection Act. Therefore, it is not possible to administer community title deeds in the area. In addition, the Thung Sum Siew Community is an area under the care and utilization of the Saponthong Tambon Administrative Organization, and this area has been transferred with the missions from the government agency under the Determining Plans and Process of Decentralization to the Local Government Organization Act, B. E. 2542. As a result, the application for registration for community title deeds by Thung Sum Siew Community was contrary to the operation of the Tambon Administrative Organization and remains as a prosecution court case until today. In addition, successive changes of government have also hampered policy changes. Whenever there is a new government, the local people have to start applying pressure for change all over again. The Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems has joined the rally calling for meaningful solutions. This is consistent with the explanation offered by Limmanee (2015) who suggested that in the case of issue networks, the individuals involved in the policy are always changing. Therefore, the policy network operation lacks continuity. This can be seen from the case of arable land requests which are often chased by the people; however, the government merely appoints a special committee to consider each case. Similarly, the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems also face the same problems. Despite the fact that the policy is promoted at both provincial and national levels, government agencies establish committees to consider each case one at a time. This is done according to the authority of the government agencies as ordered by the higher authorities. At the national level, when the government changes, the policy also changes and the proposals of the network are not taken seriously for implementation.

5. The direction of the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems by utilizing policy advocacy coalition with external partners is concisely explained by Smith (1993) and (1997) who described deep-core policies as policy-intensive networks of interconnected

communities. However, the policy community may also break down into other types of networks. As factors change or more actors and problems arise, these networks further split into sub-categories so that the actors involved in the policy become more diverse, which further complicates the negotiations. For example, according to the diversity and awareness of the current problems, the social structural framework dissipates and the problems within the society become disseminated. The iron triangles as described by Hecló (1978) metamorphose within the issue networks as a result of the regular changes in social issues. This explains why, in one era, Thailand's forest and land policy was set by policymakers with the beneficiaries limited to community-based partnerships. When these ideas are challenged and a wide variety of new issues and areas exists, as well as a growing number of actors in the arena, the problems in different areas become more diverse. Similarly, government policy regarding forest and land has also changed over time. When forest and land problems are continually presented and promoted such that the society recognizes and understands the real situation, then these issues can be grouped together as community policy and highlighted as unjust when the society begins to recognize and become aware of the problems through regular updates. This affects the change in social thought. For example, Read (1992) described the changing relationship between the cigarette industry and the state who had shared enormous benefits over 250 years. Cigarette production for the people in the UK involved only a handful of companies as partners with the state, and they monopolized the interests as iron triangles through the government, the big tobacco companies, and government officials. Later, groups of people such as the British Medical Association and anti-smoking citizens tried to encourage the public to become aware of the dangers of smoking as the main cause of cancer and heart disease. Both these

groups were not members of the cigarette manufacturer network and had no interest in producing cigarettes. They presented their opinions toward public issue which can be classified as a health issue network. These groups recognized the danger of smoking cigarettes and the monopoly of production as well as public ignorance regarding the health issues. They communicated publicly to increase the population's understanding of the danger of cigarette smoking and change the behavior of consumers using credible scientific reasons. Their campaign was successful and increased public awareness to the dangers of smoking. This allegory is similar to the aims of the Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems by stimulating and presenting land issues to society and joining with other networks outside the group, namely the Isan Land Reform Network and the Thai Land Reform Network to push the deep core belief policy of community title deeds as the solution to the problem of land concentration in the country, and to prevent invasions of land by capital groups with purchasing power, as well as preventing the change of land ownership. Campaigning in the society also increases public awareness and understanding of the problems. Although these efforts have not yet been able to push the government to set a policy that responds to the demands of the people, they are a force for social stimulation on land issues. Activity movements and regular mobilization may cause a change in community policy regarding forest and land ownership issues if the society is aware of the problems. Smith (1997) stated that some issues are at the margins, but if they generate increased concern and deep involvement, they can change community policy. However, these factors depend on the change in the situation and the environment. Organizing campaigns to raise public awareness can also change government policy in the future. In addition, igniting a continuous and widespread interest can generate reform.

## Conclusion

The Chaiyaphum policy network for solving land problems was established as a result of government policy during the volatile political situation in 1979. The government policy aimed to expand economic areas as an accelerated development program through forest pioneering in the northeast as commercial areas by building roads and relocating people in the buffer zone between the state and the communists. When the conflict was resolved, the forests were greatly depleted, and the government set new plans to regenerate the forest areas. However, the physical condition of the forest had changed, and now there was no forest to protect as a restricted area. At that time, there were only two proprietary systems for land ownership—state ownership and private ownership. There were no other alternatives such as a collective ownership system managed by the community or traditional land use. This led to conflict between the government and the people regarding the use of land resources which ultimately resulted in the integration of various groups having the common problem of disputed land ownership with the government. This situation expanded to become a policy network on land problems with a policy advocacy coalition addressing issues at the area level to the national level and connected from small networks to large networks. Solutions to these problems of land management, whereby people should participate in community ownership schemes, were also promoted as public policy. However, these land ownership disputes between the local villagers and the government remain unresolved in Northeast Thailand to the present day.

## Ethical clearance:

The study was approved by the institution.

## Conflict of interest:

None.

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