

ROLES OF ACTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF
ORGANIC FARMING IN BAAN NON-YANG, AMPHOE
KUD-CHUM, YASOTHON PROVINCE



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บทบาทของตัวแสดงในการพัฒนาระบบเกษตรอินทรีย์ในบ้านโนนยาง อำเภอกุฉุขุม จ. ยโสธร



วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต

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เกษตรอินทรีย์ในประเทศไทยได้ถูกหล่อหลอมขึ้นจากหลากหลายปัจจัยท่ามกลางบริบทเชิงโครงสร้างด้วยความ
 ขัดแย้งของการพัฒนาในประเทศไทยตั้งแต่ปีพ.ศ. 2513 เกษตรอินทรีย์กำเนิดขึ้นและถูกพัฒนาจนกลายเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการ
 ขับเคลื่อนการเกษตรทางเลือก และรูปแบบของเกษตรอินทรีย์ยังได้รับการเปลี่ยนแปลงจากพลวัตรของบริบทที่เกี่ยวข้องกับตัว
 แสดงจำนวนมากอีกด้วย การเกษตรอินทรีย์ในชุมชนตำบลโนนยางเป็นตัวอย่างที่สามารถเรียกได้ว่าเป็นการพัฒนาในระดับจุลภาค
 ที่ซึ่งองค์กรภาครัฐ เอกชนและองค์กรที่ไม่แสวงหากำไรต่างก็มีส่วนร่วมในเครือข่ายเกษตรอินทรีย์ของชุมชนแห่งนี้ ด้วยการเจรจา
 ต่อรองและการให้ความร่วมมือภายในเครือข่ายนี้ได้ช่วยให้การขับเคลื่อนเกษตรอินทรีย์ของชุมชนยังคงดำรงอยู่และพัฒนาได้มาจนถึง
 ทุกวันนี้

วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้ได้ถูกสร้างขึ้นจากบทวิเคราะห์ของผู้ที่มีส่วนเกี่ยวข้องในกรณีศึกษาของเครือข่ายเกษตรอินทรีย์ใน
 ชุมชนตำบลโนนยาง ภายในบทวิเคราะห์จะเน้นถึงการอภิปรายทฤษฎี food regime ผลจากการวิเคราะห์แสดงให้เห็นว่า
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 อย่างไรก็ตาม ในความเป็นจริงแล้วยังเกี่ยวข้องกับประเด็นเรื่องอำนาจอธิปไตยในเมล็ดพันธุ์ การสร้างเสริมสุขภาพที่ดีและตัวเลือก
 ในการบริโภคของตลาดอีกด้วย โดยความสำเร็จที่แท้จริงมาจากการเคลื่อนไหวระหว่างผู้ที่เกี่ยวข้องและทรัพยากรภายในระบบ
 มากกว่าเรื่องของระบบเชิงคุณค่าที่ต่อต้านระบอบอาหาร ซึ่งภายในความเคลื่อนไหวนั้น เกษตรกรต่างต้องมีความกระตือรือร้น
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Organic agriculture in Thailand has been shaped by the agency factors with contestation on development in structural contexts since the 1970s. It emerged and developed as a part of alternative agriculture movement, and transformed in dynamic contexts with involvement of various actors. Organic farming in Non-Yang community can be perceived as the microcosm of the development. POs, NGOs, GOs and private sectors are involved into the community as actors of organic farming network. With negotiation and cooperation in the network, the movement has persisted and become viable until today.

The thesis was conducted with a stakeholder analysis on the case of organic farming network in Non-Yang. The analysis was emphasized to dialogue with the food regime theory. The results suggest that the community-based organic farming movement does not achieve its success because of values. Nevertheless, it actually holds the concepts of seed sovereignty, health production, and alternative market. It is the mobilization of stakeholders and resources within the system, rather than the value-based mobilization against food regime. Within the mobilization and process of compromise, farmers have more space to bargain, connect with supporters, negotiate with different actors, and keep learning in the changing society.

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Yan-ting Huang

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Rationale

Organic agriculture, without a universal definition, has been interpreted and approached variously by different actors since it emerged in response to the negative impacts on peasantries brought by industrialization and globalization (Buch-Hansen 2001). For farmers, it leads to a niche market with higher and more stable price (Poupon 2013), while activists and intellectuals perceive it as counter-hegemony movement toward conventional agriculture system (Prapimphan 2017). Although some argue the role of government and agribusinesses to be limiting and co-opting the development of organic agriculture, the two actors are indispensable to offer institutionalized support through national policy making and considerable market demand (Buch-Hansen 2001; Michelsen 2001; Delforge 2004). It turns out that organic farming does not mean going back to traditional peasantries; instead, structural forces such as commercialization, globalization and growing civil society have brought multiple actors to influence agricultural practice and interact with one another. Since various actors have different ideas and expect disparate outcomes from organic farming, as Natedao (2011a) has pointed out, there are contesting meanings behind organic agriculture. The practice of organic farming cannot be produced by farmers only, but is produced through their response to system and interaction among different actors. It is thus important to discuss how multiple actors play their roles in the network, and how the interaction shapes organic farming at community level.

Starting from the 1960s, Green Revolution speeded up agricultural commercialization and economic development in new industrialized countries (NICs) in Southeast Asia. Urbanization and globalization have not only transferred the countries from agriculture-based to industrial economies, but also brought up socio-economic transformation in rural agrarian societies. Terry Grandstaff *et. al* (2008) referred the transformation in Northeast Thailand as “rainfed revolution,” which started from the innovation of rainfed rice species. The adoption of RD 6, a new species of sticky rice released by Rice Department in 1977, along with fertilizers and other technical innovations offered stable production of food and enabled the diversification of rural livelihood in the Northeast. While agricultural work became less labor-intensive, non-farm income and remittance sent by migrant workers have made up more proportion in sources of rural households’ income. Through investing extra income to the mechanization and technical innovations of farming, agricultural production has also been improved (Keyes 2014; Rambo 2017; Rigg 2006; Rigg & Nattapoolwat 2001).

The transformation, however, has brought both changes and challenges to rural villagers. Adopting chemical fertilizers and pesticides to cope with insect and yield problems have also caused environmental degradation and threatened farmers’ health (Rigg & Nattapoolwat 2001). Farmers unable to afford fertilizers became in-debt, and some even lost their land (Pasuk & Baker 1995). To adapt the changes, as many scholars have argued, villagers have either started non-farm

career in urban areas or adopted new techniques in farm work. The adaption has transferred them from typical peasant and diversified rural livelihood (Rigg & Nattapoolwat 2001; Naruemon & McCargo 2011; Keyes 2014; Rambo 2017). While there has been certain degree of deagrarianization occurring in the region (Rigg & Nattapoolwat 2001), organic farming, offering environmental friendly production and relative stable price, is also one of the options for farmers who face difficulties in conventional agriculture. In the study on farmers who converted to organic rice farming in Northeast Thailand, Natedao (2011b) discussed the conversion as one of the choices for villagers to adapt into the shifting world:

“They have a number of options open to them: (1) to persist with conventional rice farming plus carry out wage labor or other non-farm activities; (2) to shift to organic rice farming plus carry out wage labor or other non-farm activities; (3) to try a combination of conventional and organic rice farming, plus carry out wage labor or other non-farm activities; (4) and, to abandon rice farming altogether and turn to wage labor.”

Shifting to organic farming does not mean simply sticking to traditional peasantry and total exemption from contemporary agrarian problems. Agrarian transformation has brought rural Southeast Asia to a society with diverse livelihood and involved it into wider network with multiple actors. Edelman (2005) mentioned that villagers in present world have to face not only subsistence

crisis such as droughts, floods, insects, crops blights, animal diseases and plummeting price, but also new risks and more uncertainties along with economic liberalization and institutional restructuring. Prapart (2011), applying the idea, further stated that with wider network built by extended families and interaction with new institutions, policies and other political change can influence rural livelihood more easily. The framework does not only fit into conventional agriculture. Buch-Hansen (2001), adopting Hirsch's idea of multiple social-political forces in Thai environmentalism, discussed the sustainable agriculture system in Thai society and argued:

“To ensure the sustainability of resource conserving and non-toxic production methods in agriculture, the role of institutions cannot be underestimated¹. This covers community groups, marketing organizations and other support institutions at the local level, but also very much institutions at the national level, such as certification of ecological produces, extension services, credit facilities and not the least property rights.”

When Buch-Hansen conducted his research, there was not yet a strong official extension network to support ecological farming in Thailand. Promotion of organic agriculture from national level has increased after 2006 *coup de' tat*, and brought support as well as restrictions and negotiation to organic farmers (Heis 2015). Organic Farming group of Non-Yang Community, Kud-chum District,

¹ The original text of Buch-Hansen was “...cannot be overestimated.” But judging from the session title and the following sentences, it might be a typo from “cannot be underestimated.”

Yasothon Province started up its community enterprise during this time. Through observing the practice and activities of organic farming of the group, we can see that the practice involves not merely the farmers, besides, it is mobilized and shaped through the interaction between multiple actors. Based on the great influence from the group in neighboring sub-districts and Alternative Agriculture Network, the group has been working with provincial Agricultural Land Reform Office (*sor por kor*) and provincial office of the Department of Agriculture (*kor sor*) to promote organic production in name of Sufficiency Economy. It also has contracts with T.C. Pharmaceutical Ltd. (known as Red Bull Company, *Krating Daeng*) to sell their organic rice. Organic farming here involves the interaction between farming group, other villagers and cooperatives, NGO activists, official sectors and private business. Is there any other actor in the network of shaping organic farming in the community? What are the motivations that have driven these actors into the network? How do they interact with one another to meet their expectation of organic farming? How has this mode of organic agriculture developed and stayed in the community? In order to answer the questions left after I visited the community, the thesis studies the development and persistence of organic farming in Non-Yang through analyzing the actors from the community.

1.2. Research questions

The research would aim to answer following main question:

- How have different actors in Non-Yang Community interacted in the development of organic farming?

The sub-questions under this question that the research would aim to answer are:

- 1.) What are the political, economic contexts and social forces that influence villagers' conversion to organic farming?
- 2.) How have various actors worked and/or negotiated with one another in the making of organic farming in Non-Yang Community?
- 3.) How has Non-Yang Organic Farming Group overcome the obstacles and become viable?

1.3. Objectives of the study

The objectives of the research would be:

- 1.) To explore the interaction among different actors in Non-Yang Community in the development of organic farming.
- 2.) To identify the political, economic contexts and social forces that made villagers transfer to organic farming.
- 3.) To study the cooperation and/or negotiation among various actors in the making of organic farming in Non-Yang Community.
- 4.) To analyze how Non-Yang Organic Farming Group has overcome the obstacles and become viable.

1.4. Research methodology

Since the thesis is to study how various actors in the community interacted in the development of organic farming, I would like to construct the knowledge through adopting qualitative methods into case study. Observation was taken in participatory field research in the community. In-depth interview on key informants were conducted, including interviewees such as farmers in organic farming groups, community leaders, the officials in concerned governments department like Agricultural Land Reform Office or provincial office of the Department of Agriculture, private enterprises, NGO workers and other concerned groups. Focus group discussion would also be taken toward school students, conventional farmers and non-farmer villagers. In addition to primary sources of data, secondary sources such as official and non-official statistics and publications, as well as related press released by media would be assessed.

1.4.1. Criteria of case study selection

The case study of the research would be set for the organic farming group in Non-Yang Community, Kam-maed Sub-district, Kud-chum District, Yasothon Province. As would be mentioned in literature review, the district has been famous in its alternative development activities, including organic farming projects. Organic farming in Non-Yang has also received strong influence from the NGO workers and successful organic rice cooperative in the region. Non-Yang Community was selected for the case study because the major group in the community has separated from the relatively stable club

in the area, and has managed its own enterprise in 2008. With limited support from Yasothon Agricultural Land Reform Office, the group is still balancing itself through searching for members, resources for production and available market. In case of Non-Yang, we can see more vivid cooperation, negotiation and struggle between different societal actors in local context comparing to the export-oriented group in Naa-Sor. Therefore, the group is a rather appropriate case to study the topic.

1.4.2. Observation

To build up understandings in local social relations and organic farming, preliminary field research had been conducted in June 2018, and participatory field research in Non-Yang Community was conducted from October to December 2018. Observation would be taken during my participation in community livelihood.

1.4.3. Methodology matrix and interview strategy

How have different stakeholders in Non-Yang Community interacted in the development of organic farming?		Data Needed	Information Sources & Interviewee/ origin of sources	Tools and Methods of Data Collection
1.	What are the political, economic contexts and social forces that influence villagers' conversion to organic farming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeline of national and regional agricultural and industrial policies • Information about local livelihood transition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past studies and historical literature • Interview with both conventional and organic farmers, community elders, NGO workers and concerned officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary research • In-depth interview with key informants
2.	How have various stakeholders in worked and/or negotiated with one another in the making of organic farming in Non-Yang Community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational regulations and periodical schedule of the organic farmers' group • Mechanism of interaction between organic farmers' group and concerned actors in the system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written information recorded by organic farmers' group and official agencies • Interview with group leaders, NGO workers and concerned officials • Discuss with non-organic farmers, non-farmers and new generations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation • Secondary data from records of organic farmers' group and the official agencies • Secondary data from official records • In-depth interview with key informants • Focus group discussion
3.	How has Non-Yang Organic Farming Group overcome the obstacles and become viable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main obstacles and their impacts to organic farming in the community • The response toward the obstacles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written information recorded by organic farmers' group and official agencies • Interview with group leaders, NGO workers and concerned government officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary documents • Key informants interview

Table 1 Methodology matrix and interview strategy

1.4.4. Key informant interviews (in-depth interviews)

To collect the information of the development of organic agriculture in the community, I would conduct semi-structured in-depth interviews to key informants, which include leaders and members of organic farming group, community leaders like village headman (*phuu yai baan*), local intellectuals, officials in Provincial Government, officials in concerned government departments of Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoAC) such as Agricultural Land Reform Office, private enterprises, NGO workers and

other concerned groups.

List of expected respondents: Community Based Organizations (18), State Government Organizations (4), Civil Society Organization (1), Private Organization (1), Focus Group discussion (15)

Names of Agencies	Numbers
Non-Yang Organic Farming Group (CBO)	10
Nature Care Club (CBO)	1
Non-Yo Organic Farming Group (CBO)	1
Kam-Maed Rice Species Developing Group (CBO)	1
Organic For Good Health Group (CBO)	4
Village Leaders' Group (CBO)	1
Provincial Government (GO)	1
Affiliated departments of Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (GO)	3
Alternative Agriculture NGO (CSO)	1
Private enterprises (PO)	1
Focus Group Discussion (non-organic villagers, school teenagers)	15

Table 2 The respondents and their belonged agencies

For group affairs: To learn the motivation, demands and negotiation strategies of organic farming group, leaders and members of the group would be interviewed. Information about their cooperation with other institutions or actors would also be collected from the interview with other respondents.

For official policies, projects, and regulations: To gain knowledge about the direction and implementation, as well as pros and cons of state agricultural policies, interviews with respondents from two government

organizations, one local NGO, and leader of organic farming group would be conducted.

For organic farming promotion and persistence: To explore the attitude of potential supporting forces in community, such as possible consumers or members, focus group discussion on non-farm villagers, conventional farmers and new generation will be conducted in order to know their general idea and consideration toward organic farming.

1.4.5. Focus group discussion

To collect opinions held by different groups of people toward organic agriculture, three focus groups discussion are planned to be conducted in the community. The discussion would include farmers who work on conventional agriculture or who have left the farm and engaged in non-farm jobs, and teenage students, which are the future generation in the community.

1.4.6. Secondary documents from concerned institutions

Research report, past studies and news released by official, research institutes or NGOs will be applied to offer socio-economic background of the case. Basic data about the group and community, such as number of members, total population, crop price, cooperating actors and annual schedule will also be collected.

1.4.7. Interview data analysis

All interviews would be conducted in the Thai language, translated to and recorded in English, transcribed and entered into software system for

qualitative data analysis. The data would be coded according to the categories identified in the above methodology matrix box and analyzed to answer the research questions.

1.5. Scope of the study

The scope of the study is the organic farming in Non-Yang Community, Kam-maed Sub-District, Kud-chum District, Yasothon Province, Thailand. The physical research area is three villages of Non-Yang and the neighboring villages which their residents working with Organic Farming Group of Non-Yang. The research would attempt to understand the interaction within the network that shapes organic farming in the area. The scope of the study covers all various forms of response toward system, cooperation, negotiation and resistance among various actors in the community, within the time period ranging from the emergence of organic farming in the area to date. The progress and effectiveness of the conversion, production, distribution and promotion of organic farming would be measured through interviews with members and leaders of organic farming group, village headman, local government officials, NGO workers and consumers in the area.

1.6. Limitation of research

There had been several limitations that I faced in conducting the research, which are the barrier of language, confidential problems and respondents'

personal concern due to their position. Since I am not a native Thai speaker, it caused some restriction in fully understanding the respondents' feedback. Therefore, information that should be assured were noted down and discussed with the respondents and my advisors again. While there were some confidential problems for me to get detailed data from organic farming group or official agencies, I asked for the rough information from respondents instead. Since organic farming group of Non-Yang has been working with Agricultural Land Reform Office, there were some concerns held by members or leaders when talking about their interaction with officials. Sometimes the officials themselves are also not able to speak out too much about policy implementation. I tried to solve the problem through getting more informants and observing more before taking the interview.

1.7. Knowledge gap

Since Kud-Chum has been famous for its successful experience in organic agriculture and self-sufficiency movement, the thesis is not the first research on organic farming in this area. However, when talking about the social forces that might influence organic farming, most of the studies discussed structural problems rather than actors in societal sectors at community level. Limited studies have looked into the relations between multiple actors in the system. The study thus would try to fill the gap through exploring how organic farmers and their group persist the sustainability in the interaction with different institutional forces

and societal actors.

1.8. Significance of the research

Survival difficulties of small-scale farmers, especially rice farmers, have always been major issues in Thailand. To support agriculture, different governments have kept offering similar policies from subsidies to mortgage and paddy pledging. However, the policies all failed to last in socio-economic or ecological aspects. While organic agriculture has often been considered an approach to sustainable agriculture, it actually can hardly sustain in all terms. Farmers' willingness to practice, available resources for production, accessibility to policy support and bargaining power with market all make up the uncertainties in its persistence.

To develop organic agriculture as one of the alternatives for farmers' livelihood, it is inevitable to ask whether it can survive, how it can last, and what makes it continue. The study would try to make a shift of focus from structural problems to the interaction of actors in community level, analyzing the needs and motivations of actors in the local network that works organic agriculture out.

1.9. Ethical issue

I obtained informed consent and protected the rights to privacy in order to maximize positive outcomes and minimize unnecessary risk according to Human Rights declaration. Some ethical considerations were taken into account when

conducting the research, including respect of the interviewed, justice for ensuring reasonable, non-exploitative, and carefully-considered procedures with fair distribution.



Chapter 2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1. Kud-Chum and its alternative development

Kud-Chum District, Yasothon Province in which Non-Yang Community is located in has been well-known for its profound experience in community development projects run by self-reliance groups based in the community. Two of the most well-known projects are the terminated community currency project named *Bia Kud-Chum*, and the rice mill of Nature Care Club (*chomrom rakthammachart*) in Naa-Sor Sub-district, which has engaged in export network of organic rice steadily. People's groups and social capital have been believed to be fundamental factors for the success of the projects in Kud-Chum (Nantiya & Narong 2004). While some argued the projects to have been based on villagers' pursuit to self-reliance in food and economy (Bakshi 2008; Heis 2015), some considered them as livelihood strategies supported by ethical network (Itthiphon 2009). When it comes to the discussion on the role of government, sustainable notions in national level policies, such as National Economic and Social Development Plans (NESD Plans) and Sufficiency Economy Philosophy discourse, were perceived as supporting forces (Itthiphon 2009; Heis 2015). On the other hand, populist policies such as One Million Baht Village Fund and Paddy Pledging Policy were perceived as co-optation measures toward the movement (Prapimphan 2017).

However, it has turned out that even when the governments hold self-

sufficiency discourse does not mean these alternative development projects would really be supported. This was reflected in the case of *Bia Kud-Chum* project, which ended up in top-down co-optation (Local Development Institute 2000; Heis 2018). The project had already been terminated though, various developing projects have been continuously taking place in name of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, especially after the idea was constitutionalized since the *coup de tat* in 2006 (Heis 2015). While Natedao (2011 b) pointed out that the Thai government's support to organic agriculture along with promotion of self-sufficiency is actually to catch up the growing global niche market, Schaffar (2018) further argued that the junta's reaching out from local organizations and existing projects to international institutions in name of Sufficiency Economy is the second phase co-optation after *Bia Kud-Chum*.

2.2. Understanding farmers in contemporary context

2.2.1. Farmers and agrarian question in general

The penetration and dominance of capitalism in agriculture production leading to multi-dimensional transition in rural society, known as agrarian transformation, has been discussed as an on-going and dynamic process. Beside commodification and intensification in agriculture, with a common sense of deagrarianization, abundant amount of studies saw the livelihood diversion from farming (Rigg 2001, 2006, 2012; Keyes 2014; Hirsch 2012). However, there has been heterogeneity rather than unidirectional diversion from

agriculture in the track of rural livelihood transformation. While Edelman (2005) adopted the concept of subsistence crisis to discuss the challenges of peasants nowadays, Bernstein (2018) argued that small-holders—no matter in farming or non-farm livelihood—are all facing survival difficulties in contemporary capitalism. Although peasants frequently expect to join higher-income groups through depeasantization (White 1986; Partha 2008), shifting to non-farm livelihoods sometimes further marginalize the small-holders (Vandergeest & Rigg 2012; Bernstein 2018). Small-holders in several conditions still take agrarian activities in capitalist and globalized context in various pathways, which has changed from the original meaning of peasantry (Bernstein et al. 2018; Rigg & Vandergeest 2012). Apart from the emergence of entrepreneurial farming, repeasantization was claimed to be observed, and small-scale farm was argued to have stayed as one of the biggest source of employment (Ploeg 2008; White 2018). While the classic debate between Lenin and Chayanov focused on whether peasantries can resist capitalism, the current agrarian question has come to whether and how peasantries—or small-scale farming—can persist as a sustainable livelihood for small-holders, and at the same time, feed the growing non-farming population (Wang 2016, 2017; Bernstein 2014; Bernstein *et al.* 2018).

Various factors are suggested to have made non-disappearance of peasantry. Some farmers continue to farm since they benefit from market in

agricultural commodification and intensification, some persist agriculture and support intensification in farm with labor wage from non-farm works and remittance of migrant workers (Rambo 2017; Walker 2012). Some are forced to stay in farming, as Vandergeest and Rigg (2012) had mentioned, because of limited choices and alternatives, while some others choose to live as peasants based on identity and pursuit to autonomy (Dayley & Attachak 2016; Ploeg 2008). Peasantry persists, however, as socio-economic context has changed, small-scale farmers now live within totally altered condition and have to struggle more to survive in contemporary context (Partha 2008; Edelman 2005). The emerging “corporative food regime,” dominated by transnational capital, has deteriorated dispossession and marginalization of small-scale farmers, especially those in Global South, through unequal global trade (McMichael 2009).

For farmers to resist agro-business corporation, some scholars adopted Chayanov's concept of peasant cooperatives and state support and call for pro-peasant policies. Different from Chayanov's focus on increasing productivity, awareness to democracy, ecology and distributive fairness are adopted in contemporary arguments (Wang 2016; Bernstein *et al.* 2018). While environmentalism in middle-class has brought up niche market for organic food, a green but capitalist “corporate-environmental food regime” has emerged (Friedmann 2005). Meanwhile, alternative concepts centering peasants' rights,

such as food sovereignty and fair trade, were developed and advocated by transnational peasant movement featured by *La Via Campesina*. While some might label the peasant movements with ignorant and conservative localism, Edelman (2005) argued that although activists are passionate in moral discourse, they have been empowered with new knowledge and new tools to struggle in a sophisticated political-economic context as political actors.

2.2.2. Farmers in Southeast Asia

Studies on Southeast Asian peasant society has been featured with the classic Scott-Popkin debate on “moral peasants” versus “rational peasants.” In James Scott’s *The Moral Economy of the Peasant in South East Asia* (1976), peasant society in the region has been depicted to be a pre-capitalist world based on self-subsistence and cooperation, which is essentially different from capitalism-led urban area. According to Scott, peasant rebellion is the resistance to exploitation from landlords and state. Popkin (1979), on the other hand, tried to discuss peasant society in neo-liberal context, arguing the rationality behind peasants’ movement. Chinese rural sociologist Yuhua Guo (2002) has warned the misleading usage of the terms “morality” and “rationality” in the debate, since the morality raised by Scott did not stand for irrational peasants’ brainless choices. While the rationality argued by Popkin could be understood as “being economically rational,” Scott’s morality can be perceived “rational” to pursue survival with limited resources (Munck & Synder 2007: 360). Peasants’ choices

and movements have never been dominated only by ethics or cost analysis in their mind, but also framed by the rooted circumstances.

Today, it has been argued that neither side of the debate is still workable to understand peasant society in contemporary Southeast Asia, since the socio-economic context has undergone great change. Modernization of state structure, “thoroughgoing urbanization” in the region, and the process of globalization has brought up state reform of structure in Asian developing countries (Dayley & Attachak 2016; Jones 1997 ; Rigg & Nattapoolwat 2001). Peasants nowadays are not facing direct exploitation from state and landlord class, but actively expecting and pursuing fair distribution and equality from government agencies in order to survive in contemporary agro-food system (Partha 2008).

2.2.3. Farmers in Thailand

The landslide victory of Thaksin faction and the up-rising of the Red-Shirts in the past ten years have stirred up the discussion on the ideology of Thai peasant movement again. Both Thai and international mainstream media have always portrayed the supporters of Thaksin to be the poor farmers from rural North or Northeast Thailand. In academia, however, there have been many researches trying to define who “the farmers” and “the red shirts” really are, as well as to explain the contradiction between The Red Shirt and The Yellow Shirt beyond class conflict. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis have been conducted to argue the composition of Thaksin faction are not mainly the poor or the farmer (Nishizaki 2014). When it comes to discussion about farmers in

The Red Shirt movement, Walker suggested farmers from the north have been in modern middle-income peasantry due to commercialized agriculture and multi-sources of income (Walker 2012), while Keyes raised the term “cosmopolitan villager” to describe modern northeast Thai villagers under rural transformation (Keyes 2010). The above ideas have been strongly opposed by scholars such as Somchai, who argued class and poverty to be the core of The Red Shirt movement (Somchai 2016), and Sopranzetti, who reclaimed the centrality of the poor’s capitalist desire in the movement (Sopranzetti 2012). Although having contradicting opinions to class factor, these studies all indicated that the farmers support Thaksin not because of their poverty or ignorance, but out of their rational choice under market-oriented considerations.

However, class contradiction failed to explain why some small-scale or marginalized farmers in the north or the northeast, who are also in poverty, fought against Thaksin power and even joined The Yellow Shirt movement (Somchai 2014). Through reexamining the composition of members in both The Red Shirt and The Yellow Shirt, some scholars tried to analyze the conflict beyond class or income distribution. Naruemon (2016) revealed the diversity in movements and argued that the two factions in the conflict originated from particular topics or charismatic leaders rather than certain class or political identities. On the other hand, Prapart (2011) referred the villagers’ activism to their higher connection with wider political-economic context, raising the idea that farmers who support Thaksin are to defend their present-day subsistence

ethic, which is based on the resources network built under Thaksin administration. Since Thaksin faction's rural developing policies were selective and exclusive to benefit certain actors rather than to really cover everyone in rural Thailand (Glassman 2004), there had been many cases that farmers marginalized from the resource network had conflict with The Red Shirt (Prapimphan 2017). Unsatisfied with agricultural system built in Thaksin period, Alternative Agriculture Network of Isan joined the anti-Thaksin movement in 2006 along with other regional networks to strike a meaningful struggle against Thaksin (Somchai 2014).

Overall, the ideological contradiction between Sufficiency Economy and Thaksinomics is a false dilemma. In practical, there have always been many choices for peasants beyond big-scale commercial agriculture and self-sufficient production claimed by conservative localists. Sometimes, as Prapimphan (2017) said, various discourses applied by sustainable agriculture movement, even some of them are based on conservative localist idea, can be perceived as just strategic tool to encourage the interest to sustainable agriculture in Thai society. McCargo (2001) also raised the strategic concern of many rural developing organizations:

“... progressive organizations could be relied upon to support (or at least not to oppose) virtually any political reform proposals which diminished the entrench power of the bureaucracy.”

This perspective can be correlated to Rigg's (1991) notion for adopting pragmatist approach. At the end of his study on grass-roots development in rural Thailand, he commented on the distinction made between "top-down" and "bottom-up" development:

"If people were less concerned with ideology, consciousness raising and empowerment, and more concerned with the achievement of development, then the practicalities and purpose of promoting grass-roots development would become clearer and its achievement easier."

Nevertheless, the dominant role of agro-economy has been moved from states to capitals in global scale (McMichael 2009). The state has been playing a crucial role in accumulation through policy controls and cooperation with large-scale business in Thai context (Prapimphan 2017). Although as Partha (2008) argued, direct subordinating relationship between peasant and state has already altered, and the joint institutional supports and innovation between farmers, NGOs, private companies and government are needed to foster small farm growth and development (Hazell *et al.* 2007). However, co-optation measure taken by dominant powers in the system, no matter by the state or private sectors, in the name of Sufficiency Economy has been brought to the notion, and should be re-considered (Prapimphan 2017; Heis 2018).

2.3. Theoretical framework

2.3.1. Food regime

Friedmann (2005) defined food regime as “a rule-governed structure of production and consumption of food in a world scale,” which is “the combined outcome of social movements intersecting with state strategies and strategies of profit seeking corporations.” Both Friedmann and McMichael agree that after the diasporic-colonial food regime from 1870s to WWI and the post-war mercantile-industrial food regime until 1970s, a third food regime has come to formation. Referring the third regime as “corporate-environmental food regime,” Friedmann argued that it is still in formation. She described the regime to be the outcome of strategic resistance taken by powerful organizations in response to the environmentalist social movements. The food supply chain under the regime will be in the form of so-called “green capitalism,” which is a profit-oriented way of capital accumulation between conventional and alternative food systems. On the other hand, McMichael (2009) argued the third food regime to be a contemporary “corporate food regime.” Globalization of the third food regime, according to McMichael, has awakened the transnational peasant mobilization pursuing “food sovereignty,” based on concerns to biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and human rights.

While the two leading scholars view differently on the relationship between social movements and the third food regime, contemporary discussions about the third food regime center the interaction between social

movements and dominant powers in the system. In this regard, this research would like to analyze organic farming in Non-Yang Community as a social movement taken by small-scale farmers, trying to dialogue with the theories that frame the agro-food system in international scale.

2.3.2. Stakeholder analysis

The stakeholder analytical framework for the research would be developed and modified from the 3M-Levelled framework raised by Michelsen in his *Recent Development and Political Acceptance of Organic Farming in Europe* (2001). The model of Michelsen was designed to analyze the development of organic agriculture in national context, concerning four domains of interaction that can influence farmers. While farming community, agricultural policy and food market can cause direct impact on farmers respectively, the interrelationship of different domains happen in institutional settings and influence farmers indirectly.

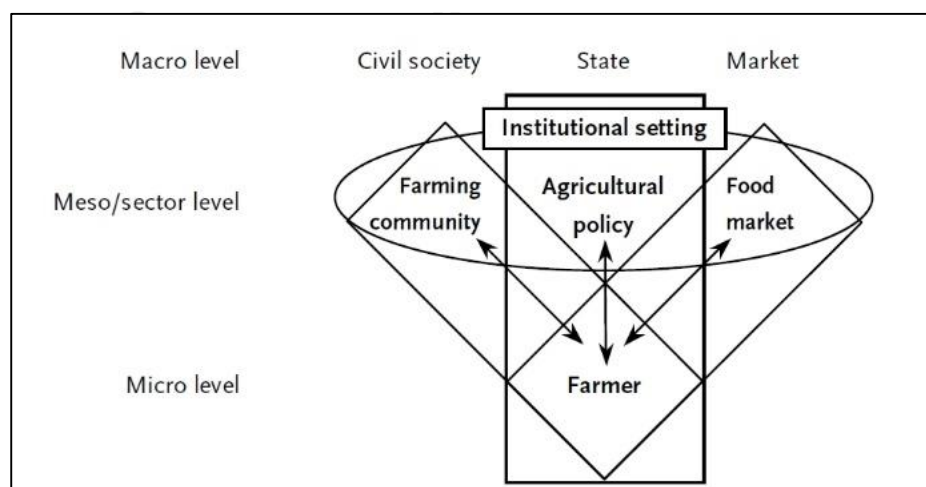


Figure 1 Michelsen's 3M-Levelled Framework (Michelsen 2001: 9)

Since the thesis is to analyze the development and persistence of an

organic farming group in community, the framework would be modified in order to fit the case more efficiently. Firstly, the interaction in meso/sector level should be unpacked to identify the systematic factors that influence farmers. Secondly, the other micro-level actors in each domains and their interaction with farmers, which are the societal factors in community level should be concerned. The study combined the framework with stakeholder analysis, and the modified framework is shown in the diagram below:

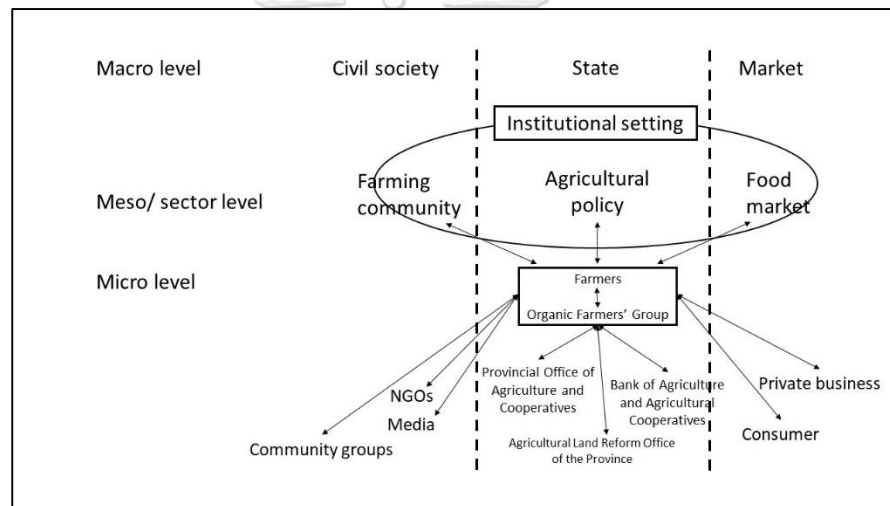


Figure 2 Developed and modified diagram from Michelsen's 3M-Level Framework

2.4. Conceptual framework

To define the political-economic context and social forces that made farmers convert to organic agriculture practice, the research will apply food regime concept and see organic agriculture as a resistant strategy for them to counter systematic forces. Furthermore, since the practice of organic farming in community cannot be taken up only by farmers and the groups, but is shaped by different agencies and institutions, the interaction between different actors in

community level would be studied in stakeholder analysis framework. The concept of the thesis thus could be explained by the framework below:

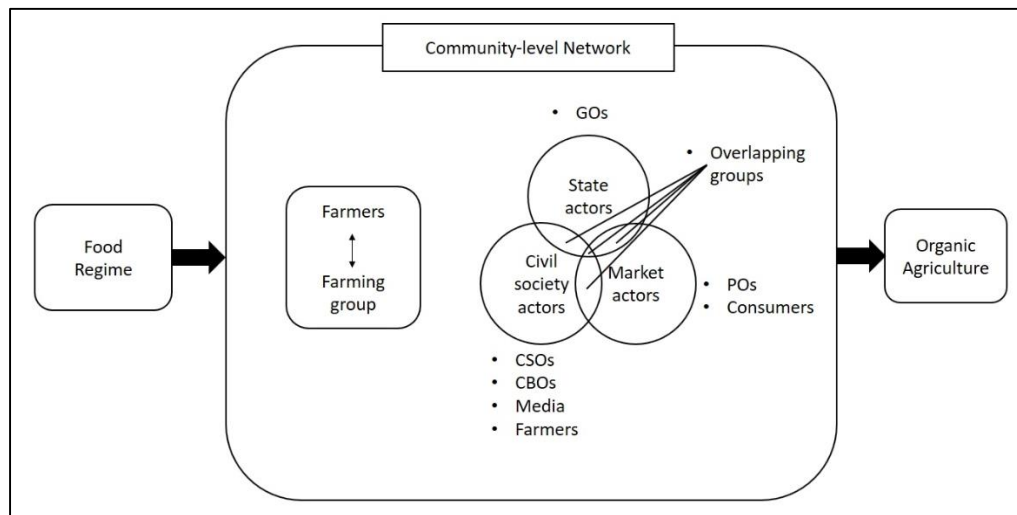


Figure 3 Conceptual framework developed from theoretical frameworks

Chapter 3. Going Organic: Development of Organic Agriculture in Thailand

Organic agriculture was introduced to Thailand as one of the forms of alternative agriculture (*kasettakam thangleauk*) in the 1970s, in response to the dynamic world after Green Revolution (Supa 2006; Natedao 2011a:90). Its development and transformation in Thailand can be highly related to several international and local trends since the 1970s: alternative agriculture movement, growing civil societies, rising environmentalism, and the notion of sustainable development. Emerging from a bottom-up pursuit to delink with market domination and state control, the alternative agricultural movement in Thailand has absorbed the concern on ecology and sustainability, and kept transferring in the top-down co-optation and dynamic changes.

In Chapter 3, a chronological overview on organic agriculture in Thailand would be conducted, in order to identify the structural factors, decisive events and major actors that have influenced the development and transformation. In the first section, alternative agriculture movement is discussed and analyzed in the contestations of development from the 1970s to the early 1980s. The second section looks into the incorporation of alternative agriculture into sustainable agriculture in dynamic political-economic contexts since the mid-1980s. The development of organic agriculture as a sustainable development approach in the capitalism-led system would be discussed in the third section. Through the chronological research, the chapter is aimed to argue that Thai organic agriculture has been shaped by the co-optation and moderation in contestations on development in contemporary Thailand. With multiple

actors involved in the transformation, the meaning and function of organic agriculture have been different from that when it initially emerged in Thai society.

3.1. Alternative agriculture development in Thailand

3.1.1. Peasants, agriculture and post-war development plan

The term “development” (*phatthana*), containing the meaning of economic progress and modernization, was taken by the Thai government during General Sarit Thanarat’s time. Out of the anti-communist concern, the military government set up the 1st National Economic Development Plan (NED Plan) in 1961, and pushed a series of rural development projects with the support of the U.S. and international institutions (Thak 2007). Under development projects pushed by Thai state and international forces, transportation, electricity, dams and irrigation projects, as well as new rice and cash crops were brought to into the rural area, especially the Northeast (Pasuk & Baker 1995). However, most of the transportations were for military use rather than for village’s livelihood, while the water tanks and the irrigation system also functioned inefficiently (Platenius 1963:10). Even the transportation infrastructures that were built effectively facilitated the access to market-oriented agriculture, and brought new economic problems (Shigetomi 2004: 46).

While series of NED Plans have pushed Thai economy through significant industrial transformation, agricultural economy has come to drastic changes as well. Through expansion of paddy production, Thailand became one of the

biggest rice exporters in the world. The export-oriented policy, however, exploited farmers with low domestic rice and benefited the rice exporters (Dixon 1999). New export-oriented upland crops were introduced to rural societies, such as kenaf, maize, cassava, and sugarcane. Farmers' reliance on market economy and cash was enhanced, and informal debts of farmers were also increased. Between the 1962s to 1970, the income gap between rural residents and urban dwellers increased (Goss & Burch 2001:977). In the rural area, a common feeling of oppression and poverty caused by authoritarian government prevailed (Ettinger 2007:666).

3.1.2. Civil societies and leftist movements

While economic development plans under the military government have caused unbalanced development and unfair distribution between urban and rural, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on development began to emerge in Thai society in the late 1960s (Kasian 2004). Many of them were influenced or supported by international NGOs based in Asian or Western countries. Thailand Rural Reconstruction Movement (TRRM), the first development-oriented NGO in the country, for instance, was founded by Dr. Puey Ungpakorn in 1967 as a part of the international rural reconstruction movement operating in Asia and Latin America, inspired by the development principle of Dr. James C. Yen, a Chinese rural construction organizer (Rueng 1995:53; Gawin 2004:72). While the state was actively taking counter-insurgency measures toward Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), the NGOs

during this time worked on offering resources and services rather than to challenge the authoritarian regime (Bencharat 2017:216). Different from the old philanthropic organizations that have existed in Thailand since the 20th century, the development activities during this time started to work independently from official welfare administration (Shigetomi 2004:47).

The late 1960s was also the period that students and academics became active and enthusiastic in the development of the country (Prudhisana & Maneerat 1997:198; Pasuk & Baker 2009:186). Following students' protest, dissatisfaction toward political and economic situation under dictatorship in the Thai society came to a peak in the early 1970s, and finally led to the public uprising in 14th October, 1973. The democratic environment between 1973 and 1976 enabled the emergence of new NGOs, and development projects were able to be implemented from national level. Influenced by local and international NGOs working on agricultural debt and environmental issues in the rural area, various local-based religious organizations started to engage in development works as well (Rueng 1995:59; Gawin 2004:73; Kaufman & Watanasak 2011:2). In the Northeast, for instance, local monks started to promote appropriate development according to Buddhist teachings during this time. The activities exemplified the process of challenging government's concept of development (Pinit 2012). In 1974, the "Return to Countryside program" was initiated, involving university students to voluntary works on public health and political and political education in the rural area (Bamber

1997:236; Haberkorn 2011:95). The radical intellectuals that used to have their activities in the urban area began to go into rural communities and spread democratic concepts nationwide. With the help of student activists, local people's organizations (POs) were established to deal with the issues such as quality of life improvement, poverty reduction and farming system transformation (Nantiya 2004; Shigetomi 2004). In November 1974, the Peasants' Federation of Thailand (PFT) was established with the help of student activists (Walker 2012:14). The federation marked the watershed of Thai national peasant movement (Turton 1987; Bello *et al.* 1998:148). Although it was violently suppressed only few years later, it did inspire critical thinking among rural villagers (Glassman 2010:52). The spirit and supporters of PFT survived, and composed the main force in alternative agriculture movement (Prapimphan 2017:70-71).

Although some student activists took Maoist ideas and were labeled as communist by the right-wing groups, there were not so much direct connections between student activism and peasant movement with CPT in the beginning (Prudhisana & Maneerat 1997:198; Glassman 2010:52; Bergin 2016:26). After 6th October 1976 Massacre, Thailand went back into a long period of military dictatorship and authoritarianism (Janjira 2018). The space for NGO activities shrank, since people who shared different ideologies from that of government would be labeled as communists and face repression from the right-wing conservatives (Amara 1995:35; Shigetomi 2004:47). After the

suppression, over 3,000 students, teachers, labor leaders, and politicians fled into the forest to escape from being arrested, and later joined the CPT (Ettinger 2007:674). The expansion of CPT members did not strengthen its movement for a long time. To the late 1970s, the party was challenged by its internal conflicts between liberal students and leftists with authoritarian ideas, and also the changed situation in the region after the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese conflict (Thongchai 2008: 579; Ji Giles 2009a:88). After the government led by General Prem Tinsulanon announced the Prime Minister Order 66/2523 in 1980, many of the activists chose to left the jungle. In the beginning of the 1980s, the leftist movement in Thailand came to a collapse (Prudhisana & Maneerat 1997:199; Ettinger 2007:676).

At the end of communist movement, the activists who left from the jungle set up new NGOs and continued their development works in each region of Thailand. Influenced by leftist anarchist concept, and as a response to the “top-down” development policies in Thai bureaucratic structure, NGOs and villagers during this time tried to pursue “bottom-up” developments through people’s groups based in communities (Rigg 1991:202). The new rural development approaches raised by NGOs, such as community culture, religious, alternative agriculture, self-reliance, and grassroots wisdom, aimed to advocate self-reliance and to develop local people’s capability of self-organization (Prudhisana & Maneerat 1997:200; Shigetomi 2004:47-48). Small-scale development

projects were started up during this time, many of them were in the Northeast. For instance, “Toward Self-reliance in Northeast Thailand: Integrated Village Development along the Thai-Kampuchean Border of Surin Province-NET” (*khrongkan phatthana muubaan chaidaeng chanwat surin*) started from Surin Province since 1981, and it later developed to be Net Foundation in 1986². To develop self-dependency of small-scale farmers, the NGOs researched and documented the stories of the progressive farmers that tried to solve their problems through alternative methods, and assisted learning programs of farmers’ groups to transfer the experience and technique. Patterns of alternative agriculture, such as agro-forestry systems, raising fish in paddy fields, and mixed farming systems were promoted (Supa 2006:3-4). The NGOs’ working approach, calling for understanding rural villagers through their socio-cultural context, was later theorized as “Community Culture” (*watthanatham chumchon*), and started to prevail among rural developers and leftist academics (Kitahara 1996; Apichart 2004: 161-163).

3.1.3. The conservative network and contestation of alternative development

While economic development has eventually created more inequality and intensified insurrections, the Thai government began to be aware of the malfunction in development plans. The common fear to the expanding left-wing

² Net Foundation. *ความเป็นมา*. Retrieved from: <http://transfernautsurin.makewebeasy.com/customize-%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%A7%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A1%E0%B9%80%E0%B8%9B%E0%B9%87%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%B2-47740-1.html>

movement brought the monarchy and military government together, taking strategic counter-insurgency measures including both violent forces and development projects in the society (Chanida *et al.* 2004). In order to ensure national security and preserve their legitimacy, the ruling class tried to make revisions to its development policy, however, through conservative ways rather than structural changes. Farmers Aid Found and Marketing Organization for Farmers were established by the government led by rightists and military out of the concern of rural unrest (Ricks 2018:402). Through taking up alternative ideas and demands, the position of top-down, capital-dominated development mode of Thai state, as well as the power of ruling class, were stabilized.

The Royal family started to take more roles in state development in Sarit's regime, especially King Rama IX, who was then considered a crucial figure with the image of "development monarch" (*kasat nakphatthana*). The well-known Royal projects supported by the U.S., targeting poverty alleviation in rural areas, was intensified in name of the King's benevolence (Hewison 1997:63; Puangthong 2017:10). Various agriculture supporting development activities were taken up by government agencies in response to the King's proposes during this time. In accordance to the King's demand, The Royal Rain Operations Office was set up in 1975, taking charge of artificial rain projects in 1975 with the supervision of MoAC (Chanida *et al.* 2004:107). In the same year, Agricultural Land Reform Office (ALRO) was also established under the

Ministry in line with the King's wish. The office was set to take charge of land distribution to poor farmers for agricultural and residence purpose, developing infrastructure and occupation, as well as promoting the effective natural resources of rehabilitation and utilization (Niramon *et al.* 2014). The above activities, along with the reviving of agriculture-related events such as the First Ploughing Ceremony and Royal Planting Ceremony, have enhanced the concept of "the King and the agriculture" (*kasat kaset*) and further made the king symbolically associated with agricultural production (Chanida *et al.* 2004:109; Sturm 2006:230). With building up the liberal value-supporting image of the King, the conservative ideal order of nation state, which is under the stable benevolent rule of sacred monarchy, with military as its protector, revived in Thai society (Hewison 1997; Zackari 2016:79).

The conservative tried to interfere in alternative development not only through government institutions, but also with the cooperation with private sectors. Although the conservatives have been generally hostile to systematic social welfare, donation for charity has been welcomed. Since the Royal family owns significant wealth and works as a business empire, the King himself had publically expressed his negative concern on social welfare system, and upheld the idea to "put the wealth to good use" (Hewison 1997). Thai public has also been willing to donate to the Royal family, in order to "join merit-making with the King" (Gawin 2004; Chanida *et al.* 2004). On the other hand, capitalists who "ruthlessly exploited" villagers were strongly criticized by the King (Hewison

1997). Thus when the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) came to Thai society, it has received strong support from the Royal family and leading businesses. Cooperating with official institutions or NGOs, corporations became actors in rural development (Parichart & Watson 2015). Research had shown that CSR projects in Thailand have been more highly engaged to community involvement and philanthropic effort comparing to other Asian countries (Chambers *et al.* 2003). Some have explained the phenomenon with Buddhist culture rooted in the society (Pareena & Olsen 2009). At the same time, however, the cultural discourse on merit making, based on Buddhist values, was also utilized to justify the conservative attitude toward private property (Hewison 1997). Under the discourse, distribution of wealth became a moral virtue rather than a social issue that should be solved systematically.

Conservatism was influential not only among the bureaucrat and businesses, but also with some civil societies involved. There have been some philanthropic organizations working closely with bureaucracies and the Royal family, such as Thai Red Cross (Prudhisana & Maneerat 1997:196). Aside from the philanthropic organizations, the King also supported some development NGOs and funded foundations through Royal Patronage in both financial and non-financial terms (Amara 1995:53; Shigetomi 2004:44; Chanida *et al.* 2004:100). Besides, some right-wing civil societies rising in response to the leftist movement in the 1970s were supported either by the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) of the military or by the King through Royal

Patronage (Chanida *et al.* 2004:117-118; Puangthong 2017:3). These right-wing groups, including Red Gaurs (*krathing daeng*), Ninth Power (*nawaphon*), and Village Scouts (*lukseua chaoban*), were later mobilized to join the suppression against left-wing activists (Janjira 2018).

At the end of leftist movement, the ruling class further began to call the activists back to participate in national development. After leaving from jungles, the activists working in development NGOs promoted self-reliance and self-organization based on Community Culture concept, pursuing to delink rural economy from mainstream development (Prudhisian & Maneerat 1997:199; Hewison 1999:10). The pursuit to a community-style anarchism with less state control, however, offered a way for the conservative ruling class, which was opposite to radical change, preferring conservation of essential values and traditions, to co-opt the radical alternative ideas with capitalist liberalization (Hewison 1997:64, 2000:285; Ji Giles 2004, 2009a:88, 2009b:234-235). With inclusion of grassroots development concepts, such as decentralization, self-help, participation, and self-reliance into the 5th (1981-86) and the 6th (1987-91) NESD Plans, the alternative approaches were incorporated into top-down development (Rigg 1999:199). Also, within the prevailing nationalism discourse of stability and unity, the linking with conservative concept of sufficiency showed the moderation of legitimized citizens after counter-insurgency period. To defend themselves from the critiques of the

government and media, some rural developers began to take reformist ideas and work with national development plans (Chanida *et al.* 2004; Elinoff 2014:94-95). Through cooperation with different institutions and incorporation of societal actors in calling for alternative development, Thai conservative network had not only strengthened the ideological power of royalism and nationalism, but also legitimized their conservative position in leading a capitalist development (Ji Giles 2004).

3.2. Dynamic contexts and sustainable agriculture

3.2.1. The rise of civil society and political reform

Due to the end of the Vietnam War and the devaluation of Thai baht after 2nd oil price-hike, Thailand had gone through a temporary economic recession and political disorder in the beginning of the 1980s (Pasuk & Baker 1996:2). In order to ensure the stability of political situation, the government of General Prem announced Prime Minister Order 60/2525 in 1982. Thailand came to an era of parliamentary politics in semi-democracy. To eliminate communism in the rural area, the government managed more funds for rural development (Pasuk & Baker 2009:236-237). While the NGOs' role in tackling rural poverty issues during economic recession had been recognized, the government began to push its rural development strategy with the consultation of NGOs (Prudhisan & Maneerat 1997:199; Prapimphan 2017:71). In 1985, a NGO-Coordinating Committee on Rural Development (NGO-CORD), composed of

elected representatives from each region, was established (Prudhisan & Maneerat 1997:201). Changing political environment enabled more positive exchanges to happen between government agencies and NGOs (Shigetomi 2004: 48-49). Through greater dialogue and cooperation between GOs and NGOs, the tensions between the two groups had gradually been eased before the 1990s (Amara 1995:39).

Also during this period, networking became a dominant feature for NGOs and CBOs working on specific issues (Amara 1995:45-46; Rueng 1995:65; Prudhisan & Maneerat 1997:201). In order to open up a platform for experience and techniques exchange beyond local level, the NGOs working on alternative agriculture started to hold workshops together in national level since 1984. Some regional and provincial networks had developed through common learning and market activities (Supa 2006:5). After a seminar in 1989, the Alternative Agriculture Network (AAN) was officially formed as a loose national network of local NGOs working in different regions, with the join of some academics and farmer leaders (Kaufman & Watanasak 2011:2; Natedao 2011a:95; Tipakson 2016). The network does not only work on alternative agriculture, but also links the farmers with various issues and policies related to rural livelihood through learning process³.

After Plaza Accord in 1985, Japan was made to revalue the rate of *yen*.

Manufacture industries moved out from leading Asian economies, such as

³ Ubon Yoowat, AAN Isan, interviewed on 14th September, 2018

Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, to search for currency protection and cheap labor in Southeast Asia. Thailand became the most popular site for relocation of foreign investment from 1987 until the late 1990s, and went through an economic growth (Pasuk & Baker 1996:31-33; Handley 1997:95). The industrial transformation brought up the economic growth and changed the economic structure of the country. To 1988, non-agricultural commodities took place of agricultural crops, and became the leading exports of the country (Buch-Hansen 2001:141). The transformation had further brought up some new groups, such as large-scale businesses in both Bangkok and provincial areas, as well as middle class in the urban, which later became influential political forces. Many of the middle-class, intellectuals, and even successful businessmen were the October generation, and they kept actively interfering into politics. While the businessmen gradually replaced generals in parliament, the middle-class gained their influence among civil societies through media and social movements (Pasuk & Baker 1996:186-187; Hirsch 1997:179). After May 1992 event that the new groups rose to protest against Suchinda's government, military power further met its decline. Thai public moved forward to call for systematic political reform (Handley 1997:98-99; Shigetomi 2004:53). However, the trend of calling for reform during this time was pushed by dominating businesses who had benefited from economic development (Pasuk & Baker 2009:251). The democracy that they demanded was to reduce the power of military and central

government, based on liberal capitalist ideas (Handley 1997:101). The issues concerned by NGOs and rural CBOs, such as income inequality caused by export-oriented economic policies, were actually not in line with their pursuit.

In response to public demand for constitutional reform, the government led by Chuan Leekphai established the committee to remand the constitution of Thailand. To 1996, the Constitution Drafting Assembly was finally organized during Banharn Silpa-archa's prime-ministry. Public intellectuals and representatives were elected from all provinces to draft up the new constitution (Thanet 2001:6). The demonstration of the Assembly of the Poor in the beginning of 1997, and Asian Financial Crisis hitting Thailand in the middle of the year further enabled the civil societies to influence the compilation of constitution. While the liberal reformists adopted the concept of "good governance," calling for more efficient and stable government, the NGOs and POs tried to contain more rights and participation in decision making. The two factions came to coalition in 1997 and pushed their demands into constitution (Prudhisan 1998:268; Kittipong 2003:107; Ji Giles 2002:194). On 27th September 1997, the parliament approved the new constitution and promulgated it on 11th October. The 1997 constitution, known as "People's Constitution," was claimed to return the power to people, marking Thai politics from representative democracy to participatory democracy (Prudhisan 1998:270; Supasawad 2010:2). With decentralization of political power and promotion of public participation, people were enabled to join into and

influence state development in multiple levels. However, while the status of free-market was supported by the constitution, the structural basis of inequality was not challenged by the reform, and led to more serious money politics (Ji Giles 2002:201-202; Pasuk 2002). Power and resources still have been concentrated in the hand of dominating businesses and political parties. The struggle of the marginalized in liberalized, globalized contexts has not yet come to an end.

3.2.2. Environmentalism and the emergence of organic agriculture

The conscious on environment (*singwedlom*) in Thai society can be related to concern on nature and health, which emerged in the 1970s, the period that student activists actively went into rural communities, and engaged in development works (Hirsch & Lohmann 1989:442; Nam 2015:122-123). Following the Return to Countryside program, a “Public Health for the Masses” campaign for primary health care was enacted, involving doctors, health workers and medical students. Along with the primary health programs, some medical professions established organizations to promote local health workers and traditional herbal medicine. Dr. Prawese, for instance, founded the Folk Doctor Association (*munthi morchaobaan*) in 1976, commencing activities such as training monks in basic medicine (Bamber 1997:235-237). Some development NGOs also started up projects for promoting traditional herbal medicines. In 1979, Komol Kheemthong Foundation set up Project of Herbal

Medicine for Self-reliance (*khroنگkan samunphrai pheua pheungtonaeng*) in 1979, which later developed to be Thai Holistic Health Foundation (*munnithi sukhapaphai*)⁴. Influenced by the programs, some villagers began to organize people's groups to work on local herbal medicine since the late 1970s.

It has been believed that the growing group of educated middle-class and globalization are the main forces that bumped environmentalism in Thailand (Pasuk & Baker 1996). While more notion of environmentalism in global initiatives had spread to Thailand, physical deterioration of the environment, such as air pollution, water pollution, and depletion of forests and other natural resources, had been widely experienced and reported in Thai society. Along with the global trend, the urban-based public started to adopt ecological concern, perceived as progressive value, into development. The notions did not emerge in civil societies only; different societal actors, from academics to business, Royal institutions and some bureaucracy also engaged in environmental activities and advocacies (Hirsch 1996, 1997; Buch-Hansen 2001). However, as Hirsch (1997:180-181) had noted, environmentalism does not automatically or consensually emerge in response to ecological destruction, but is rather a complex political phenomenon in context of rapidly changing polity. In the beginning of the 1980s, environmentalism was not a focus of attention for NGOs based in rural area (Quinn 1996:89). What prevailed among rural developers was the synthetic approach to pursue self-reliance and self-

⁴ Thai Holistic Health Foundation. รู้จักมูลนิธิสุขภาพไทย. Retrieved from: <http://www.thaihof.org/main/about>

management. During this time, the NGOs worked on assisting rural communities in setting up community groups such as rice banks, cooperative shops, as well as communal saving schemes based on locality (Shigetomi 2004; Supa 2006).

To the mid-1980s, in order to boost the export-oriented industry, Thai state was in need of cheap labors and more control on natural resources. Large amount of villagers had been mobilized to leave from rural area into towns, working as labor forces in factories. While they were mainly seasonal labors in the beginning, long-term migrants increased drastically by the early 1990s (Pasuk & Baker 1995, 1996:91-100; Hirsch 1996:12, 25; Hirsch 1997:180). Since the mid-1990s, remittance has taken up most of the proportion in rural families' income (Rambo 2017:213). The migrants, however, did not have a good quality of life in the urban area, but suffered from living in crowded slums with polluted air and water (Pasuk & Baker 1996:98-99). At the same time, environmentalism was applied by the government to justify their claim on land, forest, and water resources rural residents. Projects such as Green Isan (1987-1992) and *Khor Jor Kor* (1990-1992) were pushed by the Royal Forestry Department, with support of some businesses' CSR projects, in name of forest rehabilitation^{5,6}. The projects, however, promoted eucalyptus plantation that

⁵ J.F. Gerber. (2016). "Green Isan & *Khor Jor Kor* projects (and other state plantations), Thailand." In *Environmental Justice Atlas*. Retrieved from <https://ejatlas.org/conflict/green-isan-khor-jor-kor-projects-and-other-state-plantations-thailand>

actually caused water depletion, and the production were used to benefit the urban-based agro-business. People were evicted from the forest which they had been depending on for livelihood. Meanwhile, the agro-business, logging and tourism got expanded. Moreover, dams constructed for hydro-power generating resettled people, and drastically changed the ecology in the basin (Prudhisan & Maneerat 1997; Goss & Burch 2001; Molle *et al.* 2009). To the late 1980s, conflicts between citizens, the state, and capital over the rights on land and other natural resources have further intensified (Prapimphan 2017:71).

The drastic transformation since the mid-1980s has pushed rural villagers into a complicated world with dynamic political-economic contexts. The NGOs, although working on self-reliance, realized that they could not limit their activities to small-scale development projects anymore. It became necessary for NGOs and POs to build up broader alliance with other civil societies, such as academic, middle-class, and media (Prudhisan & Maneerat 1997:201-203). In 1995, the Assembly of the Poor was formed as a national network of the groups that were marginalized by development policy, including rural small-scale producers and urban poor (Prudhisan 1998:266-268). With the support of NGOs, networking movement and the spread of media press, the struggles were raised to national and even international level, widely catching public attention (Hirsch 1997; Missingham 2003). Some reformist intellectuals, such as Dr.

⁶ T.C. Pharma CO. โครงการที่ผ่านมา-อีสานเขียว. Retrieved from <https://www.tcp.com.th/project/detail-19>

Prawese Wasi, one of the recipients of medical scholarship funded by the King, have played major roles in linking NGOs and conservative groups (Chanida *et al.* 2004:105; Ji Giles 2009a:95).

The rural-based environmentalism is not a fashion or a form of idealism, but emerges from a defense of their livelihood. At the same time, it is able to cut across the gap of class and build up alliance with urban middle-class (Prudhisan & Maneerat 1997). The concept can be applied to explain the emergence and development of organic agriculture as well. Due to the environmental degradation and farmers' sickness caused by adoption of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, ecological holism has long been a concern in alternative agriculture movement (Kaufman & Suriyapong 2011). But to the time when the AAN was initially formed, "organic agriculture" had not yet been an issue in Thai alternative agriculture movement (Supa 2006). Within the growing environmentalism, the concern on health and food safety was aroused in Thai society. The need for uncontaminated, natural food brought up the trend of green consumerism, especially among urban middle-class, which has been believed to strengthen village-based alternative agriculture movement (Srisuwan 1995:73; Natedao 2011a).

Another driving force of organic agriculture is the coming of natural farming concept raised by Japanese agricultural innovator Masanobu Fukuoka. The translated version of Fukuoka's book *The One Straw Revolution* published

in Thailand in 1987, and the author came to Thailand and visited several rural communities in 1990 and 1991. Although the technique of natural farming came out to be impractical to Thai farmers, the idea to reduce or eliminate chemicals and pesticides in awareness of environment and soil fertility has been recognized (Amara 1995:48; Sununtar & Gilman 1999; Supa 2014). While organic manner and less use of chemicals could make land plots ecologically healthier, organic crops could also offer better choice for green consumers (Srisuwan 1995:73). Environmental and health concern in both production and consumption sides paved the way for later development of organic farming as one of the approaches to alternative agriculture.

With opening up public sphere and formation of alliance in the society, development NGOs have gained more political influence through assisting POs' advocacies over environmental and economic problems. To the 1990s, they began to influence the decisions and activities of state and market actors through more active advocacies or even demonstrations (Shigetomi 2004). In 1992, AAN held the first national alternative agriculture fair and forum in Thammasat University. The affair organized farmers, academics and NGOs together to discuss related issues, produce academic papers and have exhibitions for farmers to display their agricultural products. Starting from 1995, campaigns on certain issues, such as critiques on export-oriented agricultural policies were launched. Farmers practicing alternative agriculture were mobilized, together with several concerned groups in the society, such as

university academics, high-quality urban consumers, monks, rural teachers, and also international green agriculturists (Srisuwan 1995:73-74).

3.2.3. Sustainable development and sufficiency Economy

The people-centered principle of development was brought to be international concern in the late 1980s. On 4th December 1986, the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Right to Development highlighted people's participation and fair distribution in development, recognizing the right to self-determination and to full sovereignty over natural wealth and resources⁷. In the following year, the 1987 report published by UN World Commission on Environment and Development, known as Brundtland Report, first defined sustainable development to be “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland Commission 1987:41). The concept of sustainable agriculture was mentioned for the first time in the report (Ibid. 104). To the early 1990s, sustainable discourse on agriculture has further been raised and promoted by Food and Agricultural Organization of UN (FAO) and in the UN Agenda 21. Within the global trend, both government and NGOs in Thailand began to adopt the idea (Sukallaya & Thapa 2010:100; Natedao 2011a: 96).

In 1992, the MoAC set up the Committee on Sustainable Agriculture, which is responsible for planning and policy to development and promote

⁷ The United Nations. *Declaration on the Right to Development*. Retrieved from: <http://www.un.org/en/events/righttodevelopment/declaration.shtml>

sustainable agriculture (Nitasmai 1996:282-283). Thailand Research Fund (TRF) was founded as a semi-independent organization⁸ in the same year to support participatory research at grassroots level, including local or popular wisdom related to natural resource management, sustainable agriculture and traditional health care (Gawin 2004:92). With the assistance of NGOs, farmers and local wisdoms began to conduct participatory research programs with the funds from government projects (Supa 2006:25). In 1994, the King raised the concept of “New Theory” on self-sufficiency, some farmers were further attracted to take integrated farming⁹. Also, the 7th NESD Plan (1992-1996) had included integrated farming in its agricultural development plan. However, the plan set only superficial target for sustainable agriculture, and was mainly to foster the development of agro-business and agro-industry rather than to pursue sustainable agricultural programs (Nitasmai 1996:282).

In 1996, AAN and other civil society groups incorporated with some public intellectuals, such as Dr. Prawase, to steer the plan in the 8th NESD Plan (1997-2001), suggesting that 20 per cent of agricultural land in the country or at least 25 million *rai* of fields should be transformed to sustainable agricultural areas. However, the plan had been facing resistance from some civil servants in the MoAC, and was never effectively implemented (Buch-Hansen 2001:146). From 24th January to 2nd May 1997, The Assembly of the Poor was staging its

⁸ Official website of The Thailand Research Fund (TRF). Retrieved from: <https://www.trf.or.th/eng/>

⁹ Bangkok Post. (1994, 4th December). “King unveils ‘New Theory’ on self-sufficiency.” *Bangkok Post*.

2nd rally in Bangkok outside of Government House, calling for public participation in decision making process (Prudhisan 1998:266). In order to enhance its bargaining power to push the plan in NESD, the AAN joined the demonstration of the assembly. At the end, a pilot program on promoting organic agriculture was finally approved by the government, and Sustainable Agriculture Foundation is responsible to monitoring the program (Prapimphan 2017: 112-115). The achievement, however, was not only based on the power of people's movement, but also pushed by rising localism and anti-globalization among bureaucracy after Asian Financial Crisis (McCargo 2001). Following by the devaluation of Thai baht, Thailand came to have economic contractions of 1.3 percent in 1997, and over 9 percent in 1998 (Hewison 1999). While investment decreased, factories and enterprises collapsed in urban area, to June 1998, national jobless rate of Thailand reached to 8.8 percent¹⁰. Huge amount of waged labors who lost their job in cities went back to the rural area and engaged in agricultural sector. On the other hand, the devaluation of currency boosted the export volume and income of agriculture products (Charuk 2014). While chemical fertilizers and pesticides in Thailand mainly relied from import, organic products with less chemical inputs, enjoying higher prices in global market and having potential to export came to be a choice to recover the economy of the country (Natedao 2011 a:102).

After Asian Financial Crisis, Thailand took the advice from International

¹⁰ Bangkok Post. (1998. 6th June). "Jobless rate reaches 8.8 percent." *Bangkok Post*.

Monetary Fund (IMF), trying to recover the economy through Washington Consensus type of policy. The liberalized economic system further limited the resources from the state to support social welfare system, bringing up the idea of self-reliance again to in guidance of rural development policy. On the King Rama IX's birthday speech in December 1997, he raised Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, pointing out that the way for recovery would lead to a more resilient, balanced, and sustainable development, better able to meet challenges arising from globalization and other changes (Priyanut 2004). Along with the existing Royal projects, the concept further co-opted and incorporated radical initiatives in the society into the top-down development programs, and later came to play the core role in Thai sustainable development (Schaffar 2018:394). In 1998, the King funded Chaiphatthana Foundation to push development projects in line with Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and his other development ideas (Prapimphan 2017:113). Being discussed on NESD board in 1999, the philosophy was adopted in the 9th NESD Plan (2002-2006) to guide the sustainable development of the country (Buch-Hansen 2003; Priyanut 2004).

To meet up with the state's sustainable development plan, the alternative agriculture system has been totally replaced to sustainable agriculture (Supa 2014). In 2001, Thailand Health Promotion Foundation (THPF, *sor sor sor*) was established according to Health Promotion Foundation Act. The foundation is supported by government with annually 2.0% of liquor and cigarette taxes to

proactively promote broadly defined “health,” including sustainable agriculture, in Thai society (Gawain 2004:92). However, Thai government’s definition to sustainable agriculture and supporting policies have been unclear (Buch-Hansen 2001; Natedao 2011a). In parallel to the promotion on sustainable agriculture, there has been a mainstream official attitude toward WTO and FTAs, continuously supporting the expansion of agro-business, in order to enhance the competitiveness of agro-products in free trade system. The leading role of agro-business has been ensured in NESD Plans (Buch-Hansen 2001; Goss & Burch 2001:979). Delforge (2004) described the dual track policy as “a schizophrenic move.” While some agro-businesses showed their support to sustainable agriculture with organic contract farming and CSR projects, the conventional, export-oriented agriculture has incorporated, rather than given concession to sustainable initiatives. Sustainable discourse based on sufficiency Economy Philosophy had been widely adopted in 2006 and 2014 *coup de tat*, as a criticism to the highly capital intensive, export-oriented economic policy of Thaksin faction. However, even during the time when the government highly uplifts sustainable discourse, support toward the usage and import of pesticides and agricultural chemicals had never come to decrease (Witoon *et al.* 2017).

Today there are three main agencies behind sustainable agricultural movement of Thailand, which are Sustainable Agriculture Foundation, Biothai

Foundation, and the AAN¹¹. While Sustainable Agriculture Foundation works mainly on organic agriculture, Biothai Foundation functions as a policy monitor, advocates on agrarian issues such as biodiversity, food sovereignty, GMOs and fair trade, with the AAN linking up civil societies as a supporting network to stage up campaigns and movements. NGOs and POs joining the AAN have spread all over the country, with provincial networks formed in 26 provinces. Provincial network of the AAN would be led by 2 farmer leaders and 1 NGO worker, connecting the AAN members in the province¹². Except for the connection with actors in national level, they also build up relations with global agro-system. Through attending the Assembly of the Poor, the network started to have interaction with *La Via Campesina* (LVC), although many of them have faced difficulties to participate in international arena due to language barriers and other reasons. While agrarian issues got broader and more complicated after Thailand joined WTO and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), organizations and institutions working on new issues joined the network, not only members but also information resources of the network got diversified and broadened (Buch-Hansen 2001; Pye & Schaffar 2008:40-41). It has been pushing the legislation of Plant Varieties Protection Act, and acting as a member of FTA Watch, keeping monitoring the agro-system in dynamic domestic and global contexts (Supa 2014:8).

¹¹ Ubon Yoowat, AAN Isan, interviewed on 14th September, 2018

¹² Ubon Yoowat, AAN Isan, interviewed on 15th January, 2019

3.3. Development of organic agriculture in Thailand

3.3.1. Policy Trajectories of organic agriculture in Thailand

Although Thai government had officially shown the interest in sustainable agriculture in the 7th NESD Plan (1992-1996), the concrete goals and policies to support organic agriculture were placed not until to the 8th NESD Plan (Amekawa 2010:390). The year 1997, having gone through the protest of Assembly of the Poor and Asian Financial Crisis, stood as a turning point that made Thai government turned its attention to organic agriculture. The 8th NESD Plan drafted in 1996 was the first time that the development of organic agriculture was supported by concrete policy by Thai government. In the plan, 20 percent of agricultural field in Thailand to be transferred for organic agriculture (Chinvarasopak 2015). However, resistance from the bureaucracy made the plan implemented ineffectively. The AAN thus chose to campaign through collective protest with Assembly of the Poor, and finally achieved the fund for a pilot program approved by the government (Prapimphan 2017:115).

Nevertheless, Chuan's government revoked most of the concessions made to the Assembly of the Poor by the previous government, including the 950 million-baht budget for the 4-year pilot project (1998-2001). To 2000, Thai cabinet finally approved 633 million-baht budget for the 3-year pilot project on Sustainable Agriculture for Small-Scale Producers (2001-2003). The project was coordinated by the Sustainable Agriculture Foundation, covering 3,500 farming families and 27,100 *rai* of fields (Prudhisan 1998:269; Hnin 2017; Prapimphan

2017). It did have finally benefited some agricultural communities in developing farmer groups, social enterprises, small-scale milling groups and community funds. Under the scheme, biodiversity of agricultural products got increased. Rice, for instance, gained from 2 or 3 species to more than 100 species¹³.

During the time that Thaksin Shinawatra was the prime minister of Thailand, market-oriented and export-oriented organic agriculture was strongly supported. In 2001, the government planned a national strategy named “the kitchen of the world,” aiming to make Thailand the center of organic agricultural production (Rattanawaraha in Praimphan 2017). Organic agriculture during this time was mainly to enhance the competitiveness of Thai agricultural products in global market, as well as a rural poverty reduction strategy in line with the One Tambon One Product (OTOP) program and rice mortgage scheme, rather than for sustainable development (Amekawa 2010; Moore & Donaldson 2015).

Certification for international and national food standards was developed during this time. In 2002, the National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards (*mor kor sor*, ACFS) was organized under the MoAC. The mission of the agency is to work on food standardization and food safety

¹³ Supa Yaimuang, Sustainable Agriculture Foundation, interviewed on 16th February, 2018

together with international partners under WTO system¹⁴. To further expand the market with branding agricultural products, the government set up Good Agriculture Practices (GAP), also known as “Q-Mark,” which is an own quality management on agriculture production in 2003. The standard is to testify the safety of a food product in order to reduce the chemical inputs and to ensure consumer confidence (Poupon 2013; Amekawa 2010:401). Since the standard is not totally free of chemicals, but only for reduction of chemical input, it is easier for farmers to reach and be incorporated in the system. However, it has been criticized that looser standard does not eventually lead to chemical-free farming¹⁵. Also, it causes confusion among consumers, while they have limited understanding to differentiate the healthy products and organic products (Schobesberger et al. 2008:28).

Although in general, the central government during Thaksin’s time was rather hostile toward sustainable development projects such as organic agriculture and tourism, some successful cases in the Northeast changed their attitude (Moore & Donaldson 2015:8). Public policy for organic agriculture came to be shaped in National Agenda on Organic Agriculture in 2005 (Pasupha 2015). With a 1,215.9 million-baht budget to implement the agenda, 23 public agencies were involved (Hnin 2017).

After the military coup in 2006, the government led by General Surayuth

¹⁴ Official website of ACFS. Retrieved from <http://www.acfs.go.th/eng/>

¹⁵ Supa Yaimuang, Sustainable Agriculture Foundation, interviewed on 16th February, 2018

uplifted the discourse of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, and made it into the constitution. Sufficiency Economy Office set for Community Development was also established under the direction of the prime minister. Since then, more funds and resources were made available for relevant projects (Poupon 2013; Heis 2015). In 2008, the cabinet approved national policy for organic agriculture, disseminating with the 1st National Strategic Plan for Organic Agriculture Development (2008-2012), in order to implement the extension of organic agriculture (Chinvarasopak 2015; Prapimphan 2017:113). The MoAC introduced a “Mentor Program,” organizing Mentor Centers (*suun praatchaobaan*) all over the country. Experienced organic farmers were selected to be the mentros (*praatchaobaan*), and to promote organic farming based on sufficiency economy concept in community level (Natedao 2011b:413).

After general election in 2011, *Pheu Thai* Party led by Thaksin's sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, became the prime minister. Yingluck's government rolled out paddy pledging scheme that paid farmers up to 150% of market value for paddy price during 2011 to 2014 (Ricks 2018:395). Some organic farmers who were engaging in alternative production began to use chemical fertilizers again, in order to boost the quantity of rice production (Prapimphan 2017:78-80). Although sustainable agriculture was promoted in rehabilitation works after the nationwide flood in 2011, the total area of organic agriculture still decreased for 6.4 percent (Ministry of Finance and World Bank 2012:51; Supa 2014:13). In

2012, the National Organic Agriculture Committee was established for setting up policies and strategies for Thailand's organic agriculture, and to integrate all related plans and measures. While various agencies in official sectors, such as MoAC, Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Science and Technology were set to be the main actors, the strategic plan has been criticized for not involving civil societies and other actors in organic agriculture (Hnin 2017; Prapimphan 2017).

After the *Coup de tat* in 2014, the military government led by National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) uplifted the Sufficiency Economy discourse again in order to legitimize its rule. While the UN raised Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, the seemingly neutral international discourse was applied by the junta to further draw connections between sufficiency discourse and liberal economic development (Schaffar 2018:403-404). In 2017, the MoAC initiated a new program called 1 Million Rai Policy (*laan rai*), namely to reduce the area of standard rice cultivation by a million *rai* (160,000 hectare) within three years¹⁶. Also, since 2016, the NCPO government put Sufficiency Economy Philosophy as a core ideology in its public relation program *Pracharat* (Ibid.:388). Mentor Centers are made to work closely together with *Pracharat* projects, such as the registration of social welfare card. However, *Pracharat* projects also include a MOU between the MoAC and private

¹⁶ Oxford Business Group. (2017, 25th July). "Thailand promotes organic agriculture with new incentives." In *Oxford Business Group*. Retrieved from <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/news/thailand-promotes-organic-agriculture-new-incentives>

businesses engaging in seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. The excessive use of agricultural chemicals supported by *Pracharat* made it criticized to be unrelated to sustainable agriculture (Witoon *et al.* 2017:2).

Since the 8th NESD Plan, various budgets, funds, and public bodies have been set, and more official agencies have been involved to support development of organic agriculture (Hnin 2017; Prapimphan 2017). However, since the official support to organic agriculture has mainly focused on value addition in global market, the strategy in national level has not been considered quite successful (Pasupha 2015; Hnin 2017). To date there are currently around 3 percent of the fields in Thailand certified as organic agricultural field, which has been considered rather few¹⁷. In addition, since some of the state-led plans have not been seriously followed, the actual support received by producers and consumers has been rather limited (Natedao 2011b; Prapimphan 2017).

3.3.2. Organic certifications in Thailand

Before the institutionalization of organic standards, the exchange of organic products between producers and consumers was based on mutual trust (Natedao 2011a:103-104). Once organic market functions as a niche market, standardization and certification of the products is indispensable in both domestic and international level. Started from 1995, the AAN started to research on organic agricultural standard of International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement (IFOAM) with some academics, NGOs, farmers and

¹⁷ Ubon Yoowat, AAN Isan, interviewed on 14th September, 2018

consumers. Office of Organic Agriculture Certification Thailand (ACT, *mor kor thor*) was established as an institution in 1998, and then laid down formal standards in 1999. In order to meet international regulations, the standard has been revised and improved in 2000 (Natedao 2011a:104). Since some condition in international standards only fit Europe but not Thailand, the organization set up committees to negotiate the standard, which is participated by farmers as well. To date the ACT standards has already been accredited by various international standards, such as IFOAM, European Union standard, Canadian standard and the standard of Swiss government (Supa 2014:13).

While ACT functioned as officially recognized organization in charge of international standards certification, there are some certifications run by national or provincial government, or even unofficial associations. Products certificated by these standards are viable only among certain area or certain groups of producer-consumers. For instance, MoAC and National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards have run the national organic standard named Organic Thailand's Brand since 2001 (Organic Trade Association 2006). According to the market survey conducted by Green Net Cooperative in 2011, around 80 percent of organic products in Thailand are certificated by international standards, while the others are under Organic Thailand's Brand. The standard of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) had

been the most widely adopted one¹⁸. While the high registration fee to have ACT certification has been a burden for small-scale farmers, the AAN, along with Thai Organic Agriculture Foundation, pushed Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) as a standard with lower certification costs for organic farmers' group since 2012¹⁹. The commodities certified with PGS standard is now accepted in nationwide market.

Except for organic standards, looser standards such as Q-GAP, which is for reduction but not exemption of chemical in agricultural production, were also considered sustainable agriculture and promoted by Thai government as "healthy agriculture" (*kaset plodphai*). While Q-GAP is supported with policies such as Large Agricultural Land Plot Program (*nayobai kaset plaeng yai*), farmers are actually prevented from converting into organic agriculture. While registration policies asking farmers to pass various kinds of sustainable certifications showed government's decisiveness to manage the development of sustainable farming in a systematic way, it sometimes turned out to be control and limitation on farmers in transition²⁰.

3.3.3. Current situation of organic agriculture in Thailand

Organic agriculture in Thailand today, according to Pasupha (2015:111), can be categorized to two main kinds of groups: the ones that are based in local

¹⁸ Green Net. ผลิตภัณฑ์ออร์แกนิกที่จำหน่ายในประเทศไทย. Retrieved from <http://www.greennet.or.th/article/1362>

¹⁹ TOAF PGS Organic. ที่มาของโครงการ. Retrieved from: <http://www.pgs-organic.org/sub1content.asp?id=14295>

²⁰ Supa Yaimuang, Sustainable Agriculture Foundation, interviewed on 16th February, 2018

community and aim at domestic market, and the ones that work with export associations, such as Green Net Cooperative and some large rice exporters, and reach out to international market. While there had been little support for farmers during the transitional period to organic agriculture, the industry chain of small-scale producers faces its restrictions in production side. Also, the lack of policy to promote consumer demands for organic products in the country made the organic commodities still highly depend on external market (Nanthiya in Prapimphan 2017). Another constraint of organic agriculture is the aging of agricultural population. While organic agriculture is labor intensive, there should be more incentives offered to attract younger labor forces.

What has also been brought to concern is the conventionalization of organic agriculture. The conservative bureaucracies in Thailand, who have been benefited from export-oriented agro-business, did not have incentive to support sustainable agriculture before (Buch-Hansen 2001:157). However, the emergence of a more competitive niche market, as well as growing green consumerism in the society have changed their attitude to support organic agriculture. Some agro-business, such as Chai Wiwat Agro-industry and Capital Rice Company, have started to engage in organic agriculture with organic rice projects and contract farming since the beginning of 1990s. The engagement of agro-businesses in organic agriculture has made the growth of organic food supplies, and the land certified as organic production has been concentrated in these big scale producers (Natedao 2011a:108).

In response to the competition from big-scale organic producers, the people's group and NGOs have tried to manage the alternative production-distribution chain, as well as to expand the market. Some organizations working on alternative markets were founded, and more and more local green markets have been set up in provinces and districts during these years. The development of communication technology and social media have further enabled the direct connections between consumers and farmers, enabling more access to market for small-scale producers. Also, there have been some enterprises supporting organic agriculture through CSR programs and welfare foundations. For instance, the AAN had built a link between *Krating Daeng* and several organic farming groups, and made the contracts of organic rice order signed since 2011 nationwide flood²¹. Recently, the owner of the company also funded its organic rice production project *salana*, further engaging in innovation of small-scale production of organic agriculture²².

3.4. Conclusion

The emergence and development of organic agriculture in Thailand, as parts of alternative agriculture movement, have been highly related to the process of co-optation and moderation between various actors with contesting development ideas. The contexts and forces that have influenced the development of alternative agriculture and organic agriculture in Thailand from the 1960s to date would be

²¹ P-Rose, *Krating Daeng*. Interviewed on 19th November, 2018

²² ศาลานา. *เส้นทางความยั่งยืน ศาลานา*. Retrieved from: <https://www.salana.co.th/aboutus.php>

showed chronologically as Table 3:

Year	Structural contexts	Agency factors	Alternative agriculture
1961	1 st NED Pan		
1965		CPT insurrection started	
1967		TRRM set up	
1968	1968 Constitution		
1971	<i>Coup de tat</i>		
1973		14 th October Uprising	
1974		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return to Countryside Public Health for the Masses 	PFT formed
1975		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Royal Rain Agricultural Land Reform Office 	
1976		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6th October Massacre Folk Doctor Association 	Activists fled into the jungle
1979	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sino-Vietnamese Conflict 2nd Oil Crisis 	Project of Herbal Medicine for Self-reliance	Activists left the jungle
1980	PM Order 66/2523		
1982	PM Order 60/2525		
1984			NGOs and farmer groups started networking
1985	Plaza Accord	NGO-CORD set up	
1986	UN Declaration on the Right to Development		
1987	Green Isan (-1992)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NET Project <i>The One Straw Revolution</i> published in Thailand Brundtland Report 	
1989			AAN formed in national level
1990	<i>Khor Jor Kor</i> (-1992)	Fukuoka visited Thailand	
1991		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fukuoka visited Thailand Chai Wiwat Agro-industry and Capital Rice Company started organic rice project 	
1992	7th NESD Plan (1992-1996)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee on Sustainable Agriculture TRF set up 	1 st National Alternative Agriculture Fair and Forum

1993			Green Net established
1994		New Theory	
1995		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assembly of the Poor formed • AAN Isan formed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign against export-oriented agricultural policy • Research on international organic standard
1996			Joined to steer the plan in the 8th NESD Plan
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian Financial Crisis • People's Constitution • 8th NESD Plan (1997-2001) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assembly of the Poor's 99-day protest • SE Philosophy raised 	Joined protestation of Assembly of the Poor
1998		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaiphatthana Foundation founded • Pilot project of organic agriculture • ACT formed 	Sustainable Agriculture Foundation founded
1999		ACT standards set up	
2000		Sustainable Agriculture for Small-Scale Producers (2001-2003)	
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "the kitchen of the world" • OTOP • Rice mortgage scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • THPF founded • Organic Thailand Brand set up 	
2002	9th NESD Plan (2002-2006)	ACFS set up	
2003		Q-GAP set up	
2005		National Agenda on Organic Agriculture	
2006	<i>Coup de 'tat</i>	Sufficiency Economy Office	
2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st National Strategic Plan for Organic Agriculture Development (2008-2012) • Mentor Program 	Mentor Centers set up in community level
2009	Income guarantee scheme		
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paddy pledging policy • National flood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • THPF promoted sustainable agriculture • <i>Krating Daeng</i> CSR of organic rice 	
2012	Paddy pledging policy	National Organic Agriculture Committee	PGS system started up

		established	
2013	Paddy pledging policy		
2014	<i>Coup de tat</i>		
2015	UN SDG		
2016	<i>Pracharat</i> Policy		
2017		1 Million <i>Rai</i> Policy	
2018		<i>Salana</i> project	

Table 3 The chronology of organic farming development in Thailand

Emerging in the late 1970s, the alternative agriculture movement in Thailand was initially embedded with anarchist, leftist ideas to delink community economy from the dominating political and economic forces. The alternative development approaches were, as Pieterse (2010:85) pointed out, originated from the dissatisfaction toward the so-called mainstream development. The movement's pursuit to self-reliance later went together with neo-liberalism to build a better functioning market, which prevailed in global society during the 1980s, in terms of reducing state intervention (Bernstein in Kothari 2005:10; Pieterse 2010:89-90). On the other hand, alternative development elements, such as participation, sustainability, and pro-poor, were gradually adopted into institutions and disciplines in neo-liberal development (Cameron in Kothari 2005:11; Pieterse 2010:89). Alternative agriculture movement in Thailand in the late 1980s had adopted progressive values, building up alliance with civil societies, but at the same time, become less challenging toward the neo-liberal nature and hegemonies. Between the 1990s to the 2000s, interventionism was adopted into state development for better governance on market to tackle poverty issues. Approaches such as deducting public expenditures, encouraging private enterprises and increasing exports were taken by governments, with economic

growth as a premise of development established under globalized capitalization (Hanlin & Brown 2013:36-37). Within the changing contexts, alternative agriculture movement has come to be incorporated into the mainstream, struggling in capitalist way of development. In contemporary cases of Thailand, sustainable development was further incorporated by nationalist discourse of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, rooted with post-development ideas, and utilized by authoritarian governments to demise democracy (Schaffar 2018:388-389). Organic agriculture, which was originally to cut the connection with state and market, has eventually become dependent on niche market in neo-liberal contexts, and been supported by state with a national agenda for sustainable development.

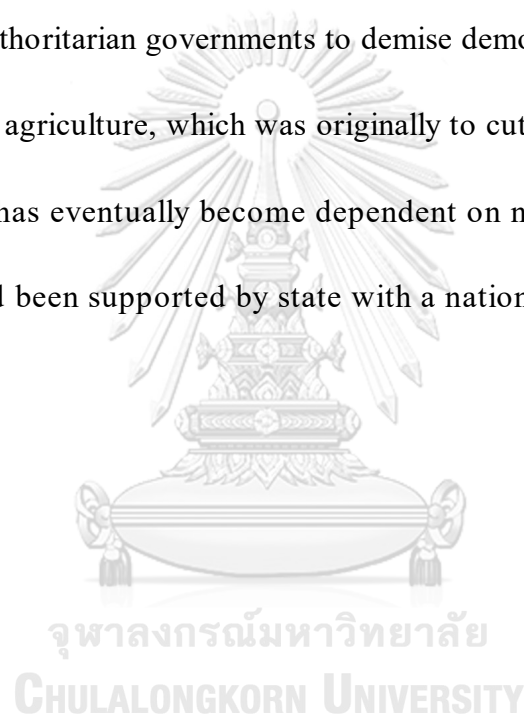


Figure 4 would try to map the geographical distribution of the actors that engage in Thai organic farming and alternative agriculture movement:

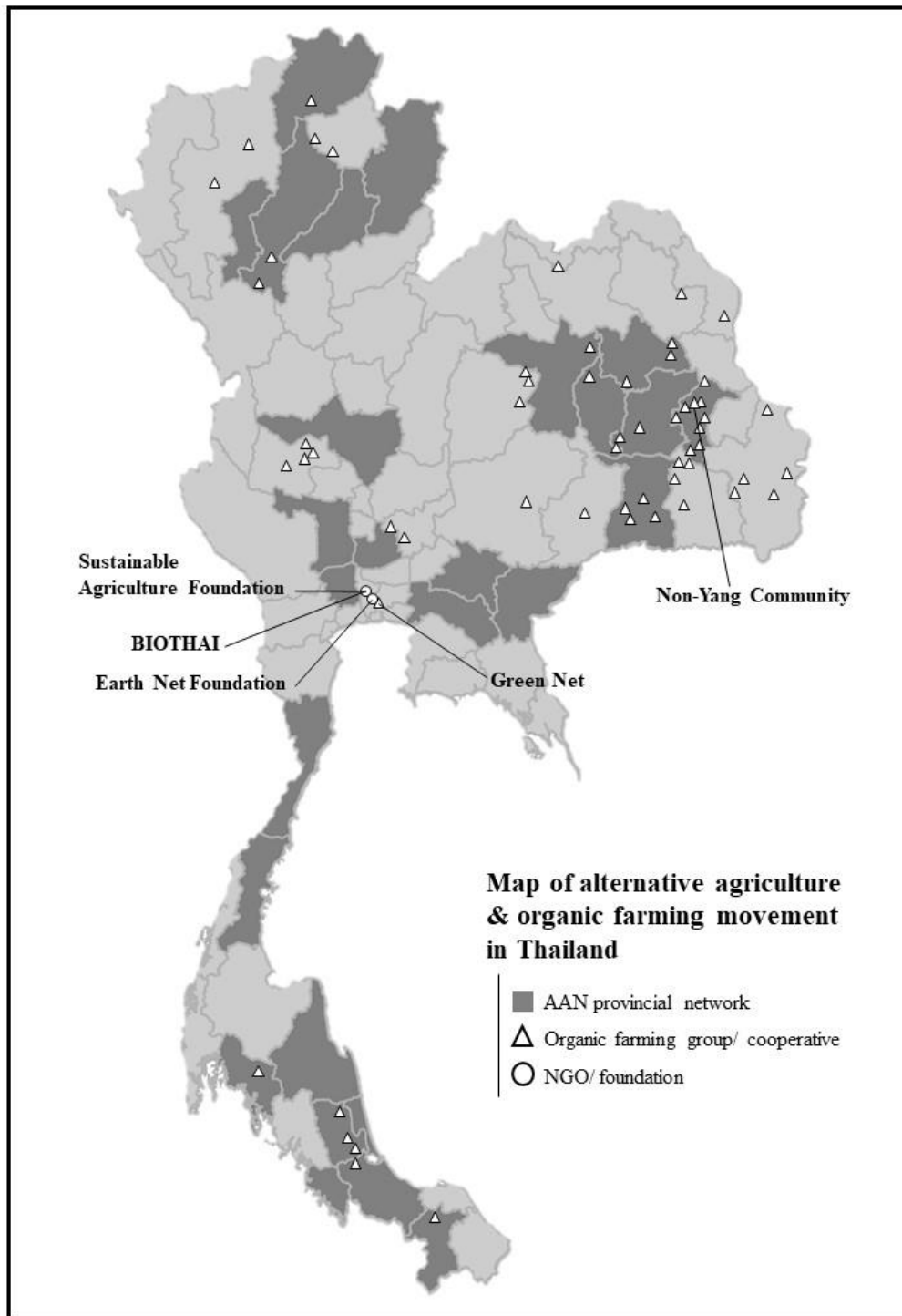


Figure 4 Map of alternative agriculture and organic farming movement in Thailand

Chapter 4. Working Organic Out: Roles of Various Actors in Non-Yang Organic Farming Network

Organic agriculture in Thailand, as discussed in the previous chapter, although originated from alternative agriculture movement with anti-capitalist and anarchist ideas, has already been integrated into mainstream development. Within the dynamic process from resistance, incorporation to cooperation, different actors have been involved into the network that made community-based organic farming valid. However, the join of actors with various views poses not only supports but also challenges to the persistence of organic farming as an alternative livelihood.

Chapter 4 would tell the story about the development and the challenges of organic farming in Non-Yang Community. The background information of the community would be introduced in section 4.1, with section 4.2 presenting how organic farming has been worked by the interaction between various actors in community level. Section 4.3 would focus on how Non-Yang Organic Farming Group have dealt with the obstacles it faced, and the restrictions for the group to persist organic farming in long-term. In section 4.4, I would try to discuss the cooperation with contestation of different actors in the network. Through depicting both background situation and agency factors of organic farming in Non-Yang Community, the chapter would like to argue it to be a way that farmers and farming groups try to respond to the structure. It is an alternative development movement joined by farmers, farming groups and various actors in the dynamic system, rather than a traditional, isolated and totally self-reliant economy. While it is inevitable to develop a strong

supporting network, the central role of people's groups to persist organic farming as an alternative livelihood for the community will be highlighted.

4.1. Introduction to Non-Yang Community

4.1.1. Background information of Non-Yang Community

Non-Yang Community is located in Kam-Maed Sub-district, Kud-Chum District, Yasothon Province, Northeast Thailand. There are 18 administrative villages and 11 communities in Kam-Maed Sub-district, and three villages of Non-Yang come together as Non-Yang community, with around 435 households in registration.

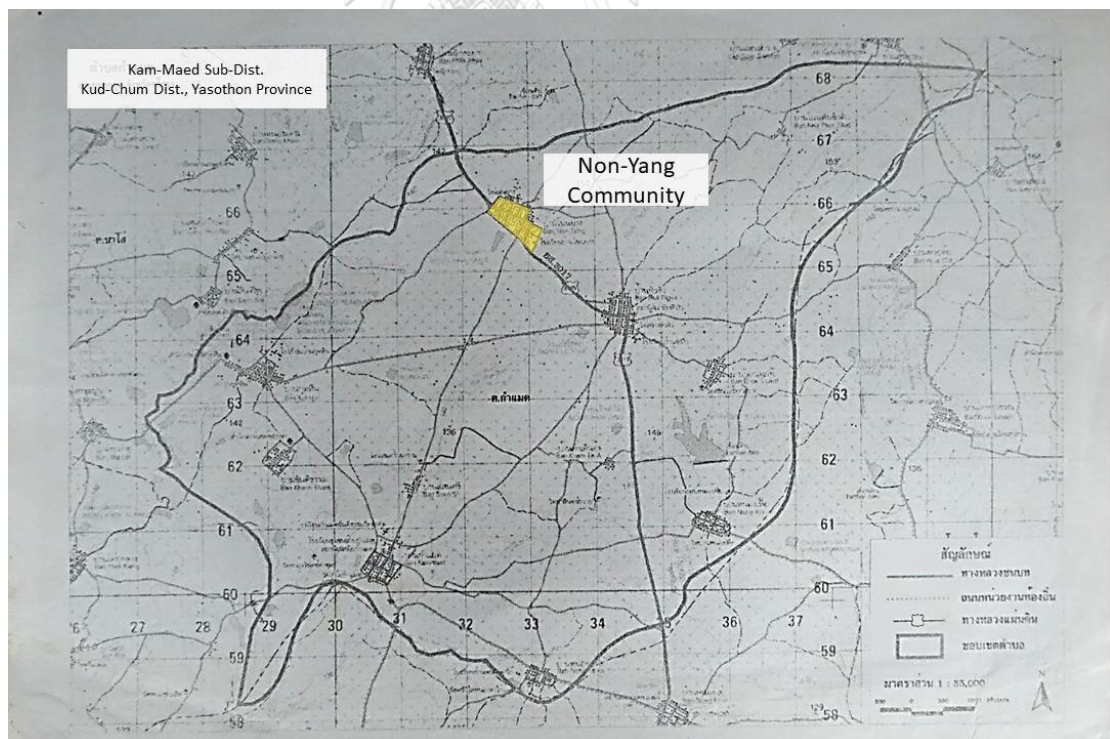


Figure 5 Map of Kam-Maed Sub-District, Kud-Chum District, Yasothon Province, Thailand (the map owned by Non-Yang villager, photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang.)

Current population of the community is mainly composed by people aging

from 20 to 50 years old. Except for some out-migrated households and youth, most of the villagers engage in agricultural career. The average yearly income of villagers in the sub-district is 63,227.36 baht. While agricultural lands owned by villagers in the community is totally around 5,500 *rai*, organic fields make up about 2,500 *rai*. Major organic crops grown in the area are rice, banana and various vegetables. While economic crops such as sugar cane, cassava, and rubber are mostly grown with chemical inputs, some villagers grow them as supporting income in other fields that are rather far from organic area²³. In addition to economic crops, it is common for middle-aged farmers to engage in both farming and non-farm works at the same time²⁴.

4.1.2. Livelihood in Non-Yang Community

Rice has been the main crop produced by farmers in Yasothon for both market and self-consumption. Over 95 percent of the agricultural lands in Non-Yang Community are used as rice fields. The farm work of rice farming starts in May, which is the time to plough the field with either man power or tractors, and spread the seeds. Ploughing and seed spreading end at June, and to July, the farmers take some parts of the rice seedlings to transplant them in the fields, the work of transplanting takes time from July to the end of August. Farmers engaging in conventional farming would put chemical fertilizers after transplanting the seedlings. Being conscious of health, even conventional

²³ Sapdah, headman of Non-Yang 17th Village, Yasothon Province, interviewed on 13th December, 2018

²⁴ Ms. B, villager of Non-Yang Community, Yasothon Province, interviewed on 10th December, 2018

farmers do not put chemical herbicides and pesticides in the area. From September to November is the time that rice grows and begin to have ears, farmers have to take care of the fields through weeding and deworming periodically. At the end of a year is the time for harvest, rice milling, packing and marketing starts from late November. Organic fertilizers made from animal wastes (*pui khork*) would be prepared for the next year during this time.

During fallow season of rice, farmers would grow short-term economic crops, such as maize, in the field. Some farmers who own yards and other fields might grow vegetables and long-term economic crops, such as oil palms and rubber. Oil palms take 3 to 4 years to grow up, after that it could be harvest every 4 to 5 months without limitation of seasons. While frogs and fish are breed during June to August, chicken, cows, and buffaloes can be raised whole year. Except for farming works, in rural villages nowadays, farmers mostly take non-farm career to support the livelihood.

Table 4 shows the crops and the growing area of them in the community.

And Table 5 shows the harvest calendar in Non-Yang Community, with both organic and non-organic livelihoods:

Rice	Cassava	Rubber	Oil palm	Others	Total (<i>rai</i>)
5,466	200	22	30	4	5,722

Table 4 Crops grown in Non-Yang Community

Month	Rice	Other crops or livelihoods
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-farm
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spread the seeds 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put organic fertilizers (made of animal wastes) 	breeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> career Raise buffalos, cows and chicken Oil palm Rubber Vegetable
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transplant the seedlings 		
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take care of the field 		
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put chemical fertilizers (organic farmers do not) 		
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take care of the field 		
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rice starts to have ears 		
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harvest and mill 		
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep the rice for self-consumption Collect the seeds Make organic fertilizers for the next year 		
February	x	Maize	
March	x		
April	x		

Table 5 Harvest calendar of Non-Yang Community

4.2. Organic farming in Non-Yang Community

4.2.1. Organic farming groups

To share the high costs for organic production and certification, as well as to exchange the farming experiences, organic farmers used to work as organic farming groups or cooperatives. The organic farming groups/cooperatives thus play the core roles in community organic farming, from producing to marketing (Itthiphon 2009:31). There are three main organic farming groups joined by organic farmers in Non-Yang Community: Nature Care Club, Nong-Yo Organic Farming Group, and Non-Yang Organic Farming Group. Nature Care Club is the first and biggest organic farming group in Kud-Chum, composed with over 1000 households all over the district. Both the group in Kud-Hin and Nong-Yang were the sub-group of the club, and were later set up

as independent groups. The information of the organic farming groups would be showed in Table 6:

Name of the group	Leader	Year founded	Village located	Non-Yang members/ Total membership (household)
Nature Care Club	Man Saamsii	1990	Sokkhumpun Village, Naa-Sor Sub-district	10/ more than 1000
Nong-Yo Organic Farming Group	Suwit Thanakhun	2005	Kud-Hin Village, Kam-Maed Sub-district	10/ more than 500
Non-Yang Organic Farming Group	Bunsong Martkhao	2008	Non-Yang Village, Kam-Maed Sub-district	30/ around 130

Table 6 Organic farming groups joined by Non-Yang organic farmers

4.2.2. Resources and capital for organic production

The production of organic rice in the field starts from ploughing the field, growing rice, harvesting to processing and marketing. Farmers and the farming groups thus would have to manage the factors of production in the whole process, which are the machines, seeds, fertilizers, knowledge and funds. Farmers in the past used to raise buffaloes to let them plough the fields, and harvest with manpower. Buffaloes are still raised nowadays, but for selling and making organic fertilizers from their wastes rather than ploughing. Most of the rural households nowadays have family members working in urban area, sending remittance back home. Some would invest the money in farm work mechanization, and people tend to depend on machines in ploughing and harvesting. However, tractors and harvesters are still not owned by every household. Although the organic farming groups own tractors opened for group members to rent, they are not enough to cover the needs of all of the members

during busy time. Some farmers thus would hire machine drivers to plough the fields and harvest the rice at the price of 200 to 250 baht each *rai*.



Normally, the farmers would keep the seeds of rice for the coming year after harvest. But nowadays due to the mechanization in harvesting, it has become difficult for farmers to collect and keep the seeds of different species. Except for buying seeds from shops, there are alternative ways for organic farmers to get the seeds. Kam-Maed Local Rice Species Conservation and Development Group (*klum anurak lae phatthana phankhaopheunbaan kammaed*), joined by around 50 households in the sub-district, is in charge of developing organic rice seeds with high quality. The group has been working with Biothai Foundation and Sustainable Agriculture Foundation based in Nonthaburi to conserve and improve local species of rice²⁵. The project of the group has also been supported by Yasothon ALRO and provincial office of the Department of Agriculture (DOA), and the new developed species would be examined by Department of Agricultural Research (*krom wichaa kan kasaet*). The buying and selling of seeds within the group would not be under legal limitation, but it has to follow the regulations set by Ministry of Commerce if the seeds would be sell to people out of the group. Due to the instability of rice price, organic farmers and groups have managed to deal with the adoption of new organic crops.

²⁵ Mr. Daoreuang, Kam-Maed Local Rice Species Conservation and Development Group, interviewed on 10th June, 2018



*Figure 6 Rice developed by Kam-Maed Local Rice Species Conservation and Development Group
(photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang.)*

As for fertilizers, the members of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group would gather together to make organic fertilizer by themselves after harvest, mostly in December each year. Nong-Yo Organic Farming Group has its factory to produce organic fertilizers throughout the whole year.



*Figure 7 Fertilizer factory of Nong-Yo Organic Farming Group
(photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang.)*

Capitals for developing organic farming groups can be roughly divided to human capital and financial/material capital, which are knowledge and funds/machines to develop organic agriculture and manage the groups. Leaders of the groups organize as committee, discussing group affairs and dealing with problems together. To gain more knowledge in producing organic agriculture, the farming groups have been working with other groups, NGOs and academics, and exchange experiences with farmer groups in provincial and national level through the linkage of the AAN. While not every organic farming group has joined the AAN, there is a provincial network among 12 organic farming groups in Yasothon built with the support of provincial DOA. Leaders of organic farming groups have been organized by provincial or national network to do research or exchange knowledge in other provinces or other countries²⁶.

As for financial/material capital, some of the groups running as “cooperatives,” such as Nong-Yo Organic Farming Groups, can receive financial and material assistance from Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperative (BAAC). With the support from BAAC, the group now owns its learning center, rice mill, fertilizer factory, and the paddy drying court. On the other hand, Non-Yang Organic Farming Group is not qualified for loaning and material support from the bank since it is run as a “community enterprise.” There are mainly three sources of the group’s funds: taking charges on the projects pushed by

²⁶ Mr. Man, Nature Care Club, interviewed on 10th June, 2018

Yasothon ALRO, which has been the main economic support to the group, yearly 500-baht membership fee of each household, and the profits from selling organic rice of members. The group has been accepting the projects pushed by the ALRO since 2008. The projects are pushed every 2 or 3 years, while sometimes the detail of projects might not meet the needs of the group, and to accept the projects or not depends on the discussion among group leaders²⁷. However, with limited budget for organic agriculture allocated from central government, ALRO can only support the group with rice mill and paddy drying court in a smaller scale, the machineries offered by the office to the group are also not quite updated²⁸. The situation got better after working with the CSR project of *Krating Daeng*. Within the cooperation, the group got material supports from the company in terms of machines for milling and processing, as well as a rice-packing hall²⁹.

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²⁷ Mr. Bunsong, Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, interviewed on 12th November, 2018

²⁸ P.Kung, Yasothon Agricultural Land Reform Office, interviewed on 13th November, 2018

²⁹ P.Rose, *Krating Daeng*. Interviewed on 19th November, 2018



*Figure 8 Rice milling machine in rice mill of Non-Yang Community Group
(photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang.)*



*Figure 9 Warehouse in rice mill of Non-Yang Community Group
(photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang.)*



*Figure 10 Rice packing hall of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group
(photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang.)*

4.2.3. Organic certifications

An indispensable factor in organic product distribution is the certification for organic standards. Yasothon ALRO's promotion on organic agriculture adopts IFOAM, and the standard is the most widely adopted one among the organic farming groups in the area³⁰. To make the rice produced by group members be recognized as organic product, the organic farming group should send documents to ACT and apply for IFOAM examination every year. The cost for ACT certification is 4,000 baht for each group, 200 baht per individual, and the entering fee for inspection is 2,500 baht a day (Itthiphon 2009:25). The staffs of ACT would stay in the field for around 4 days, review the documents and pick up around 15-16% of the members' fields to examine if the production fits IFOAM standard or not. After the inspection, the staffs would have a

³⁰ P·Art, Yasothon Agricultural Land Reform Office, interviewed on 15th November, 2018

meeting with group leaders. Farmers who were found out not following the organic standard, for instance, putting chemical or branded fertilizers in the fields, would have to leave the group. Experience exchange and suggestions for future development would also be taken between the ACT staff and group leaders.



Figure 11 Meeting between ACT staff and Non-Yang Organic Farming Group leaders (photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang.)

4.2.4. Processing and marketing

After harvest, members of organic farming groups can take the paddy to the groups. “During the starting years, our group could only get 100 tons of rice per year. But now we get over 200 tons every year, and sometimes can reach 300 tons,” said Bunsong. The price of organic paddy rice is relatively stable, but still change in accordance to the price in conventional market. Normally, the price of paddy in conventional market is around 13 to 14 baht/kg, then the organic farming group would buy the rice from members at the price of 15 to

16 baht/kg. The group would pack the milled rice or further process the rice into snacks, and market it in the unit of group. Some group, such as Nature Care Club, work with exporter such as Green Net and sell their products in the unit of group to global market. In Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, some of the members have exported their rice individually, however, there has not yet been export of organic rice in the unit of group.

When Nature Care Club was just founded, it was the Project of Herbal Medicine for Self-reliance that helped linking up the group with the consumers in Bangkok (Nantiya & Narong 2004:46). Nowadays, consumers of organic farming groups in the area range from individuals to private businesses. In case of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, individual consumers can get the products of group members in the shop and learning center of the group, order the rice with the group through phone calls or on-line, and receive the products through logistic. Private businesses can order the rice for single times, or through signing contracts with the group. The price of larger amount of rice depends on the negotiation between the group and representatives from businesses. The contract between *Krating Daeng* and Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, which orders about 60 tons of organic rice every year, offers a stable market for the group. The staff of the company visits the village once a year to see the fields and discuss the detail of contract that year. Except for ordering rice for its employees, the company also orders rice for Children

Development Centers in Kam-Maed Sub-district from the group in concern of the children's health³¹.



Figure 12 Children in children development center and rice (photo credited to Suprawin Martkhae.)

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

³¹ P-Rose, *Krating Daeng*. Interviewed on 19th November, 2018

Except for selling paddies to the groups, farmers can also mill the rice for self-consumption or sell the organic products on green markets by themselves. When products are sold in the unit of group, the groups act as mediators and processors in the value chain. In the case that farmers sell their own products on green markets, the groups play important roles in helping farmers find or access to market/consumers. In 2005, network of organic farming groups in Yasothon had achieved a weekly green market provincial city hall. With the support of civil societies network in Kud-Chum district, a green market in front of Kud-Chum District Hospital held twice a week was set up in 2007.



*Figure 13 Kud-Chum District Hospital
(photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang.)*

4.2.5. Promotion and expanding of organic farming

To attract more potential supporters into the network of organic agriculture, promotion works from community level to provincial and national level were taken by the actors in the network. Before the establishment of Non-

Yang Organic Farming Group, organic farmers in Non-Yang mostly worked on themselves, promotion on organic agriculture went only between relatives³². After Sufficiency Economy Philosophy was constitutionalized by the junta in 2006, funds were made from national level to promote sustainable agriculture (Heis 2015:73). Invited by Yasothon ALRO, Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, which was a sub-group of Nature Care Club, was formally established as an independent community enterprise. At the same time, the provincial DOA set up Mentor Center in the yard of Rerm Churat, who was the village headman from 1997 to 2007. Ten experienced organic farmers were selected to be the mentors and run the Mentor Center, periodically holding training programs in name of Sufficiency Economy to promote organic agriculture. Before 2016, the groups had to invite farmers to join training programs by themselves. After NCPO government pushed *Pracharat* policy, villagers who are in need to register for welfare card were made to attend a 3-to-4-day training program on organic agriculture every month.

³² The statement was commonly made by some mentors, such as Sanit, Thawi, Kaendamklaa, Phunsak, Bunsong, and Bunkong (interviewed separately during June, 2018)



Figure 14 Mentor center of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group
(photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang.)



Figure 15 Training program in Mentor center
(photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang.)

Stories of experienced organic farmers in Non-Yang Community have been depicted as representative self-reliance practices following King Rama IX's New Theory and Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. To spread their experience, Yasothon ALRO invited some successful organic farmers to set up learning centers in their fields. The centers are opened for people from

everywhere to learn the knowledge about organic farming. Thawi Senaphrom's integrated farm is special for his arrangement of fields according to King Rama IX's New Theory.



*Figure 16 Thawi Senaphrom's integrated farm
(photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang.)*



The learning center of Thawong Philanoi and his son Kaendamklaa spreads knowledge about crops breeding. Through breeding with crops species from all over the world, the father and son have developed thousands of species of rice and many new vegetables. They have been exchanging experience with various groups, from Thai and foreign academics, students, and religious groups like Santi Asoke.



Figure 17 Kaendamklaa Philanoi sharing experience with students from Chiang Mai Province (photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang.)

Within the trend that Sufficiency Economy is strongly promoted by the state, organic farmers' stories are told by people, reported by media, and even published as books in name of the philosophy. Phunsak Sombun, known as Laem, one of the Non-Yang villager working with Nature Care Club, became such famous during the time between 2006 to 2010. "I was just like a super star of villagers," he said, "was kept invited to talk on TV shows, and traveled all

over the country to give lecture on Sufficiency Economy.³³ Laem was given the nickname “*Arahan Chaonaa*,” which means the enlightened farmer. His story was learnt by Buntham Loetsukhikasem, who later became the provincial governor of Yasothon (Buntham 2018:10). After the *coup de tat* in 2014, the story of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group was brought up again. The group became famous since most of the members stayed organic farming even throughout the time of populist paddy pledging scheme³⁴.



Figure 18 Laem, Phunsak Sombun
(photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang.)

Social capital has been a crucial factor in all kinds of alternative development (Nantiya & Narong 2004:42; Parnwell 2007). In the promotion of organic agriculture, the core social capital is the comprehensive knowledge and positive attitude toward organic^{35,36}. Some farmers might leave or choose not to

³³ Phunsak Sombun, interviewed on 11th June, 2018

³⁴ Siriphan, C. (2014, 19th September). “Organic rice... Non-Yang also get its power like today.” In *Thairath*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thairath.co.th/content/451077> (In Thai)

³⁵ Buntham Loetsukhikasem, previous provincial governor of Yasothon, interviewed on 24th December,

join organic farming groups due to their own reasons, but the common conscious to the benefit of organic agriculture and the danger of adopting chemicals offers a friendly environment for organic farming to be developed in the area. In Non-Yang Community, there are stories about the harmfulness of agricultural chemicals, talking about fish and frogs dying in the field or people getting sick due to the utilization of chemicals. One of the often told tale is about a man's male genitalia shriveled after using too much agricultural chemicals in his field. In the Constitution of the Sub-district (*thammanun tambol*) of Kam-Maed Sub-district, it was written that people who use chemicals in their fields or yards should set a warning sign to show the other villagers. If not, they will be fined³⁷. Non-organic farmers and farmers that had dropped from organic farming thus still control their chemical inputs. A non-organic farmer said, her family joined Nong-Yo Organic Farming Group and tried organic farming for three years. Although she had given up at the end, she still supports organic farming, and help organic farmers in the community to sell their products³⁸.

The promotion of organic agriculture aims not only producers, but every sector in the society. The organic farming projects taken by ALRO usually collaborate with public hospitals in the region, encouraging farmers to donate organic rice to hospitals. To further promote organic agriculture among younger

2018

³⁶ Suwit, Nong-Yo Organic Farming Group, interviewed on 6th November, 2018

³⁷ Mr. Bunkong, Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, interviewed on 13th November, 2018

³⁸ Ms. R., Villager in Non-Yang Community, interviewed on 8th November, 2018

generation, the groups also worked with the local school. In Non-Yang Village, the school managed a field for students to grow organic rice by themselves during 2011 to 2012 with the support of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group. Nevertheless, the field was not rented to the school anymore after the owner retired, the school still worked with the group until 2016. In 2016, a new principal came to the school after the previous one retired, the school then ended the connection with organic farming group since the new principal was not interested in organic farming. In 2017, supported by *Pracharat* project, Nong-Yo Organic Farming Group cooperated with 3 public schools in Kam-Maed Sub-district to organize student visiting to the group, in order to enhance younger generation's knowledge and open their interest to organic agriculture³⁹. The activity was to promote organic farming in name of Sufficiency Economy. While knowledge about raising fish and making organic fertilizers were introduced, Royal image that King Rama IX has developed sustainable agriculture with great effort, and some royal projects such as Royal Rain were taught to the students⁴⁰.

In 2015, Buntham was assigned the provincial governor of Yasothon. Since his term of office, Yasothon government has strongly supported the promotion of organic agriculture. According to a mentor in Non-Yang Community, Buntham worked closer with villagers (*khao theung chaobaan*

³⁹ Mr. Suwit, Nong-Yo Organic Farming Group, interviewed on 6th November, 2018

⁴⁰ Group discussion with students in Baan Non-Yang School on 5th November, 2018

maak kwaa) than any of the provincial governors⁴¹. He respected the central role of organic farming groups in the process, and pushed the projects in consults and close cooperation with the leading figures of organic farmers in Kud-Chum, such as Man, Bunsong, and Suwit (Buntham 2018:23-24). In his book talking about his governing experience of developing organic agriculture in Yasothon Province, he admitted: "...that organic agriculture in Yasothon became famous and progressed until today, is not because of the work of government or someone elsewhere, but comes from the farming groups" (Ibid.:36-37).

4.3. Challenges and responses in persisting organic farming: the case of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group

Through working together with various actors in the supporting network built from community to national level, organic farming in Non-Yang Community has developed until today. The persistence and development of organic farming have not gone smoothly, but with various obstacles for farmers and organic farming groups to deal with. The inferior climate condition and lack of irrigation infrastructure in the Northeast Thailand have set nature limitations for organic farming to be developed efficiently in this region. Also, the dynamic political-economic contexts in globalization, as well as the process of agrarian transformation have brought more challenges to farmers and farming groups. As

⁴¹ Mr. Bunkong, Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, interviewed on 13th November, 2018

Bunsong, the leader of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, said, “There would always be endless problems when running the group. Once a problem was solved, a new one would come out.” The persistence of organic farming in contemporary Thailand is about farmers and farming groups continuously dealing with the problems emerging in the changing society.

4.4.1. Dealing with dynamic policies

Thai agriculture has been highly export-oriented and connected with global market. Small farmers—both conventional and organic farmers—in Thailand thus has been fragile and easily influenced by changing agricultural policies under free trade. To monitor and collectively campaign on agricultural policies, the AAN has been formed as the civil societies network among the farmers. As mentioned in previous sections, Non-Yang Organic Farming Group has been working closely with the AAN. The leading figures of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, such as Bunsong and Rerm, are currently the committee members of Yasothon AAN. The network has linked farmer leaders with NGOs in regional and national level, and made farmers get access to the information about dynamic agricultural issues in globalization and regional integration, such as GMO and competitiveness of Thai crops in WTO or AEC free trade system. Since 2008, AAN Isan has held Isan Local Seed Festival (*mahakaam phankaamthongthin phaakisaan*) annually, gathering farmer leaders in the region together to discuss on improvement on local crop species and

monitoring sustainable agriculture policies⁴². Through leaders attending learning process and holding training programs, farmers in Non-Yang Organic Farming Group have become more conscious of contemporary agrarian issues, such as conserving local crop species and biodiversity (Supa 2014:18-19). The Mentor Center of the group had also held training program about agriculture under AEC. While some leaders of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group have tried to develop new crop species by themselves, many members have joined Kam-Maed Local Rice Species Conservation and Development Group to work on local rice conservation and innovation together. When there are movements to be carried out, AAN would mobilize farmers through the leaders of farming groups, gathering farmers together and raise up the voice to policy makers.



*Figure 19 Non-Yang organic farmers joining AAN event
(photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang.)*

Rice has been a major crop grown by Thai farmers, and the industry has

⁴² มหกรรมพันธุ์กรรมภาคอีสาน 2560. *เครือข่ายเกษตรกรรมทางเลือก*. Retrieved from:
<http://thaiaan.org/index.php/79-2017-03-01-10-21-03-89-seed-festival-17>

always played a crucial role in political economy of the country. With around 45% to 50% of rice in the market are for export, the competitiveness of Thai rice, as well as the price fluctuation of rice price in global market would highly influence the price in domestic market, which would directly be reflected on farmers' income (Wareerat 2017:1). Different governments of Thailand thus have rolled out policies from subsidies to mortgage, in order to protect and support the livelihood of rice farmers. Paddy pledging scheme, first launched since 1981, was a policy that let farmers mortgage their rice to BAAC in a price lower than market price to ensure farmers' income in harvest period. The mortgage price was lifted to be higher by Thaksin's government, and was maximized during Yingluck's prime-ministry from 2011 to 2013 (Ricks 2018:408-409, 412). But at the end Yingluck's government failed to pay the promised subsidies of paddy pledging scheme, and the small scale farmers' network in both the North and the Northeast Thailand raised protests to ask for money from the government. The farmers later joined People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC), a coalition of yellow-shirt groups and other civil society organizations to fight against the political power of Thaksin faction⁴³.

The organic farmers are supposed to sell their rice through alternative market and be less influenced by the instability of mortgage scheme. However, the price of organic rice actually shifts along with the rice price in conventional

⁴³ Korat Forum Online. (2014, 6th March). "Isan farmers shifted to join PDRC for exerting pressure on money of paddy pledging scheme." *Korat Forum Online*. Retrieved from: <http://www.koratforum.net/politics/2606.html>

market. Organic farming groups have been buying paddy rice from members with the price slightly higher than conventional price, which is also a reason that made farmers join organic farming. Under paddy pledging scheme, price of paddy rice in conventional market climbed up from 14-15 baht per kilogram to 20 baht per kilogram. The price in conventional market was attractive to farmers since it was higher than 15-16 baht per kilogram in organic market. In order to keep the members in organic farming and ensure the rights of them, Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, like many other groups, raised the price of buying organic paddy rice from 16 baht to 20 baht per kilogram⁴⁴. To cover the costs, organic farming groups had to bargain with consumers for higher price. Some groups, especially those engaging in international market, faced problems bargaining with consumers and thus had financial difficulties⁴⁵.

As for Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, the leaders frequently held meetings among members and actively communicate with consumers. “We tried hard to explain the adverse effect brought by the policy to farmers and farming groups to our members,” said Bunsong. At the end, few members had dropped from Non-Yang Organic Farming Group within paddy pledging scheme, and most of the consumers were willing to purchase the products of the group in higher price. One of the reasons made members stayed in organic farming is

⁴⁴ Mr. Bunsong, Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, interviewed on 12th November, 2018

⁴⁵ ศจินทร์ ประชาสันต์. (2013. 25th January). “วิเคราะห์ความไม่เป็นธรรม โครงการชานา.” In Social Equality & Health. Retrieved from: <http://social-agenda.org/โครงการสัมมนาเชิงปฏิบัติ/การใช้กรอบคิดวิเคราะห์-5/>

that farmers could not be paid by the scheme by cash, which has been important for rural livelihood. Some farmers could not wait until the money came to BAAC for them to withdraw, thus chose not to join the scheme⁴⁶. Story that the group survived paddy pledging scheme became famous after 2014 *coup de tat*.

In 2017, MoAC rolled out 1 Million *Rai* Policy, aiming to reduce the area of conventional rice cultivation to organic farming by one million *rai* in three years. The program promotes organic agriculture by encouraging a reduction in the amount of new rice planting, and a shift from commercial varieties to organic strains⁴⁷. The program is implemented nation-wide by office of Rice Department, encouraging farmers to reduce their dependence on chemicals, in order to convert their fields from conventional fields into organic ones. It was set that 60 percent of the harvest from the program would be exported, and the rest set to meet the rising domestic demand for organic rice. However, both Thai Rice Exporters Association and leader of Nature Care Club had suggested the government to expand domestic market for organic rice first⁴⁸. The organic rice produced under the program are not traded through alternative market, but still go into conventional market through big rice mills. Farmers receive the conventional price from rice mills, but get subsidies from the government with

⁴⁶ Mr. Bunsong, Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, interviewed on 12th November, 2018

⁴⁷ Oxford Business Group. (2017, 25th July). "Thailand promotes organic agriculture with new incentives." In *Oxford Business Group*. Retrieved from: <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/news/thailand-promotes-organic-agriculture-new-incentives>

⁴⁸ Thai PBS. (2018, 4th November). "หน่วยงานโยบายรัฐเพิ่มนาข้าว 1 ล้านไร่-กระตุ้นปลูก "ข้าวอินทรีย์" สั้นตลาด" In *Thai PBS*. Retrieved from: <https://news.thaipbs.or.th/content/267448>

2,000 baht for each *rai* of field, and 15 *rai*, which is 30,000 baht at most. The program caused problems when it was implemented in Yasothon, the province that civil societies been working on organic farming long before policy support⁴⁹. Since the policy supports only farmers who newly converted to organic farming, some members of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group dropped from the group and registered to the program. While some farmers registering the program choose to work on themselves, farmers in Non-Yang Community set up a new organic farming group, named Organic for Good Health Group (*klum kasetinsi sukhaphadii*). The staffs of Rice Department come to the field and do organic inspection twice a year, once a household is found out of standard, none of the members would get subsidies for the next year. To manage the risk, farmers joining the program prefer to organize a small-scale group with close friends rather than working as a big group. The group functions loosely and do not organize any activity to promote organic agriculture⁵⁰. It came out that 1 Million *Rai* Policy did not helped farmers from relying on state and conventional market, but had weakened the existing people's groups and undermined the base of community self-reliance.

The problems brought by policies to Non-Yang Organic Farming Groups reflect the contradiction of different value system between government and organic farmers. Thai government has lack of a clear concept to support organic

⁴⁹ P.Kung, Yasothon Agricultural Land Reform Office, interviewed on 13th November, 2018

⁵⁰ Ms. Y., Organic for Good Health Group, interviewed on 10th November, 2018

agriculture with consistent agricultural policies in national level. In most of the time, organic agriculture is supported to increase the competitiveness of Thai crops in global market or to serve conservative discourse (see 3.3.1). The support from government works mainly on production side, trying to expand the area of organic farming through subsidies. However, the increase in supply side without growing needs in the market would cause the decline in price of organic products⁵¹. Also, programs promoted by government are usually to control and integrate organic farmers' activities into the mainstream rather than to support. What organic farmers really need is not being managed by government programs, but the expansion in market needs. "The government should let go of organic production to farming groups and farmer leaders." Bunsong said, "The more the government tried to interfere, the more problems they brought."

4.4.2. Finding funds and managing income

As already mentioned in section 4.2.2, Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, which was established as a community enterprise, is not qualified to loan from BAAC. While Nong-Yo Organic Farming Group has loaned from BAAC and faced debt issues, the group in Non-Yang has not yet faced debt problem to date. However, it has met limitations in expanding the scale and upgrading the tools and machines for modern production. The funds of the group are mainly

⁵¹ Thai PBS. (2018, 4th November). "ห่วงนโยบายรัฐเพิ่มนาข้าว 1 ล้านไร่-กระตุ้นปลูก "ข้าวอินทรีย์" สั้นตลาด" In *Thai PBS*. Retrieved from: <https://news.thaipbs.or.th/content/267448>

from the projects pushed by Yasothon ALRO, yearly membership fee of members, and the income gained from selling organic rice for members. While material support from government has been limited, market and consumers thus become important for the financial persistence of the group. In order to expand the needs for organic products in the market, as well as to build up the image of the group, Non-Yang Organic Farming Group has been working on spreading knowledge about organic farming in the society. Promotion activities have been taken in cooperation with various official and unofficial organizations (see 4.2.5). Some leaders of the group have also submitted their research projects to TRF. Through conducting research on local agricultural issues, farmers and the group get financial support from the fund. At the same time, people and policy makers can understand more about farmers' needs and the difficulties they face.

โครงการวิจัย			
การสร้างเครือข่ายช่างชาวนาเพื่อพัฒนานวัตกรรม			
เชิงเทคโนโลยีการผลิตสำหรับชาวนาสูงอายุในพื้นที่ภาคอีสานตอนกลาง			
คณะผู้วิจัย			
▲	1. นายทองหล่อ	ขวัญทอง	หัวหน้าโครงการ
-	2. นายเริ่ม	ชูรัตน์	ทีมวิจัย
	3. นายบุญกอง	สุวรรณเพชร	ทีมวิจัย
	4. นายสนิจ	ทองน้อย	ทีมวิจัย
	5. นายอนนท์	จีวลาย	ทีมวิจัย
	6. นายเหมี่ยว	จงศักดิ์กลาง	ทีมวิจัย
	7. นายบุญส่ง	มาตชา	ทีมวิจัย

Figure 20 TRF supported research done by leaders of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group

Moreover, the group has tried to modernize its supply chain and expand

its market through diversifying the variety of organic products, at the same time, increase the added value of them. With the rice-packing hall, the group members gather together to process organic rice in to snacks. The processed rice snacks of the groups can be sold not only at green markets, but also some coffee shops in district and province town area. While organic milled rice is at the price of 40 baht per kilogram, processing brings another 50% to 100% value to the rice, each kilogram of rice used in making snacks comes to value 80 to 100 baht.



Figure 21 Tuiles cookie produced by Non-Yang Organic Farming Group (photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang.)



*Figure 22 Rice snack produced by Non-Yang Organic Farming Group
(photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang.)*

4.4.3. Maintaining group membership

The stability and consciousness about self-reliance of group members are core factors for organic farming groups to deal with both dynamic policies and financial problems. Before the organic farming group of Non-Yang was set up as a community enterprise, organic farmers in the area were mainly the members of Nature Care Club. Farmers during this time were used to work by themselves separately rather than being organized. Member shortage thus has been a problem during startup period. Starting from 30 to 40 households, the group gradually expanded to a group joined by more than 100 households through the past ten years, but the membership has decreased and become a problem to the group again in recent years. There were around 130 households of group members in 2016, and to the end of 2018 the number reduced to 116 households. While some farmers have dropped from the group, the group has

faced limitations in recruiting new members due to various factors. In addition to the declining number, the aging of group members stands as an obstacle for long-term development of organic farming. Although the members join the group in unit of household, the ones who really work on the farm, according to the group leader, are mostly more than 40 years old. Few young farmers join the group to do organic farming mostly because the elders in their families are group members. There have been some cases that elders who were too old to work on fields left the group and rented their fields out.

Rural area in Thailand had been dragged closer to cities with penetration of market economy. The process of agrarian transformation deepened villagers' connection and reliance on external networks and weakens local relations. New crops and new techniques brought up the process of agrarian transformation, taking self-sufficient agriculture to market-oriented system and increased villagers' need for cash. While urban area has gone through industrialization and got larger demand of labor force, rural people tended to flow to cities for work opportunities. The out-migration, no matter permanent or seasonal, have loosened the social structure of rural area, which used to be based on people's dyadic interaction (Shigetomi 1998). Remittance sent back home by the migrants became main income of households, while villagers' dependence on market and government support also increased (Pasuk & Baker 1995; Rambo 2017). While most of the households in the village nowadays rely on non-farm

income or the remittances sent by family members working in town, some farmers don't even grow their rice for sell, but for self-consumption only. Since joining the group is for selling rice at a better and more stable price, farmers who grow rice for self-consumption prefer to work by themselves rather than joining the group. Also, it takes three years of observation period for the fields to be certificated as organic. Some farmers in Non-Yang have tried to transfer to organic farming due to the promotion and invitation of organic farming group, however, failed to continue in the beginning years. Although the price in organic market is higher than conventional ones, doing organic farming with organic farming group means more intensive labor force and more times in group affairs. Monthly meetings and training programs during the whole year have exhausted some small-scale farmers who have limitation in time and labor force in their households.

Disparity of value system between different groups in community also impacts villagers' willing to work with organic farming groups. One of the factors that makes disparity is age/generation. The daughter of one of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group's leaders admitted that, working with the organic farming group is not so attractive to young farmers in the community. Since the leaders of the group are mostly the elders in the community, who have been used to living a traditional way of slow life, young farmers who pursue planned working schedule in modern society feel uneasy to work with the group. The generation gap blocks some young farmers from working on organic farming,

since they don't want to just follow the instructions of the elders, and it is difficult for them to develop organic farming by themselves. One of the members of the group supported by Rice Department also pointed out the generation gap in Non-Yang Organic Farming Group: "The old generations have different lifestyle with people in middle age. They can work only on farming because they receive age pensions, and their sons and daughters working in town would send money back. But we are the generation who have to raise our families. Except for farming, we have to do some other works for living, we don't have full time for organic agriculture." Organic farming based in community was attractive to the villagers who were in their middle age in 1990s, since staying in the community was the first concern for people in this period. But for the new generation, organic farming, which takes time and intensive labor, ties people in the community rather than getting the job opportunities in towns.

While there is generation gap between older generation and the middle-age, the gap is larger between the youth and their grandparents. Around 50 percent of 20 to 30-year-old youth in Non-Yang Community are currently working in town as waged labors. Most of the school teenagers in the community nowadays, although some have experience of helping farm work in the fields, do not want to work as farmers. While being asked about future plans, the most frequently answers they gave were to work in town or become

motorbike riders. Almost every student's family owns rice fields, however, the new generations have few ideas about the field of their family, and neither have knowledge about farming and organic farming. The only difference that they can tell between conventional and organic farming is with the adoption of chemical fertilizer or not. Although the activities arranged by school and organic farming groups (see 4.2.5) had made them more interested in organic farming, the students still prefer non-farm jobs rather than working as farmers in the future⁵².

To attract more group members, another problem for Non-Yang Organic Farming Group to fix is the mutual misunderstanding—or stereotype—between organic farmers and conventional farmers in the community. Despite of the complexity behind failing to do organic farming, organic farmers believes that organic farming is all about paying time and effort. They thus used to simply conclude that the conventional farmers are “lazy, not understanding policy, and shortsighted.” On the other hand, conventional farmers tend to refer the success of organic farmers to the scale of farming: “They own many fields, but we don't. That's why we cannot do organic farming. It is not suitable for small farmers.” Through the repeating and spread of these narrations, almost no effective exchange was taken between organic farmers and non-organic farmers, further causing adverse effects to the attraction of new group members.

⁵² Group discussion with students in Baan Non-Yang School on 5th November, 2018

4.4. Cooperation with contestation: the roles of actors in the network

Organic agriculture has been believed to be suitable for small-scale farmers in sustainable development, which offers them to be less dependent on external resources, with stable yields and higher incomes (UNCTAD-UNEP 2008: iii). The stable yields and higher value of organic products, however, are not naturally generated by decreasing dependence on external resources, but are pursued and made by the involved actors in the supporting network. However, the actors in the network are not homogeneous in views toward organic farming and ways of supports. The following section would discuss the roles of different actors and their cooperation with contestation that makes organic farming in the community.

4.3.1. Actors at grassroots: POs and CBOs

Different from the situation in central plain, most of the administrative villages in the Northeast have been highly overlapping with indigenous ones. Villagers' organizational active ties for development in the region thus had usually occurred at the administrative village level, interrelated with local social network (Shigetomi & Okamoto 2014). It is thus inevitable to discuss the role of POs/ CBOs and the local network behind them when discussing local development in the Northeast Thailand.

Laying in different historical and socio-economic contexts from central Thailand, the Northeast Thailand has been a region of rebellion in modern Thai history (McCargo & Krisadawan 2004:221; Keyes 2014). The insurrection of

the CPT since 1965 also started from the jungle in the region, while Yasothon (divided from Ubon Ratchathani Province in 1972) was one of the strong holds of the party's movement (Baker 2003:530). In Kud-Chum District, there have been some influential leading figures holding radical thinking, the most well-known one is Udon Thongnoi. Born in Non-Yang Village, Kud-Chum, Udon graduated from Thammasat University and went back to lead the leftist and democratic movement in the area during 1972 to 1973. He later joined Socialist Party of Thailand (*phak sangkhomniyom haeng prathethai*) and was elected as parliament member of Yasothon Province in 1975 (Pit 2008:50-52)⁵³. Within the prevailing insurrections and intensified interaction with radical students after 1973 up-rising, villagers in Kud-Chum were inspired to be conscious of public affairs (Nantiya & Narong 2004:42-43)⁵⁴. Some villagers who played leading roles in later community development had experience in leftist movement. Bunsong Martkhao, the leader of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, had fought for CPT during 1977 to 1982⁵⁵. At the end of communist movement, students and villagers were allowed to go back into villages, but they still kept

⁵³ เมธา มาสขาว. (2017, 17th October). ประวัติศาสตร์สังคมนิยมอีสาน : อุดร ทองน้อย อดีต ส.ส.อายุน้อยที่สุดในประเทศไทย จาก จ.ยโสธร (ตอนที่ 1). *The Isan Record*. Retrieved from: https://isaanrecord.com/2017/10/20/udon_thongnoi1/

⁵⁴ เมธา มาสขาว. (2017, 21st October). ประวัติศาสตร์สังคมนิยมอีสาน : อุดร ทองน้อย อดีต ส.ส.อายุน้อยที่สุดในประเทศไทย จาก จ.ยโสธร (ตอนที่ 2). *The Isan Record*. Retrieved from: https://isaanrecord.com/2017/10/21/udon_thongnoi2/

⁵⁵ The Isan Record. (2016, 8th July). From rice fields to rebellion: Untold stories of Northeastern Thailand's armed struggle (PART I). *The Isan Record*. Retrieved from: <https://isaanrecord.com/2016/08/07/part-i-from-rice-fields-to-rebellion/>

leftist ideas and applied on development works. Adopting the concept of “collective economy” (*setakit rwomklum*), a group of active teachers and local intelligences in Kud-Chum tried to push development projects, such as setting up commune and collective farm, in Naa-Sor Sub-district since 1982. However, since Yasothon has been concerned to be the land of strong communist threat, the projects based on leftist idea were opposed by the government⁵⁶. Villagers thus started community development from setting up CBOs, such as rice banks, community funds and community rice mills.

Since the time of activism, medical treatment based on traditional herbal medicine has been a focus of rural development projects and brought up villagers' concern to health and environment. To conserve and promote local knowledge about herbal medicine treatment, Kud-Chum Local Doctor and Herbal Medicine Mutual Club (*chomrom moryaapheunbaan lae phuusonjaisamunphrai amphoekudchum*) was established in 1983. The club was joined by local villagers, monks, teachers, hospital medicals, and NGO workers, together expanding the adoption of herbal medicine (Nantiya & Narong 2004:43). Working with NGO projects, the club organized experience sharing and field visiting activities for the members, which made the villagers became more interested in mixed farming and self-reliance (Prachathip 2005:11-12). Also, when Fukuoka visited Thailand in 1990, Kud-Chum was one of the places that he came to promote the concept of natural farming. In the same

⁵⁶ Ubon Yoowat, AAN Isan, interviewed on 15th January, 2019

year, farmers who were interested in organic farming set up Nature Care Club with the support of NGO project, and rice mill of the group was built up in 1991 (Nantiya & Narong 2004:46; Prachathip 2005:19)⁵⁷. While farmers who failed in conventional market were later attracted and joined the club, members of the club later spread in the district and formed the cross-community network of organic farming. The club began to work with the AAN in 1995, and was certificated with international standard by ACT with the network's support⁵⁸. Currently most of the organic rice produced by members were exported to Europe countries through the fair trade chain operated by Green Net Cooperative (Itthiphon 2009:23-24; Heis 2015:78).

With the successful experience, Nature Care Club played as a paradigm of organic farming in the area, and its members gradually spread to the neighboring communities. However, the huge number of members somehow has caused the insufficiency of distribution and management in capital and resources, some farmers thus started to develop organic farming network based in their own communities⁵⁹. During the 20 years since the establishment of Nature Care Club, more and more groups and cooperatives in all kinds of scales have been set up in the area. In 2005, Suwit and club members in Kud-Hin Village set up Non-Yo Organic Farming Group, running as an agricultural cooperative (*sahakorn*).

⁵⁷ Thai Holistic Health Foundation. *รู้จักมูลนิธิสุขภาพไทย*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thaihof.org/main/about>

⁵⁸ Ubon Yoowat, AAN Isan, interviewed on 15th January, 2019

⁵⁹ Suwit, leader of Nong-Yo Organic Farming Group, interviewed on 30th October, 2018



Figure 23 Nong-Yo Organic Farming Group
photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang

As for in Non-Yang Village, the organic farming group of the community was initially a sub-group of Nature Care Club since 1995. The sub-group built up its own rice mill in 2003. In 2008, with the support of Yasothon ALRO, Bunsong and some local leaders set up Non-Yang Organic Farming Group as a community enterprise (*wisahakit chumchon*).



*Figure 24 Non-Yang Organic Farming Group
(photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang)*

Also based in Non-Yang Village, a new group will be set up by Annon Ngyulai in near future.

Except for organic farming groups work mainly on the production-distribution of organic rice, there are some supporting organizations working on organic rice species and seeds. Kam-Maed Local Rice Species Conservation and Development Group, the interest group in charge of offering rice seeds with good quality through improving local species and cultivating new species of rice is led by Daoreuang Pheutphol. The group, based in Kud-Hin Village, is joined by around one hundred organic farmers in the area⁶⁰.



Figure 25 Farmers joining the meeting of Kam-Maed Local Rice Species Conservation and Development Group (photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang)

It is often to see villagers choose to join organic farming groups because of the invitation of relatives or friends in the group. All of the four headmen of Non-Yang 17th Village since 1997 to date have been engaging in organic farming. Many of the local intelligence (*phumpanyaa*) and elders who have been

⁶⁰ Sustainable Agriculture Foundation. กลุ่มอนุรักษ์และพัฒนาพันธุ์กรรมข้าวพื้นเมือง ตำบลท่าแมด. Retrieved from: http://www.sathai.org/autopagev4/show_page.php?topic_id=1188&auto_id=33&TopicPk=

active and influential in community affairs are also the member of organic farming groups. Local societal network centering the leading figures, as well as the cooperation with agencies such as schools and hospitals, have played crucial roles in the formation and development of organic agriculture in Non-Yang Community. The network is not limited in the district, but is built up between different farming groups and NGOs in provincial, regional and national level through working with AAN.

4.3.2. Actors as technical supporters: NGOs

While development projects serving for regional security and national integration were exerted strongly in the region since post-war period, some adverse effects had occurred to agrarian society of the Northeast. Within student and peasant activism, some rural development NGOs began to emerge, but not until the collapse of communist movement in early 1980s that NGOs began to thrive (Bencharat 2017:217). To late 1980s, there have been many NGO-pushed projects dealing with peasantry problems run in the Northeast⁶¹. With the previous connection between villagers and activists, Kud-Chum is a region that NGOs activities started early. During 1986 to 1990, Komol Kheemthong Foundation promoted mixed farming and nature farming in Kud-Chum through the Project of Herbal Medicine for Self-reliance. The project also supported the farmers to reduce the adoption of agricultural chemicals, which gave support to the establishment of Nature Care Club through linking

⁶¹ Supa Yaimuang, Sustainable Agriculture Foundation, interviewed on 16th February, 2018

up funds and consumers in Bangkok with the club, leaving strong influence to the development of organic agriculture in the area⁶².

Gathering farming groups and NGOs all over the country, the national network of AAN was founded in Bangkok in 1989. The regional members of AAN formed AAN Isan in 1995, continuing to promote production, processing and marketing of organic products, as well as to create venues for member groups to exchange their ideas and knowledge in the region. After the formation of AAN Isan, Nature Care Club began to work together with NGOs in the network, campaigning on issues such as KDML 105 and RD 6, the new rice species promoted by Department of Agricultural Extensions (DAE), as well as GMO. Later, AAN members in Yasothon also built up its provincial network. Through linking up with the network in provincial, regional, and national level, series of activities and forums in exchanging rice seed and developed data on native rice seed grown in the area were organized (Supa 2006; Prapimphan 2017: 99). NGOs in national level, such as Biothai Foundation and Sustainable Agriculture Foundation, have also worked closely with organic farming groups and rice species group in Kud-Chum.

4.3.3. Actors from the state: GOs

While in national level, various institutions and policies have been set up for organic agriculture development (see Chapter 3), the implementation of policies is taken by administrations in local level. Based on the decentralizing

⁶² Thai Holistic Health Foundation. รู้จักมูลนิธิสุขภาพไทย. Retrieved from: <http://www.thaihof.org/main/about>

principles in 1997 constitution, provinces might have their own provincial development plan⁶³, and Tambon Administrative Offices (TAO) was supposed to be able to push participatory development in sub-district level. Practically, however, the local administration cannot strike development activities efficiently unless central government decentralize the budget (Buch-Hansen 2001:145-146; Amekawa 2010:411). While local development projects have still been highly dependent on national agenda, government support to development organic farming in local level actually took part in a limited extent, and began at a rather late time.

In 2001, central government led by Thaksin started up some rearrangement in bureaucratic system. Under CEO governor policy and the allocation of provincial budget, provincial governor became able to direct their use of funds to provincial development expenditures (Supasawad 2008:42-43). Suthi Markbun, the governor of Yasothon Province from 2002 to 2005, was the first one to push policy about organic agriculture in Yasothon from provincial level. During Suthi's governance, organic agriculture was drafted into the provincial development plan, and the strategy of "pushing organic agriculture to the world" (*nam kasetinsri suu sakol*) was set up as a development goal of the

⁶³ King Prajadhipok's Institute. *แผนพัฒนาจังหวัด*. Retrieved from:

<http://wiki.kpi.ac.th/index.php?title=%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%9C%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%9E%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%92%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%88%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%87%E0%B8%AB%E0%B8%A7%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%94>

province (Donaldson & Moore 2017:12; Buntham 2018:9)⁶⁴. After *coup de tat* in 2006, the junta constitutionalized Sufficiency Economy, and MoAC began to promote organic agriculture in community level through Mentor Programs (Natedao 2011b:413; Heis 2015:73). Yasothon DOA took good advantage of the strong existing network among civil societies, gathering experienced farmers and set up totally 4 Mentor Centers in the province. The development of organic agriculture in Yasothon had kept growing as a whole, but later come to a plateau (Donaldson & Moore 2017:12). To 2015, Yasothon's successful experience in organic agriculture was affirmed by MoAC. A memorandum of understanding (Drahmoune) was signed between Yasothon government and MoAC in 2016, in order to build the paradigm of "Yasothon Model" and promote the experience of Yasothon to other provinces (Buntham 2018:19-21). Buntham Loetsukhikasem, the provincial governor from 2015 to 2017, played a crucial role in improving and expanding the organic agriculture in the province. During his time, provincial development strategy named "Yasothon Organic Way Strategy 2016-2019," and the goal to build Yasothon as "Land of Organic Farming" (*meuang kasetinsi*) were set up (Ibid.:17, 25).

While provincial government and DOA are the main agencies in charge of organic agriculture policies and budget management in provincial level, the extent of official support and involved agencies to organic farming are currently differ from province to province. In some cases, organic agriculture

⁶⁴ P.Waew, Yasothon office of the Department of Agriculture, interviewed on 20th December, 2018

projects in community level are implemented by provincial and district DAE, and certificated by Rice Department or Land Development Department (Pasupha 2015:113-114). In Yasothon Province, which has been set to be the Land of Organic Farming, almost all of the administrative offices have their organic farming projects. In the case of Non-Yang Community, the crucial official agency working on organic farming promotion has been the provincial ALRO. After 2006 coup *de tat*, promotion on organic farming in name of Sufficiency Economy was enabled to be taken with increased funds (Heis 2015:73). Yasothon ALRO began to research on organic agriculture in the province since 2006, and started to promote organic farming since 2007. The projects of ALRO aimed only the farmers that hold partial land title (SPK 4-01) issued by the office. While Non-Yang Community has been the area with both many experienced organic farmers and villagers holding SPK 4-01, it became the first choice of ALRO to start organic project⁶⁵. With the support from ALRO project, Bunsong and some local intelligence set up Non-Yang Organic Farming Group out of Nature Care Club in 2008. In the same year, the Mentor Center in Non-Yang was organized by Bunsong and some local intelligence in cooperation with DOA, starting to promote organic farming in name of Sufficiency Economy.

While the strategy of “pushing organic agriculture to the world” was set up

⁶⁵ P.Kung, Yasothon Agricultural Land Reform Office, interviewed on 13th November, 2018

as a development goal of Yasothon in 2003, it was not until 2015 did provincial government have a clear policy to support organic agriculture. In 2015, Buntham was assigned to be the provincial governor of Yasothon, revisions and improvements in provincial policies were made to promote organic agriculture more efficiently. Clear divisions between GAP and organic were drawn, and resources were concentrated for developing organic agriculture (Buntham 2018:11-13). To attract more farmers to convert to organic farming and expand the organic area, Yasothon Basic Organic Standard (BOS) was set up in 2017, selecting core requirements from PGS system, and offers free investigation to both individual farmers and organic farming groups⁶⁶.



*Figure 26 Logo of BOS standard
(photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang)*

To spread the knowledge of organic agriculture and bring more people in the society to participate in the development of organic agriculture, educational and promotional activities such as Organic Fair have been held, and picture

⁶⁶ Buntham Loetsukhikasem, previous provincial governor of Yasothon, interviewed on 24th December, 2018

book telling story about organic agriculture of the province was published.



Figure 27 Yasothon Organic Fair 2018
(photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang)

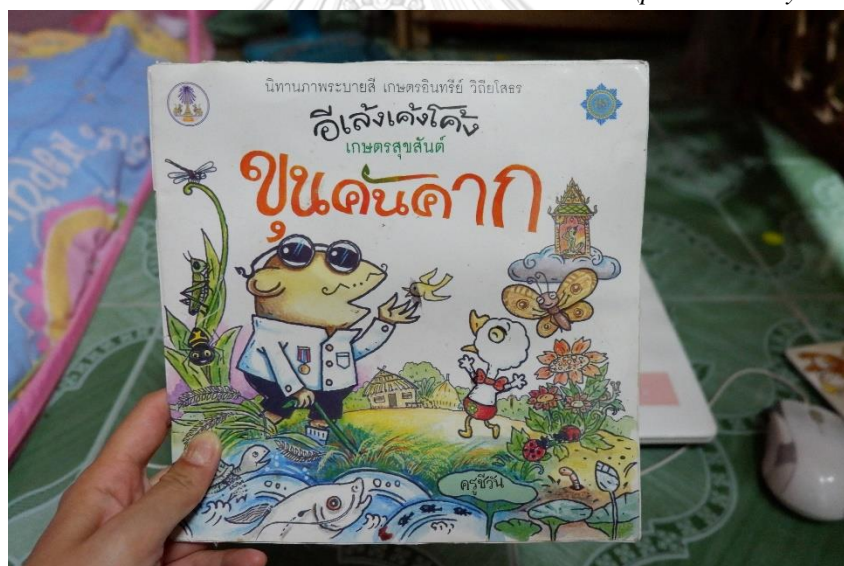


Figure 28 Picture book about organic agriculture
(photo taken by Yan-Ting Huang)

4.3.4. Actors in the market: private sectors

In the beginning time that organic farming groups emerged in Kud-Chum, it was NGO workers that linked up the consumers in Bangkok as the market for the organic products. Later, some social enterprises, such as Green Net, came up and assist the groups to access to national and international market.

Some private business also started to support the produce of organic farming groups through their CSR projects. While Nature Care Club work with Green Net, Non-Yang Organic Farming Group cooperate with *Krating Daeng*. With AAN building up connection between the company and organic farming groups after 2011 nationwide flood, it began to purchase organic rice from groups and offer material supports through CSR projects⁶⁷.

4.5. Conclusion and discussion

The case of organic farming network in Non-Yang Community can be perceived as a microcosm of organic agriculture development in Thailand. It has lasted from leftist activism in the area since 1970, and has been highly related to the alternative agriculture movement. The POs/ CBOs composed of villagers have always been the central actors in the movement. Starting from the cooperation with NGOs, alternative agriculture movement in the community was to delink from the mainstream development. With more societal actors coming to influence the development of organic farming in the community, farmers and farming groups continued to develop organic farming through negotiation and cooperation with various actors. Through building up provincial, regional, and national network among civil societies, as well as taking advantage from support of GOs and private sectors, organic farming in Non-Yang Community has developed until today.

⁶⁷ P·Rose, *Krating Daeng*. Interviewed on 19th November, 2018

Meanwhile, with close interaction with external actors, farmers have been integrated into a wider context, and become not able to stay away from mainstream development anymore. Exposed to challenges brought by dynamic society, farmers have to actively adapt the changes in policies and market situation. While the top-down policies to support organic farming have tried to integrate organic farmers into conventional market, small farmers have been easily attracted by the benefit in the mainstream. In the case of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, the group and its supporting network have played the core roles in countering the co-optation. Being economically disadvantaged to keep competing with mainstream integration, it has tried to stabilize its financial situation through expanding market needs and upgrading the production. However, the decline of members places difficulties for long-term development to the group. Except for mainstream co-optation, urbanization and agrarian transformation have made lifestyle and value system of people shift and deepened the generation gap in community. While the group has been resilient in dealing with structural changes, the discourses they adopt to promote organic farming in community, such as self-reliance and sufficiency, have been relatively stiff and not attractive to younger generations. To adapt the changes in societal aspects, it might be a choice for Non-Yang Organic Farming Group to adopt new ways of management, and have more exchange in experience with villagers who engage in non-organic farming livelihoods.

Chapter 5. Conclusions

5.1. Summary and discussions on research findings

The thesis aims to answer how different actors in Non-Yang Community have interacted in the development of organic farming. It first grounded the knowledge on peasants and alternative development in Kud-Chum, and framed the theoretical framework with food regime and stakeholder analysis in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, it took a historical review on alternative agriculture movement in Thailand, and analyzed the agency factors that influenced the development of organic agriculture as a part of the movement in changing political-economic contexts. Chapter 4 is the microscopic research conducted in Non-Yang community, identifying the roles of actors that influence organic farming in the community, and discussing the obstacles, responses to persist organic farming for Non-Yang Organic Farming Group. To answer the research question, the research findings would be discussed in three points below:

5.1.1. Agency factors that made organic farming in changing political-economic contexts

Organic agriculture in Thailand, as a part of alternative agriculture movement, was first started by farmers activated by liberal civil societies and leftist activities, aimed to pursue self-reliance from mainstream development led by state and market. Due to the drastic transformation in Thai society after the collapse of communist movement, from industrialization, political reform, rise of middle-class in Thai society and rising concern on health and

environmentalism, farmers and NGO workers changed the pursuit from delinking with mainstream to adapting the changing society. Alternative agriculture movement built national and regional networks and allied with various actors in the society, in order to gain influence to policy making and ensure the fair market. After Asian Financial Crisis, organic farming has been officially recognized by Thai state as an approach to sustainable agriculture and the royal discourse of “self-sufficiency.” However, barely no structural changes in agricultural policies have been made to efficiently support organic agriculture. To cope with the changing agricultural policies, members of the AAN—both civil societies and farming groups—have worked closely together in campaigning and policy monitoring.

5.1.2. Roles of actors in Non-Yang organic farming network

Supporting networks of organic farming movement in Non-Yang are built with farming groups led by farmer leaders as the core actors. The networks involve various stakeholders, which are people’s groups, NGOs, governmental organizations and private sectors to be supporters. While people’s groups are active in resource mobilizing, they access to external supporters and resources through NGOs and government agencies.

Both NGOs and GOs play important roles as consultants for organic farming groups in terms of knowledge, techniques and policies. For example, NGO workers, such as those from the AAN, focus on people’s empowerment and linking between different farming groups, NGOs, and urban consumers.

Through the networks built between NGO workers, farming groups, academics and consumers, the organic farming groups can access to market, policy monitoring and collective campaigns. NGOs also brought in some powerful actors from private sectors, such as *Krating Daeng*. However, this method can be argued that it makes the movement to rely upon one single consumer.

On the other hand, organic farming in Non-Yang received stable resources and branding through working with governmental organizations. Local GOs such as provincial government and ALRO offer financial and material supports to organic farming groups through projects. The officially held marketing campaigns also helped to build a positive image of organic farming to the public, and create more needs for organic products in the market. GO's supports in networking and promotion helps to bring individual consumers and private sectors to support organic farming of the community. At the same time, however, the movement has been more incorporated into mainstream development guided by government.

5.1.3. Non-Yang Organic Farming Group's responses to obstacles

Through building up connections with strong actors, which are GOs and private sectors in the system, organic farming movement in Non-Yang Community has changed its pursuit from resisting the system to surviving within the system. In order to survive and persist, there are three main obstacles for Non-Yang Organic Farming Group to overcome, which are dynamic policies, insufficient funds and incomes, as well as declining number

of memberships. Key factors that help the group overcome the difficulties are the strength of group and the supporting network. Through maintaining strong connections within group members and effectively cooperating with various actors in supporting networks, the leaders of the group have been rather well-experienced in adapting policy changes and managing funds. To stabilize group income, the group have adopted modernization in supply side, trying to meet the needs of market. However, the membership began to shrink in the recent years due to aging population and changing value system of new generations, and became new limitations for long-term development for the group. To persist community organic farming as an alternative livelihood, it needs more innovation and changes especially in the way of group management.

5.2. Theoretical discussion

The research was attempted to take a stakeholder analysis in the development and persistence of organic farming in Non-Yang Community, and to discuss the findings with food regime theory. McMichael (2009) argued that farmers mobilize against the “corporate food regime” in forms of social movements such as food sovereignty, slow food, and community-supported agriculture. In this regard, the community-based organic farming in Non-Yang, as a part of alternative agriculture movement, is a bottom-up activism. It does hold the values of healthy production, seed sovereignty, biodiversity and alternative market. However, what triggers the development of movement in Non-Yang

Community is not the claim on the moral values above, but rather the success in the following two aspects:

1.) the empowerment of farmers and farming groups to actively pursue alternative livelihood; and

2.) the strategic allying networks built between farmers and actors from different social sectors, which has helped ensure the stability of recourses, funds, and market.

It is undeniable that the involvement of actors from governmental or business sectors into social movement entails certain extent of co-optation. As Friedmann (2005) argued, in the formation of “corporate-environmental food regime,” the powerful institutions in the food system would selectively appropriate the demands of social movements, and develop to be “green capitalism,” a profited-oriented way of capital accumulation between conventional and alternative food systems. In the case of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group, the alternative market of the group highly relies on the yearly contracts with *Krating Daeng*, which has become their main consumer. Also, in cooperation with provincial government and ALRO, the projects of organic farming movements in Non-Yang Community have been wrapped by the royalist discourse of Sufficiency Economy, in dismiss of alternative agriculture values.

Viewed from a pragmatic perspective, the contracts with *Krating Daeng* offer the group a stable source of income, which enables them to further engage in training and promotion. Even though the consumers in the alternative market is

not yet so diverse, farmers and farming groups have been empowered through the process of networking and negotiation with market supporters with the assistance of NGOs. As for the adoption of Sufficiency Economy in the promotion of movement, the discourse, in fact, does not help the community-based organic farming in the way of self-sufficiency as it claims. However, it helped in the way of bringing funds and resources, and even reputation, to the organic farming groups. With the involvement of these actors from “powerful institutions,” indeed, the organic farming movement in Non-Yang Community have become more incorporated into conventional agro-food system. However, more space for negotiation and cooperation are opened to the farmers and farming groups. As Bunsong said, “to truly make changes, we cannot just stay outside of the structure, but have to work with the government”. Organic farming movement in Non-Yang Community, therefore, is no longer the value-based mobilization against food regime anymore. It concedes to powerful actors, and becomes part of mobilization of actors and resources within the system. Within the mobilization and process of compromise, farmers have more space to bargain, connect with supporters, negotiate with different actors, and keep learning in the changing society.

5.3. Suggestions on policy and future research

Organic farming in Non-Yang Community has received strong influence from alternative agriculture movement, which is the continuance of peasant

activism since the 1970s. Evolving from the initial pursuit of delinking with state and market, the community-based organic farming has come to manage its persistence within mainstream development through building up strong supporting networks among various actors from POs, NGOs, GOs, to private sectors. Based on empirical research and theoretical discussion, the study would like to provide some recommendations to policy makers, potential actors and future researchers.

The thesis has kept arguing the central role of organic farming groups and leaders in the development of organic farming movement in Non-Yang community. However, we have to admit that the supporting networks have heavily relied on the personal relationships centering certain farmer leaders who are the elderlies of the community. While the pattern has worked successfully for two decades in the community, aging population in the community, out-migration and depeasantization of middle aged and younger generation have set limitations for long-term development of the movement. To a modern era that young generations in the community show more interest on non-farm career and urban life, new incentives should be motivated to attract new small-scale producers to join organic farming movement. Also, to strengthen the supporting networks and gain more supports from civil societies, the movement should build comprehensive understanding through raising effective discussions in the society. These might involve the research on topics such as community identity building and sub-urban agriculture. While there is limited time and space for me to

research on these aspects in this study, the knowledge gap might be filled by future research.

While the study argues the active roles and mobility of farmers and farming groups in the system, it does not deny that changes should be made in structural level. In the case of Non-Yang Community, we can see governmental actors in provincial level engage in the movement. However, we should bear in mind that it is the responsibility of central government to push structural changes in national level. And the debates on agricultural issues should be brought on tables of development policy rather than a matter of provincial budget allocation. There have been some cases that agricultural policies were pushed in ignorance and contradiction to farmers' needs in Thailand, including the recent controversies on Rice Act Draft (*phor ror bor khao*). The stakeholders in the process of national agricultural policy making, and the possible contradiction between central and provincial administrations on agricultural issues, which are not covered by this study, are topics worth academic attention in the future.

The thesis conducted merely understanding research on community-based organic farming with a single case of a Northeastern Thai community. However, through studying the cooperation with contestation between various actors in supporting network of social movement, it tried to approach the movement through both top-down and bottom-up perspectives. For researchers interested in organic agriculture, it discovered both reality and possibility of a community to persist organic farming. For researchers in the field of social movement studies, it

offered a case that how farmers and farming groups have mobilized resources and be empowered through networking with various actors. For those in the field of Southeast Asian Studies, the thesis discussed the practice of sufficiency economy with the food regime theory, trying to tell farmers' struggle and compromise to survive in the current system. Hopefully, the analysis conducted with the findings in this study may contribute to the above-mentioned research fields.



Appendix

The interviewees of the thesis are mainly based in Non-Yang community and neighboring villages; while some of the them are in Meauang District, Yasothon, and some are in Bangkok. Ten of the key informants, as the representatives of organic farmers in Non-Yang Community, are the mentors of the Mentor Center, as shown below:

Name	Birth year/age	Village	Year started organic	Remarks
Bunsong	1957/61	Non-Yang village	1995	*Founder and leader of Non-Yang organic group
Thawong	1959/59		1997	*Specialty in herbal medicine
Sanij	1968/50		1996	*Specialty of raising livestock
Thawi	1953/65		2002	*Started integrated farming in 1997 *Specialty in integrated farming
Rerm	1951/67		2008	*Far relatives with Bunsong *Village headman 1997-2007
Bunkong	1952/66		1996	Specialty in plant species, religion and art
Kaendamklaa	1982/36		1997 with father	*The son of Thawong *Specialty in rice breeding
Phunsak	1972/46		1998	*Teaching in learning center of Non-Plia Village *Arahan Chaonaa *Famous in 2006-2010
Arun	1965/53		2001	*Specialty in rice processing
Annun	1958/60		1999	*Started working with AAN in 1997 *Specialty in plant species developing *Recently left the group and setting up a new one

Since the organic farming network of Non-Yang community have interacted with other community groups in the area, there have been some key informants

from other villages or belongs to other groups, shown as below:

Name	Birth year/age	Village	Year started organic	Remarks
Man	1948/70	Sokkhumpun Village, Naa-Sorr Sub-dist.	1990	*Leader of Nature Care Club *Started herbal medicine in 1983 *Organized Nature Care Club in 1995
Daoreuang		Kud-Hin Village	1995	*Leader of Local Rice Species Developing Group *Specialty in rice breeding *Member of Nature Care Club
Suwit	1951/67	Kud-Hin Village	1995	*Leader of Nong-Yo Organic Farming Group

While farmers and community based organizations have been the main actors in organic farming in Non-Yang Community, the network has been worked out with the support from other social forces. Key informants from these agencies are listed below:

Name	Institution	Remarks
Ubon Yoowaa	AAN Isan	*Leader of AAN Isan
Buntham Loetsukhikasem	Yasothon Provincial Government	*Ex-Governor of Yasothon Province (2015-2017)
P. Kung	Yasothon Agricultural Land Reform Office	*Worked from 2005
P. Art	Yasothon Agricultural Land Reform Office	*Worked from 2016
P. Waew	Yasothon Provincial Office of Agriculture and Agricultural Corporative	*Worked from 2014
P. Rose	T.C. Pharmaceutical Ltd. (<i>Krating Daeng</i>)	*Worked from 1994

To promote organic agriculture in the community, organic farming group of Non-Yang has also worked with different groups and institutions in the

community. Except for the informants who have been active in organic farming, some passive and potential actors in the community can also play roles in the network. These informants are shown below:

Name	Age	Institution	Remarks
Sapdah	47	Non-Yang 17 th Village	*Headman of Non-Yang 17 th Village since 2016 to date *Member of Non-Yang Organic Farming Group
Teenage students	Junior high school 3 rd grade	Baan Non-Yang School	*Around 15 students joined focus group discussion

Name (abbr.)	Birth year/age	Village	Organic farming experience	Remarks
Ms. R	1965/53	Non-Yang Village	1999-2001 Non-Yo Group	*too busy to join training programs *running a shop
Mr. C	1945/73		2012-2016 Non-Yo Group	*running a shop *too old to farm *field currently rent to brother
Mr. S	1954/64		x	*grow rice not for self-consumption *children send remittance
Ms. B	1964/54		2004 Non-Yang Group	*drought happened in 2004 *too busy to join training programs *children send remittance
Mr. S	1942/76		x	*grow rice for self-consumption *too old to do organic
Ms. S	1962/56		2007-2014 Non-Yang Group	*leader of Rice Department Group *too busy to join training program
Ms. Y	1974/44		x	*planning to join Rice Department in 2019 *husband work as sculptor *too busy to join training program *having different thinking with

				people in the existed group
Ms. S	1976/42		2017	*member of Rice Department Group *silk weaving
Ms. B	1972/46		2017	*member of Rice Department Group *clothes sewing *husband works as middle man of vegetable selling *having different thinking with people in the existed group



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