**Rural Reconstruction in Thailand**

**Laddawan Tantivitayapitak**

**Farmers Federation of Thailand (FFT)**

Thailand witnessed several uprisings by farmers from several central Thai provinces in the mid-1970s.  Thailand, transitioning to democratic government after nearly forty years of dictatorship, was beset by revolution involving several segments of the population. Farmers were one of several politicized groups that rioted on the streets.

The aims of the farmer's revolt were to be recognised for their contributions to the state and subsequently to be treated with respect equal to that of their landlords. From the revolt, the Farmers Federation of Thailand (FFT), a national, autonomous Thai farmers organisation, emerged.

In March 1974, farmers, supported by the NSCT (National Students Center of Thailand), staged their first large-scale protest, gaining nationwide attention for their demands to increase rice prices. From August to November 1974, land disputes were widespread and discontent was vented. Newspaper reports reported that approximately 7,000 farmers from eight different provinces threatened to relinquish their Thai identification cards and go about setting up a "liberated area" unless the government met their demands.

On 19 November 1974, the assembled farmer representatives in Bangkok declared the formation of the Farmers Federation of Thailand (FFT). The FFT led the struggle in northern Thailand to pass a law which standardised and lowered the level of rents on rice land, the Land Rent Control Act (LRCA) of December 1974. The revolt antagonized landowners and state officials. In response, activists were harassed and murders were to follow. Between March 1974 and September 1979, 21 FTT leaders were assassinated with the killings concentrated in the Chiang Mai region. The assassination of FTT leaders created an environment of pervasive fear in the countryside and ended the revolutionary efforts of the FTT.

**Assembly of the POOR (AOP)**

After FTT, People movements have grown slowly for decades since 1979 from the farmers, groups affected by large-scale government projects, slum dwellers. labour groups, etc. which eventually led to formation of several networks and movements among them emerged the prominent movement, Assembly of the POOR.

The establishment of the Assembly of the Poor took place officially on December 10, 1995 at Thammasat University with representatives from various local communities affected by development both in Thailand and 10 Asian countries that have participated in PP21. Under the Lam Nam Moon Declaration or Pak Moon Declaration that all representatives who later got together to draft between 11 and 14 December 1995 at Khong Chiam District, Ubon Ratchathani Province, it declared the purpose in combination as poor people's assembly network to be a platform to gather energy of cooperation, exchange with synchronization and mutual assistance. The origin of the Poor People's Assembly was therefore the integration of subnets, namely the Dam Network or Dam Assembly, the Northern Farmers Network, the Slum Dwellers Network, the work-based patient network, the opposition waste-lignite power plant network, etc.

The AOP was described as a new social movement—a description which has been widely used ever since 1997 because it comprises of different social classes, addresses previously unaddressed issues, adopts direct political actions, and seeks to build a new more equal relationship between the people and the state with non-class interests. AOP’s political struggle is the continuation of the movements in the past but with a new approach. The movement address some long-term public issues, such as environmental problems, the creation of a decentralised organisational structure, participatory culture among its members, collective leadership, a new resource mobilisation structure, non-violent practices, and an alliance with NGOs and other allies.

In 1997, the **Assembly of the Poor (AOP)** successfully organised a 99-day protest, which was widely hailed as ‘a historical moment’ for people's politics in Thailand.

There are features: a more democratic and decentralised structure, direct political actions, new non-violent strategies, the link between the AOP with the role of strengthening the civil society, the recognition of the AOP as a new social movement, the multi-class alliance, and the tackle on the previously unaddressed issues, especially environment. These descriptions clearly distinguish the AOP from the failed radical movements in the 1970s as well as the less successful movements in the 1980s and 1990s.

The goals of AOP can be divided into 2 levels: 1) the immediate level and 2) the structural level. The first goal of AOP was to address the immediate problems of its members, which were partially or entirely the results of misguided state development projects, unjust laws, and government policies. These goals usually involved financial compensation and the cancelation of problematic state projects. At the structural level, the AOP also aimed to put a stop to state policies that have been pursued without grassroots participation and caused problems in rural communities. More ambitiously, the movement sought to change the relationships between the state and the people. People, according to the AOP, “must be those who control the direction of development and must truly benefit from development. Poor people must be part of the decision-making process in any development projects that affect the people’s lives”. By taking part in the movement, attending meetings and negotiations, networking, and interacting with other social groups, AOP members had “expanded the social domains available for political association and contesting the power of the state” during those period of time.

**People’s Movement for a Just Society (P-Move)**

People’s Movement for a Just Society (P-Move) found in May 2013, is a network of people with land rights problems and those affected by government policies. It is grassroots group campaigning for land rights for the rural poor. It is a movement that comes from a network of communities and marginalized people affected by globalization. The movement is the radical uprising of AOP and move on as parallel of AOP for decades.

P-move is a social movement that has a form of formation from “Subnets” come together to form a large network with the objective of increasing power and bargaining power and decision making according to the resolution of the meeting of the community leaders. The consultants are academics and activists.

P-Move consists of 6 main networks of people's movements: the Slum Network of 4 Regions, the Land Reform Network in the Northeast, the Community Network for Social and Political Reform, the Northern Farmers' Federation, the Farmers' Federation Southern region and the Banthat Mountain Range Land Reform Network.

The principle of the movement focuses on shaping relations with the state, structural problem management by amending laws and shifting social norms by showing the power of the masses express by gathering people who have suffered and presenting distress information with a campaign to create understanding and the call for a blockade-rally dialogue to pressure the responsible national and local authorities to bring up the problem and solve it concretely.

It creates direct pressure with the number and activities such as the Government House siege march of power to achieve their demands. It is a process that will allow the villagers to see their self-power, seeing their own power from uniting and fighting together, increase confidence and build internal learning process. It is a means of communicating pain, suffering, and factual information about the problem of social or public demands. The negotiating-demanding movement includes the use of soft sticks from religious ceremonies, cultural parade, natural resource vegetable parade in claiming community title deeds. In every case, there is an amplification and reproduction with social media that always reveals two images together, namely the “peace process” and the “real suffering” of those standing in front of them.

**Community Organization Council (COC)**

Community Organization Council is established under Community Organisation Council Act, B.E. 2551 (2008). It is cleared that the Community Organization Council plays an important role in promoting the learning of democratic values and behaviour in the community. This process began by stirring interest in the members of the community to have a common development goal. This was followed by creating a clear understanding of democratic principles among the participants, followed by community agreement on the modus operandi. These were achieved by the processes of learning through an exchange of ideas, brainstorming, and presenting the strategies for development and solutions to the problems of the community from the common life goals of the Community Organization Council.

Trust and confidence in representatives are essential principles of democratic administration. In this regard, the Council of Community Organizations has developed a system of monitoring and monitoring work to ensure transparency and good governance of local administration organizations under the motto that “Democracy must have good governance, it must be transparent and verifiable.” Working in a democracy requires quality representatives, not relying on the majority of votes to select people to be representatives of the work. There must be a development of the quality of the workers as well.

The Council of Community Organizations did not adhere only to the form of representative democracy. They view democratic work in the form of participatory democracy or Consultative Democracy (Deliberative Democracy). Learning about Democracy by Community Organization Councils is a social process. It is structured appropriately and consistent with engagement. It is a horizontal structure which causes cooperation in the work initiative that has developed activities and works that diverse with different members. With belief that each member has a vision that results in a desire to achieve common goals.

**ALTERNATIVES/SOLUTIONS :**

In response to the current situation that rapidly change during these days, strategies may need to work out in according to the changing context and incurred issues. The study shows Thailand's Gap: The richest 20%, the poorest 20%, the income difference is 10 times but in terms of assets much different than this. While the land of the richest 20% and the poorest 20% are 320 times the difference.

Throwing Ideas as Way Out:

1. Promote strong communities, build community leaders, encourage the youngsters to return to their domicile, as well as to help relieve legal barriers. Allowing communities to set up their own small financial institutions with community welfare, community enterprise, community shop, tree bank, blue crab bank, community forest according to the area.

2. Find market locally and internationally for community to sell things through online marketing like in China, Alibaba helped build Taobao Village (e-commerce business enabled rural villagers to sell agricultural products, handicrafts and manufactured goods by opening stores on platforms such as Alibaba Group’s Taobao. A virtuous circle is taking place whereby e-commerce is enabling more rural residents to become entrepreneurs by selling local products online, and the resultant income growth is driving up e-commerce-based consumption as these rural residents seek out products, they can’t find in their neighbourhood stores.), including Ule stores that help in the integration of the grocery store to compete with the big lords.

3. University – Encourage research to help community make a living, such as research on plant species, soil, water, machinery, technology 4.0, as well as promoting a curriculum for children to help the community think about community projects.

4. Promotion of Self-reliance like on health protection in communities during pandemic such as the role of village health volunteers in provide service and reach out to villagers for pandemic cure and protection, the use of indigenous herbs Fa Thalai Jon or Andrographis paniculata (Burm.f.) Wall.ex Nees. ACANTHACEAE., etc.

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