Politics of Participation

Case Study of the Form and Power Dynamics of Participation in Two Villages in Southern Thailand

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Abstract

Genuine forms of participation of the local people are integral to the success of government development projects implemented to curtail escalating insurgency against the State in the restive southern borders provinces of Thailand. This thesis aims to determine the form of participation that has manifested itself and the mechanisms of power that shape its parameters, given the centralized and hierarchical administrative reality in which participation has been carried out. Arnstein's (1969) characterization of different forms of participation and VeneKlasen & Miller's (2007) three models of *power* provided the analytical framework for research. Findings from a two-village case study reveal that participation remains tokenistic with decision-making powers concentrated in the hands of local leaders and state officials vis-à-vis average villagers and marginalized groups. The agency of local leaders and district officials, rule of majority wins, villager's lack of access to information, and subtle mannerisms in Thai society contributed to shaping this tokenistic form of participation.

Keywords: Forms of participation, dynamics of participation, redistribution of power, decision-making power, visible power, hidden power, invisible power, villagers, status quo, State development project.

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List of Abbreviations

CD: Community Development

PRA: Participatory Rural Appraisal

PSU: Pattani Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus

QVP: The Development Project to Improve the Quality of life of the Villagers in the Southern Border Provinces

SBPAC: Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center

TAO: Sub-District Administrative Organization

UNRISD: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

VC: Village Committee

Table of Contents

CHAPTER IV: Methodology

CHAPTER V Contextual Background Information

CHAPTER VI: Findings and Analysis

CHAPTER I: Introduction

1.1 Background: Insurgency in the Deep South

For the last few years, Thailand has witnessed a series of political turmoil, nationally and regionally. On the national level, former Prime Minister Thasksin Shinawatra was ousted by a military coup in 2006. Since then deep seated divisions have surfaced in Thai society, not least manifesting itself in the form of yellow versus red shirted protestors who have bought one of Asia's most bustling cities to a grinding halt. In May 2010 Bangkok made the headlines once again when the Democrat-led government clamped down on red shirt anti-government demonstrators in the city's commercial heartland.

At the regional level, there is yet another turmoil altogether, one that has persevered for longer and claimed several thousand more lives. Unfortunately, given the situation in Bangkok, the violence in the three southern border provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat (also known as the Deep South) has been given far less attention than it deserves.

1.1.1 Manifestation of the Conflict

On 4 January 2004, militants raided an army arsenal in Narathiwat, killing soldiers and seizing large amounts of weapons. This attack signaled a return to violence that has erupted sporadically for a century ever since the three southern provinces were officially incorporated into the Siamese Kingdom [1] in 1909. Previously part of the Malay Sultanate of Patani, around 80% of the region's population is Muslim and speak Malay. This is different from most Thais in other provinces who are Buddhists and speak Thai. As McCargo contends, the Malay Muslims in the Deep South have never been properly incorporated culturally or psychologically into the predominantly Buddhist Thailand (2008:2) and throughout its attempts to unify the country Bangkok has mainly pursued policies

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[1] Former name of Thailand.

of assimilation and standardization with little consideration for the distinctive history and character of the provinces and its population. For their part, Malay Muslims perceive themselves as second-class citizens because of discriminatory policies imposed from Bangkok – in areas such as justice, the economy, education, culture and political representation, not least the discrimination practiced by ethnic Thai officials in the region (Funston 2008:19). Today, like the rest of Thailand unelected officials administer the three provinces.

From 2004 to 2009, there have been approximately 9,400 violent attacks that claimed more than 3,900 lives in the region ("Southern Thialand" 2009). Analysts argue that Thaksin government's heavy handed and aggressive security crackdowns[2]; arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial killings have further weakened the legitimacy of the Thai state, alienating the local population especially young disaffected Muslims to the side of the militants (Phoonphongphiphat 2009). Small-scale killings are now a common feature of everyday life. Both Muslims and Buddhists, seen as representing the government are the main targets; these include teachers, monks, community leaders, and especially police and soldiers.

1.1.2 Political Causes of the Conflict

The root causes of the most recent escalation of violence are complex; Islam alone is an unsatisfactory explanation. McCargo contends that Islam is not a distinct *cause* of the conflict, but an ideological framework and a legitimating resource that has gradually been seized by those of militant orientation (2008:12). Indeed observers point to a mix of causal factors such as history, ethnic identity, religion, criminal networks and internal rifts between the army and the police, failure of the successive assimilation policies and poor governance, to problems of poverty and socio-economic disparity[3](Storey: 2007).

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[2] On April 28, 2004, more than a 100 men died in simultaneous attacks on a series of security posts, leading to a bloody siege at the historic Krue-Ze Mosque- and on October 25, 2004, 78 unarmed Malay Muslim protestors died in Thai military custody, apparently from mistreatment and suffocation, following mass arrests at Tak-Bai, Narathiwat.

[3] The economy of Deep South is largely based on agriculture and fisheries and has been at the margins of Thailand's development for several decades. The local populations here are among the poorest in the country.

Notwithstanding that history, religion and structural inequality are certainly causal factors; the root causes of the conflict are largely political. Mahakanjana argues that the root causes of the conflict stems from the problems of a centralized state bureaucracy and the consequent "disembeddedness" or "inability for the state to sink roots into the surrounding social milieu" (2006:4). She argues that if the State in the south of Thailand exerts more of a colonial presence, its authority is disembedded and weak and in turn this poor governance then feeds local grievances. Duncan McCargo adopts a similar framework arguing that the conflict essentially reflects a political problem centered on questions about administrative centralization and the subsequent lack of participatory legitimacy (2008:3). In his words, what is "largely missing from Thai constructs of legitimacy in the Deep South are mechanisms to ensure the *active participation* of Malay Muslims in their own affairs: in short, participatory legitimacy (2008:18). Furthermore, "A participatory bureaucracy, run by and for Malay Muslims with real local accountability remains apparently beyond the imagination of the Thai authorities…such participation as is permitted is always framed by Thai structures, priorities, and agendas" (McCargo 2008:18). That said, it is important to briefly look at the bureaucratic power structure in Thailand.

1.1.3 Bureaucratic power structure in Thailand

The Thai State is a highly centralized and hierarchical political order. Unelected provincial governors, answerable directly to the Ministry of Interior in Bangkok administer all provinces across the country. A province (changwat), the primary unit of local state governance is hierarchically administered, staffed and funded by the central government. Each province is divided into districts (amphoe) and sub-districts (tambon)[4] that are administered by unelected district governors and district permanent secretaries respectively. In addition, government officials representing various ministries are also assigned to district level offices.

In the Deep South, the assignation of officials has been rather problematic. Most senior members of the District Office are drawn from the majority Buddhist population from other parts of Thailand, often without the ability to speak the local language and understand the very different religious and cultural context that the local populations belong. Furthermore, the gulf between the state officials and the local populations is maintained by the bureaucracy's long political tradition of being more concerned with preserving national harmony and stability rather than having an active and interventionist district officer energetically involved in local affairs (Hall 1980:446).

As state officials have been unable to reach out to the wider rural society; they primarily turned to manage village populations through middlemen such as the sub-district and village headmen (kamnan and phuyaibarn). A sub-district headman supervises a number of village headmen who with the help of the village committee (VC) take charge of development planning in their respective village. Although they are not part of the official bureaucratic structure, they are *upwardly accountable* to the Ministry of Interior. The bureaucracy regards them as its "eyes and ears" (Hall 1980:448) and tends to rely on information provided from these traditional elites to administer local units from above, irrespective of their responsiveness to the larger village population.

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[4] A sub-district comprises of several villages (mubaan) that are the smallest unit of government administration.

Hall proposes that while local leaders maybe an important vehicles for vertical integration in Thai society, they should not be regarded merely as communicators or protectors of general community "interests" but as active and frequently manipulative political agents with their own particular interests (1980:448). In addition, in areas prone to insurgencies where the government is particularly concerned with increasing its level of control in the village, and where "developmental" inputs are seen as a way of responding to local discontent, there may be a particularly strong temptation for local leaders to face community sanctions and identify with the bureaucracy to gain access to new resources that may be manipulated for their own ends, thus reinforcing their dominance in the locality (Hall 1980:452). That said, the degree of downward accountability and extent to which local elites work in the "interest" of the community, by acting as good demand articulators and providing the channel for average villagers to gain access to economic and political resources is highly questionable.

1.1.4 Development to The Rescue

Soon after taking office in December 2008, Prime Minister Abhisit recognizing that the operations in the South had been too focused on security, pledged to undo policy oversights and incorporate an emphasis on "development" and "justice" in future policy making ("Souther Thailand" 2009). The PM said his government would use development aid to raise living standards, reduce the economic disparity in the relatively impoverished region and thus counter the attempts by militant groups to derail the government's peace efforts (Phoonphongphiphat 2009).

Amongst other initiatives, pertaining to the development front, a grandiose 63 billion baht ($1.86 billion) "Special Development Plan for the Five Southern Border Provinces[5]" has been implemented to last from year 2009 to 2012 ("Souther Thailand" 2009). This plan has manifested on the ground in innumerable development projects dealing with different aspects of development;

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[5] The five provinces comprise of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and the relatively peaceful Songkhla and Satun.

namely quality of life[6], justice, human resources, investments and governmental management.

The Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC)[7] has been assigned to monitor the implementation of State development projects that pertain to this plan and coordinate with the necessary administrative units. Local officials at the District Office are responsible for day-to-day accomplishments of the projects on the ground.

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[6] As much as 43% of the proposed budget would go into this aspect of development that seeks to improve the quality of life and village annual household income from 64,000 baht ($1900) to 120,000 Baht (3,554). The QVP project that this thesis is focused on is also part of it.

[7] SPBAC was originally established in 1981 to enhance consultations with Malay Muslims, tackle corruption, and reduce prejudice amongst state officials in three provinces. Erroneously dissolved by Taksin in 2002, it was later revived by the post-coup Surayud government in 2006. Under supervision of the military dominated Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), SBPAC is responsible for development activities in the Deep South.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Agencies such as the International Crisis Group have proposed that in order for the massive economic stimulus to genuinely work, the government should ensure that projects are implemented transparently and most important of all with grassroots participation ("Southern Thailand 2009). On their part, the government too claims to recognize the importance of "public participation" and the incorporation of it in development planning and implementation.

However scholars contend that participation can occur in various forms; from the most superficial and tokenistic in which the status quo is maintained without citizens gaining access to decision-making power vis-à-vis the traditional power holders, to those more genuine and transformative manifestations whereby citizens assume greater control over the decision-making power. Thus, in light of this, this thesis aims to investigate into the nature of participation in government development projects, especially the form[8] by which it manifests itself into and the power dynamics at play in determining that form of participation given the presence of traditional power structures on the ground. In other words, considering the centralized administrative reality and the State's reliance on traditional power holders in the village mentioned earlier on; an investigation into the nature of participation in practice, including the power relations that pervade it, will indicate whether participation has been transformative or whether it is inclined to be instruments for reinforcing control whereby the status quo is maintained.

As the government has pledged to make participation an emphasis of its policies, it is therefore important that genuine participation actually occurs. Undertaking this research is imperative, as it will help determine the direction to which the state's "participatory" initiatives are heading towards. Sherry Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969) and VeneKlassen & Miller's (2008) interactive dimensions of power would be used as the analytical framework to understand the research problem at hand.

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[8] In this thesis the words form, shape, level and types will be used synonymously.

1.3 Research Questions

To accomplish the purpose of this study the following research questions are used:

1. What is the form of participation in the development project?

 (How is the space for participation created? *Who* took part; *how* they did so, *why* they chose to do or not to do so)

2. What are the mechanisms of power at play in shaping that form of participation and how do they challenge or maintain the status quo in the village?

Irrespective of the form of participation uncovered, the second research question seeks to probe deeper into the power mechanisms at play in shaping that particular form of participation and the implication it has on the status quo in the village. In order for a participatory initiative to genuinely benefit the grassroots it has to be one that provides the channel for this section of society to articulate their interests and at the same time enable them to actively partake in decision-making procedures of the project as well. In other words, a challenge to the status quo is needed for genuine participation.

1.4 Scope of Research

It should be mentioned that as there are numerous development projects being implemented across the region the author was not able to ascertain which one would be the point of focus until she was in the field. It was decided then that only one development project, namely "The Development Project to Improve the Quality of life of the Villagers in the Southern Border Provinces (QVP)" would be the focal point of the research. The rationale for this decision will be addressed in the methodology section. That said, the aim of this research is not to conduct an overall evaluation of (QVP) per se, but rather to focus only the *dynamicsof the participatory process* of the project in the two villages selected[9].

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[9] In fact, a large-scale quantitative evaluation of the QVP had previously been conducted in 2007 by a team of researchers from PSU, Pattani. However, their research was not focused specifically on the participatory process and its power dynamics in it in the way this research has chosen to address.

1.5 Significance of the Research

Most of the development projects in the Deep South have only been initiated in the last couple of years. This thesis offers an initial attempt at specifically examining the micro-politics of participation within one development project; looking at how local populations have been incorporated and how they exercise agency in the project on the ground, far from the policy-making scene. Because such micro qualitative analysis of participation in SBPAC development projects has not previously been conducted the research findings in this thesis will be potentially useful to researchers, development practitioners, civil servants and policy-makers interested in assessing the government's participatory initiative in the Deep South in order to enhance its effectiveness in the future.

CHAPTER II: Literature Review

This chapter will situate the concept of participation in the development discourse, highlighting some of its definitions, conceptual underpinnings and their criticisms. These reviews influenced the research question and guided the broader analysis of participation in this study.

2.1 Situating Participation in Development

For over the past decade there has been a rocketing of interest in participatory development, employing "participation", the involvement of local communities to address some of the most pressing concerns in the world, from poverty reduction to unrepresentative democracy. So great has been the interest in a concept that originated from marginal NGO communities in the 1950s which opposed top-down and externally-imposed development orthodoxy, it has now become an integral feature of mainstream development discourse. Indeed, by the early 1990s every major bilateral development agency has emphasized participatory policies and it would be rather difficult to find development projects that do not in one way or another claim to acknowledge the importance of "bottom-up planning", "indigenous knowledge", and the "empowerment" of local people (Henkel and Stirrat 2001:168).

Participation however, has had a much longer history in debates over the meaning and practice of democracy, especially in Western countries. In this context, participation is closely related to the rights of citizens and their involvement in the decision-making processes of government (Missingham 2000/1). Gaventa notes that participation is also being ever more written into government's development projects as there is growing disillusionment amongst citizens based on concerns about the government's corruption, lack of responsiveness to the needs of the poor, and distance from ordinary people (2004:26). Critics of top-down development argued that the needs of deprived sections of society were not being met, mainly because decisions are made by professionals with little understanding of the people and their requirements, and

implemented through mechanisms accountable to central authority instead of the local reality. Thus, in order to rebuild this relationship between citizens and local governments new measures for participation, responsiveness and accountability have been undertaken, as evidenced in the multitude of programs for decentralized governance that are found in both southern and northern countries alike (Gaventa 2004:25). From a governance perspective, participatory approaches emphasize local organizations as the venues, which would provide opportunities for rural people to speak and act collectively. It implies a transformation in the relations of power between bureaucratic agencies and local communities to give local people greater access to state resources, technical knowledge and other forms of support (Missingham 2000/1).

2.1.1 Definitions and themes in Participation

Participation has a range of conceptual definitions and practices, which are molded to suit the different interests of its users and the field in which it is applied. For this reason, its precise meaning remains rather elusive. However, those definitions whose origin has given it some authority have important political dimensions, concerned with power and the transformations in the relations of power (UNESCAP 2009; Chambers 2007:103).

The UNRISD research program on popular participation in the late 1970s gave early definitions of participation as:

> "…the organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulate institutions in given social situations on the part of groups and movements hitherto excluded from such control" (cited in Chambers 2007:103)

The World Bank defines participation as:

> "a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them" (World Bank Source Book 1996).

In very broad terms participation is attributed to the voluntary and democratic involvement of people in (a) contributing to the development effort, (b) sharing equitably in the benefits derived there from and (c) decision-making in respect of setting goals, formulating policies and planning and implementing economic and social development programs (Missingham 2000/1).

The central conception of making 'people' (especially the agency of local and marginalized people) centre to development has undeniably, struck at the heart of previous development paradigms. In the English-speaking world, Robert Chambers and his Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) research method has been very influential in setting the standards for participation in development practice across the world.

2.2 Criticisms of Participatory development

Ever since participation entered mainstream development discourse, critics have labeled it as a degraded term, serving only to soften top-downisn and stripped off all its previous radical connotations (Gardner and Lewis 1996:111). Some have gone even further to label it as a form of political control. Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, and other critics who contributed to the book Participation: The New Tyranny?strongly challenged its "empowering" claims, going to the extent of calling the initiative a tyranny. According to Taylor, participation has been used as a "hegemonic device" to secure compliance to, and control by, existing power structures. This kind of control, subtler than direct domination, takes the form of seeking the "commitment" of those to be controlled and then allowing a degree of "responsible autonomy within limits" (2001:37). Similarly, White concurs that sharing through participation does not necessarily mean sharing in power and while participation has the potential to challenge patterns of dominance, it may also be the means through which existing power relations are entrenched and reproduced (1996:6).

In general the critiques of participation have manifested at two levels: the internal level of critique that addressed the technical limitations of participation (especially PRA) and a more fundamental critique that delineate the power

relations underlying participatory discourse (Williams 2004:559). Going into the details of these two levels of critique would be superfluous for the research problem at hand. However, the main critiques of participation that helps to guide one's critical analysis of the initiative will be reviewed briefly below.

2.2.1 Illusions of "community"

One of the key conceptual underpinnings of participatory discourse involves privileging the 'local' vis-à-vis 'the national' or 'international' as the site of action. Closely related to this, the "local community" is then seen as a "natural" social entity characterized by solidarity relations (ESCAP 2009). Critics argue that these accounts can conceal power relations both *within* and *outside* the local community itself.

Firstly, as Mohan contends, participatory development seeks to give local people control but the many processes affecting their lives are often not readily tackled at the local level (2008:49). For instance, it is difficult for a small cooperative in Africa to change the rules governing international trade when the WTO is dominated by developed economies. Thus the uncritical emphasis on empowering the local overlooks the *external broader* economic and power structures that shape local development problem and in doing so leaves them unchanged (Mohan 2008:49). Secondly, the image of community as being homogenous, harmonious units whose members share common interests contrasts with reality, thus essentializing "local community" risks downplaying power differences and inequality based on age, gender, religion and class existing within the local itself (McGee 2002:106, Mohan and Stoke 2000:249; Parfitt 2004; Cooke and Kothari 2001;).

Furthermore, social norms have been accepted as part of a "local culture" for development programs to incorporate, without a close examination of that culture or "seeing it as the product of internalized power relationships" (William 2004:562). Thus participation based on such uncritical notions conceals power relations and dominance.

2.2.2   Inclusion through "participatory structures"

Participation often involves the mobilization local people into formal community structures that are deemed to improve efficient delivery of development, including the cultivation of desirable characteristics amongst participants such as responsibility, ownership, collective endeavor and therefore eventually empowerment (Cleaver 1999:601).   In contrast, exclusion is undesirable, inefficient and marginalizing. Once mobilized, there is a tendency for "meaningful" participation to then be measured by democratic representations of participants and their individual verbal contributions in the public space (Cleaver 1999:602).

This has been criticized for its blindness to social contexts. Hailey articulated that processes of inclusion may not be as inclusive and representative as expected, and that projects can end up relying on a small sample of self-selecting participants (2001:94). Moreover, the nature of group dynamics suggests that power often lies in the hands of the most articulate or politically adept, and attempts to include the marginalized can instead serve to reinforce the status of power groups within the community. Thus creating new institutional arrangements for participation will not necessarily be more inclusive and oriented towards the poor and the grassroots. Again much depends on the nature of the power relations, which surround and imbue these new participatory spaces. Unless they are taken into account, there is danger that the formal manifestations of community-based approaches to development will become mere empty shells.

2.2.3 "Local Knowledge"

Another set of criticisms questions the nature and validity of information such as "local knowledge. Mosses argues that what is accepted as "local knowledge" including community needs and priorities are not entirely of the "locals" own making but is collaboratively produced in the context of planning, behind which is concealed a *complex interplay of power-relationswithin* and *outside* the community that shape the knowledge production and use (Mosse 2001:23). For instance, locals may learn to shape their needs in accordance to what they anticipate would be plausible given the administrative realities thus the projects institutional interests becomes built into community perspectives and "local knowledge" becomes compatible to top-down planning (Mosse 2001:24). Secondly, as local power hierarchies intervene some expressions would be dismissed as illegitimate and immediately suppressed whilst others with better skills and authority to present their personal interests will gain leverage (Mosse 2001:21). Thus by overlooking power differentials within the "community", participatory projects aiming to empower the marginalized could potentially end up strengthening the powers of the relatively better off, or those who are better able to voice their interests, at the expense of further excluding the targeted population from the joint production of "local knowledge and priorities.

2.2.4 Agency of experts

Williams points out another limitation within participatory development, which views professional experts merely as the "facilitator" and thus minimizes their agency in actively shaping the process of participation (2004:565). This notion is problematic because, as he says, in practice, development experts frame participatory events in a great number of ways and the denial of their agency and motivations ends up removing important aspects of the development process (i.e. management and leadership) from public scrutiny. Blame for project failure can then be removed from macro-level concerns, re-localized and displaced onto "the people" as bad participants or non-participations (Williams 2004:565).

In sum, the above accounts help guide analysis of participation. They provide valuable insights into how power relations always pervade spaces for participation and plausible scenarios whereby participation may not be as 'good and 'neutral' as is often understood. Indeed, Brohman suggests that because participation is an inherently political act, it can never be neutral (1996:251). Assessing power relations that permeate and shape the parameters of the participatory spaces is therefore crucial to determine the extent of its empowering potentials or whether, as critics contend participation would become the instruments for reinforcing domination and control within the status quo.

CHAPTER III Analytical Framework

This chapter sets out two specific analytical frameworks that would be employed to assess participation. Although the two research questions are not mutually exclusive, two different analytical frameworks will be used to address each separately. The first question will be examined by using Sherry Arnstein's (1969) typology or *ladder of participation* as its analytical framework. The second question will be using VeneKlasen and Millers's (2007) three models of political power as its analytical framework.

3.1 Power Over

Before, proceeding to introduce the respective analytical frameworks, it is crucial to point out most of these frameworks, with the exception of VeneKlasen and Millers's *invisible power dimension*, are very much rooted in the conceptualization or model of *power over.* Indeed, there are many models of power that are currently being used to analyze different aspects of participation and empowerment. Each of these models convey very different ideas about what power is and how it operates. Unlike the *power to* model, which suggests that there is an infinite growth of power of one person that does not necessarily negatively affect the others, this *power over* model treats power in absolute and zero-sum terms. Unlike the decentred model of power proposed by Foucault, power relations are perceived by this model as coercive and centred in institutions of government, although spilling over into wider structures of society (Nelson &Wright 1995:9).In terms of participatory development, *power over* involves the gaining of access to political decision-making, often in public forums. It holds that:

> "hitherto marginalized people with an expanding sense of their ability to influence ever more aspects of their lives will soon encounter relations where control of resources has been institutionalized, sometimes within the locality, sometimes in more distant councils. The challenge is for the marginalized group to gain treatment as equal partners is a process of development from people in such institutions, so that they have long-term access to resources and decision-making" (Nelson &Wright 1995:8).

3.2   Arnstein's Ladder of Participation

In spite of the many definitions of participation, what is certain is that it has different types and degrees of involvements for participants. Arnstein's analytical typology, built on power and control, articulates the different ways in which an organization can involve participations. There are eight forms of participation arranged in a ladder pattern with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizen's power in determining the end product (1969:217)[10].

For Arnstein "citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future" (1969:216). Her articulations concur with the criticisms of participatory development mentioned earlier on. As she puts it:

> "There is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process…the fundamental point is that participation without redistribution of power is empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the power holders to claim that all sides where considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit. It maintains the status quo" (Arnstein 1969:216).

In other words, participation that does not lead to power redistribution in the given society risks becoming just a façade whereby the powerless continue to be excluded from decision making.

Although not specifically designed for assessing participatory development projects, this analysis nevertheless can be adapted to fit the context of development projects since it treats participation rather broadly by including all the plausible types of participation from manipulation to citizen control and then to also differentiate their effects on power relations[11]. The further up the ladder is

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[10] Arnstein's ladder of participation is illustrated by examples from federal social programs in the United States such as urban renewal and anti-poverty programs.

[11] The various forms, types, degree or levels of participation are often characterized as ladders. There are various other participatory ladders, i.e. those articulated by Kanji and Greenwood (2001:5) or VeneKlasen with Miller (2002:88).

indicative of levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making clout.

Figure 1


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        ┌                          ┐  ┐
   8    │      Citizen control      │  │
        ├──────────────────────────┤  │  Degrees
        │      Delegated power      │  │  of
   7    ├──────────────────────────┤  │  citizen power
        │       Partnership         │  │
   6    ├──────────────────────────┤  ┘
        │        Placation          │  ┐
   5    ├──────────────────────────┤  │  Degrees
        │      Consultation         │  │  of
   4    ├──────────────────────────┤  │  tokenism
        │        Informing          │  │
   3    ├──────────────────────────┤  ┘
        │         Therapy           │  ┐
   2    ├──────────────────────────┤  │  Nonparticipation
        │       Manipulation        │  │
   1    └                          ┘  ┘
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FIGURE 2   *Eight Rungs on a Ladder of Citizen Participation*

Source: Arnstein (1969)

Below is an explanation of each rung of participation extracted from the descriptions in Arnstein's article "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" (1969).

1. Manipulation

This bottom most rung describes levels of "non-participation" and signifies the distortion of participation into a public relations vehicle by power holders. There is an expert or a power holder present, and the people subjected to their will are participants in a set of situations (Greenwood and Levin 257). It may consist of committees for participation and inclusion of minority groups, but these community structures have no legitimate function or power, but are being used to "prove" that "grassroots people" are involved in the program. Moreover, the goal for experts or leaders is to get the "participants" to do as they are told.

19

2. *Therapy:*

From the political point of view this is also a non-participative approach with similar characteristics to the first manipulation rung. "On this assumption, under a masquerade of involving citizen in planning, the experts subject citizens to clinical group therapy…citizens are engaged in extensive activities, but the focus of it is on curing them of their pathology rather than changing the victimization that create their pathologies" (Arnstein 1969:218).

3. *Informing*

Informing citizens of their rights, responsibilities and options can be the most important first step toward legitimate citizen participation. However, emphasis is often placed on a one-way flow of information - from officials to citizens – with no channel provided for feedback and no power for negotiation. In other words, people participate simply as recipients of information. Under these conditions, particularly when information is provided at the late stage in planning, people have little opportunity to influence the program design "for their benefit". Meetings can thus be turned into vehicles for one-way communication by the simple device of providing superficial information, discouraging questions and giving irrelevant answers (Arnstein 1969:219)

4. *Consultation*

The next type of participation is *consultation*. Inviting citizen's opinions like informing them can be a legitimate step toward their full participation. Frequent methods used are meetings, public enquiry forums, and meetings with citizen committees, survey attitudes and so on. While consultation makes those in authority more available to questions from their constituencies, for the most part such meetings are heavily orchestrated and controlled. And if consultation is not combined with other modes of participation, this rung of the ladder is still a shame since it offers no assurance that citizen concerns and ideas will be taken into

account. When power holders restrict the input of citizen's ideas solely to this level, participation remains just a window-dressing ritual. What citizens achieve in all this activity is that they have "participated in participation". What power holders achieve is the evidence that they have gone through the required motions of involving "those people" (Arnstein 1969:219).

5. *Placation*

Arnstein articulated that it is at this level that citizens begin to have some degree and influence through participation though tokenism is still apparent (1969:220). Here, usually a few members of the "have notes" are picked out and incorporated into the communication networks of those in power. It channels their opinion through these individuals selected but also often co-opts potential leaders of these groups into the plans of those holding power (Greenwood and Levin 2007: 259). In other words, this level of participation allows citizens to advise or plan ad infinitum but retains for the power holders the right to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advice. Arnstein gave an example in which citizens who participated in the participatory meetings at this level were in fact unaware of their minimum rights, responsibilities, and the options available to them under the program (1969:221).

6. *Partnership*

The more robust form of participation is *partnership*. At this rung of the ladder, power is in fact redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders. They agree to share information, analysis, planning and decision-making responsibilities through such structures such as joint policy board and planning committees. After the basic principles have been established through some form of give-and-take, they are not subject to unilateral change. Moreover, in such situations where power has come to be shared, it was in fact "taken" or "wrested" by citizens themselves rather than being "given" by power holders who naturally would want to hang on to it (Arnstein 1969:222).

7. *Delegated Power*

In this type of participation, negotiations between citizens and public officials can result in citizens achieving dominant decision-making authority over a particular plan or program. In other words, citizens now hold a clear majority of seats on committees with delegated powers to make decisions. It not only puts the stakeholders in charge of the process but also makes them accountable to themselves, the leaders, and others in the community for the quality or rightness of their decisions and actions. In other words participants form the majority in decision-making arenas.

8. *Citizen Control*

This typology at the highest rungs of the ladder describes a situation in which those directly affected by any decision, condition, or action are completely in charge of planning, making policies, and taking actions to affect their own situation and that of the broader collectivity of which they are part (Greenwood and Levin 2007:258). In other words the have-nots handle the entire job of managing and planning the program, they retain full decision-making and managerial power, with no intermediaries between them and the source of funds. In development jargon, this type of participation would be seen as transformative and empowering.

3.2.1 Limitations of the framework

While this ladder of participation illustrates the different types of participation, what one has to bear in mind is that these categories are merely simplifications of a more complex reality that is ever changing and never static. In actual development practice there are probably more types of participation that do not possess as discrete a boundary as illustrated above. The categories themselves may often overlap with one another, and a particular type of participation may possess characteristics found in the other types too. Moreover, in reality powerless citizens (the have-nots) and the power holders often do not exist as homogenous groups as juxtaposed in the above illustration. Instead as Arnstein herself points out, each group encompasses a host of divergent points of view, significant divisions, competing vested interests, and splintered subgroups. Yet, she argues "the justification for using such simplistic abstractions is that in most cases the have-nots really do perceive the powerful as the monolithic system, and power holders actually do view the have-nots as *those people*, with little comprehension of class and caste differences among them" (1969:217). Although the illustration suggests that the higher up the ladder one gets the better it would be for the "have-not's", in reality, as we have seen, participation is essentially about power. The notion of exactly who is to participate is ambiguous; therefore, a particular project situated at the top of the ladder (i.e possessing characteristics of citizen control) is not necessarily free of manipulation and inequality, based along lines of gender, age, ethnicity and class. A project may be deemed free of interferences from "outside power holders" but within the "have-not insiders" wielding decision-making power, real control may rest only in the hands of just a couple of the "have-nots" at the expense of marginalizing others such as women, elderly and the illiterate. For this reason, a deeper power analysis of any participatory space is also crucial. VeneKlasen& Miller's analyses of power would be employed here.

3.3 VeneKlasen & Millers Analyses of Power

VeneKlasen and Millers (2007) articulate three interactive dimensions of *power over* that shape the boundaries of political participation. They range from the more obvious and visible to those that operate largely unnoticed behind the scenes. The narration of these dimensions of power below is extracted from VeneKlasen and Miller's book "A New Weave of Power, People & Politics" (2002:47-49).

1. Visible Power: Observable Decision-making

This dimension of power examines powers in its visible manifestations - the formal rules, structures, authorities, institutions and procedures of decision-making. There are two main ways in which visible power discriminates against certain interests and people:

    i)   Through biased laws and policies that may seem "neutral" but clearly serve one group of people at the expense of others, such as health policies that do not adequately address women's specific needs.

    ii)   Through closed, corrupt or unrepresentative decision-making structures that do not adequately involve the voices or interests of the people they are intended to serve.

2. Hidden Power: Setting the Political Agenda

This dimension of power over is less obvious and thus relatively difficult to discern. Certain powerful people and institutions maintain their influence by controlling who gets to the decision-making table, what gets on the agenda or whose issues get addressed. By preventing important voices and issues from getting a fair public hearing, policy-making can be skewed to benefit a few at the expense of others. *Controlling access to information* is one of the main ways to hide problems and limit the influence only to those who have the necessary information to partake in participatory initiatives. If people are unaware of a

problem, they are unable to make informed choices or participate in public deliberations that can contribute to its solution. These dynamics exclude and devalue the concerns and representations of other less powerful groups, such as women and the poor. What is important to note is that for many marginalized peoples, being denied information can reinforce feelings of powerlessness, ignorance and self-blame but at the same time it can also spur people to action and resistance.

Both of the above dimensions of power are very much rooted in the conceptualization of power over, where power is viewed in absolute terms and as markedly being centralized in the hands of the "power holders" vis-a-vis the those "without the power".

3. Invisible Power: Shaping meaning

Probably the most insidious of the three dimensions of power, shaping meaning operates in ways that render competing interests and problems invisible. Significant problems and issues are not only kept from the decision-making table, but also from the minds and consciousness of the different players involved, even those directly affected by the problem. By influencing how individuals think about their place in the world, this dimension of power is internalized. In many societies for instance, men and women have been taught to accept their respective roles and relationships as natural. And often, such socialized consent prevents them from questioning or envisioning possibilities for changing these relationships or addressing injustices. In other words, processes of socialization, culture, and ideology perpetuate exclusion and inequality by defining what is normal, acceptable and safe. As mentioned earlier on, this third dimension of power is not rooted in the centralized model of power over. In this case, power is diffused, decentralized and largely internalized throughout society and thus difficult to discern.

That said, all of the above articulations would be employed in this thesis as the analytical frameworks to specifically determine the form of participation and the power mechanisms at play in shaping it at a micro level.

CHAPTER IV: Methodology

In this Chapter the overall research design, including methods of data collection and their limitations will be illustrated.

4.1 Overall Research Design

This research employs a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. Qualitative research is known for its inclusiveness of a wide range of methods of collecting and analyzing empirical evidence, each having their own advantages and disadvantages. In this research, case study method, semi-structured interviews, observations, focus groups, and expert interviews were employed.

4.2 Case Study

From amongst the variety of tentative methods, this thesis employs a *Two-case Case Study* method[12]. Yin points out that in general, case studies are preferred when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (Yin 2003:1). How and why questions are suggestive of a more explanatory style of research as opposed to simply being descriptive or exploratory. Although the research questions in this study do not exactly begin with '*how*' or '*why*' they are very much oriented towards an in depth explanation of a tangible and contemporary event taking place in the Deep South, that are far too complex for surveys or experimental methods, and measure events which the author has no control over. To discern the form of participation in a particular State development project involves investigating what actually happened in the construction of these participatory spaces; *who* took part, *how* they came to hear about the to participatory initiative, *how* they took part, and the

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[12] It will be mentioned below why the Two-Case Case Study method was selected.

reasons *why* they chose to do or not to do so. Similarly it also involves expounding the motives of the government, asking *why* they chose to employ this strategy in the first place and *how* did they go about doing it.

4.2.1 Limitation of case study research

One of the limitations of case study research is that findings deriving from it cannot be generalized to the large population (Bryman 2008:55). Thus it is not expected that the findings of from these two villages can be generalized to other villages in the province as well. Indeed, the aim of the research is to explore into the complexity of a phenomenon, to see how it manifests itself and the implications of these manifestations in the selected villages only. However, Stake argues that when a case is properly described it may be possible for experienced researchers to make naturalistic generalizations with other similar cases (Gomm *et. al* 2000: 22)

4.3 Fieldwork

According to Creswell, case study research does not rely on a single source of data but gathers multiple sources of information through observations, interviews, audiovisual material, documents and reports as they build an in depth picture of their case(s) (1998:39). For this study, the author spent one month collecting empirical data in the southern province of Pattani. Semi-structured interviews, focus groups and direct observation have been the primary data collection methods in this field study. The details about each data collection method will be addressed in the following pages.

The particular emphasis of this thesis which led to undertaking a field study has been to examine the kind of information that can only be obtained through going into the locality; seeing how villagers live and conducting interviews with them in their own homes. Because this kind of information is considered highly valuable and particularly relevant, this thesis has from the outset endeavored to go about the best way of finding it. As the media has

amplified the level of violence in the Deep South, very few researchers have actually visited the villages themselves in recent years. A common saying in NGO communities is that villagers are now familiar with the names of big hotels in Pattani because they have been invited there several times to sit at interviews.

4.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis has been used to analyze the data in this thesis.

As noted by Bryman a thematic analysis concentrates on *what* is said by the interviewees rather than *how* they said it (2008:553). As there are no binding techniques to identity themes, the author looked for repetitions, similarities and differences in the answers to the same question and based on that categorized them into key themes. The author first worked on coding the themes in each village and then proceeded to make comparisons of the two villages.

4.5 Rationale for choosing the QVP project

Although there being many SBPAC monitored development projects in the Deep South, *The Development Project to Improve the Quality of life of the Villagers in the Southern Border Provinces (QVP)* is the only project that explicitly embraces the participatory approach. At the level of policy, it stipulates that a *village forum* must be created before any funds can be transferred to the village. Thus, as it guarantees some kind of "space" for participation, this project was the most relevant to the research question posed in this study. In addition, it is also one of the longest running State development projects and has been implemented very widely across the region. This would allow for the two case study villages to be drawn from any where in the region rather than limiting selection to a narrow pool of villages in one particular area that might be difficult to access. However, due to time, safety and restrictions in gaining accessibility to subjects, it was decided that concentrating the field study in only two villages in the Pattani province would be best.

Because the author was not familiar with rural settings in the Deep South, a pilot test lasting three days was conducted in a village called Chang-Hai-Tok in Pattani. This helped to refine data collection plans and to develop more relevant lines of questioning. This village was selected based on convenience as the author had acquaintances living there.

4.6 Rationale for the identification of cases

Based on the pilot test, it was recognized that in the given time frame, doing *more than* two cases would not be possible. In this scenario, Yin articulates that multiple-case designs may be preferred over single-case designs, even if it is a "two-case" case study (2009:60). Single case designs are vulnerable because researchers will have put *all their eggs in one basket* and more importantly the analytic benefits from having two (or more) cases may be substantial (Yin 2009:61).

The next important criteria for case selection concerned the author's *ability to gain access* to the village community. In an unfamiliar setting, finding the key person(s) to make the introduction into the community is imperative. After spending many days accompanying an NGO group, government officials and other acquaintances to some of the most remote villages in Pattani, six potential villages and the key persons for them were found.

Out of the six villages, Red Village and Green Village[13] were strategically chosen for their relevance in a "two-case" case study design that could illustrate contrasting conditions of participation (using Yin's rationale that each case in a multiple-case study must be carefully selected so that it either (a) predicts similar results or (b) predicts contrasting results (2009:54)). The political background[14] of the villages led the author to hypothesize that any differences in terms of participation would likely be more pronounced in the two cases, thus juxtaposing

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[13] For ethical reasons, actual names of the two villages will not be mentioned in this thesis. However, the basic facts of the villages will remain the same as it is in reality.

[14] The basic information about each village is given in Chapter V.

them would be illustrative of the diverse typologies of participation that exists and also the different power dynamics that shape the respective parameters of participatory space.

In sum, decisions on using the two cases was largely determined by the situation on the ground but also by referring to scholarly views that argued that the evidence from multiple case studies will be more compelling and robust as compared to a single case study. In addition, geographical proximity to the city was another very important criteria. As roads leading to rural areas are often dangerous, it was important to be back into the city no later than 4 pm. In sum, a combination of convenience and purposive sampling methods were used to select the two village cases.

4.7 Rationale and sampling method of interviewees

Key persons can be of great help during fieldwork. However, as Bryman mentions researchers might develop undue reliance on the key informant, and rather than seeing social reality through the eyes of members of the social setting, researchers might end up seeing social reality through the eyes of the key informants (2008:409). In Thailand it is expected that a visitor to the village would first be taken to the village headman and it is he who becomes the customary key person. If this happens, the researcher is most likely to gain access to only a specific part of the field that is in his interest. Thus, the village headmen were not approached at the onset of the fieldwork and were only interviewed much later on.

Two key persons provided access into Green Village. One of them being a Malay-Muslim acquaintance whose family lives in the village and the other, a nurse from the sub-district health care centre.[15] They were briefed with the aim of the research and requested to introduce the author to different groups in the village, in order to discern opinions of a good cross section of population. Both Malay-Muslim and Buddhist villagers were interviewed. Within the Malay-Muslim majority, villagers belonging to different groups were also interviewed;

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[15] Nurses working at local health care units are considered as local state officials. However, as compared to local state officials from other units they are known to have the most trust from villagers because of the kind of job their perform.

from those considered most likely to benefit from development projects to those considered most marginalized and poor. Given that it would be risky to travel into the village too often, there was little choice in the selection of interviewees in this case and the author relied on whatever had been arranged. Under these terms the experience in Green Village was completely different and more time was spent in the latter village.

One key person, an eighty-year-old Buddhist college teacher provided access into Green Village. The author had accidentally come across him on a visit to observe a village forum. He was very sympathetic to the cause of this research and introduced the author to other interviewees. And after interviewing these villagers it slowly became possible to interview more villagers. Thus, *snowball sampling* was the primary sampling technique in this village. While it can be very useful, Bryman points out that snowball sampling may come at the expense of introducing bias because the technique itself reduces the likelihood that the sample will represent a good cross section from the population (2008:458). Thus, to minimize this risk, the author tried to crosscheck the suggestions that these interviewees made (as to whom should be interviewed) with the information obtained from other villagers she came across while loitering around in the area. Ultimately, it was not very difficult to select the Buddhist interviewees.

When sampling the Malay-Muslim villagers it was conceived that going straight to their religious leader the Imam would be most conducive to find participants given the surprising scenario that the Buddhist interviewees did not know whom to recommend and since relying ondistrict officials to make the introduction would not be wise either. To reduce biased selection, other Malay-Muslim villagers recommended by the assistant of the village-headmen were also interviewed later on.

In the field, Mikkelsen points out that interviewees tend to respond differently depending on how they perceive the person asking the questions. In particular, the sex, age and ethnic origins of the interviewer have a bearing on the amount of information people are willing to divulge and their honesty about what they reveal (2005:177). That said, it should also be mentioned that the author not only received a cordial and warm welcome from the villagers but also felt that she was able to gain a high level of trust from them. This was probably due to the fact

that the author was perceived as a *young girl, alone* in this endeavor[16]. Had state authorities or friends accompanied her the level of trust would have been very different and it would have been very difficult to discern the "truth" beneath all the propaganda.

4.8 Semi-structured interviews

Flick asserts that the interviewee's subjective viewpoints can be better expressed in an openly designed interview situation than in a standardized interview or questionnaire (2006:150). For this reason, semi-structured interviews with opened questions were selected. They allowed interviewees more freedom to answer in their own time using their own words. An interview guide[17] was prepared for data comprehensiveness, however such an interview situation also allowed for flexibility in sequencing and asking additional questions based on interviewees responses on sight spontaneously.

Four sets of interview guide were used for the four groups of interviewees namely, the villagers, the village leaders, the district officials[18], and the expert informants. For interviewees within the same group, questions were asked with similar wordings to maintain standard for data analysis. Interviews lasted from 20 minutes to 1 hour depending on how long it took to "break the ice". All the interviews were conducted in Thai, transcribed and translated into English by the author who is fluent in both languages.

All in all, from Red Village sixteen villagers (including local leaders) and six district officials[19] were interviewed. From Green Village twelve villagers (including local leaders), and five district officials were interviewed. In addition to those, seven expert informants were interviewed.

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[16] The author was at the village for 8 consecutive days and had no acquaintances there.
[17] See Appendices E,F,G,H for the interview guides.
[18] There were two different teams of local state officials responsible for the QVP in each of the two villages.
[19] District officials in this case imply local state officials or civil servants who represent their ministries at its lowest unit of administration (the district).

4.8.1   Limitations of interviews with villagers

Challenges in qualitative interviewing often focus on the mechanism of conducting the interview; ranging from the researchers ability to ask the interview questions to issues related to unexpected participant behavior (Creswell 1998:140). In this research, problems concerning the researchers ability to formulate questions in the right manner for villagers to understand were encountered.

It became evident from the pilot test, that most villagers had difficulties expressing opinions when open-ended questions were asked. They seemed unaccustomed to answering certain questions or analyzing certain issues. For instance, many found it hard to answer, "what do you think was good about the village forum?" Even after changing the question to "what did you gain by taking part in the village forum[20]?" many still could not respond. To sidestep this problem, relatively leading questions had to be asked. For instance, "What do you think is good about the village forum", was followed up questions like "Did you gain something after attending the village forum or nothing at all?" or "Do you know more about what the government is doing to your village now than before?"

It is important to clarify that the villager's difficulty in providing answers to some of the questions does not mean that they were 'stupid' or 'unintelligent'. The difficulties were probably due to author's distance from the whole set up of rural Thailand that made her unable to pose the simplest questions in a more familiar way to the villagers. Because what is considered "easy" to understand is relative and shaped by one's life experiences, certain questions, which the author considered as "simple" might not be so for others. With little knowledge of the kind of language used on a day-to-day basis by the villagers, the fieldwork proved challenging at the onset.

Thus in many cases it was necessary to use leading questions in order to obtain any answers from the villagers. Researchers from the positivist school would argue that this way of questioning is not scientific because the researcher has interfered by framing opinions of the interviewee, thus hi-jacking "objective"

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[20] This question is translated from Thai language, and it may sound a bit vague in English.

findings. However, Kvale and Brinkmann have provided a post-modernist counter argument saying that knowledge is co-authored and co-produced by both the interviewee and interviewee (2009:173). They suggested, that although the wordings of a question can unintentionally shape the content of an answer, the validity of using leading questions depends on the topic and purpose of investigation and that they can be *necessary* parts of many questioning procedures (2009:172). In this case, the entire research was dependent on villager's experiences and perceptions of participation, thus if they resorted to saying almost nothing the research problem would not be answered at all. In addition, leading questions in qualitative research will also help to check the reliability of the interviewees answers, as well as help to verify the researchers' interpretations of it (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:17). For these reason, employing leading questions in the research is justified.

4.9 Expert interviews

Expert interviews were conducted with academic, high ranking state officials and military personnel due to their in-depth knowledge and significant experience in the field. Outsiders with inside knowledge are often valuable key informants who are able to answer questions about other people's knowledge attitudes, and practices besides their own (Flick 2006:165). Another reason to conduct expert interviews was to make sure that focus is not lost in issues that are of no relevance to the research topic. However, to circumvent the risk of being misled by key informants' sometimes-biased information, people representing distinct fields and interests, i.e. from the academia, government and military were chosen. In this case, the interview guide had a stronger directive function and interview questions were more systematically applied.

4.10 Focus groups

According to Flick "the hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in the group" (2006:197). In this research, focus groups were expected to complement personal interviews. It was expected that villagers would be more reluctant to speak up in a one-on-one interview and thus bringing them together would ensure free flowing, detailed and valuable information. Also due to limited time it would be faster to discern many viewpoints at once. Flick suggested that it would be more appropriate to conduct a focus group with strangers so as to minimize the level of things taken for granted that would remain implicit in a group of friends (2006:198). However, given the level of conflict of interests in the villages, it was decided that putting a group of friends together was more beneficial to the findings than putting "strangers" who potentially might also not get along. During the focus groups, a non-directive style of interviewing was adopted but at the same time all participants were encouraged to express their personal viewpoints. However, despite these efforts the focus group method was beset with problems.

4.10.1 Focus group limitation

Villager's relative inability to articulate mentioned earlier also influenced the effectiveness of the two focus groups conducted in Red Village. From the 6-7 villages that participated in each group, only 2-3 spoke up. Even upon intervention by the author many did not respond and it would have been unethical to force them. The reason could have been that they found it difficult to articulate or that they were in agreement with those who spoke up hence there was no need to speak up themselves. These experiences disproved the expectations that group discussions would be the most suitable method for interviewing villagers and thus focus group research method was not used at all during research in the Green Village. One-on-one interviews provided better research findings[21].

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[21] Despite these methodological inconsistencies, what can be learned from the above is that villagers should be encouraged to be 'critical', to 'question' and to be 'analytical' of their immediate surroundings in order for any participatory initiative to be genuinely empowering.

4.11 Observation

Creswell argues that observing in a setting is a special skill that addresses issues such as potential for deception of the people being interviewed, impression management, and the potential marginality of the researcher in a strange setting (1998:134). Thus it was very fortunate that they author was able to observe a village forum conducted by district officials at Green Village and the results of which pertained directly to the research question at hand. Most importantly, observation was also complementary to data collected through the interviews. Through out the event the author did not participate or interact with the villagers at all. Gold suggests that this kind of observer-as-participant role carries the risk of not understanding the social setting and the people in it sufficiently and therefore of making incorrect inferences (cited in Bryman 2008:412). Thus, to minimize this risk, details of the observations were crosschecked with the interviewees who had participated in this forum (later on during the individual interview).

4.11.1 Observation limitations

Despite high relevance to the research problem, it was not possible to observe any village forums for the QVP in Red Village as they had already been conducted. However, accounts given by many villagers as to what took place in the village forum was sorted to replace this bit of information (although understandably it might not carry the same credence as direct observation).

4.12 Ethical Issues

Prior to conducting each interview the permission for using a sound recorder was asked from each informant. The author then introduced herself, briefed the purpose of the research and gave reasons as to why the informant was being interviewed. The role of an independent researcher was explained including that there was no intention of using their expressions in any way harmful to them. In addition, villagers were specifically assured that there would be no right or wrong answers and that their "truthful" opinions would be valued. And as interviews can be hierarchical by nature, with an asymmetrical power relationship between the interviewer and interviewee (Creswell 1998:139), informal introduction was crucial to set friendlier tones to the conversation. Moreover, in a hierarchical society like Thailand where age determines the power differential in a conversation, the author being much younger than the interviewees helped balance out the asymmetrical power relations of the interviews.

Informants in both villages asked for confidentiality of their real. Thus, fictional names of villagers and the villages itself are used here. District officials are addressed by their career positions.

4.13 Role of Researcher

Flick asserts that in qualitative research although one tends to let the voices of the participants speak, it is also important that researchers remember that it is their own subjectivity too that becomes part of the research process and shapes their interpretations of the results (2006:16). Thus, researchers must always bear in mind how their life experiences and biases may bare influence on research right from data collection to analysis. From the beginning the author tried to be cautious of her bias towards the work of the State in general and of officials and village headmen in particular. Thus effort was made to ensure that the questions posed to villagers were relatively neutral and absent of pre-conceived notions. In addition, the disliking towards state officials revealed by some interviewees was not flared in the hope of gaining more controversial answers.

CHAPTER V

Contextual Background Information

5.2 Basic information about Red Village

Red Village is politically and socially "unstable". Many villagers here lost their male family members in the infamous Krue-Sae Mosque incident on the 24th of May 2004[22]. To this day it remains in the red zone[23] as the government continues to suspect separatist sentiments amongst some villagers, fearing that they still might be sympathetic to militants. The former village headman (phu-yai-ban) was killed for working for the State. The incumbent headman is feared by most villagers and unpopular due to corruption allegations. In addition, there is also tension between the Buddhist minority and Malay Muslim majority, as well as tension within the latter group itself. Since the village is relatively large (comprising of approximately 1200 people) some villagers want to break away and set up small settlements. This however, has not happened so far. The primary source of income for most villagers is agriculture; from small plots of rubber plantations. Those who do not have their own plantations are often labourers in others. Some work in small grocery shops in the village and the very few educated ones work as civil servants. This village is very remote and outsiders are reluctant to visit for fear of danger.

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[22] The military open fired on "insurgents" taking refuge at the Krue Sae Mosque. This incident led to cries of human rights abuses by the government.

[23] The government and military characterizes regions in the Deep South into Red, Green or Yellow according to the security situation there. Red indicates an unsafe area with potential militant activities. Green indicates a safe zone.

5.2 Basic information about Green Village

In contrast to Red Village, Green Village is in the green zone. Many call it a 'model village' for the government, as politicians (amongst them the incumbent Prime Minister), high-ranking Thai state officials, and foreign diplomats are brought here on their occasional visits to the Deep South. To most outsiders the village is known for its 'strength' and 'cohesion' based on peaceful coexistence between the Buddhist majority and Malay-Muslim minority. The village headman has also been given the Outstanding Headmen Award. Compared to Red Village, this village has a much smaller population and much better off populace of about 460 people, most are Buddhists. Significant number Buddhists inhabitants are civil servants, whilst others are sub-contractors in cities. Few work on agricultural fields and raise livestock. Most of the Malay-Muslims work in agriculture and some work in neighbouring Malaysia. In contrast to Red Village, most inhabitants currently living here are rather aged. The younger ones have migrated to other provinces or to Malaysia for better career prospects.

CHAPTER VI:

Findings and Analysis

At the onset of the fieldwork it was anticipated that there would be distinctive forms of participation in the two villages. Juxtaposing them would then illustrate contrasting typologies of participation and also how different power dynamics shape their respective parameters. As Green Village is renowned for the success of its community enterprise and micro credit programs initiated by villagers themselves without the help of the State it was expected that participants in the QVP would likewise also possess a high degree of "citizen power", thus villagers would be united in their responsibility for planning and decision-making in the project. It was expected therefore that lessons could be drawn from Green Village's exemplary case in order to avoid the tokenistic measures expected to be employed in Red Village whereby villagers would wield relatively less control over decision making vis-à-vis district officials and local elites. The empirical findings however were unexpectedly something very different altogether.

6.1 Forms of Participation in both villages

In both Green and Red Village, the participatory initiative took on *nominal* and *tokenistic* forms. Although it is not possible to classify them to a specific rung of Arnestein's ladder of participation (because different characteristics of these rungs were present) it was nevertheless evident that the level of participation was not above *placation*. Ultimately, decision-making powers in the "participatory" village forums that had been initiated as part of the requirement by the State were largely concentrated in the hands of local-elites, especially the village headmen vis-à-vis the larger village society. At best, the village forums "allowed" villagers to voice their interests and needs (anything they wanted) but retained for local elites the right to determine the legitimacy of the proposed needs, thus the real

decision-making power.

In both locations, especially Green Village, villagers were "subtly forced" and "recruited" to participate in a ritual of rubberstamping or voting for pre-determined decisions and had little agency in shaping the outcome of the forums. In Red Village, many villagers were "lured" to participate by the promise of material rewards and the forums became a battleground for different interest groups rather than a place for cooperation. In both villages the government's requirement that one person from 70% of the total number of households should participate was barely reached, yet the village forums went ahead. In spite of their marginalized role in the village forum, villagers were not completely passive subjects either. Increasingly aware that local leaders were using them as tools, some villagers chose not to participate in the forums at all. Thus attendances in the village forums have tended to dwindle in time. Ultimately, the villagers were not placated.

In the section below the author will describe the kind of participation that took place in village forums in each village; addressing the questions of who participated, how they did so, and the reasons why they did or did not participate in the forums. By enquiring into the interests that villagers hold towards these forums, combined with the interests of local elites and state officials, it was possible for the author to discern the form of participation that took place in both villages.

6.1.1 Official conceptualization of Participation

Before the empirical evidences are revealed it is important that the reader know what the official conceptualization of participation is. To determine this interviews were conducted with high-ranking bureaucrats at SBPAC. They expressed rather progressive ideas concerning participation and the importance of bottom up initiatives. As Wunsiew, one of the directors of SBPAC articulated *"the concept underlying participation of the local people is that the villagers think for themselves and act for themselves...they come to the forums themselves and explore and solve their own problems...bureaucrats and state officials alone cannot do it, bureaucrats will always think like bureaucrats, they can go to help the villages but the villagers themselves have to also become involved in solving their own problems ...because they know their needs the best."* He also expressed an awareness of the different types and degrees of participation. In his words "what we do is not just inviting them [the villagers] to listen or simply informing them about something, but we give importance to the kind of participation that enables them to decide their future for themselves".

Similarly Choymonkong, an SPBAC bureaucrat supervising the implementation of the QVP in five provinces said *"this is not the kind of project that will teach villagers to be handicapped or lounge about waiting for the money to fall from the sky...we use the principle of public participation that is based on the line of thought that villagers think for themselves, decide by themselves, and act by themselves...".* He further articulated *"We [the officials] are not forcing them [the villagers] to propose a particular project that we have in mind...the final decision would be whatever the outcome of the village forum is...".* In sum, high-ranking state officials adopted a definition of participation as one in which local people are fully involved right from the onset of the development activity until the end, following a series of steps. These include community analysis planning, decision-making, implementation and management, monitoring and evaluation and of course distributing the benefits in the village (expert interview, Choymonkong). Unfortunately, as will be revealed below, participation that manifested in practice was far from these envisaged ideals.

6.1.2 Form of participation in Green Village

> …Some villagers had gathered under a big shady tree…those arriving, gave their signatures and quietly sat down in rows, one after another…a tripod projection screen that was never used indicated a stage… seated upfront were Buddhists villagers … Malay Muslims occupied the back rows…the district permanent secretary began the session, very briefly introducing the purpose of the meeting…in Thai…then the microphone was handed to the village headmen, whom after a long monologue…in Thai…asked the audience "do you agree with this point...if you agree raise your hands"…. No one did…so he said, "If there is silence then I will take it to mean that everyone is in agreement,"…He asked again for agreement and many hands went up this time… "Alright we move on to the next point"…the same procedure was carried out for the next four points…at the end the district permanent secretary came back and said "can you all please raise your hands so that we can take photographs"...instantly ALL hands shot up and flashes flickered… the microphone was then handed to a Malay translator.[24]

The above were the author's observation of one participatory village forum in Green Village. It involved the mobilization of local people into a rather formal but temporary community structure, known as a *prachakom*or *participatory village forum.* The villagers refer to these forums as meetings. Apart from the fact that most of the participants were old and the seating arrangement was not enabling for discussions, three things were immediately noticeable in this forum. First was the one-way flow of information from the village head to the participants and at certain intervals the district permanent secretary would contribute a few words, complementary to theformers. Second, the villagers for the most part, were passive informants. There was no channel for feedback or negotiation. Throughout the village forum, only one elderly Buddhist villager spoke up, but the microphone was not handed to him and within seconds his concerns had been

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[24] The issue being addressed in this village forum was about how to combat drug addition that has become a pressing concern in the village. In 2010, the QVP added another criteria for fund disbursement; making it compulsory for a part of the money to be used for activities related to combating drug addition. It was up to the participations in the forum to decide on the "activities" they would like to do.

brushed aside. Malay Muslims seated at the back seemed to pay little attention to what was being said, many looked bored and murmured to one another. Third, for much of the time Thai was used in facilitating the forum (despite the fact that many Malay Muslim villagers do not understand the language). These observations immediately indicated the little importance given to the in put of villagers in determining the outcome of the forum. In other words, it was not important whether the villagers had understood the points mentioned or not, because they had already been decided upon by the "power holders". And even if they did not agree with the "choices" given they were somehow coerced into accepting them as evidenced in this forum. In other words, what average villagers were expected to do was simply to rubberstamp decisions. They had no legitimate power and the gathering was needed to prove that villagers had been involved in the project. These actions would be characteristic of Arnstein's lower rungs of participation.

Although one cannot generalize the dynamics of this one particular village forum to the others that had taken place as part of the QVP in 2010, it does nevertheless provide entry points into understanding how these "participatory" spaces were conducted. And for accuracy, these observations were crossed checked with opinions of villagers. The findings were complementary.

Indeed, most villagers acknowledged that forums usually occurred in more or less the same way as witnessed by the author. In the words of Pornchai, a retired civil servant "it is usual that most people who come to these meetings do so for the sake of it, they don't have any information on what its about, they know nothing, everything has been prepped". He also explained that what gives the façade of a strong village is not that villagers participate in decision making with the power holders but that villagers prefer not to talk aloud or comment on things. Similarly Bunsong, an 81-year-old former college teacher said "in this village, usually a small group of people, a few voices of the leaders who decide for the big group". He also added "…in the village forums they have completely arranged for everything already…like what you saw…all the information will be pre-written in points and they just come to tell us about it for the sake of it…but that is not the way participation should happen… it has to be us representatives of the village together who think how we are going to solve this problem [drug addiction] together". These two villagers said that they rarely attend any village forums

because even if they did there was nothing they could contribute. For other Buddhist villagers, at the most forums were a place in which they would be informed about the happenings in the village and if there were nothing else to do they would always "participate" (interview, Yai Nim). Apart from that, attendance was also a matter of being "cooperative with the village headmen" and to help sustain the reputation of the village. What was evident here was also that the Buddhist villagers were not very bothered by the fact that they had little agency in these forums because in being relatively well off they did not rely on the material resources from these development projects.

In comparison, the Malay Muslim villagers expressed more frustrations about the superficiality of village forums. Muhammad a young villager said "They [district officials] just come into the village, call all the villagers to come and then they take pictures to fabricate a story, to create an image, that's all". He explained how "sick and tired" all the villagers are of these forums because "they just ask us to tell them what we want, so we tell them but after that nothing ever happens…we are so bored of all this now". For another villager, genuine interest to attend the forums was barely visible, and she only did so because she was "told" by the assistant of the village headmen (interview, Kachah). She said, "Every time they call us to attend a meeting we must go, just to listen, but we don't tell them anything…even if we do, we never get anything, so it's better to not say anything out". Yet for many others, resister to participate was more rudimentary. "For many older Muslim women, the forums are useless, even if they attended they will not understand anything [because the language of instruction was predominantly Thai]…so it is a waste of time…"(interview, Mareya). These articulations again indicated the absurdity of the forums for the villagers and frustration and powerlessness evoked as a result of being "recruited" to participate. Unlike what was envisaged by high-ranking bureaucrats, villagers simply participated by being passive listeners (to whatever little they understood) and good followers. They would voice their interests at times but ultimately real decision-making powers were in the hands of "those people"- the power holders (interview, Pornchai).

In sum, to use Arnstein's words, participation in Green Village remained just a "window dressing ritual". Power holders, especially the village headmen and district officials, restrict the input of villagers only at the level of voicing their needs but retain for themselves the power to judge the legitimacy and feasibility

of the advice. Thus, no matter, how many needs are voiced; its execution is inevitably left to the discretion of the village headmen and the district officials. In 2010 QVP funds would be used to extend the public water system to all Malay Muslim households, located geographically on a different side of the village to the Buddhists. Yet, Muslim villagers articulated that although this would benefit them, they had actually been asking for this water system for many years but nothing had ever been done about it. Until today, with well water undrinkable they have to buy drinking water[25]. The point to make here is that had the villagers wielded more citizen power over decision-making, they would have had clean and safe drinking water years ago.

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[25]This applied to only the Malay Muslims not the Buddhists who already had clean drinking water.

6.1.3 Form of participation in Red Village

Although the author was unable to observe any village forums in person, accounts given by villagers in Red Village indicated the prevalence of high degrees of tokenism in the participatory initiative of the QVP.

Kayah, a Muslim villager from the focus group described the happenings of the forum as follows: "*The first thing that we did at the forum was to sign our names. Then after that the district permanent secretary and everyone in their team introduced themselves and introduced the project. They said prachakhom is for villagers to think for themselves, act for themselves and propose their needs themselves, and they [the district officials] are just mentors... After a while of talking they asked us to propose what we want and so many villagers proposed...some proposed that they wanted to build toilets, others said they wanted goats, ducks, etc.... the officer would write all the proposals down on the board...after a while of everyone proposing what each wanted, we were asked to raise our hands and vote for the proposals that we wanted or agreed with most and they prioritized it according to the number of votes...towards the end there were 3 proposals...but then something happened...the leaders talked with each other...and finally the village headmen said that they will only grant the first 2 proposals...*". This indicated that ultimately decision-making power was not in the hands of the villagers but with the local leaders.

Moreover the first two proposals had already been determined in advance, so the articulations of the villagers needs never counted in the first place. Kadah, a female Muslim villager explains that the first scheme[26] proposed by the Imam and endorsed by the village headmen got most funding even though it was not an urgent need for anyone and will not help villagers to become less impoverished. The second scheme[27] had to be granted because it was in the interest of district officials to make sure that the minority Buddhist group also got something, irrespective of whether they are really the ones "in need" (interview, Kadnah). Lamenting the injustices, Kanah said, "why can't they change the leaders and the people in the village committee? Why does it have to be the same people all the time, the same people who made the decisions and the same people who benefit

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[26] Purchasing funeral boats where corpses will be cleanse before burial according to the Malay traditions.
[27] Purchasing tables, chairs and cooking utensils to be used during ceremonies in the Village.

from it". Similarly, villagers in the focus group also expressed dissatisfaction in the way the forum was being conducted. If they had the power, they would not use the rules of voting and majority wins because in the end it does not include the small groups who may be genuinely in need of those funds (focus group 1[28]).

In reality, because the forums had never been responsive to their needs, but usually to the needs of one dominant group in the village, the numbers of participants have decreased tremendously in time (focus group 1). A villager explained"…from there being a whole room filled with people now about half have disappeared. For the QVP village forum this year, not even 50 people joined in from about a 1000 people". Those who still participate are doing so because they were "recruited" or "lured" into participation by the promise of material rewards by the village headmen (focus group 1). Fahrida, highly aggravated by the results of the forum said, "now the village headman has to even drag people to attend the village forum. And not only that, he also promised us that if we go, when the QVP funds arrive he will give each one of us who attend the forum one goat…but in the end even though we went, we didn't get anything that was promised to us in return, we didn't get the sheep and we also didn't get the money…we got nothing at all…it was a waste…". She also said that she no longer wanted to attend the forums because she felt emotionally hurt, helpless and wronged at the end of it. To make matters worse, it was also evident form the interviews with Buddhist villagers that the forums had been turned into a battleground for different groups to fight over control of economic resources flooding into the village as a result of the governments boost in development aid.

In sum, the participatory activities in Green Village exhibited high levels of tokenism, whereby the villagers were allowed to voice their interests (and in the process get into conflict with one another) but ultimately it was the leaders (the village headmen and district officials) with the power to determine the final outcome of the forums. From the point of view of *power over*, inviting villager's opinions, like informing them is a legitimate step towards genuine participation, however, as evidenced from the interviews if there are no guarantees that those ideas will be taken into account then participation yet remains just a window-dressing ritual. What power holders (including district officials) will achieve from

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[28] With Malay Muslim Villagers

this initiative is that villagers have "taken part" in "participation" and thus their work is accomplished. In reality though, there was no redistribution of power, and activities of cooperation, joint planning and decision-making between average villagers and power holders necessary for genuine participation barely took place at all. To make matters worse, as pointed out by the district permanent secretary who had just been assigned to Red Village "in the end all that villagers would gain from participating is "more conflict" which inevitably would have negative repercussions on the cohesiveness of the community. In his words, "…those who do not get anything [from the forum] will be offensive, next time they will not offer help to the community…they will say 'its better for us to remain idle' …so all the potentials for cooperation and harmony will wither away slowly".

Given the above findings to the first research question, the section below will answer the second research question. It will probe deeper into analyzing the mechanisms of power at play in shaping the tokenistic forms of participation in the two villages. As participation in the two cases manifested itself in similar ways, the power mechanisms that shaped them were also very similar in nature.

6.2 Visible Mechanisms of Power

6.2.1 The village headmen, the VC and their monopoly over decision-making

VeneKlasen and Millers articulated that the most visible dimension of *power over* manifests formally as rules, authorities and decision-making structures that do not adequately involve the voices or interests of the people they are intended to serve (2007:49). Empirical evidence gathered in this study indicated that the most noticeable mechanism of *power over* which shaped the tokenistic form of participation is the village committee (VC); especially the way in which its leader, the village headman monopolized decision-making power in the forum to serve his interests vis-à-vis those of other local leaders and average villagers.

A village committee is headed by the village headman[29] and usually consists of two of his assistants and other village representatives (often heads of local groups such as housewives groups) "elected" by the villagers, totaling about five to nine people depending on the population of the village. It performs official administrative tasks, particularly the delivery of government services and resources, and leadsdevelopment activities in the village according to village "needs"(Missingham 2000/1). By doing so, the VC helps integrate the village into the larger administrative structure of theThai state.

Although members of the VC (village headman included) are "elected" by the villagers to their position, it was evident from interviews in both villages that the VC was not representative and thus was not the mechanism that could ensure genuine participation. In other words, they were answerable to the village headmen and not the public. In Red Village for instance, members of the VC were either relatives or cliques of the village headmen, making it easy for him to dictate their activities in the participatory initiative and thus maintain control over power and resources coming into the village. Moreover, some of the members of the VC were simply "assigned" to the post without even knowing their role in the project and often sign papers without the knowledge of what it will be used for (Focus

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[29] The village headmen remain in office up to the age of 60 and have an exceptional status by virtue of his position in the village.

group interview 1).

Similarly, in Green Village, the phase *"gor-morgorr pen khonekhongkhaow"* resonated in many interviews with villagers, meaning that the "people in the VC belonged to him" (village headmen). The Imam especially was very skeptical about the potentials for the VC to be co-opted by the village head. In a nutshell, the administrative structure that was envisaged by the government to cater the needs of the villagers ultimately became a closely-knit power base preserving the dominance of the village headmen.

See SaowLuk

That said, the State was not completely oblivious to these shortcomings. Indeed it has tried to circumvent problems arising from concentration of power in the hands of the village headmen by creating yet another mechanism called *See Saow Luk* to work in parallel with the VC (whose structure is kept intact). *See Saow Luk*, literally translated in English as 'Four Main Pillars" is a de facto group of four community leaders, whose presence is seen to enhance the capacity and responsiveness of the VC. It comprises of the Local Leader (sub-district headmen or village headmen), the Regional Leader (a representative of the Sub-district Administration Organization or TAO), the Religious Leader (Imam or Monk)[30] and the Natural Leader (usually an elderly person respected by the villagers for his knowledge or positive attributes). In the QVP, these four leaders are meant to be present at the participatory forums and in order for funds to be transferred to the village from SPBAC, decisions taken in the village forum need to be endorsed with the signatures of these leaders.

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[30] For Malay Muslims, the Imams role as a community leader is grounded in the local culture. It is he who holds moral and legitimate authority (sanctioned by God), and not the village headmen (whose authority is sanctioned by the State). Whilst the village headman is seen to be accountable to his superiors i.e. the district and provincial officers, the Imam is accountable to Allah and the people he is meant to serve. For this reason, giving the Imam authority parallel to the VC is meant to raise its responsiveness and accountability to the larger public, especially the Malay Muslims majority. Natural leader is someone "knowledgeable" and "accepted" by the villagers. The Regional Leader is a representative from the TAO, another administrative unit that works in parallel to the VC in the locality).

Failure of counter balance mechanisms

Unfortunately, this counter balance mechanism only works in theory not in practice. Evidences from the fieldwork in both villages revealed that this new mechanism had been rather symbolic, having little impact in curbing the power of the village headmen in the forums, let alone champion the needs of the marginalized villagers.

One of the reasons for the failure of these counter measures was that often the teachers, religious leaders, or natural leaders who have the knowledge and ability to drive change prefer not to participate, leaving the decisions in the hands of the village headmen (interview, CD official in Red Village). Wanphet (a civil servant with considerable experience with the implementation of QVP in the field) reiterated that although it is actually the duty of the Imam to help solve the problems of the village in reality not many Imams actually do this kind of work. Many are afraid of clashing with the interests of the headmen, thus they tend to restrict their own involvement in participatory forums altogether. For instance, in Red Village, the Imam said that he did not even want to be apart of the See Saow Luk because he wanted to avoid conflict with the headmen. He talked about his inability to curb corruption and of how development projects benefit only a small group of people, namely the village headmen and his cliques because average villagers could not determine its outcome. Similarly, the Natural Leader (a very elderly Malay Muslim man) was not even aware of this role and rights in the project. He attended the village forums only for the "sake of it" and because village headmen had "told" him to do so. Moreover he did not make any suggestions or comment on the proposal of the headman in the forum, although he did not agree with it. This indicated the nominal role played by See Saow Luk members in Red Village.

The superficial nature of See Saow Luk was similar in Green Village as well. Here although the Imam complained about how the VC has been co-opted by the headmen, he himself was not active in exercising his power in the forums at all. Indeed, he was not even present on the day the participatory village forum on drug addiction was conducted. The Imam was also not aware of his own role and authority in being a member of See Saow Luk. He simply expressed concerns that it was difficult for him to change anything in the forums as in doing

so he would be putting himself up against the village headmen.

All of the above findings indicate that counter measures taken by the State to enable some sort of redistribution of power in the participatory forums had little impact over the status quo. Moreover, it also shows that the state has contradicted it's own interests in bringing about genuine participation and put itself in a catch-22 position. In other words, the State has put itself in a vicious cycle of having to maintain its jurisdiction over the village through the village headmen and VC whilst at the same time trying to curb the unilateral exercise of power by the headmen that it recognizes is leading to poor governance which in turn precipitates conflict in the region. Villagers cannot really "think and act by themselves" if structurally they are under the control of village headmen and the VC. However, the State cannot dismantle this traditional power structure because it is the official entry for them to maintain control in local communities[31]. And by creating a de facto mechanism of power (See Saow Luk) to enhance the effectiveness of an inherently flawed mechanism the state is adding more complications to an already chaotic situation, as these new local leaders would fight amongst one another for control over resources flooding into the region (expert interview, Jitpiromsri). Inevitably, as Jitpiromsri puts it "…instead of promoting genuine participatory processes this mechanism will turn into a tool for the bureaucracy".

That said it is by no means suggestive here that individual bureaucrats and the government are not supportive of genuine participation. Rather the point being made is that the broader administrative structure of centralized State authority clearly bares influence on the tokenistic form of participation at the micro level whereby power is maintained in the hands of the village headmen vis-à-vis the larger public.

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[31] Note that the VC, headed by the village headmen is an extension of the central government administration at the smallest unit. It does not work independently but under the supervision of district officials who are part of the hierarchical bureaucratic structure.

6.2.2 Rule of "majority wins" and marginalization of the minority

Another visible mechanism of power that prevents the participatory forums from being broadly inclusive is the rule of "majority wins" adopted to determine the outcome of the project. Vesting decision-making power in the hands of the "majority", the village forums end up further marginalizing those who do not belong to that "majority". Although the rule of majority wins seems rather "benign" and "fair", in practice it clearly serves the interest of one dominant group in the village at the expense of others (especially the minorities[32]).

Wanphet argued that the voting method makes minority groups in the village feel that the forums are a waste of time and that all they end up being are "decorative plants" (personal interview). In addition there is little that these minorities groups can contest with since "the majority" has voted for it. Needless to say, the person who is behind the proposal for which the majority would be rallied to endorse is the village headmen and his team (interview with district permanent secretary in Red Village). In Red Village it had already been decided upon by the leaders what they would use the funds for, and the forum was just a ritual to which villagers were "dragged" to participate in by casting their vote (focus group, Malay Muslim villagers). Clearly the rule of majority wins played into the hands of the village headmen as he has the most clout and can muster most number of votes to backup his proposals in the forums (interview, Kadah). Inevitably, it is always the same group of people that controls decisions in the forums and benefit from its outcome every year (interview, informal education teacherin Red Village). The above indicated that the rule of majority wins used in the participatory forum to determine the outcome in itself became a tool that entrenched existing patters of control and dominance in the village, by the power holders albeit very implicitly.   In Green Village, the voting technique helped maintain the status quo in a slightly different way. Because the outcomes of the forums have been endorsed by the votes of the majority, blame for any project failures will then be displaced onto the local population and not the leaders who masterminded those ideas in the first

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[32] Minorities in this case include not just the religious groupings i.e. Buddhists or Muslims, but also the small groupings within that religious community. i.e. women, widows, or the unemployed.

place. It was the village headman himself who unknowingly revealed this aspect to the author. He said, "…in this village I think for the villagers, I suggest four or five points and ask them to pick which one they want…and after that, *after they have given their agreement and support and if it fails then they cannot blame me*". These words illustrate how voting procedures in village forums will make it even harder to bring the village headmen to be accountable for the failures of the project. In other words participation in this manner becomes a tool for the power holders to make villagers accountable for project failures and not themselves.

This leads us to ask the next question, why were the rule of majority wins and the voting technique employed in the forums in the first place? And who decided to use it? This is where the hidden power and agency of state officials come into play.

6.3 Hidden Power

6.3.1 Team of district officials and their role as facilitators of the village forum

In an attempt to readdress the administrative gap mentioned earlier on, Choymonkhong explained (pertaining to the QVP) that the government has created a team of officials who would then go into the villages to work closely with the villagers and to convey that the state has "come down" because of sincere concerns for their wellbeing. Also known as the "7 Royal Tigers", this team comprises of 7 district officials who are representatives of the different ministries at its lower level of administration[33]. A team of district officials would normally consist of a district permanent secretary (also the de facto head), a community development official, a local public health official, a district agricultural official, an informal education teacher, and other representatives of the State i.e. the principle of a State School and a permanent secretary of the TAO (Sub-district Administrative Organization). Each team is responsible for a number of villages depending on the size of that district.

In theory, the 7 Royal Tigers have the mandate to monitor the overall execution of the project; to be the "mentor"[34] by giving technical guidance to the village committee and to ensure that project guidelines are followed throughout the implementation process[35]. Indeed, throughout the interviews all the district officials lucidly explained that they had no part in the decision-making processes in the project and that everything was up to the "villagers" to decide. Phrases such as "we let villagers think forthemselves and act for themselves" resonated in almost every interview. A local public heath official in Red Village reiterated, "We are simply the mentors for them, we can give suggestions but we cannot decide for them, we do not have the right to say to the villagers that they have to do this or do that".

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[33] Four of them have to be representatives from the four main ministries (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Public Health) and the rest can be officials working permanently the locality.

[34] "Phi-liang" is the word used in Thai intended to mean that the district officials are not the "doers" but rather the "advisers" or "mentor" in this project

[35] District officer also do not have a stake or control of project funds as money is transferred directly into the village bank account and can be withdrawn only by members of the village committee.

Notwithstanding these sincere attempts and seemingly little agency to be exercised by district officials, their presence as "mentors" or "facilitators" nevertheless had profound impact in shaping the tokenistic form of participation in the village forums. There are two ways in which district officials have impacted the form of participation; the first concerns the way in which they have endorsed the rule of majority wins in the forum. The second questions their capacities to actually bring about genuine participation.

6.3.2 District Officials and their hidden power to determine the ground rules

Although district officials claim that they did not interfere directly in the decision-making course, they were nevertheless the ones responsible for laying the ground rules and procedures to be used in the participatory process. As mentioned earlier on, especially in Red Village, the rule of majority wins adopted in the forum by district officials did little to enhance the bargaining power of the marginalized sections of the village.

As there are no specific rules stipulated of how to conduct village forums, district officials (especially the community development official) had at their disposal the authority to recommend other techniques or rules of decision making that would be more inclusive of minority groups. Indeed, during the interviews many district officials, admitted to the disempowering technique used in the forum that favors the majority at the expense of further marginalizing minority groups in the village. Worryingly however, most of them especially those working in the Red Village justified using this procedure because majority wins is a "normality" that "happens everywhere and not just in Thailand" and because the marginalized villages are merely in the "minority" (interview, TAO Permanent secretary). To make matters worse, this rationale coexisted oddly with an awareness of typical village politics and lobbying by influential leaders. Yet, they did little to circumvent this predicament. What they could have done was to conduct an investigation into the needs of the different groups in the village before holding the village forum. In this way, they would be able to negotiate with the local elites, instead of leaving all the decision-making power in the hand of the

"majority" (expert interview, Pengmuan). However, in the Red Village, district officials had not made any preliminary enquiries into the needs of the villagers at all and the final outcome was conceived very quickly, after just one village forum was conducted (focus group interview 1).

In sum, the least that district officials in Red Village could have done in the forums, which they failed to do, was to adopt different procedures of decision-making so as to enable the forums to be more responsive to smaller and marginalized groups as well. Their failure to do so is indicative of the little importance given to the actual participatory process that should have enhanced the bargaining power of marginalized groups vis-à-vis the dominant one. Furthermore, as district officials themselves sanction the decisions taken in the forum, it becomes difficult for villagers to file complaints thus making it even harder to challenge dominant power structures in their village. At the end of the day, what was seen as a bottom-up initiative had in truth been conceived within a tight framework laid down by district officials from above.

The conduct of officials in Green Village was slightly better but nevertheless not adequate or conducive for genuine participation either. Having a reputation to uphold, there was greater effort on the part of district officials to make sure that minority groups (especially the Malay Muslims) gained from the material benefits of participation. Therefore, the Malay Muslim minority here was saved from the marginalizing effect of the rule of majority wins. Criticizing the actions of local leaders, the district permanent secretary said, "We have to really push them [the village headmen and the VC] to conduct the village forum and to really make sure that everyone is informed about it not just the Buddhist villagers. If left to the village headmen alone then there are bound to be problems with communication or less of it…if district officials are not supervising the village committee the village would be met with a catastrophic end". However, despite these seemingly sincere attempts the team had been too focused on the "end results" of the forums without paying enough attention to the process of participation itself (interview, CD official). Although the final outcome of the forums is likely to benefit the villagers (because district officials are making sure it does), little has been done to actually enhance "citizen power" or the power of average villagers to determine the outcome of the forum (interview, community development official). In other words, district officials were ensuring "good

authoritarianism", whereby the redistribution of decision-making power to the average villagers does not occur but they still benefit from decisions taken by the power holders. In this case, if one focused on the joint benefits, then the participatory initiative could be at the rung of partnership or citizen control. However, from the stance that this thesis has taken that power over decision-making is held to be integral for genuine participation, these participatory forums are still considered to be at the lower rungs of Arnstein's ladder.

6.3.3 Agency of district officials: Inadequate facilitators of participation

The second aspect concerning the agency of district officials in shaping participation revolves around more fundamental notions of whether they are the "right" people with the "capacity" to facilitate participation at all. Pengmuan, having taught many provincial and district officials, also explained that often state officials attend workshops on participatory methods one after another; they know participatory techniques in theory but are not able to put them into action because of less practical experience in this field (expert interview). Wanphet reiterated this point, and expressed concerns that the participatory processes currently implemented in State development projects are not on the right track. In her words "The process that lets the local people think and act for themselves is a good initiative, however, the tool that is being used needs people who are knowledgeable, understanding and earnest in their work…But the reality is that, district permanent secretaries who head the teams are not knowledgeable in using participatory methods because they have always worked in a system of command and instruction...therefore, their way of doing things is to send down commands in a descending order, from the district officers to the sub-district headmen, then to village headmen from where the order goes down to the village committee". In addition, she also argued that there are NGOs in the region who have extensive knowledge about participatory methods than the bureaucrats, but they have not been included in this team (of facilitators) at all (expert interview).

Another reason why state officials may not be suitable as facilitators of genuine participatory initiatives is because they tend to work in very tight time frames (expert interview, Wanphet) and because of the work load they already have from their own respective divisions (interview, Non-formal education official in Red Village). Indeed, expert informant Rodloi the senior deputy district officer admitted that participatory forums are still conducted despite the fact that very few villages participate because work "needs to get done". He said "we still have to go forward because the provincial officers will say to us you *have to get it, you have to get it done*…we have a time limit, a time frame to work within, so for this reason the local officials have to quickly accept whatever happens [even if they know that the outcome has not been determined by average villagers at all]". The village forums thus have become merely empty shells, to simply prove to the central government that "something" is being done and that the locals are "participating". Genuine participation that aims to involve people in something from which they have previously been excluded and to spread the material and social benefits of their inclusion is a very time taking process, thus if officials have limited capacity and time then their involvement in the participatory initiative will not be as envisaged.

6.3.4 Conception of the "uneducated" villager and control over access to information

The words "villagers are villagers, they do not know anything much" resonated many times during the interviews with district officials and local leaders in both villages. A similar assumption made by villagers, who often perceive themselves as subordinate and thus refrain from taking action in village forums, underlies the rationale behind these words, which enables local leaders to sweepingly justify the exclusion of average villagers from joint planning and decision-making in the forum. Based on the reason that villagers are "uneducated" and do not possess the "necessarily qualities" to make the "right" and "well informed" suggestions, it is then the village headmen and district officials who "know more" and thus can monopolize planning and decision-making in the forums in the common interest of the community. This inevitably obstructs redistribution of power and entrenches existing patterns of control in the village. Most importantly, what is insidious about this rationale is that those who have articulated it are themselves not entirely aware of the impact it has on further marginalizing villagers from genuine participatory processes.

For instance, the community development official in Green Village admitted that the village committee is the real impetus behind things in the village and not the villagers. As she puts it "But with what do you expect the villagers to drive change? First of all, they don't even have the knowledge necessary, they are educated only till fourth or sixth grade…and even at the level of language it is already difficult for us to communicate with each other". Similarly, the village headmen disclosed that most of the time he had pre-determined the "choices" prior to the village forum with little input from average villagers. According to him this had to be done because most villagers present at forums are old and "cant really think" for themselves, especially the uneducated Malay Muslims[36]. In his words "If you expect them to think, I can guarantee nothing will be expressed…so we have to create dolls for them and then ask them to raise their hands if they agree. This would work out better but if you ask them to come together to suggest

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[36] As mentioned earlier on, most of the villagers who participated in the village forum in the Green village are elderly people either retired, work in their fields in village or are unemployed. The younger population has migrated elsewhere in search of better jobs leaving the older and very young behind in the village.

something, its impossible, even if you waited for three days nothing will come of it".

From the author's experience during the interviews with villagers it is understandable to a certain extent why the district officer and village headmen would think that way. Indeed, many of the villagers have little education making it difficult for them to comprehend complex information let alone think analytically and express coherent ideas in time for planning. However, this does not justify monopolizing the decision-making power in the forums by village headmen and the VC at the expense of removing average villagers from deliberation, planning and decision-making procedures altogether. In knowing these structural limitations, the forums should all the more become a place in which villagers can begin to learn, to think, analyze, deliberate, and decide together under the guidance of "those who know more". However, this has not been the case. And as power holders continue to justify the needs of pre-determined "choices" because villagers "have no ideas", all avenues for which average villagers can actually express their own views and set their own agendas outside the boundary of the choices given in the forum are virtually nonexistent. Inevitably, the village headmen and those in control further perpetuate their dominance in the locality.

Accounts given by villagers help to disprove the claims that the power holders need to pre-determine the choices for them because "they cannot think".To being with, for many Malay Muslim villagers the reason they had not been able to make suggestions at the forums is because they did not understand what was going on in the forum to begin with since the language employed was mostly Thai. Apart from this, some felt that they were unable to contribute anything to these forums because they lacked the necessary basic information and thus were not prepared for deliberation when the forums took place. Kada, a female Muslim villager from Red Village said that most of the time the villagers don't even know why they have been given the funds and what the projects are all about, let alone contribute ideas to the forums. She explained that the village leaders never explain or give any details about the projects and what the villagers are expected to do prior to the forums. In other words, with little access to information about their role and rights, the villager's capacity to partake in joint planning and decision-making in the forums with the leaders is curtailed.

Similarly, some villagers in Green Village did not like to take part in the forums because they have never been informed enough about the issue to be able to make any suggestions and thus end up only as puppets in the forums (interview, Pornchai). As Pornchai, a retired state official puts it "They just invite us informally, but if we attend the forums then we think what can we suggest to them? What contributions can we make?...but if there is no information given on that [the details of the project] at all prior to the forums why should we attend?...to simply sit and listen and raise our hands? And then leave just like that?...Most of the time this is what happens in the village forums…we don't have the information but they [the village committee and leader] do…and they have already made their choice and the villagers can't do much but accept it..". He also expressed concerns that those who are "in charge" of the village do not like educated people to join the forums because "they know a lot" and this would make it difficult for the leader to unilaterally exercise decision-making power. Bunsong, another villager also explained that he also felt that leaders did not really want him to participate at the forums because he would "talk too much and would make things difficult for them".

These articulations indicated that average villagers being unaware of their minimum rights, responsibilities, and the options available to them under the project are automatically disadvantaged vis-à-vis those who are aware (power holders and their cliques). Power holders limit the influence of average villagers by controlling who gets to know what and thus whose ideas actually get to the decision-making table. In a nutshell, controlling access to information then becomes a hidden tool whereby local elites, especially the VC and the village headmen maintain their dominance in the village.

6.4 Invisible Mechanisms of Power

6.4.1 Internationalized social norms and mannerisms in a hierarchical society

In addition to the above-mentioned visible manifestations of *power over*, the more decentralized and invisible mechanisms of power are also at play in shaping tokenistic forms of participation in the two villages. VeneKlasen and Millers articulated that invisible power is the most difficult form of power to discern and contentious to deal with, as it is often embedded in societies (2007:49). Invisible dimension of power internalized as societal norms, traditions and customs influence how individuals think about their place in the world, shapes their beliefs, sense of self, and also acceptance of their status within that society.

As the notion of participation is grounded in Western conceptions of democracy, individualism, equality, freedom of thought and expression, the extent to which it can transpire in an authoritarian and hierarchical society with strict social stratification such as Thailand is somewhat contentious. A theme that often emerged during the interviews was how certain aspects of Thai customs and mannerism play a part in determining the form of participation; specifically the capacity of average villagers to openly express their individual ideas and to question those of the power holders.

The Captain of an infantry regiment task force and a member of the district official team in Green Village, articulated that in most of the village forums he attended, villagers tended to be rather quiet and were not very active in voicing their opinions especially when it came to disagreeing with district officials and local leaders. He pointed out an aspect of Thai mannerism that could be the latent cause of such behaviors. A mannerism commonly taught in Thai society *"phu- noi thong kow rub phu-yai"* urges that the one who is "smaller" should respect and hold the one "bigger" in high regard. Pu-yai denotes someone who is considered high up in the hierarchy of social relations such as leaders, teachers, parents, the elderly, and the powerful and famous. The captain argued that

villagers often perceive themselves as the phu-noi should not   and do not argue or contest with the phu-yai because the latter "know more" and "have higher social status". This inevitably cultivates a sense of awe, fear and also susceptibility to follow in the footsteps of the phu-yai without the courage to question their culturally sanctioned authority. Key informant, Wanphet concurs with the above. As she puts it "…the one thing we have to admit is that, in the very foundation of our society we have always been taught to believe in your leaders, this kind of thinking spans over other aspects of life too and when it comes to expressing our ideas we don't have the courage to do so".

Indeed, many of the villagers interviewed in Green village, especially Buddhists said that they had never suggested anything contradictory to the village headman in the forums and often merely followed his lead. Busaba, a female Buddhist villager said, "the villagers in these village forums usually follow what the village headman says… if they don't agree they just sit still, those who agree will raise their hands and then others will also raise their hands. The four or five who don't agree just sit still like each other…no one has the guts to say anything most of the time". Similarly, Yai Nim a 65 year old villager proudly said "…I always listen to them [the authorities and the village head] and when they tell me to raise my hand I also raise my hand and when they tell me to put it down I put it down". The tone of her voice suggested that she was certain that what she had done was righteous and indeed expected of her.

In addition to the above, a local health care official monitoring the QVP in Green Village articulated the notion of *"kraeng-jai"* as yet another characteristic of Thai mannerism that contributes to low levels of villager involvement in village forums. Kraeng-jai is at best translated into English as the deference towards and consideration of another person deemed higher up in the social hierarchy, at the expense of sometimes muting one's own desires. It also implies the reluctance to impose one's issues on another out of respect but also out of fear of disturbing their private space. Indeed, an interview with Bunsong, an elderly former college teacher proved that the notion of kraeng-jai had indeed influenced him in not voicing his opinions in the forums. Mentioning that although he had questions to ask and many suggestions to make in the forums, especially about combating drug addiction, he had never done so for "fear of wasting the time of district officials and village headmen who have other things to

do".

The above findings are indicative of two things. Firstly, that there are indeed invisible mechanisms of power internalized as norms and mannerisms in Thai society that psychologically limited villager's freedom of expression in the face of an authority figure, which is the first step needed for any redistribution of power to take place in the village. Secondly, participatory initiatives (such as those happening in the QVP) that rely on the verbal contributions of villagers in front of their "superiors" will be a meaningless endeavor in their current manifestations, as they are blinded to the social and cultural context, which constrain participant's actions, making them susceptible to self-censorship. Ultimately, envisaged freely expressive participants become non-participants and the whole purpose of a participatory forum is then defeated. Using another procedure to articulate the needs of the villagers, i.e. writing them down on paper instead of verbally expressing them out-loud would be a more beneficial method (interview, Pengmuan).

It should be mentioned that the impact of these mannerisms was more pronounced amongst Buddhist villages in Green Village and less amongst Malay Muslim villagers in the Red Village as the latter do not hold their village-headmen with such deference.

In conclusion, this section has narrated the findings for the second research question. The agency of local leaders and district officials, rule of majority wins, lack of access to information, and subtle mannerisms in Thai society have contributed to shaping the tokenistic forms of participation in the two villages.

CHAPTER VII:
Concluding Remarks

The current government of Thailand pledged to use development aid rather than aggressive security measures to tackle the escalating insurgency in the three southern border provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. Since then a grandiose 63 billion baht "Special Development Plan for the Five Southern Border Provinces" has come into effect, manifesting as innumerable "development" projects on the ground. Most importantly the State has also emphasized the incorporation of *public participation* throughout the planning and implementation stages of the projects, recognizing that these "transparent", "responsive" and "cooperative" procedures are integral for successful and sustainable development in the region (expert interview, Veerachit).

In light of the above, this qualitative study has endeavored to investigate into how this rhetoric of participation has manifested in practice given the reality that it will be carried out under a centralized and hierarchical administrative structure. The aim of this thesis was to determine the form of participation that has transpired and the power dynamics at play in shaping it given scholarly suggestions that participation can occur in various forms; from the most tokenistic in which the status quo is maintained without citizens gaining access to decision-making power vis-à-vis the traditional power holders, to those more genuine manifestations whereby citizens assume greater control over the decision-making power. Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969), which characterized the different forms of participation and VeneKlasen& Miller's (2007) articulations of three dimensions of power, provided the analytical frameworks for investigation. The subject matter of analysis was the "participatory village forums" conducted in two different villages in Pattani, as part of a requirement of an SBPAC project known as "The Development Project to Improve the Quality of life of the Villagers in the Southern Border Provinces (QVP)". It was anticipated at the onset of this research that two drastically different forms of participation would be discerned. However, empirical findings proved unexpected.

Findings from both villages revealed that the form of participation that has manifested in both villages were largely tokenistic and could be classified as belonging to the *placation* rung of Arnstein's participation ladder or lower. Villagers were "allowed" to voice their interests and needs, but it was the local elites (the power-holders) who retained authority to determine the legitimacy of the proposed needs and thus the real decision-making power. Villagers merely "participated" in a ritual of rubberstamping or voting for pre-determine decisions and in effect exercised little agency in determining the outcome of the "participatory" village forums. In other words, there was no redistribution of power to average villagers and ultimate decision-making power concentrated in the hands of local leaders and district officials (the traditional power wielding mechanism of the centralized and hierarchical administrative structure of Thailand). As Maj. Gen Khunsong articulated that there is essentially no "grassroots participation" in the Deep South. What is happening now, he said "is just a way of putting things extravagantly but it is all simply about creating a façade…an false image… an act…and it has been like this for every generation" (expert interview).

Another endeavor of this study has also been to analyze the mechanisms of power that pervade these participatory spaces, which inevitably contributed to its tokenistic form. Here, VeneKlasen& Miller's (2007) models of political power (visible, hidden and invisible) were employed as the analytical framework.

Empirical evidence revealed that the most visible mechanism of power that shaped the tokenistic form of participation was the village committee; especially its leader, the village headmen who monopolized decision-making in the participatory forums. In order to counter balance unilateral exercise of power by the traditional village head (whilst keeping his position intact), the State introduced a new de jure mechanism with four leaders (See Saow Luk) to work alongside the VC. These new leaders, however, took on nominal roles in the forum failing to curb unilateral power of the village headmen over decision-making. This failure illustrates how broader centralized administrative structure of the Thai State bares influence on the tokenistic form of participation, even at the

micro level. Corrections lie perhaps in empowering the existing de jure TAO[37] being rather than creating a new de facto mechanism that would not be sustainable (expert interview, Jitpiromsri).

The second visible manifestation of power that prevented participatory forums from being more inclusive is the rule of majority wins that is "accepted" as "fair", but which in effect clearly serves the interest of the one dominant group in the village at the expense of the minorities. By using "majority wins" to justify their actions, participation becomes a tool whereby the local leader further maintains dominance over resources flooding into the region. The outcome of voting also makes it more difficult to bring power holders to account for their failures. Responsibility for projects that fail is automatically displaced on to the "majority" who "sanctioned" the go ahead for the project, rather than on to the power holders who masterminded the creation of the project itself. To enhance genuine participation, the State must ensure that another decision-making procedure is used. If not, current activities in participatory forums may exacerbate existing tensions in restive villages, as different groups within the village will try to levy control over incoming resources.

Closely tied to the above point is the issue concerning the hidden power that manifests in the agency of district officials "the facilitators" of the forums. District officials whom at face value seemed to exercised little agency, were in truth responsible for shaping the perfunctory activities in the village forum. By implanting the rule of majority wins and voting procedures of decision-making they had already pre-determined whose issues (the "majority's") would get addressed and what will actually get to the decision-making table (albeit unintentionally). In addition, officials also lacked the technical knowledge and capacity to facilitate genuine participatory processes. Thus, if the government is sincere about participatory initiatives they should ensure that other factions of the civil society like NGOs are included facilitating the initiative.

Another hidden power ploy enabling power holders to dominate village forums is the underlying rationale that villagers are "uneducated [and] cannot think" for themselves, thus it is acceptable for those who "know more" to pre-determine the "choices" for the villagers to choose from. While it is true that

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[37] The State at present distrusts the TAOs, especially its leaders (Nayok) for being sympathetic to the militants thus it has chosen to bypass this existing democratic unit of administration.

villagers are not accustomed to thinking critically about complex issues and have difficulty articulating, it does not justify power holder's monopoly over planning and decision-making in participatory forums. Moreover, the real reason that made it seem as though villagers were not able to think in the forums is because they lacked access to basic information that would make them aware of their responsibilities and options available in the project to deliberate. In other words, by controlling access to information or controlling who gets to know what, local elites are able to curtail the influence of the participants in the forums to their advantage. To solve this, a change in the way information about the project is disseminated is needed, perhaps as formal leaflets sent to every household instead of just passing the information by word as has been practiced.

The last mechanism of power preventing genuine participation that is decentralized, *invisible* and most difficult to address is the customs and mannerisms embedded within Thai society itself. Certain customs like *"phu-noi tong kaow rob phu-yai"* (the one smaller should respect the one bigger) and *"kraengjai"* (deference towards another of higher status) internalized by the villagers through their upbringing conserves their actions towards the power-holders merely as the "subordinate" ones who cannot and dare not challenge the authority of the "superior". Thus, there is no guarantee that participation will become anymore inclusive even if a different strategy to deal with the visible mechanisms of power are adopted as long as these mannerisms embedded in Thai society are not addressed along with it. In the long run addressing this may even mean having to review Thai education policies to encourage more individual and critical thinking.

Although average villagers exercised little agency in shaping the outcome of the QVP project, accounts given by villagers nevertheless suggested that they were not always passive subjects to be taken advantage of either. Indeed, some villagers, showed brave resistance to domination by choosing not to participate in the forums at all. Moreover, as Hirsch suggest the fact that they had to be "forced" or "recruited" to attend already indicates at the very least a resistance of consciousness, if not action (1990:194).

This concluding section has summarized the aims and findings of this research and made preliminary suggestions as to how genuine participation might be enhanced. Informing the villagers and allowing them to voice their interests is

no doubt and important step for genuine participation and good governance. As some villagers said they would still prefer having these forums instead of nothing at all. However, as illustrated in this thesis, if these procedures are not combined with other modes of participation especially decision-making powers of the villagers, then participation remains just a shame, a window dressing ritual (Arnstein 1969: 220).

That said, if the state is really sincere about good governance and giving local population more control over their lives then it has to ensure that these shortcomings are addressed. The problems in the South are pressing concerns and the government must concentrate efforts on finding a way to undertake serious policy initiatives despite being hampered by political deadlock in Bangkok.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEWS

Key informants: Academics and experts

Major General ChamlongKhunsong (March 24, 2010)
Deputy Commander of the Southern Civilian-Police-Military Task Force
4th Army Region Assistant Commander (4th Army Region is responsible for the entire region of Southern Thailand)

Narong Wunsiew (April 4, 2010)
High-ranking government official
Director of the Special Affairs Division, Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC)

Veerachit Choymunkong (April 5 and April 7, 2010)
Government official, Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC)
Director, The Development Project to Improve the Quality of life of the Villagers in the Southern Border Provinces (QVP)

Somdej Rodloi (April 23, 2010) (this is his supposed name)
Senior Deputy District Officer
Supervises a number of district permanent secretaries in the district in which the Red Village is located.

Srisompob Jitpiromrsi (April 19, 2010)
Professor of Political Science, Prince of Songkla Univeristy, Pattani .
Extensively published writings on the conflict in the Deep South, one of which featured in Duncan McCargo's book "Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence" and co-authored a journal article in 2008 with McCargo titled "A Ministry for the South: New Governance Proposals for Thailand's Southern Region".
Adviser to the Research and Evaluation Team that assessed The Development Project to Improve the Quality of life of the Villagers in the Southern Border Provinces (QVP) in 2008.

Kornvibha Wanphet (April, 2010)
Civil servant, Non-Formal Education
Supervises a number of non-formal education teachers (who are also civil servants)
Activist, with considerable experience in the field in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat.
Has trained a number of district officials for the QVP.

SananPengmuan (April 20, 2010)
Lecturer in Community Development Education (CDE), Prince of SongklaUniveristy, Pattani.
Has considerable experience in using participatory methods for rural development.

Interviews at Red Village

District Officials from Red Village (April 22-24)
Permanent Secretary of theTAO
Official at Local Sanitation Unit
Community Development official
Head ofTAO
Non-Formal education official

Villagers including local leaders (April 17-22, 2010)
Focus group with six Malay Muslim villagers (April 17, 2010)
Focus group with five Buddhist villagers (April 22, 2010)
Personal interviews with two Muslim Villager
Village headmen
Imam
Natural Leader

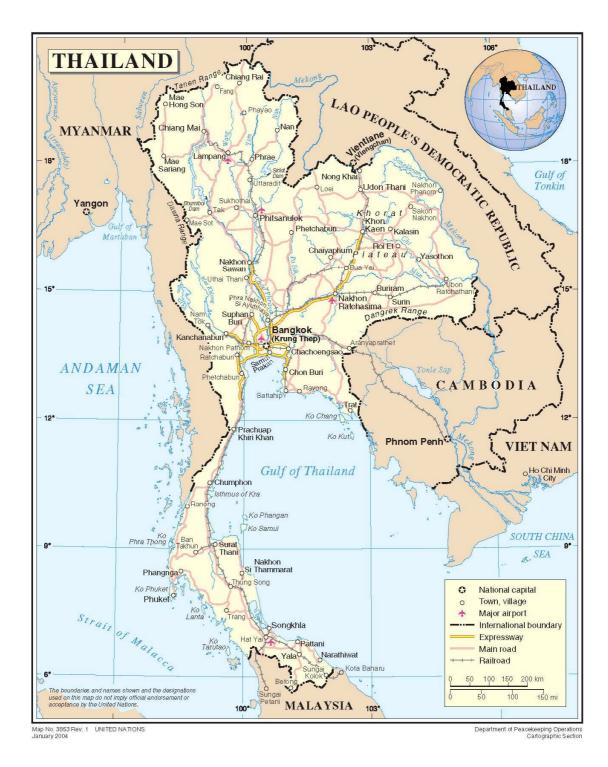# Interviews at Green Village

District Officials from Green Village
District Permanent Secretary
Community Development Official
Captain of the Infantry Regiment Task Force
Heath Official
Local School Headmaster

Villagers including local leaders (April 25 - May 2, 2010)
Personal interviews with ten villagers (four Malay Muslims and five Buddhists)
Village headmen
Imam
Monk

APPENDIX B

MAP OF THAILAND

Source: "SOUTHERN THAILAND: MOVING TOWARDS POLITICAL SOLUTIONS?", 2009. Asia Report N°181. 8 December

APPENDIX C

MAP OF THE 5 SOUTHERN PROVINCES

Source: Melvin, N. J., 2007. "Conflict in Southern ThailandIslamism, Violence and   the Statein the Patani Insurgency".SIPRI Policy Paper   No20.

APPENDIX D

MAP OF THAILAND'S THE 3 SOUTHERNBORDER PROVINCES

Source: "SOUTHERN THAILAND: MOVING TOWARDS POLITICAL SOLUTIONS?", 2009. Asia Report N°181. 8 December.

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR VILLAGERS

(Make an introduction, ask them about their lives, tell them why you are here and ask if its ok to record their voices, assure confidentiality, assure no right or wrong answers)

1. Have you heard about the QVP project?
2. How did you hear about it?
3. Did you take part in the village forum?
4. From what you can recollect, could you tell me what happened during the village forum?
5. Who came to the forum? How many people?
6. Who was talking in the forum? (Who spoke most? What did they say?)
7. What did you do in the forum? Did you say anything? What did you say?
8. If you wanted to say something, will you say it in the forum? (why, why not?)
9. Did other people say anything? What did they say?
10. How did you go to take part? Who told you? Who else came from your family?
11. How often do you go to the forums?
12. Why did you go?
13. After attending the forum, what did you gain? (objects, ability to see, to know, etc)
14. After attending the forum, what did you feel? (e.g. happy, proud, no feeling, etc)
15. After attending the forum, do you keep track of when the results will come?
16. When the result comes, do you feel you own it? or does it belong to government?
17. If you did not go, what will happen?
18. If compare with other project that does not have village forum, which is better? and why is it better? (or it is the same)
19. Are you happy with the decision from the forum?

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR VILLAGE LEADERS

(Make an introduction, tell them why you are here and ask if its ok to record their voices, assure confidentiality, assure no right or wrong answers, ask about the general information of the village, population, jobs, etc.)

1. Could you please tell me about the origins of QVP project in your village?
2. Who is part of the village committee, how were they selected?
3. What did the forum decide to do with the fund?
4. What is your role in the forum?
5. In your view how is the participation of local people important?
6. What are the methods employed to let people know about the project and the village forum?
7. Who comes to the forum? How many?
8. What do you expect from this project?
9. What are the advantages of this project?
10. What are the weakness/limitations of this project?
11. What do you think of the 4 leaders concept? How has it helped in the project?
12. What obstacles did you come across when trying to carry out this project?
13. Were there any problems when villagers are brought together to participate?
14. Apart from the forum, are villagers involved in other parts of the project? (If so what, and if not why?)
15. After participating in the forum what do you think the villagers gained?
16. After the village forum ends how do you feel?
17. What do you think you gained?
18. If compare with other project that does not have village forum, which is better? and why is it better?

APPENDIX G

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LOCAL STATE OFFICIALS

(Make an introduction, tell them why you are here and ask if its ok to record their voices, assure confidentiality, about the general information of the village, population, jobs, etc.)

1. In the context of your work, what are the aims of local participation?
2. How is participation of villagers important in this project?
3. What are the methods employed to let people know about the project and the forum?
4. Who comes to take part in the forum?
5. Why do you think they will come or not come?
6. What implications will the forum have on the lives of the villagers? (short term or long term)
7. What do you think the villagers will gain from the village forum?
8. At which point in the project do villagers participate?
9. What is optimum participation?
10. At which stage of the project do you think villager should participate in for optimum participation? Why?
11. What are the weaknesses/limitation of this project?
12. What difficulties do you encounter during the forum?
13. Has the conflict/violence affected your efforts to conduct the forum? If so, how?
14. What are the benefits of having the four leaders?
15. What are the weaknesses of having the four leaders?
16. To what extent do you think this project reflects the needs of the villagers?

APPENDIX H

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR KEY INFORMANTS

1. General Information of informants
   1.1 Name
   1.2 Occupation
   1.3 Background information

2. Why would the government support participatory initiatives in development projects?
3. What are the advantages of this project?
4. What are the limitations/weaknesses of this project?
5. What are the advantages of participation of local people in this project?
6. What are the limitation/weaknesses of the participation of local people in this project?
7. Do you think particular cultural traits of this region can influence the outcome of participation?
8. In your opinion, what is to be done, if one wants to strengthen the village, and to see that villagers are able to stand on their own feet?
9. What do you think optimum participation?
10. At which stage of the project do you think villager should participate in for optimum participation? Why?
11. Will the participatory initiative have any short term or long term implications of their lives?
12. What do you think the villagers will gain from this initiative?
13. To what extents can the kind of participation of local people that is happening now lead to a redistribution of power relations in their village?

Executive Summary

Genuine forms of participation of the local people are integral to the success of government development projects implemented to curtail escalating insurgency against the State in the restive southern borders provinces of Thailand.

Although little is known about it by the outside world, the southern border provinces of Thailand; Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat has witnessed sporadic eruptions of violence against the Thai State for a century, ever since they were incorporated into the Siamese Kingdom in 1909. The latest phase of violence erupted in 2004 and has claimed more than 3,900 lives since then. The root causes of the violence are complex. Observers point to mix of causal factors such as history, ethnic identity, religion whereby Malay Muslims in the region have never been properly incorporated culturally or psychologically into the predominantly Buddhist Thailand. Others point to problems stemming from criminal networks, internal rifts between the army and the police, failure of the successive assimilation policies and poor governance, to problems of poverty and socio-economic disparity. While these articulations are no doubt valid, this thesis maintains that the root causes of the conflict are largely political, stemming from problems of a centralized state bureaucracy and the subsequent "disembeddeness", poor governance and lack of participation of the local population that in turn feeds local grievances (Mahakanjana 2006; Duncan McCargo 2008).

Soon after coming into office, the current Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjejiva pledged to use development aid to tackle the escalating insurgency. Since then a grandiose 63 billion baht "Special Development Plan for the Five Southern Border Provinces" has come into effect, manifesting as innumerable "development" projects on the ground. Most importantly the State has also emphasized the incorporation of *public participation* throughout the planning and implementation stages of the projects, recognizing that these "transparent", "responsive" and "cooperative" procedures are integral for successful and sustainable development in the region (expert interview, Veerachit).

In light of the above, this qualitative study has endeavored to investigate into how this rhetoric of participation has manifested in practice given the reality that it will be carried out under a centralized and hierarchical administrative

structure of Thailand. Thus the aim of this thesis has been to determine the form of participation that has transpired and the power dynamics at play in shaping it given scholarly suggestions that participation can occur in various forms; from the most tokenistic in which the status quo is maintained without citizens gaining access to decision-making power vis-à-vis the traditional power holders, to those more genuine manifestations whereby citizens assume greater control over the decision-making power. To accomplish the purpose of this study two research questions were posed, as follows:

1. What is the form of participation in the development project?
   (In involves looking at how the space for participation was created, who took part, how they did so and why they chose to do or not to do so).

2. What are the mechanisms of power at play in shaping that form of participation and how to they challenge or maintain the status quo in the village?

   (Irrespective of the form of participation encountered, the latter question seeks to probe deeper into the power dynamics at play in shaping that specific form of participation and assessing its implications on the status quo in the village)

Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969), which characterized the different forms of participation and VeneKlasen& Miller's (2007) articulations of three dimensions of power, (visible, hidden and invisible) provided the analytical frameworks for investigation. In order to answer the research questions. The author undertook one month field study in Pattani to collect primary data for analysis. The methods of data collection were qualitative, including a *two-case* case study, focus group interviews, key informants interviews, and in dept interviews. The subject matter of analysis was the "participatory village forums" conducted in two different villages in Pattani, as part of a requirement of an SBPAC project known as "The Development Project to Improve the Quality of life of the Villagers in the Southern Border Provinces (QVP)". It was anticipated at the onset of this research that two drastically different forms of participation would be discerned. However, empirical findings proved unexpected.

Findings from both villages revealed that the form of participation that has manifested in both villages were largely tokenistic and could be classified as

belonging to the *placation* rung of Arnstein's participation ladder or lower. Villagers were "allowed" to voice their interests and needs, but it was the local elites (the power-holders) who retained authority to determine the legitimacy of the proposed needs and thus the real decision-making power. Villagers merely "participated" in a ritual of rubberstamping or voting for pre-determine decisions and in effect exercised little agency in determining the outcome of the "participatory" village forums. In other words, there was no redistribution of power to average villagers and ultimate decision-making power concentrated in the hands of local leaders and district officials (the traditional power wielding mechanism of the centralized and hierarchical administrative structure of Thailand).

Another endeavor of this study has also been to analyze the mechanisms of power that pervade these participatory spaces, which inevitably contributed to its tokenistic form. VeneKlasen& Miller's (2007) models of political power (visible, hidden and invisible) were employed as the analytical framework. Here empirical evidence revealed that the most visible mechanism of power that shaped the tokenistic form of participation was the village committee; especially its leader, the village headmen who monopolized decision-making in the participatory forums. In order to counter balance unilateral exercise of power by the traditional village head (whilst keeping his position intact), the State introduced a new de jure mechanism with four leaders (See Saow Luk) to work alongside the VC. These new leaders, however, took on nominal roles in the forum failing to curb unilateral power of the village headmen over decision-making. This failure illustrates how broader centralized administrative structure of the Thai State bares influence on the tokenistic form of participation, even at the micro level.

The second visible manifestation of power that prevented participatory forums from being more inclusive is the rule of majority wins that is "accepted" as "fair", but which in effect clearly serves the interest of the one dominant group in the village at the expense of the minorities. By using "majority wins" to justify their actions, participation becomes a tool whereby the local leader further maintains dominance over resources flooding into the region. The outcome of voting also makes it more difficult to bring power holders to account for their failures. Responsibility for projects that fail is automatically displaced on to the

"majority" who "sanctioned" the go ahead for the project, rather than on to the power holders who masterminded the creation of the project itself.

Closely tied to the above point is the issue concerning the hidden power that manifests in the agency of district officials "the facilitators" of the forums. District officials whom at face value seemed to exercised little agency, were in truth responsible for shaping the perfunctory activities in the village forum. By implanting the rule of majority wins and voting procedures of decision-making they had already pre-determined whose issues (the "majority's") would get addressed and what will actually get to the decision-making table (albeit unintentionally). In addition, officials also lacked the technical knowledge and capacity to facilitate genuine participatory processes.

Another hidden power ploy enabling power holders to dominate village forums is the underlying rationale that villagers are "uneducated [and] cannot think" for themselves, thus it is acceptable for those who "know more" to pre-determine the "choices" for the villagers to choose from. While it is true that villagers are not accustomed to thinking critically about complex issues and have difficulty articulating, it does not justify power holder's monopoly over planning and decision-making in participatory forums. Moreover, the real reason that made it seem as though villagers were not able to think in the forums is because they lacked access to basic information that would make them aware of their responsibilities and options available in the project to deliberate. In other words, by controlling access to information or controlling who gets to know what, local elites are able to curtail the influence of the participants in the forums to their advantage.

The last mechanism of power preventing genuine participation that is decentralized, *invisible* and most difficult to address is the customs and mannerisms embedded within Thai society itself. Certain customs like *"phu-noi tong kaow rob phu-yai"* (the one smaller should respect the one bigger) and *"kraengjai"* (deference towards another of higher status) internalized by the villagers through their upbringing conserves their actions towards the power-holders merely as the "subordinate" ones who cannot and dare not challenge the authority of the "superior". Thus, there is no guarantee that participation will become anymore inclusive even if a different strategy to deal with the visible mechanisms of power are adopted as long as these mannerisms embedded in Thai

society are not addressed along with it.

This section has summarized the aims and findings of this research and made preliminary suggestions as to how genuine participation might be enhanced. Informing the villagers and allowing them to voice their interests is no doubt and important step for genuine participation and good governance. As some villagers said they would still prefer having these forums instead of nothing at all. However, as illustrated in this thesis, if these procedures are not combined with other modes of participation especially decision-making powers of the villagers, then participation remains just a shame, a window dressing ritual (Arnstein 1969: 220).

That said, if the state is really sincere about good governance and giving local people more control over their lives then it has to ensure that these shortcomings are addressed. The problems in the South are pressing concerns and the government must concentrate efforts on findings a way to undertake serious policy initiatives despite being hampered by political deadlock in Bangkok.