

Constructed Identity and Community Self-Expression to Perceive Human Security; Case Study of Klity Village, Kanchanaburi Province, Thailand

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Abstract *The lead released from a mine in Klity village killed many people, especially children. Moreover, it destroyed the ways of lives of the community and damaged the environment severely. The voices of the marginal Klity villagers have not been heard for over 10 years. These voices of both physical and mental pain have finally led to the fight being heard and the faint voices have now been amplified and heard by both the public and the ears of justice. The objective of this study is to discover how this overlooked community will be able to reconstruct their identity and create community self-expression in the public realm. Documentary research, participant observation and interviews have been designed to collect data. The voice of Klity has never been heard until the media started to release news about Klity. This communication is meant to allow the society to perceive facts and feelings. Simultaneously, the community has had to struggle with structural power and mainstream cultures in order to receive recognition as humankind with human dignity as well as human security. The Klity case is the first environmental case in Thailand where the community has won a lawsuit against a powerful mine company and governmental organization, and this has raised public awareness about risk and social consciousness.*

Keywords: *Klity, lead mine, environmental risk, identity construction*

1. Introduction

The main purpose of the National Economic and Social Development Plan I (1961–1966) was to promote a better quality of life for the population of Thailand in terms of economy and material well-being. This resulted in the state creating a physical infrastructure, including building roads, electricity power plants and dams. The materials used for constructing these fundamental infrastructural features come from mining. From the initial ideologies of development came the beginning of the ideology to overcome nature. Mining has provided the nation's main domestic and international income with its products for export. This is the cause behind those who suffer from the existence of the mining industry, "the marginal, small portion of the people who have to sacrifice for the prosperity of the nation". Furthermore, a ruined environment as a result of the mining industry would be seen as something "inevitable". When the discourse about development emphasized economic prosperity rather than the sustainability of the environment and the security of human beings, environmental problems ensued. Ways of life, human rights and human dignity have become the silent problems amidst the blindfolded development.

Klity village is located in the area of the vast Thung Yai Naresuan forest; the villagers were living amidst happiness and sufficiency. The Klity creek is like the main artery for the Klity villagers in terms of food security: villagers catching shrimps and crabs for food as well as foraging for vegetables and herbs for side dishes, children swimming innocently in the water and cattle drinking water on the bank of the creek are the regular scene in the village. The Lead Concentrate Co. Ltd. in Kanchanaburi had released lead waste into the Klity creek and this resulted in dead fish, plants and herbs, and the villagers themselves suffered from illness caused by lead contamination. The fight for justice from the marginal Karen villagers was filled with pain and adversity. They needed to make the public see their existence to create social awareness and bring about a solution to the problem, yet the fighting to construct the identity that established the strength of the community was not easy and it was even more difficult than for Thai people due to their marginal existence, in terms of both geographical and social bias. Being Karen, they are limited by language and an identity hegemonic mainstream knowledge. Their initial publicized search for recognition started by appealing for justice in a court, appearing in the media, organizing exhibitions, putting on performances by children in the village, and attending various conferences and seminars. The actions of the villagers and the children challenged the hegemonic discourse which had economic success as the main goal of social and environmental concern. This new motivation was in accordance with the Human Development Report 2009 presented by the United Nations Development Programme regarding concepts of human security, which focuses on human rights, equal distribution of resources, a state of well-being and the environment. In

Thailand, the National Economic and Social Development Plan VII-XI (Issue numbers: seven from 1992 to 1996, eight from 1997 to 2001, nine from 2002 to 2006, ten from 2007 to 2012 and eleven from 2012 to 2016) was also updated as the critical-thinking mindset which reflects the changes in the essential core of thoughts, such as the change from centralization to decentralization, from the development that emphasizes the growth in economy to human-centred development and sufficiency economy. Meanwhile, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aim to create environmental sustainability by 2015 (the United Nations, 2008). Thus, the construction of an identity for a small village in Kanchanaburi is a great step towards social justice, the questioning of development discourse, and an awareness of environment and society as being parallel with the economy. Moreover, it is a lesson from which other villages and governmental sections can learn more about sustainable development.

2. Objectives

1. To study the construction of an identity for the marginal community that could publicize their existence to the public and society.
2. To study the route of the villagers' fight for justice from the past until present.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Marginal people

Marginal people are those without power, such as power in politics, society and the economy, and accessibility to resources. They are those who do not belong in the hegemonic group of the nation. Most people who belong to the hegemonic group will refer to them as 'the others', and sometimes the hegemonic group do not even see 'the others' as being visible (Yee, 2005). Moreover, development could also play a role in marginalizing the marginal people so that they become the marginal entities of the marginal people. The Karen villagers at Klity village are among those who also suffered from development, in this case in the form of mining. Although mining provided the main national income, its biggest impact on the villagers was its creation of pollution problems. The rules and regulations were ignored, and the Pollution Control Department did not try to solve the pollution problems until the issue reached crisis point. The mining company did not take responsibility or try to manage this problem by taking measures to control lead contamination in creek. The Klity village was forgotten because "the small few should sacrifice for the good of the nation" and "They are Karen, not genuine Thai". Pain was thus the silence amidst the loud cries of happiness due to the increasing gross domestic product. To amplify the silent voice so that it could be heard, it needed to be connected to a larger structure in society, which was the origin of the oppression that caused them to be marginal people (Mullaly, 2007). The fight for justice of the small group of Karen people required an identity to make their 'existence' visible in the society as a priority.

3.2 Building Space in the Context of Globalization

Globalization has destroyed the difference in the dimensions of time and space, making communication easier and faster, as well as making it different and more complicated. Identity is not something intrinsic but rather the attempt to name or define things for ourselves and for others. Social identity is the common identity of the members of a community or society (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). Constructing social identity occurs because of conditional being, belief, traditions and cultures that are identical. Moreover, it means having a common feeling as well. The Klity village needed to create space in the society to make people aware of their very existence and their story. Social construction of risk was essential in indicating that problems really existed and that the society was in danger from them. However, social construction of risk not only contains factual data but is also a matter of bias and distortion (Eiser, 2001). The other important thing is communication: communication will let the outsider perceive facts and feelings about a problem and help reduce bias and distortion as well as cultural bias. The media is the other factor in bridging a case from a small village to the acknowledgement of the public. Moreover, the media also helps the government to decide on a way to solve such issues (Nerb et al., 2001).

3.3 Mines: Environmental and Health Problems

3.3.1 Environmental problem

In the recent past, many areas have changed from fertile fields to polluted areas; for example, the Lead Concentrate Co.

Ltd., Kanchanaburi, released lead into the Klity creek, causing the death of fish, herbs and plants in and near the creek. The villagers suffered from illness from lead contamination as well. The marginal Karen villagers' fight for justice was filled with pain and adversity, not very different from the Ashio Copper Mine case in Japan, which was the very first and most important lesson for the Japanese government and public regarding the pollution from mining that affects the environment; the Mutsuki village had to suffer as it went from green fertile forest to bald mountain, from rich village to abandoned village and area. The mining industry created environmental pollution that severely affected health and the ways of life of the villagers. Poisonous sulphur dioxide gas, cyanide, leach residues, lead, cadmium and zinc contaminated the air, soil and water sources. The mountain was covered with sulphites that no living creatures could live with. The village that used to be situated in the abundant area was replaced by a polluted field. The environmental problem was confirmed in the research carried out by Eduardo Ferreira da Silva, who found that the gold mine in Castromil, which closed in 1940, still contains high levels of lead (Ferreira da Silva et al., 2004). Christopher J. Schmitt, who studied the contamination of the heavy metal in fishes, found enough evidence to conclude that the water near Missouri, United States of America, was contaminated with lead (Schmitt et al., 2007) This research is in accordance with the research conducted by Robert T. Angelo (Angelo et al., 2007) and James M. Czarnecki (1985), who studied water animals near the mines and found high levels of heavy metal contamination.

3.3.2 Health problem

Many researchers from Thailand and other countries talk about the negative impacts of mines on the health of the people in the villages near the mines, especially children, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers. The research conducted by Stephan Bose-O'Reilly (Bose-O'Reilly et al., 2008) found that children who live near the gold mines in Indonesia and Zimbabwe suffer from health problems caused by accumulated mercury. This is in accordance with the research carried out by Boreland (Boreland et al., 2009) which claims that the children in the Broken Hill community in Australia have high levels of lead in their blood. He speculates that this is due to the fact that the community is close to a mine. Margrit C. von Braun (von Braun et al., 2002) also supported this claim with research that studied the level of lead in the blood of people who live near mines in Russia, finding that preschool students have a higher risk of lead poisoning. The research by Stephan Bose-O'Reilly also discusses mercury contamination in mothers' milk, which will have a direct impact on their babies (Bose-O'Reilly et al., 2008). During the time when the Klity creek was really turbid, around 1995-2001, 29 children in the Klity village died (Banthaothuk, 2007).

3.4 Vulnerability

Vulnerability lies between a physical threat and the potential of humans to solve a problem (UNEP, 2003). Although humans face identical problems, their potential to solve these problems differs. In the case of vulnerability to toxic materials, it has been found that the villagers in the community possessed different levels of vulnerability depending on immunity, behaviour, the distance of their dwelling from the toxic source and economic status, etc. In the research conducted by Lorraine Halinka Malcoe et al. (Malcoe et al., 2002), it was found that poor children are more vulnerable to lead poisoning. Thus, if any community is prone to risk from either chemicals, pollution or natural disaster, all parties should consider the vulnerability issue among individuals, because in considering the risk from the total picture without taking other factors such as gender, economical status, poverty level, independent level etc. into consideration, it is impossible to truly solve the very core of the problem. Moreover, human security might occur temporarily without sustainability. Any study into a community's vulnerability to risk needs to be a multidisciplinary one because reducing the chance of risk cannot be done singularly. For example, the Klity village suffered from lead contamination in the creek because the creek was the most important source of nutrition, ways of life and cultures for the members of the village; hence, solving the problem of lead contamination in terms of physical features, health problems, poverty, problems in adapting to the new contaminated environment and other issues required knowledge and cooperation from the government sector, the public sector, civil society, the people's representatives and the media. The study must be carried out holistically: building interdisciplinary knowledge, cooperation from each organization's specialization and cooperative management are all needed to help solve the problem.

4. Methodology

This research employs the methods of collecting data by three research techniques included documentary analysis, interviewing and participant observation.

4.1 Research techniques

4.1.1 Documentary analysis

Research articles, archives, government publications, newspapers, television reports were employed as the primary technique of data collection.

4.1.2 Interviewing

The second technique was interviewing four groups, firstly, three community leaders, secondly, ten adult villagers, thirdly, ten young villagers in Klity village. The respondents were chosen by specific sampling. There were two main criteria for chosen the respondents which were experiences as well as involved with constructed identity and community self-expression. Last but not least, the interviewing also including six scholars; two specialize in law, two sociologists and two specialize in environment.

4.1.3 Participant observation

The research was employ participant observation in Klity village, Thong Pha Phum district, Kanchanaburi province. The data was collected between 2011 and 2012

4.2 Analysis

The analytical method used to analyse the data was that of descriptive analysis. The multiple methods was analysed, interpretation and translation into descriptive data.

5. The Result of the Study

5.1 *The unheard voice of the Klity villagers*

Klity village is a village of Karen ethnics, with about 82 houses and a population of 327. Farming has been the villagers' main occupation. Klity villagers lived in this area for many generations until the Lead Concentrate Co. Ltd. established a mineral processing plant in 1967. The mine did not have a good water management system and released its waste water into the Klity creek on a regular basis until 1975 when fish started to die of an unknown cause. The ways of life of the community still persisted and pets and cattle continued to die. The villagers' health, especially that of the children and women, also deteriorated as time went by. The villagers started to perceive abnormalities and appealed to the Director General of the Pollution Control Department in 1998; however, the department did not take any immediate measures to prevent contamination and restore normality to the village. From the blood sample tests conducted by the Public Health Office of Kanchanaburi, it was found that the villagers had higher levels of lead than the standard level (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, 2008). This caused disability, both physical and mental, in children and adults, and between 1995 and 2001, 29 children died (Banthaothuk, 2007). In 1998 the mine was ordered by the government to be closed, yet the problem remained unsolved and the case was forgotten.

5.2 *When Klity Creek became indirectly killer*

The villagers were very concerned and distressed because they worried about their children and did not know what to do. Moreover, they were also greatly affected when the creek, which was the life and soul of the villagers, became, indirectly, their own killer. Some villagers were distressed because their animals died and they could no longer find enough money for their families; some families could only feed their children plain rice because they were not able to catch fish in the creek anymore. Since the water had become turbid and contaminated, the villagers could not use it for cooking, causing them to go further into debt because they needed to buy food from the outside vendors that came to sell food in the village. The villagers were very worried about illness and the limited availability of medication, as well as the expense and difficulty of travel.

5.3 Life before being publicized

The villagers were leading a simple life interconnected with the surrounding nature until the mine released lead-contaminated waste water into the creek; the villagers' way of life changed from that moment. The villagers tried to appeal for help from the government to restore the creek and heal the condition of those affected by both physical and financial problems, but the government did not take any action and seemed to ignore the villagers until the villagers felt belittled and worried. Moreover, the villagers were also marginalized geographically as the village is very far from the main town of Kanchanaburi; communication was rather difficult as the route to the village was a non-asphalt road – ordinary cars could not enter the village, only pickup trucks could. Furthermore, they were the marginal group in the society as Karen ethnics and people only saw them as outsiders finding shelter in Thailand who did not belong to the majority of Thai nationals, when they are actually Thai people of Karen race; they were also marginal people in terms of politics as they did not have the authority to manage resources or decide on and participate in the restoration of the creek. In addition, their voices were so quiet that the government could not hear. Lastly, they were also marginalized in terms of a hegemonic knowledge base; the villagers did not know their rights according to the law and human rights and this caused them to be exploited by the mine company and lack of important knowledge in legal regulations.

5.4 Step forward out of the small village to the public sphere

The villagers knew the common risk, and with this in mind they had to decide whether they would do nothing or fight. Their final decision led to their appeal to the court conducted by the community leader. The villagers also helped by being cooperative with the lawyers and the media. They started to talk with news reporters. Their first attempt to being publicized was in dialect and body language communication because some of the villagers could not speak Thai as they used the Karen language when communicating within the village. They started to learn Thai from the younger generations. The villagers started to observe and monitor the abnormality in the creek and the health of the people in the village. This could be described as the villagers' first step across their familiar environment towards the public to challenge governmental authority and the powerful mine company.

5.5 The Role of the media and the court jurisdiction

The media had a really significant role to play in bridging and reflecting the problem so that it became understood by the public. In 2000, the ITV channel reported on the Klity case six or seven times a day and other TV channels started to report on the case as well, but not as often as ITV. This could be considered as the village's public appearance in the hegemonic mainstream media and it resulted in more people being aware of and concerned about the Klity case. Environmental Litigation and Advocacy for the Wants cooperated with the Lawyers' Council in assisting the villagers to sue both the mining company and the Department of Pollution Control. The procedure of the lawsuit was rather difficult, especially in terms of the health impact: it was rather hard to prove. Doctors did not all agree on the medical results and they could not definitely confirm that the health problem was caused by lead contamination. If the result of an examination was not clear, then the villagers could not sue the company. The issues of complication and repetition of the laws by the department responsible for the case, and the lack of communication and cooperation between different sectors, hindered the court process and caused the different sectors to blame each other. Moreover, the court procedure was very slow, while the severely suffering patients could not wait until they won the case; some villagers died before the court came to its final verdict. Despite the struggle, the 13-year-long fight finally ended in victory.

Table 1 Table showing the jurisdiction procedure in the Klity case

1967	Establishment of the Lead Concentrate (Thailand) Co. Ltd.'s mineral processing plant
1989	The villagers start to get ill and die. The ecosystem around the creek is fatally damaged
1998	The suffering of the lower Klity villagers as a result of the mine is publicized in the media The Lead Concentrate (Thailand) Co. Ltd. is ordered to close
<i>Case 1</i>	8 Lower Klity villagers sue the Lead Concentrate (Thailand) Co. Ltd. at the court of Kanchanaburi for violating the National Environmental Quality Act B.E. 1992
2003	8 Lower Klity villagers sue the Lead Concentrate (Thailand) Co. Ltd. and ask for compensation
2006	The civil court orders the company to compensate 4,260,000 baht to the villagers (excluding interest); the company appeals to the appeal court
2008	The appeal court orders the 29,551,000 baht compensation to be paid to the villagers (excluding

	interest); right now the case is at the supreme court
<u>Case 2</u>	The Lower Klity villagers sue the Department of Pollution Control
2004	13 Lower Klity villagers sue the Department of Pollution Control at the central administrative court
2008	The central administrative court orders the Department of Pollution Control to compensate 743,226 baht to the villagers; at present the case is at the appeal court
<u>Case 3</u>	151 Lower Klity villagers ask for compensation from the Lead Concentrate (Thailand) Co. Ltd. at the court of Kanchanaburi
2007	151 Lower Klity villagers sue the company and ask for compensation
2010	The villagers win the case in the civil court; the court orders the company to compensate 35.8 million baht (excluding interest) to the villagers; the case is transferred to the appeal court
2012	The court orders the company to compensate 36 million baht (excluding interest) to the villagers; it is speculated that the company will appeal to the supreme court

The victory of this small village in their fight with the powerful mining company and the governmental section is a symbol of justice in society as well as encouragement and inspiration for other affected villages to continue to fight and strike for justice.

5.6 Publicity: public appearance

Adults

The villagers gave the information to news reporters and tried to exchange with and learn from the scholars, attorneys, charity groups and governmental section; they tried to make themselves known and created a social network. In creating the network, it was essential to enlarge the knowledge base, to build cooperation and to assist one another to cross the boundaries of knowledge, specialization and organization with integrity.

Youth

Young people also participated in helping their village. Their public appearance differed from the adults as they could not understand distant issues unrelated to them and their principles and thoughts. However, they possessed sincerity and innocence; the provincial organization, as well as volunteers such as the Dinsorsee Creative Group and alliances, organized activities which helped the society to understand the story of their village through plays and a short film about lead production from the children's perspective. Photographs and paintings created by the Klity children reflected their relation to nature and the injustice that occurred in the village. These expressions were exhibited and performed in the city centre in Kanchanaburi and in Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand, and they have been featured in short news items on television and radio channels.

5.7 Changes in the community

After the story of Klity village was publicized and the society got to know more about it, the community changed quite significantly. More people, including governmental sections, scholars and volunteers, came to the village. Initially, the villagers were happy to know that the society knew about their problems and they hoped that people would come and help them. Professors and students from many universities came to exchange knowledge and learn about their problems, and the scholars and the villagers started to see a wider and clearer range of methods to solve the problem. However, the data collectors who asked to collect research data, whether in terms of scientific or social studies, or those who asked to collect the blood samples to detect lead in the blood from the villagers, often disappeared and never got back to the village with the results. The villagers then started to develop a negative attitude towards the strangers coming to the village. Nevertheless, their attempts to get known by the public and their fight for justice, in tandem with the media pressure, helped urge the governmental section to come and assist in solving the problem by closing down the mine and finding ways to restore the creek.

5.8 Constructing human security

After the mine released waste water into the creek, the human security in Klity was very vulnerable in terms of living a life

prone to a risk of lead toxicity and illness, and being ignored by the state and the society. The value of being 'human' was dehumanized because of their Karen ethnicity. However, with their construction of a self-identity, they finally bridged the silent gap to the public and their voice was finally heard in the public sphere. The Lead Concentrate (Thailand) Co. Ltd. was ordered to close, the governmental officers and governmental organization were inspected and the villagers won the lawsuit. All this helped to improve the quality of the lives of the villagers and endowed them with hope. Although not all the problems were eliminated, with hope and the strength of the community, partnering networks that are always ready to assist them, and the media which is constantly reporting and motivating the feelings and awareness of the value of being "human", the perception of risk and creation of social consciousness, human security in Klity will not be beyond reach.

5.9 Future actions

The restoration of the creek has not been completed the lawsuit is not yet finished, and the villagers' fight still persists; however, the fight has already acquired more networks and has become stronger. The communities affected by the mine that learned the lessons from Klity village will become the new alliances, media and volunteers and will help as mediators in publicizing and reporting the adversity of the villagers while also monitoring the process of the governmental section in restoring the creek. Eventually, the development discourse that only emphasizes the economy and profit will be questioned as to whose benefit this is for.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

The research on constructed identity and community self-expression to perceive human security, case study of Klity village, Kanchanaburi Province, Thailand, aims to study the construction of a self-identity for the marginal community that succeeded in raising the awareness of the public about them, and to study the route to justice of the community from past to present by using the research methods of studying archives, interviewing the villagers and participant observation, and using descriptive analysis in analysing the case. The Klity villagers perceived a common risk, so they decided to publicize their story to the public. The villagers' construction of an identity made the society aware of their 'humanity' by exchanging knowledge with scholars, volunteer groups and a governmental section, and creating networks, while the youth also got to participate in activities such as filming a short movie, photographing, painting and being in a play which reflected their love for the village and their relation to nature, as well as injustice in society. The construction of an identity in the public sphere became the power in pressuring the governmental section to order the closure of the mine; the villagers won the lawsuit and their human security finally fell into place.

In order to construct a self-identity, strength and unity for the members of the community, be it children, adults, elders, men or women, they must all have a common conscience and awareness of the problem. When they perceive the problem, they must then decide to ignore or fight it, and if the villagers chose to fight for justice, they then need to accept adversity before they feel hopeless. Hopelessness will lead villagers to succumb to the problem and the social structure, the villagers will then be defeated by the development discourse which overlooked issues of environment and humanity, and finally the community will be shadowed by the cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 1992) and no longer possess enough energy to ask questions or to resist. Due to this, strength and common conscience are very important in the construction of identity and for challenging authority. Moreover, the partnering networks will be influential in amplifying the story of a small village so it is heard by the public. When the community is stronger and has alliances and the media to support them, the problem from a very small corner of the society will become the pressure that urges the government to hurriedly solve the problem; this is in accordance with the work of Josef Nerb (Nerb et al., 2001). Moreover, this case will help the public to perceive different dimensions regarding justice in society and gain awareness in solving environmental problems.

7. Recommendation

7.1 Recommendation regarding the strategy of national development

Society should question whether a strategy of development which emphasizes economy without considering other factors can reach sustainable development. All divisions – government, private sector and civil society – should learn about the pain and adversity of the pollution problem in Klity as well as the process of truly restoring physicality (environment, ways of life, well-being) and mentality, which are valueless but are defined by monetary compensation. It is also important to speculate whether the compensation for restoring and healing was worth the destruction of nature and ways of life that

would never be the same again. From this, the strategy for development might need to focus more on different and complicated dimensions; the sustainable development needs to arise from a balance between economy, society and environment.

7.2 Recommendation regarding future research

This research looked at the construction of an identity to fight for justice in a community motivated by both internal divisions and external networks. However, it does not explore risk in society. Future research might focus on how risk can be reduced once the identity and networks are built, and how this can help in creating justice both at the community and social levels. These questions still need to be answered.

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