

Citizen Science in a Democracy: The Case of Thai Baan Research

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Abstract

Over half a century of the power struggle between local communities and the state on environmental governance issues in Southeast Asia, the conception of data, knowledge, and science went through critical interpretation as more open framework of governance structures emerged in the majority of the countries. In Eurocentric view of education and political orders, the science is perceived to belong to official academic practices and believed to be taken as the ultimate authority in decision making processes of governmental institutions. This view of science considers local knowledge and tacit knowledge as inferior in decision making processes. The paper examines the case of Thai Baan research which counters the Eurocentric practice of science. In so doing, the paper explains how and why cooperative science conducted by local communities and citizens plays critical role in animating associational life in democracy and democratic decision making processes.

Keywords: Pak Mun Dam, Thai Baan research, democracy, development, citizen science

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CITIZEN SCIENCE IN A DEMOCRACY: THE CASE OF THAI BAAN RESEARCH

Introduction

As Thailand's sustained its economic growth began in the mid-1980s with the substantial double digit growth, the country's natural resources, especially forests, land, and water were common targets of the state development projects. These development projects, often shaped in the interests and in the name of the state rather than local populations, generated perhaps unintended inequalities between rural and urban populations (Saneh, 1983; Hirsch, 1990: 2). In the early 1990s, the rural population, whose livelihoods depend solely on the forest, land, and water resources, began to mobilize to protect their interests. Bruce Missingham (2003: 55), in his ethnographic study of highly debated development project, the Pak Mun Dam, with a focus on the rise of the rural and urban poor movement led by the Assembly of the Poor against state development projects in Thailand, observed:

The state, controlled by capitalists and high-ranking state officials, has promoted the hegemony of economic growth and industrial development to the exclusion of other social goals. Within this context, the rural and urban poor, who actually constitute the majority, have been excluded from the benefits of economic development

This rising inequality between rural and urban populations at the outset of the state development projects in early 1990s began to set off alarms among the rural population in Thailand whose foundation of livelihood systems was under increased pressure for urban

livelihood systems. In the 1990s, several NGOs especially representing rural poor—mostly farmers, fishermen, hill tribe ethnic groups, and urban slum dwellers—emerged as voices of the poor in Thailand (Baker, 2000: 5-11). The Pak Mun Dam project was one of those state development projects implemented at the reawaking era of rural voices in the 1990s.

In a larger context, three conditions facilitated and supported the re-emergence of rural voices: (1) the relaxation of the Cold War era repression against rural peasant voices in Thailand (Baker, 2000: 5); (2) the global trend and support for decentralization and localization of decision-making authority over natural resources as a way to protect globalization's pressure on rural communities; and (3) uneven distribution of benefits from development projects like Pak Mun Dam, which produces electrical power for mostly urban consumers and less for rural communities while extracting from forest, land, and water resources historically tied to rural community livelihood. Among these three conditions, the third condition was the most cited and reasoned one to justify the state development projects (AOP, 1995; Sulak, 2002: 47-49; Missingham, 2003: 54-57). Therefore, the foundation of the agitation of rural poor against state development projects is fundamentally the issue of inequality between rural and urban communities as a result of state development projects. This issue of inequality set off alarms and gave rural communities legitimate reasons to question the benefits of state development projects to their communities. The questioning from rural population eventually led to critical examination of how the decision making by using knowledge, data, and scientific research conventionally accepted by the development practices under the Thai state is democratic and how it endanger local people's voices in a democracy.

Among the major state-managed development projects , the Pak Mun Dam project became a symbol of power struggle between rural poor and state supported by urban population

and conventional elites. The Pak Mun Dam struggle led by project-affected villagers during the 14 years from 1989 to 2003 has passed through seven prime ministers and nine coalition governments including the 1991 military coup council, the National Peace Keeping Council (NPKC), and the NPKC appointed government. The villagers and members of the Assembly of the Poor (AOP) who led the Pak Mun Dam protests would rather describe their struggle as a struggle against the project managing agency, the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT), instead of a struggle against Thai governments or prime ministers. Because EGAT is a state-owned agency with relatively stable techno-bureaucratic leadership compared to those elected prime ministers and coalition governments, who come and go with the election cycle, villagers are correct in describing their struggle as one against EGAT in particular, but in a larger context, the Thai state.

From Protests on Streets to Conducting Self-Organized Research

There are three stages in the development of the Pak Mun Dam protests. The first stage is the emergence of the protests against the Pak Mun Dam by villagers. This is the stage where villagers defined their rationale and pronounced their policy disagreement with the Pak Mun Dam by protesting against the project. During this stage, actors against the dam emerged and forged their identity to press forward and influence the struggle. In this stage, protesters across Thailand organized the Assembly of the Poor (AOP) as a network of poor (and people who were sympathetic to the poor) who shared common grievances as a consequence of state development projects. Taking the Pak Mun Dam as the exemplary case for urban and rural poor against state development projects, the AOP began to influence the transformation of the rules of state in decision-making processes for development projects.

The second stage was the media war between the EGAT and protesters to gain media support and publicity in defending and defining their interests and perspectives. The second stage, therefore, involved both further nationalization of the cause as well as globalization or internationalization of the cause by lifting the profile of the Pak Mun Dam struggle to a global environmental movement. Pak Mun Dam protesters gained increased public sympathy and support as the media continued to report the plights of villagers having to leave their families and villages for cities in search of new jobs as they no longer were able to fish for a living. During this stage, protesters focused their struggle on defining their interests and defending their positions on Pak Mun Dam issues which became a symbolic case for the plight of the poor who suffered from the consequences of state development projects. AOP and its supporters took the publicity campaign of the Pak Mun Dam beyond the border of Thailand and internationalized their campaign by using NGO networks, the Internet, and other modern telecommunications. This stage eventually lifted the profile of the Pak Mun Dam from local and national layers to the international layer.

The third stage was the stage where actors intensified the knowledge battle for their interests and position. In the knowledge battle, actors supporting the Pak Mun villagers' plight and EGAT's unwavering stand for the dam sharpened their perspectives to push further for the fate of the Pak Mun Dam on whether to decommission it or to keep it as an intended state development project. The knowledge battle was the level of reconfirming and supporting actors' interests, perspectives, and positions taken during the previous two stages. In the third stage, intellectual debate, policy evaluation, and appraisal for both sides were conducted in order to push further on whether to decommission the dam in the point of views of villagers and to keep the dam in the case of EGAT and the Thai government. In this stage, actors intensified the use of

both tacit and scientific knowledge to influence the decision in favor of their interests and issues. In so doing, protesters and rural people organized self-organized research known as Thai Baan Research (Thai Villagers' Research).

First Stage: Emergence of the Assembly of the Poor

The first stage of the Pak Mun Dam struggle from 1989 to 1997 is perhaps the embryonic period for the birth of AOP and the nationalization of the Pak Mun Dam struggle in Thailand. The visible and vulnerable actors when the Pak Mun Dam project was announced were the Pak Mun villagers whose livelihood was to be altered due to the impact of the dam. Before the dam construction began in 1991, villagers demanded to stop the Pak Mun Dam project for the reason that their livelihood would be destroyed because they relied on the Mun River fisheries

As soon as the Pak Mun Dam project was made public, the villagers submitted a letter to the then prime minister in June, 1989, opposing the project. There was no response from the government. In February 1991, it was reported that thousands of villagers protested in Ubon Ratchathani, the provincial capital, against the Pak Mun Dam project. Within a month after the first protest, villagers formed Love the Mun River Group. The group was the initiative of the villagers, and its membership was composed entirely of villagers.

In March, 1991, villagers and Pak Mun Dam protesters submitted to the World Bank's Thailand country representative in Bangkok a petition with over 12,000 signatures protesting the Pak Mun Dam project and the involvement of the World Bank (Ishida, 2002: 62). In September 1991, representatives of the villagers sent a letter to the president of World Bank. At the same time, Love the Mun River Group was reestablished and renamed the Mun River Villagers' Committee for Restoration of Life and Community (hereafter Mun River Villagers' Committee).

The Mun River Villagers' Committee led the first stage of the Pak Mun Dam struggle until 1995, when it established AOP, a network of rural and urban poor and their associated NGOs.

The Voices of Rural Poor

In the early 1990s, Thailand's rural and urban poor began to address the issue of unequal distribution of the benefits from the state development projects. Thailand's state development projects and policies initiated along with the political changes in the late 1960s and 1970s reached a test of time in the 1990s, as once systematically silenced rural poor voices during the Cold War started to regain political space to raise the issue of uneven development. Scholars and observers of Thailand's development path began to raise questions regarding the uneven developments between rural and urban livelihoods and unsustainable development between environment and institutions (Saneh, 1983; Hirsch, 1990; Bello et al., 1998; Baker, 2000; Ratana, 2003). With the support from middle-class academics and the media during the campaign against the then military government in 1991-1992, the rural poor sought the opportunity and extended their struggles against state development projects beyond the local layer. Among those various struggles spanning from agricultural and land conflicts related cases to dam schemes, the Pak Mun Dam struggle took center stage in rural and urban poor protests against the state development projects in the 1990s.

Diverse movements of rural villagers and urban poor in the early 1990s were precursors to the emergence of AOP.

¹ In May 1991, during the short-lived military council-appointed government, networks

¹ Also see some archival information on the Internet at <http://www.thai.to/aop/data001.html> and www.searin.org, last accessed on September 3, 2004.

of People's Organizations in northeast Thailand protested against the Agricultural Council Bill which was designed to extend more power to the agribusiness companies in Thailand. The protesters' voices were heard and the government dropped adoption of the bill into public policy. A year later in June 1992, the Isan Farmers' Assembly demanded that the government cancel its plan of the Internal Security Operation Command on Land Allocation Scheme for the Landless People (LASAP, better known as *Khor Jor Kor*) in forest reserves. The *Khor Jor Kor*, designed to promote reforestation, evicted rural villagers from their settlements in "degraded" forest reserves, and planted fast growing eucalyptus trees to feed the fast-growing pulp and paper industries in Thailand. Villagers protested against *Khor Jor Kor* by organizing an 80-km-long march from the Nakorn Rachasima Provincial Hall to Lam Dan Yai in Pak Chong District. This long march was joined by nearly ten thousand villagers. Some observers have asserted that this rural campaign against *Khor Jor Kor* was a "turning point for rural mobilization and protest" in northeastern Thailand (Missingham, 2003b: 338 n. 1). In February 1992, the government dispatched then Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Interior Anek Siddhiprasart to chair dialogue with village protesters. The government finally agreed to abolish LASAP and the agreement was signed by the deputy minister following the June and July 1992 protests.

Meanwhile, Pak Mun villagers had been staging protests against the dam construction at both the dam site and at the Government House in Bangkok before construction began in 1991. Table 1.1 shows the chronology of the demands and protests of Pak Mun villagers from the very beginning of the protests to January 2003. During the first stage of the Pak Mun Dam struggle from 1989 to 1997, the issue of the Pak Mun Dam evolved around the compensation issue. The villagers' initial demand to stop the construction of the dam was not even a question in the minds of EGAT officials and the government as the construction of the dam continued during the

villagers' protests. Villagers, therefore, kept their protests and shifted the focus to the compensation and resettlement issues instead of demanding a stop in construction. By shifting to compensation issues, since they could not stop the construction, the village protesters were successful in publicizing the fundamental issue of the Pak Mun Dam project, which was that the project lacked a systematic study of the impact the dam would have on the livelihoods of villagers. The issue of the destruction of their livelihoods by the dam was what villagers were fundamentally concerned about as they had demanded a stop to the project before the beginning of the dam construction in 1991.

<Table 1.1 about here>

As the displacement and destruction of villagers' livelihoods by the Pak Mun Dam was morally appealing to the general public, the villagers' protest gained attention from the media. The government was forced to consider compensating Pak Mun villagers, whose livelihoods were disrupted by the loss of fishing income.² Consequently, EGAT and the government had to map out the plan for compensation. Table 1.2 shows an ad-hoc plan and rules for compensation to displaced villagers drawn out in June 1994 after completion of construction of the dam in May

² The support and sympathy from the public was further extended by the publications of various independent and NGO researchers on the consequences of Pak Mun Dam on villagers' livelihoods. For instance, see *Just another Dammed River? Negative Impacts of Pak Mun Dam on Fishes of the Mekong Basin* by Tyson R. Roberts (1993) who was a research associate of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute; also see *Villagers Occupied World Bank's Dam Site in Thailand in Desperate Attempt to Protect the "Kingdom of Fish"* by Probe International, a Canada-based NGO (1993); and *Fish, Forests and Food: Means of Livelihood in Mun River Village Communities* by the Project for Ecological Recovery, a Thai NGO (1993).

1994. The timing of drawing up a compensation plan after the fact indicates there was no systematic, comprehensive study of the costs and benefits of the project prior to cabinet approval. Table 1.2, which illustrates the stages of drafting the compensation rules, is taken directly from EGAT's document titled *Information and Opinions toward the Assembly of the Poor's Demands on the Case of the Pak Mun Dam*, which was presented to the Central Committee in Resolution Findings for the Assembly of the Poor and published June 12, 2000.³ Table 1.2 shows that the Pak Mun Dam protesters pushed the compensation issues in five progressive stages to increase the amount of compensation and the number of cases until the last stage, when EGAT called it final. Eventually, the formal agreement from the government to compensate fishers was secured in writing by villagers in January 1995.

<Table 1.2 about here>

Villagers' Influence

The influence of villagers and their network of organizations, mainly referred to as NGOs, have been downplayed by EGAT and Thai government officials from the very beginning of the Pak Mun Dam project. Government officials singled out leaders of NGOs, who mainly came from the urban middle class, above village protesters to discredit both the influence and the plight of project-affected villagers. The chief of the Central Intelligence Office of Thailand at the time was quoted in *Thai Rath* newspaper on March 12, 1993, as saying:

I don't believe that the anti-Pak Mun movement has any political agenda. The NGO

³ The language of the original document is Thai. My assistant and I translated the whole document into English.

groups led by Wanida Tanwitthayaphitak, have a nation-wide network. These people usually come out to call for equal human rights and to protect the environment. Their only purpose for taking rural people to rallies is to increase monetary support from international sources.

Portraying villagers' legitimate protests as merely projects of NGOs to showcase to international donors to seek funding in order to keep their NGO jobs had significant impact on the image of the villagers' protests, because two Thai language newspapers widely read by Thai citizens, *Thai Rath* and *Matichon*, echoed official views in their framing of Pak Mun Dam related reports (Ishida, 2002: 103). This accusation of NGOs, using villagers and their causes to seek funding for their own existence as NGOs, had significant impact on the image of NGOs itself. Most important, the argument worked to a certain extent to discredit the legitimate cause of villagers as they were portrayed as being used by NGOs. This pressed on villagers' sentiment. Their conscious nerves were challenged further to prove that their protests truly were for the cause of the destruction of their livelihood by the Pak Mun Dam. Reportedly, in 1993 and 1994, Pak Mun protesters increased their protests with some dramatic actions, such as seizing the dam construction site near Ban Hua Haeo and organizing a long march from the villages to the provincial capital (see also Table 1.1).

There are three reasons, according to the village organizers, why they "dramatized" their protests in 1993 and 1994: (1) to increase public awareness that they were actually protesting for a loss of livelihoods, not for compensation money that the government and EGAT accused them of; (2) to increase media attention by dramatization of protests; and (3) to set the tone that they were not going to give up their fight easily. In reading the newspaper articles about the Pak Mun

Dam struggle between 1989 and 2001 that appeared in *Thai Rath*, *Matichon*, and two English language newspapers, *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation*, I could see the increase in news reporting in 1993 and 1994 during the first stage of the protests (Table 1.3 and Chart 1.1).⁴ This increase in media reports indicates that villagers accomplished their objective of publicizing their cause. On top of that, EGAT officials, during an open-ended interview, admitted that the media reports and public sympathy forced EGAT to concede to villagers on the issue of compensation that eventually led to the crafting of ad-hoc rules for compensation by establishing a committee in December 1993 (Table 1.1). When asked if EGAT planned to compensate for the loss of the fishing income of villagers, this official explained that there was no baseline data to determine who would be affected by the project and therefore EGAT did not plan to compensate for the loss of fishing income. This explanation was consistent with the World Bank's comments on the study of Pak Mun Dam by the World Commission on Dam (WCD).

<Table 1.3 and Chart 1.1 about here>

Not all of these protests pressuring the government to at least accept their demand for compensation, if not to stop the project before construction, were easily accepted by the government. In some cases, protesters were threatened, intimidated, and arrested, and protests were violently broken up by the police. In addition to the villagers' own accounts, the media analysis of the Pak Mun Dam struggle conducted by Ishida (2002: 112-118) for his doctoral dissertation at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Iowa, likewise reported extensive coverage of violent clashes between police and Pak Mun protesters in *Thai*

⁴ This data is taken directly from Ishida (2002: 84).

Rath, Matichon, The Nation, and Bangkok Post. The first wave of violent clashes occurred during the final stage of the dam construction in 1993 and 1994, when protesters seized the construction site to halt the construction. Villagers, after realizing they would not be able to stop the dam construction, began to occupy the construction site as a symbolic and direct statement against the dam to dramatize their protests and causes. Media reports, testimonies of villagers, and documentary films as well as literature on the Pak Mun Dam struggle have described, in detail, accounts of the protests elsewhere.⁵ These protests, even though they were not powerful enough to stop the project, influenced the government and EGAT to finally agree on the compensation issue.

The government's agreement, at least signed on paper, to compensate displaced villagers and those of project-affected villagers for their loss of fishing income due to the construction of Pak Mun Dam became the first ever recorded case in Thailand where the state agreed to pay compensation for the consequences of a state development project (AOP, 2000). Subsequently, the Pak Mun Dam villagers' struggle became a symbolic case among the protesters for other types of cases.

Nationalization of the Pak Mun Dam Struggle

In parallel with the Pak Mun Dam struggle, there were issue-focus-group struggles in which rural and urban poor claimed to have suffered the loss of their livelihoods due to state development projects. These cases early on were triggering protests in separate regions of

⁵ See Baker (2000); Ishida (2002: 112-118); and Missingham (2003, Ch. 3 and 4). Also see the documentary film about the Pak Mun Dam protest, titled *Rebel with a Real Cause*, and *The Return of Pladaek* produced by the Assembly of the Poor, 2000 and 2001.

Thailand by different issue-focus groups. In the literature on rural movements in Thailand, these issues were described and discussed as “grievances” that protesters presented to the Thai government as complaints against state development projects (Praphat, 1998: 71-78; Baker, 2000: 16-23; Missingham, 2003: 323-326). There were a total of 125 grievances or issues emerging out of at least seven major-issue focus groups in the early 1990s. These seven major-issue focus groups were: (1) forest and land (2) dams; (3) slum communities; (4) work-related illness (5) alternative agriculture; (6) small fisheries; and (7) government schemes (Baker, 2000: 16; Missingham, 2003: 325). A regional breakdown of 125 issues indicates that the northeast region of Thailand bore 75 issues (Baker, 2000: 16; Missingham, 2003: 325), including the fisheries and livelihood destruction issues due to the Pak Mun Dam, accounting for more than half of the total grievances. Among all of these issue-focus groups, the Pak Mun Dam struggle emerged as the most publicized and visible group because it won the formal agreement of the government to compensate their livelihood loss.

The coordinators of the rural poor movement in Thailand had been mobilizing different issue-focus groups to coordinate as a network in representing the grievances of the poor against state development projects. The case of the Pak Mun Dam generated the interest and focus of the rural movement from leaders of rural communities and local and national NGOs during the first stage of the struggle. A case in point was the “Forum of the Poor” organized by coordinators of different issue-focus groups and NGOs in October 1991 when Thailand hosted the World Bank’s annual summit in Bangkok. At that summit where the World Bank had planned to announce the funding of the Pak Mun Dam, protesters across Thailand with support from international

participants held a parallel conference known as “Forum of the Poor”⁶ (Ishida, 2002: 63; Missingham, 2003a: 82). Various issue-focus groups joined the forum and heated discussions were coordinated and led by Thailand’s environmental NGOs such as the Siam Environmental Club, the Students’ Environmental Organizations, and the Project for Ecological Recovery. This event was the first occasion where the Pak Mun villagers and protesters had a chance to present their version of the potential consequences of the Pak Mun Dam to World Bank officials before completion of the dam’s construction (Missingham, 2003a: 83). After listening to villagers at the summit, the World Bank at least delayed the announcement of the loan to Thailand, which finally was announced in December 1991 as a loan for the third power system development project, which included Pak Mun Dam.

Coordinators of various issue-focus groups and NGOs learned over time from such events as “Forum of the Poor” that coordination and networking among them would be necessary as a new social force to represent all grievances under which Thailand’s poor in general suffered from state development projects. This became clear during the first stage of the Pak Mun Dam struggle in 1995 that it would be necessary to forge an identity of various movements. In so doing, rural poor could collectively influence the state development policies and increase the bargaining power of the rural and urban poor in the decision-making processes of state development projects, which directly affect their livelihoods. This set the stage for the

⁶ Some reports describe it as “People’s Forum,” while others call it “Forum of the Poor.” For instance, Ishida (2002: 63) refers to it as “Forum of the Poor,” while Missingham (2003: 82) called it “People’s Forum.” According to a local participant in this event, it should be called “Forum of the Poor” because the issues raised and articulated are mostly by the poor and for the poor. This event was organized in coordination with some international participants who joined to protest against the World Bank.

emergence of the Assembly of the Poor. Taking the Pak Mun Dam as an exemplary case to highlight the suffering of rural villagers under the state development projects, the poor from various issue-focus groups joined together to forge coordinated efforts for their causes.

Establishment of the Assembly of the Poor

In 1995, the alliance of two major rural networks of farmers known as the Assembly of Small-Scale Farmers of the Northeast (ASFN), established in 1992, and the Northern Farmers Network (NFN), established in 1994, broke into factional splits. ASFN has been an exemplary force behind rural farmers' voices raising grievances on their loss of income and security of their livelihoods due to the state development projects. The factionalism split left a vacuum of political venue for the struggle of rural poor and set the stage for the emergence of a new, coordinated network for their grievances.⁷

In order to define their political space and political bargaining power, over 250 delegates of villagers and NGOs launched a conference entitled *Assembly of the Poor: the Consequences of Large Scale Development Projects* at Thammasat University in Bangkok, December 10-15, 1995.⁸ This conference was spearheaded by the Mun Villagers Committee and it put the Pak Mun Dam struggle as the milieu of their gathering and their solidarity. In so doing, the conference agenda included a trip to the Pak Mun Dam after the opening day of the conference. Representatives from the aforementioned seven major-issue focus groups and villagers' organizations such as the Northern Farmers Network, the Network of People Affected by Dams,

⁷ See detailed accounts of ASFN and NFN in Baker (2000: 13-15) and Missingham (2003a: 33-38).

⁸ The opening day of the conference was carefully chosen to coincide with the International Day of Human Rights and thus there were international participants at the conference.

the Isan Farmers Assembly, a network of urban slum dwellers, the Assembly of Small Farmers of the Northeast, and national and international NGOs attended the conference (Misshingham, 2003a: 38-29; AOP, 2003). On the final day of the conference, December 14, 1995, the participants issued “The Mun River Declaration” at the Ban Dan Kao in Kong Jiam District of Ubon Ratchatani. The Mun River Declaration proclaimed:

... People must involve in setting up the country’s development direction. The people must be real beneficiaries of development. And the poor must participate in decision making involving development projects that will affect them...⁹

This declaration set out a clear rationale of villagers who had been protesting against the Pak Mun Dam that their struggle is larger than what EGAT wanted to portray as a struggle for compensation.

One of the most important decisions that participants agreed to during this conference was to establish a loosely structured network proclaimed as “The Assembly of the Poor.” AOP consists of loosely connected networks of various issue focus groups and NGOs that champion the cause of rural and urban poor to advance their political rights and to influence the direction of state development policies and projects. AOP declared its character and rationale for existence as follows:

The Assembly of the Poor is a network of people who share the same destiny that is being victims of over four decades of Thailand’s economic and industrialization

⁹ Translated by Boonthan T. Verawongse of the Assembly of the Poor.

development policies. The rural agricultural sector as the backbone of the country's economy was being ignored... On the social capital of the rural sector, human and natural resources have been drawn from every direction to feed the unlimited growth of the urban sector... One rural community after another has been forced to sacrifice their resources and has been abandoned to face subsequent hardship by themselves.¹⁰

With this character and rationale, AOP found the case of Pak Mun Dam as an perfect example for use as a backdrop for their larger struggle, which was to influence the changes in state development policy and projects. The emergence of AOP in Thailand was facilitated by the political awareness and relative degree of political freedom of Thai rural and urban poor to challenge state development projects.

Second Stage: Internationalizing Pak Mun Dam

The second stage began with the formation of AOP in 1995 and it ended around 2000 when the World Commission on Dam (WCD) released its research findings on Pak Mun Dam. If the first stage of the Pak Mun Dam struggle began coincidentally during a political crisis in Thailand as a consequence of Thailand's latest military coup to overthrow a democratically elected government in 1991, the second stage of Pak Mun Dam struggle squeezed through a period of economic crisis as a result of the currency devaluation of the Thai baht in 1997.

Although the Pak Mun Dam struggle passed through a larger political and economic crisis in Thailand, the villagers were able to keep their focus, perspectives, and position against

¹⁰ See "Assembly of the Poor" documented by Prasittiporn Kan-Onsri, Coordinator of Friends of the People (FOP) and translated by Boonthan T. Verawongse on the web at: <http://www.thai.to/aop/data001.html>.

state development projects affecting their livelihoods. Table 1.3 and Chart 1.1 show that between 1995 and 1999 Pak Mun Dam received the lowest newspaper coverage during the long struggle. As public interest in the Pak Mun Dam was overshadowed by the 1997 economic crisis, the newspapers and media in general paid less attention to the Pak Mun case. In addition, the media and public assumed that the Pak Mun Dam case was over when the government and protesters reached a compensation agreement for project-affected villagers on March 23, 1995 (Table 1.1). Although the compensation issue was resolved in view of the agreement, it was a tool for protesters to advance their protests. They believed that the dam had to be decommissioned if they were to regain their lost livelihood.

Pak Mun Dam protesters continued to increase their momentum by appealing to the public and sympathetic media. The increased participation from international observers and international NGOs began to support the position of villagers as a civil society and in general were highly connected and networked loosely via Internet campaigns. There were two prominent internet campaigns launched at the international layer. The first was launched by the California-based International Rivers Network and the second by the Canada-based Probe International, both joining the campaign against the Pak Mun Dam.¹¹ These international campaigns served mainly as forums of information dissemination and a loosely networked campaign against the dam-related policies of both the World Bank and EGAT during the course of the Pak Mun Dam struggle. They operated within the global environmental movement, linked internationally to local and national environmental NGOs. However, their substantive campaigns relied directly on the political action of local communities in Pak Mun Dam and NGOs in Thailand. Thereby these

¹¹ See their respective websites: International Rivers Network at <http://www.irn.org/programs/pakmun/>, and Probe International at <http://www.probeinternational.org/pi/Mekong/index.cfm> Last accessed on September 29, 2004.

international campaigns played a crucial role in both dissemination of information about the Pak Mun Dam to the global community and lending moral support to the villagers and NGOs' activists in Thailand. This global political socialization served as a springboard between local NGOs in Thailand and the global environmental movement. They facilitated in cultivating a global-level social capital¹² for the Pak Mun Dam struggle.

Information as a Source of Influence

During the second stage, the voluntary network and coordination between villagers and urbanites from various social and economic backgrounds grew stronger as academics, journalists, social workers, and NGO activists worked together. At the second stage, advisors to AOP realized that villagers needed to move beyond stating their perspectives by way of staging protests if they were to aim for the decommission of the dam. Information sharing and applying what they knew became important aspects of building a strategy at AOP meetings.

As villagers tried to gain urbanites' understanding of their rationale for protests against the Pak Mun Dam, they connected their livelihoods with those of urbanites so that they could better explain their suffering as a consequence of the Pak Mun Dam project through the use of metaphoric language. During my interviews, villagers cleverly referred to the Mun River as their "bank" and to fish as "money," as they can catch fish seasonally just as urbanites can withdraw

¹² Social capital here refers to "features of social organizations such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits" (Putnam, 1995: 67) under *polycentric arrangements*. I emphasize *polycentric arrangements* to distinguish from centralized and controlled arrangements of organizations that can also be organized with forced networks, pressured norms, and bribed social trust within, which are common under authoritarian and dictatorial regimes.

money from a bank. The birth of this metaphoric referral to the Mun River as a bank by the majority of villagers who joined protests and who never had an account or withdrawn money from automatic teller machines was rather telling about how adaptive (desperate in a sense) villagers are to connect their livelihood issues with those of urbanites. I learned during open-ended interviews that urbanite supporters, mainly academics and NGO leaders within AOP, regularly held meetings with protesters to inform each other of the governmental policies and to discuss further strategies. At one of those meetings, some urbanite advisors had suggested that villagers use “bank” as a metaphor for the Mun River and “money” as a metaphor for fisheries and the ecosystem services of the river so as to effectively communicate with urbanites in illustrating the Mun River and their livelihood connection when they talked to reporters. After having spent time in Bangkok for numerous protests and having seen urbanites withdrawing money from the automatic teller machines, villagers understandably liked the metaphor and intensified the use of “bank” as a metaphor for the Mun River. At the same time, newspaper reporters whose main readerships were urbanites found this to be a useful illustration to report the villagers’ plight.

Villagers’ willingness and capacity to learn how to adapt and transform their protests enabled them to utilize available resources to sharpen their arguments. During my field research, I learned that villagers and coordinators of AOP adopted the use of postcards as their campaign tool to seek international support in addition to organizing press releases, publications, internet campaigns, and production of documentary videos.¹³ With their permission, I attended several weekly strategic meetings of the Southeast Asia Rivers Network (SEARIN), which was one of the most active NGOs in helping the Pak Mun Dam project-affected villagers and a leading NGO

¹³ Using postcards in political campaigns is a relatively new tool in Thailand and definitely new for villagers.

within the network of AOP.

After spending some time with them, I became a familiar face, and they would share information and engage with me in discussion about their activities and sometimes ask my opinion. At one of the meetings when they were brainstorming for phrases in English for postcards to be printed with the pictures of various species of fishes, I was asked if I had any suggestions. I suggested two phrases – *damming the flow of Mun River is damming the flow of life* and *rapid development or rapids destruction?* The latter was referring to the planned blasting of rapids in the Mekong River by riparian countries to improve the channel for navigation and also to the blasting of rapids in the Mun River to clear the way for the dam construction. After about two weeks, SEARIN staff handed me a pile of postcards with the phrases I suggested printed on them. I was rather impressed with their skill of using the resources and information they had in order to keep their perspectives and positions clear and intentional on the Pak Mun Dam. This personal episode I had with SEARIN staff and the villagers' creative use of "Mun River" as their "bank" indicated to me that the people who were working directly with villagers within AOP and supporting their cause clearly understood that having information was the beginning stage and using it to articulate their position and to reach out to the outside world were crucial for their cause.

Information became crucial in crafting strategies for the internationalization of the Pak Mun Dam struggle. Within the network of AOP, different NGOs began to utilize information about the ecosystem services of the Mun River and its connection to their livelihoods in order to show the negative consequences of the dam and to reason that the Pak Mun Dam project would result in unjust destruction of villagers' livelihoods. They networked with each other for information dissemination and provided information to researchers and news reporters. The

information included the failure of the fish ladder¹⁴ that did not accommodate the migration of fish from the Mekong and the Mun River, the loss of income, and the disintegration of families as relatives left for cities such as Bangkok to find jobs to replace fishing. One of those well-known academics who extensively wrote about the Pak Mun Dam and its consequences on fisheries both in academic forums and newspapers, including the *Bangkok Post*, was Dr. Tyson Roberts, a Smithsonian Institute research associate based in Thailand. Dr. Roberts was known among AOP advisors as a scientist whose knowledge about fisheries on the Mekong and Mun rivers supported their claim that the fish ladder did not serve as passageway for the migration of fish. At the same time, he argued, the presumed reservoir of the Pak Mun Dam would become an “unnatural habitat” (Roberts, 1993, 1995, 1996) that would kill many species of fish, contrary to EGAT’s claim that there would be more fish in the reservoir.

The advisors and NGO leaders within the network of AOP targeted international media, international NGOs, and research organizations to disseminate information about the plight of the villagers. Ishida (2002: 104-112) who analyzed the media’s framing of Pak Mun Dam issues found that two English-language newspapers, namely the *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation*, covered Pak Mun Dam stories mostly in favor of the villagers’ perspectives. These two newspapers played an important role in the internationalization of the Pak Mun Dam struggle, because the readers of these two newspapers are mainly foreigners who reside in Thailand and affluent Thai

¹⁴ The comment on fish ladder of ichthyologist, Dr. Tyson R Roberts, was quoted in *Bangkok Post* on July 25, 2000: “Can you imagine a female fish with half-a-billion eggs swimming up the ladder? As far as I know, no pla buek (giant catfish), the most important migratory species, has ever used it. And yet, that’s the least of the problems. Worse, the ladder does not allow fish to move downstream, and thus its life cycle cannot be completed.”

who are connected to other countries through business or the internet. From my archival research, I found two international campaigns against Pak Mun Dam, one by International Rivers Network and another by Probe International that had archived articles about Pak Mun Dam in their campaign websites as sources of information to support and justify their perspectives against the dam project. Among those archived articles, roughly 90 percent were reported in the *Bangkok Post* and *the Nation*.

As the movement continued to push further than street protests, the NGO activists and villagers became deeply cognizant of the fact that having information is just a potential to become an influential actor. They understood that knowing how to use information would define how they could influence the decision processes. A number of Thai NGOs¹⁵ that were part of, and coordinators with, AOP began to intensify the use of information in crafting policy issues and raising the issues of villagers to the international layer by distributing information about their plight to the international community. The NGOs, ranging from research organizations such as Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) to environmental campaign-oriented organizations such as Project for Ecological Recovery (PER), which published Pak Mun articles in its *Watershed* magazine, and SEARIN, which produced documentary films and campaign materials, were influential actors in terms of information distribution and knowledge production about the Pak Mun Dam struggle.

Information distribution to the international community mostly occurred in an informal

¹⁵ Leading Thai NGOs within the Assembly of the Poor network which took initiatives on dissemination of information about villagers' plight at the Pak Mun Dam to international media and international non-governmental environmental organizations include the Southeast Asia Rivers Network, the Project for Ecological Recovery, Friends of the People and Thai academics who served as informal advisers to the Assembly of the Poor.

network and via the Internet and newspapers articles. During my field interviews, respondents indicated how they used information via their networks and coalitions to frame their issues was an important factor with which they influenced the decision processes of the Pak Mun Dam–related issues. Respondents were asked to indicate the sources of their power in influencing the decision-making processes of Pak Mun Dam. Respondents scored from 1 = least influential to 10 = most influential factor for them in the Pak Mun Dam decision processes. Table 1.4 shows the mean difference *t*-test between state and non-state actors on each factor. The use of “demonstration,” or protest, as an influential factor was statistically significant ($0.011 < .05$), which shows the obvious fact that non-state actors, especially villagers, viewed protests and demonstrations as influential factors, as opposed to state actors, who did not use protests or demonstrations. Other factors were not statistically significant in terms of the mean difference *t*-test.

<Tables 1.4 and 1.5 about here>

However, it is informative to examine the distribution of respondents’ perspectives on knowledge, which received the highest mean score of both state and non-state actors. As shown in Table 1.5, 12.5 percent of state actors and 5.1 percent of non-state actors scored at the lower end of the scale, at 1 and 2, for knowledge as an influential factor, while 72 percent of state actors and 61.6 percent of non-state actors scored at the upper end of the scale at 9 and 10. This is reflection of respondents as they used information to influence the decision processes. The use of information increased the attention to and support of the Pak Mun villagers from international NGO community. *The Economist* (2000: 38) observed on the case of Pak Mun Dam and its

international attention:

It is more than a thorny issue. Protests against the dam have been held outside Thai embassies in other countries and at the World Bank's offices in Washington. But it is also an ominous sign of a widening fissure between urban and rural Thailand, with potentially dangerous political consequences for the government.

Furthermore, the case of the Pak Mun Dam led by AOP was featured in the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report 2000 as an exemplary instance where villagers and traditionally marginalized communities influenced state development policies. Thailand's *The Nation* newspaper on August 27, 2000, proclaimed in reporting the UNDP's showcase of AOP as follows:

The protest of the Assembly of the Poor (AOP) has gone global as the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has picked it as a model for grass-roots struggles for sustainable development.

The World Commission on Dams and Globalization of Pak Mun Dam

Perhaps the hallmark of the international profile of the Pak Mun Dam case was set by the release of the study of WCD¹⁶ in 2000. As we can also observe in Table 1.3 and Chart 1.1, the

¹⁶ The World Commission on Dams (WCD) was initiated by the World Conservation Union, widely known as IUCN, and the World Bank in 1997 to review the role of large dams in development. The WCD selected the Pak

media report about the Pak Mun Dam case dramatically increased during the year 2000, especially after the WCD released the Pak Mun Dam study. The WCD study found that the Pak Mun Dam did not produce the electricity that was projected by EGAT.¹⁷ This is a major policy attack on EGAT, and EGAT responded to the WCD study by issuing a counter pamphlet titled “WCD-Its Untransparent” in which EGAT questioned both the method of calculation and validity of WCD’s claims. EGAT’s major argument against the WCD study focused on the credibility of the study by questioning the processes and the motive of the WCD study and the ways in which preliminary findings of the WCD study were published in its website in “draft” format before the final report was actually issued. While WCD claimed it released a draft version for public comment, the media in Thailand, especially *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation*, sought the opportunity to further discredit EGAT by using these preliminary findings as hard and true facts.

The Assembly of the Poor intensified using the WCD draft, finding that it supported their decade of argument that the Pak Mun Dam destroyed villagers’ livelihoods. The media’s use of the information released by the WCD draft report angered EGAT officials. EGAT’s doubt about WCD’s motive of releasing its draft report without final validation of the findings was a legitimate concern for EGAT, as it has been dealing with the case for a decade. WCD General Secretary Achim Steiner wrote a letter to the AOP Coordinator Prassittiporn Kan Onsri on June 9, 2000, stating:

Mun Dam case as one of eight case studies first released in June 2000 and finalized as an official version in October 2000. Further details, also see at www.dams.org.

¹⁷ The disagreements on calculation of electricity production and other findings between WCD and EGAT were reported in the WCD study version of “Final Draft – October 2000” from page 110-129.

In recent weeks the draft version of the report has been cited in press articles, press releases and correspondence to international organizations on numerous occasions and issues. This has occurred despite the fact that this is a draft report, circulated for review and comment which the Commission has neither accepted nor released as a final version to date. On each page of the draft there is a clear statement that is a draft of the report which is not for citation or circulation.

It was not because the findings of the WCD study was a groundbreaking finding that the profile of the Pak Mun Dam case was raised among the media and international public but because the findings were reported in a stylistic study by the organization called the *World Commission on Dams*. The project-affected villagers had been arguing since the beginning of the project construction that the Pak Mun Dam disrupted fish migration between the Mekong and Mun rivers and thereby destroyed their livelihoods, which offset any benefits that can result from electricity production. The WCD report just confirmed what the villagers had been arguing for their cause during a decade of protests and campaigns. The *Bangkok Post* on September 28, 2000, questioned:

Why did we have to wait 15 years for the WCD findings to believe the villagers' cause is valid and their problems real? Why? Because Thai society primarily looks down on the poor. Poverty is considered a sin. The education system teaches us to look down on our cultural roots and village simplicity while making Western affluence our ultimate dreams.

The advisers of AOP were aware of the fact that *who* presents the information also

matters in making it influential in decision-making processes. Being cognizant of the fact that the villagers' legitimate arguments fell on the deaf ears of the successive Thai governments and EGAT, the AOP advisers sought the opportunity to have the case of the Pak Mun Dam selected for the WCD study. They also knew that the WCD's study report would carry undeniable weight to pressure EGAT and the Thai government at least to consider the legitimate voices of villagers. One of the key persons proposing the Pak Mun Dam case to WCD was SEARIN Director Chainarong Sretthachau,¹⁸ who not only served as an AOP adviser but had also taken action on the front lines of the Pak Mun Dam struggle in support of the villagers. In fact, the majority of the authors of WCD's Pak Mun Dam case study were Thai academics and professionals who, one way or another, had served as AOP advisers (Amornsakchai et al., 2000). One of the key chapters of the earliest version of the WCD study issued in February 2000, *Social Aspects of Pak Mun Dam*,¹⁹ in regard to the Pak Mun Dam villagers' argument was written by a Professor Chayan Vidhannapudi at the Faculty of Social Science of Chiang Mai University, who also served as adviser to SEARIN and AOP.

It is an undeniable fact in the history of the Pak Mun Dam struggle that the WCD study helped villagers and AOP in their efforts to internationalize the profile of their struggle and to increase pressure on the Thai government and EGAT. It provided a policy gun for the bullets

¹⁸ During an open-ended interview, Mr. Chainarog Sretthachau described how he and colleagues argued to get the Pak Mun Dam case selected under the WCD study before the WCD was officially launched in May 1998. Also see p. xxii of *Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision Making*, a report of the World Commission on Dams, November, 2000.

¹⁹ See Chayan Vidhannapudi, 2000, *Social Aspects of Pak Mun Dam*, in WCD Case Studies: Pak Mun Dam, draft for discussion prepared for the stakeholders meeting on February 23, 2000.

villagers had for the policy arguments to push their issues further. With the support of the WCD study, the villagers and AOP decided to drop the demands for compensation and renew their larger demand to decommission the Pak Mun Dam. The *Bangkok Post*, on April 27, 2000, carried the news of the villagers' decision to drop the compensation issue and to step up their demand for decommission as follows:

No matter how things turn out, the Pak Mun villagers' decision to drop compensation demands for the return of the *Isan* people's bloodstream marks an important step in Thailand's grassroots movement... Right from the start, the Pak Mun villagers told EGAT officials that fishing is their main source of livelihood. That the dam will block fish migration and destroy fish abundance, that they did not want the dam because any compensation could not match the losses.

On May 15, 2000, AOP sent an open letter asking the government to open sluice gates so the Mun River could flow freely. In support of AOP's demand, the international campaign for Pak Mun Dam led by the International Rivers Network sent a letter on May 19, 2000, to then Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai stating:

The World Commission on Dams Pak Mun Dam case study shows that the Pak Mun project is not performing well economically,With independent evidence now overwhelmingly supporting the villagers' claims that the dam has caused more harm than good, we believe that it is time your government took action to address the villager's

demand ... open the gate and restore the Mun River.²⁰

In response to the villagers' pressure and AOP, Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai's government issued a resolution on July 25, 2000, ordering to open all eight sluice gates of the dam for four months per year during the supposed fish migration season from May to August beginning in 2001. At the same time, the resolution established a committee to oversee research on the livelihoods of villagers to compare the differences between the periods of the gates being open and closed. This opened up the opportunity not only to the government and EGAT but also to AOP and concerned academics to conduct research to prove their perspectives of the Pak Mun Dam. The trial opening of the dam sluice gates initiated knowledge production to compare the consequences before and after the dam sluice gates were opened. This was the beginning of what I would call the "knowledge battle" among key actors in the Pak Mun Dam struggle about which I explain further in the following section.

Third Stage: Knowledge Battleground

The third and final stage of the Pak Mun Dam struggle is the stage where information production and utilization was intensified to the level of a knowledge war among key actors. Information production and utilization was intensified to reinstate and support policy arguments stated in the previous stages. In this stage, knowledge became or was considered an influential factor for the actors to sharpen their arguments and to appeal to the wider public to gain support.

²⁰ See International NGO letter to Thailand's prime minister, May 19, 2000, also posted on the Internet at <http://irn.org/programs/pakmun/supp.000519.html>. Last accessed on September 22, 2004.

The third stage roughly began with the opening of the Pak Mun Dam's sluice gates in June 2001 and ended in January 2003 with the final decision of the prime minister.²¹ The major reason for opening the sluice gates was to re-examine the linkage between villagers' livelihoods and fisheries of the Mun River. It has been argued by the villagers that the dam destroyed fisheries by blocking the fish migration between the Mun and Mekong rivers. The research therefore focused on the impact of dams on the fisheries and ecosystems of the river, and thereby on the livelihoods of villagers. It is on this ground that the knowledge about livelihoods, fisheries, ecosystems, and the consequences of dam construction became focal issues.

The reason AOP and villagers demanded the opening of the dam gates was to prove that the free flow of the Mun River would revitalize both the livelihoods of villagers and the ecosystem of the Mun River. While they had been demanding to decommission the dam from the beginning, the government and EGAT had long claimed that the consequences of the dam have been compensated and therefore, the dam was justified in its operation for electricity. However, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's cabinet reached a consensus on April 17, 2001, to open all eight sluice gates as a trial for four months in the first period beginning on June 14, 2001.²² Later, the new resolution was issued on December 11, 2001, to keep the dam gates open for one more year until November 2002. The extension was to facilitate academic research on the consequences of opening the dam gates to be conducted by the government-commissioned

²¹ In January, 2001, Thailand had a new general election the first time under the 1997 Constitution. Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai lost and current Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra won in the election. Prime Minister Thaksin ran the election on the platform that he would try to solve Pak Mun villagers' problems and poverty in Thailand.

²² This resolution is a continuum of Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai's cabinet resolution issued before Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was elected in January 2001 election.

academic institutions. In so doing, the rationale was that the problem of the Pak Mun Dam project would be eventually decided by the cabinet and the prime minister based on the scientific academic research findings.

Scientific Knowledge and Local Knowledge

With the opening of the sluice gates on June 14, 2001, the government commissioned Ubon Ratchathani University to conduct studies to assess the impact of opening the dam's eight sluice gates. By commissioning academic researchers to conduct research, the government expected to make a decision based on the scientific knowledge they gained from this research. The eventual decision to be made was whether to keep the dam in operation for electricity or open the sluice gates permanently so the Mun River would continue to flow. At the same time, EGAT assigned the Science and Technology Research Institute of Thailand and Khon Kaen University to assess the economic, social, and environmental consequences of the Pak Mun Dam gate opening.

As the government- and EGAT-commissioned research teams conducted studies on the impact on villagers of the opening of dam gates, villagers also took the initiative to conduct their own research so as to show the differences in their livelihoods between the open and closed periods. The research conducted by the villagers is known as *Ngan Wijai Thai Baan* (hereafter Thai Baan research), meaning villagers' research. SEARIN and AOP assisted the villagers in conducting Thai Baan research. In reasoning for the need to conduct the research, one of the village researchers stated:

We are the ones who suffer from all negative impacts. We are the ones who are directly

affected. Our lives have been destroyed by the dam, but when fish and nature are restored to the river, our lives are restored too. We are trying to make other people see and understand in the impacts of what has happened since the dam gates have been opened. And we thought of documenting the impacts of opening the dam gates by doing our own research. If outsiders conduct the research, we are afraid that they will not see the full picture, and will not consider all issues of the impacts from the dam because they are outsiders who live in cities and do not understand our lives. They do not know about fish, the ecosystem, and the Mun River like we do. Therefore, we decided to do our own research.²³

This reasoning was a direct challenge to the conventional *scientific* knowledge that is produced by university academics and scientists whose works mainly monopolize project-related consulting documents and, in this case, government- or EGAT-commissioned research projects. Professor Chayan Vaddhanaphuti of Chiang Mai University in a preface to the published English version of Thai Baan research wrote:

Local knowledge has long been the subject of interest among scholars of different disciplines as well as practitioners of development, but local knowledge production has always been in the hands of outsiders who claim to have a certain methodology to understand it. In most cases, local villagers who possess and practice their knowledge often play a secondary role, treated as informants or respondents in the process of

²³ See p. 13, *The Return of Fish, River Ecology and Local Livelihoods of the Mun River: A Thai Baan (Villagers') Research*, The Assembly of the Poor and Southeast Asia Rivers Network, 2004.

investigation. Despite increased interest in local knowledge in development practice, it is often treated as inferior to scientific knowledge. The latter is often seen as superior and a key to villagers' problems.

This sets the tone for the fundamental ground of a knowledge battleground during the third stage of the Pak Mun Dam case. At the very least, this perspective on knowledge production and utilization unravels the underlying forces within surrounding politics or institutional dimensions of knowledge production and utilization. In other words, it conveys that scientific knowledge is not necessarily a *value*-free set of facts and products of a society. Therefore, careful observers have to understand the processes by which knowledge is produced, and have to pay attention to how and for what purposes it is used in social processes where actors engage in organizing orders and making choices in life.

Knowledge Production and Utilization

In over a decade of the Pak Mun Dam struggle between villagers and the state, successive cabinets had established various committees to solve the problems associated with the demands of the villagers. These committees handled issues associated with land allocation and resettlement to the compensation issues. It was not until the third stage of the struggle that the government agreed to ponder the fundamental issue that villagers had been demanding: decommission the dam and restore the Mun River. Although scientific knowledge had been produced since the Pak Mun Dam project was initiated in the 1970s, the existing knowledge did not seem to contain enough information to help the government make a decision on the question of whether the dam had caused the destruction of the villagers' livelihoods and whether that loss

was more or less than the projected benefits of the dam. This is a conclusion that can be inferred from the underlying reasons behind the cabinet's resolutions that ordered the dam gates to open and at the same time commissioned research teams to conduct further research. The stories of villagers' suffering reported by the media and the independent research gathered by individuals and organizations were not sufficient enough information to help the government make a decision. Why? The answer to this question is embedded in the institutional dimensions of knowledge production and utilization, or simply the politics of knowledge.

During the dam gate opening period between June 14, 2001, and November 4, 2002, the government, EGAT, and the villagers were on their missions to conduct research on the consequences of the dam gate being open. Meanwhile, independent researchers and media were also involved in reporting stories of villagers returning to their villages from Bangkok and other cities where they had gone in search of other jobs during the dam operation period. In one count, there were at least 20 research papers and reports conducted by various individuals, organizations, and academic institutions in search of evidence for the benefits and costs of the dam.²⁴ Among those, the Ubon Ratchathani University's research and the villagers' Thai Baan research received close attention from the observers and media. The research of Ubon Ratchathani University was a leading government-commissioned official research specifically mandated to study the consequences of the opening of the dam gates and, therefore, it was closely watched by observers.

However, the Thai Baan research gained attention from observers and the government because of the path-breaking, self-organized action research villagers did on the history of the

²⁴ See p. 4 of *The Assessment of the Knowledge Fundamental for Decision Making in Case of Pak Mun Dam*, by The Committee to Screen the Findings Concerning the Cases of Pak Mun Dam, Ubon Ratchathani, 2002.

rural struggle in Thailand. The fundamental assumption behind Thai Baan research was that the knowledge villagers needed was to be packaged in a way that would make government and EGAT officials pay serious attention in their decision making rather than rely on the press releases and statements villagers had made in the past at their protests. The villagers' conducting research and packaging their local knowledge in parallel with the academics' research conducted by government-commissioned universities and institutes was an unprecedented action in Thailand's social movement. As such, the Thai Baan research not only gained funding from donors²⁵ but also received the attention of the National Health Foundation of Thailand and the World Health Organization, both of which jointly awarded this research effort the National Health Foundation Award for community cohesiveness and welling-being.²⁶

More important, the Thai Baan research was considered as alternative knowledge to the official government-commissioned research in the report on the *Assessment of the Knowledge Fundamental for Decision Making in the Case of Pak Mun Dam*, prepared in January, 2002, by the Committee to Screen the Research Findings Concerning Pak Mun Dam's Cases (hereinafter "the Screening Committee").²⁷ The Screening Committee was established by Deputy Prime Minister General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, who chaired the national committee to follow up on the problems associated with the Pak Mun Dam. The deputy prime minister was assigned to prepare recommendations to the cabinet after reviewing the Screening Committee's assessment.

²⁵ Some of the campaign activities including the Thai Baan research of the Southeast Asia Rivers Network were partially funded by Oxfam America, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the International Rivers Network, and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation.

²⁶ See *Matichon* newspaper (in Thai), December 16, 2002.

²⁷ The names of these committees in English are rough translations from Thai. For original names in Thai.

The Screening Committee's assessment was issued in January 2002 and centered on four bodies of research:²⁸

1. EGAT-sponsored Khon Kaen University's assessment of the impact on economic, social, and environmental impacts reported in August 2000 and presented to EGAT.
2. Government-commissioned Ubon Ratchathani University's study on the guidelines to restore the ecosystem and community livelihoods that were affected by Pak Mun Dam, reported in September 2002 and proposed to the national committee to follow up on the problems associated with Pak Mun Dam.
3. EGAT's report on the progress of the economic, social, and environmental mitigation plan to develop the quality of life for people and community along the lower part of Mun River, prepared by Science and Technology Research Institute of Thailand in November 2001 and subsequently in 2002.
4. Thai Baan Research, titled *Mae Mun: The Return of Fisherman*,²⁹ was conducted by

²⁸ These reports were published in Thai and the titles listed are rough translations. The committee also considered other reports and independent research in its discussion in the assessment. See details in "Introduction" in the draft version of the *Assessment of the Knowledge Fundamental for Decision Making in the Case of Pak Mun Dam*, issued by the Committee to Screen the Findings Concerning the Cases of Pak Mun Dam, January 2002.

²⁹ An English version of the Thai Baan research report was published with the title, *The Return of Fish, River Ecology and Local Livelihoods of the Mun River: A Thai Baan (Villagers') Research*, in 2004 by the Southeast Asia Rivers Network and the Assembly of the Poor.

Pak Mun villagers with assistance from the Assembly of the Poor and the Southeast Asia Rivers Network.

The fate of the Pak Mun Dam, or more precisely the fate of Pak Mun villagers, was to be decided from the knowledge produced by these four bodies of research. Originally, the gates were supposed to be opened for four months beginning from June 14, 2001, under the cabinet resolution. However, as discussed, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra decided to extend the period until November, 2002, to give at least one year for research. The role of these packages of knowledge was crucial and therefore it is important to understand how they were produced and how they were used in the decision-making processes.

The main policy issue that forced the government to seek the knowledge production to understand the consequences of building the dam on villagers' livelihoods was to reconcile two main arguments. On one hand, World Bank and EGAT had long argued that the Pak Mun Dam was justifiable for the loss of villagers' livelihoods since the project compensated adequately for villagers' land and income loss and the dam was producing electricity to meet the increasing demand in the northeast region while it also increased water for irrigation (EGAT, 1996: 5; World Bank, 1998b: 4-8). On the other hand, the villagers have also been arguing that their livelihoods were destroyed by the Pak Mun Dam because it disrupted fish migration between the Mun and Mekong rivers and destroyed their cultural, social, and communal space along with the ecosystems of the river (Srettthachau and Deetes, 2003: 13-14). Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who eventually would make the decision whether to decommission the dam or let the dam operate at least four months per year, had to reconcile these two contending arguments.

From the government's perspective, the Pak Mun Dam was claimed to be a multipurpose

development project because it would generate electricity, increase availability of water for irrigation, and create a reservoir to serve as a habitat for fish (EGAT, 1996: 5). Thereby, the Pak Mun Dam would increase the utility of the river for all actors in Thailand. From the villagers' perspective: (1) the dam would destroy fisheries by blocking migration; (2) the land in the region was not suitable for agriculture; and (3) fishing was a century-old, traditional profession and a major thread in the fabric of their livelihood while providing a better local economy than agriculture. Thereby, they argued, the Pak Mun Dam would destroy not only their economic well-being but also the communal, cultural, and social aspects of their lives, because their livelihood as a whole was intricately tied to the ecosystems of the Mun River (Sretthachau and Deetes, 2004: 13-27). Therefore, the produced knowledge and research to be presented to the Screening Committee needed to answer which argument was closer to reality when it compared the period where the dam was in operation for electricity to the period when the dam gates were open for the study.

Findings of Government-Commissioned Research

Among the three EGAT- and government-commissioned research efforts mentioned above, the media, observers, and government considered the Ubon Ratchathani University study as the most comprehensive package of knowledge. The Ubon Ratchathani University had been assigned by the government, with the mandate from the prime minister on June 13, 2001, to prepare for "the project to survey and study the guidelines to revitalize the ecosystem and community livelihoods which were influenced by the Pak Mun Dam" (Screening Committee, 2002: 11). The main objective of the study was to answer four questions: (1) What is the status and the role of the dam in electricity generation? (2) What are the actual and potential irrigation

benefits of the dam? (3) On an ecological, agricultural, and fisheries basis, how does the dam affect community economic and social relation? and (4) What options might exist to manage the dam? (Screening Committee, 2002: 11; Ubon Ratchathani University, 2002: 1).

The Ubon Ratchathani University study found that on the status of the electricity generation:

Regarding impacts on the stability of the lower Northwest region's electric power distribution system; system stability (that is, maintaining voltage fluctuation at plus or minus five percent) can be maintained without the Pak Mun Dam.³⁰

This finding, described in succinct details in the report, counters the argument of EGAT that the Pak Mun Dam was a necessary and crucial project to meet the increasing demands of electricity consumption. On the issue of actual and potential benefits from the irrigation provided by the Pak Mun Dam, the Ubon Ratchathani University study summarized that:

The Department of Energy Development and Promotion estimated that it would be possible to supply water to 14,757 rai [5,834 acres]. However, in 1998-1999 (prior to the

³⁰ See p. 4 of the *Executive Summary* of the Project to Study Approaches to Restorations of the Ecology, Livelihood, and Communities Receiving Impacts from Construction of Pak Mun Dam, Ubon Ratchathani University. The electricity power distribution network of the Northeast region of Thailand is fed by five domestic power plants and four power plants in Lao P.D.R as of November 2002, in addition to the electricity received from the Central region's electricity power distribution network. Pak Mun Dam generates 123 MW on average power output and it is below the projected 136 MW. The executive summary report was prepared by the principal researcher Mr. Taweekun Sawantranon for the question on electricity production and the status of Pak Mun Dam.

experimental opening of Pak Mun Dam), farmers requested water to supply approximately 2,525 rai [998.3 acres], or 17 percent of the planned area. During the dam opening in 2001-2002, farmers requested water supply to 2,052 rai [811.3 acres], or 14 percent of the planned area.³¹

The report continued to explain why the region was not suitable for agriculture. It explained the soil condition and types in the three districts affected by the Pak Mun Dam. In Phibol Mangsahan and Sirindhorn districts, the soil is relatively more fertile than in Khong Jiam district. Even in these two districts, the report concluded:

The use of irrigation to increase rice field area does not fit in with rice farming methods used by farmers in this area. Farmers do not ask for water to grow a second (dry season) crop of rice. Instead, they ask for water for rice seedling production and rely on rainfall for cultivation of the transplanted rice crop. Therefore, it could be said that irrigation charges, lack of soil fertility in the study area, and methods used by farmers are obstacles to developing agriculture in the area using irrigation.

In Khong Jiam district, where the dam is located and:

...which consists of rocky outcroppings, forest, and sandstone hill formations, is not particularly suitable for any commercial crops. Water pumping stations are not found in

³¹ See p. 7 of the “Executive Summary” of the *Project to Study Approaches to Restorations of the Ecology, Livelihood, and Communities Receiving Impacts from Construction of Pak Mun Dam*, Ubon Ratchathani University.

this area. Irrigation is not a relevant factor.³²

These findings of the Ubon Ratchathani University on the electricity production and irrigation, both of which were two main projected benefits in EGAT's project documents and EGAT's policy arguments, were both consistent with the villagers' perspectives.

In terms of fisheries, the study found that household income from fishing increased from 3,045 baht per year in 2000 to 10,025 baht per year after the opening of the dam gates in 2001. This increase in household fishing income still has not matched 25,742 baht per year before the construction of dam started in 1990 (Ubon Ratchathani University, 2002: 11). Therefore, the report concluded that:

Economic growth, especially growth from industrial development that requires electric energy has not yet developed as forecasted. The Dam does not yet play at full-capacity in irrigation. It is appropriate to direct benefits from the Mun River Basin to community-based economics by ceasing use of the Dam for electricity generation for now, until electricity demand changes from current conditions.

This conclusion is consistent with the findings of the Thai Baan³³ research conducted by the Pak Mun villagers. Villagers were delighted to see the government-commissioned study recommending what they had been arguing all along in the struggle. However, these sets of

³² See p. 6 of the *Executive Summary* of the Project to Study Approaches to Restorations of the Ecology, Livelihood, and Communities Receiving Impacts from Construction of Pak Mun Dam, Ubon Ratchathani University.

³³ For the detailed report of Thai Baan research findings, please see Srethachau and Deetes (2004).

knowledge produced by both the government and villagers faced the challenge of the politics within which Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra made decisions, as we will see in the following section.

Knowledge in the Final Decision of the Prime Minister

These findings were reported at the end of the trial opening period of the dam in October 2002. At the same time, the decision of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was due to be made when all the research reports were completed. The morale and spirit of villagers and AOP at that time was at the highest point in the history of the Pak Mun Dam struggle. They were very hopeful the prime minister would follow the recommendation of the government-commissioned research findings, which was to open the dam gates for at least three more years or until the demand for electricity increased.

At the same time, AOP intensified their public protests at the government house with renewed evidence supporting their position. These findings of the government-commissioned study not only legitimized their long struggle but also increased credibility of their Thai Baan research. Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra made a surprise visit to protesters at their protest camp near the government house on December 8, 2002, and spent 7,000 baht buying lunch for protesters and scooping ice cream personally to offer to villagers. Villagers, in return, handed their Thai Baan research report to the Prime Minister.³⁴ At the same time, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra told villagers that he would conduct a meeting with them on December 20 at the government house to find out more about how the Pak Mun Dam affected their lives.

³⁴ See “Protesters get free lunch from Thaksin,” *The Nation*, December 9, 2002.

Meanwhile, he told them that he would also look into all the research findings and visit the dam site and affected villages after the meeting with the villagers at the government house. After that, he said he would make a final decision.

On December 20, 2002, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra met with 30 representatives of villagers at the government house for four straight hours over lunch. It was not only an historic moment in the Pak Mun Dam struggle, but it was also an historic moment in the history of Thailand.³⁵ He invited villagers, the four research teams mentioned above, and officials of EGAT. The meeting was broadcast live on a major television channel from the beginning to the end. At the meeting, EGAT presented a brief history and summary of the current situation. After that, EGAT argued for the dam by stating that opening the sluice gates could lead to power shortages within three years. Admittedly, by invoking the sunk-cost syndrome,³⁶ EGAT also revealed that the project was still 4 billion baht in debt.

During the meeting, the prime minister declared, while opening his notebook and marking the date, that he would visit Pak Mun Dam on December 24 and accepted the villagers' invitation to ride a boat along the Mun River and to see various villages. On December 24, he visited the dam and held some more discussion with the villagers. The final decision was made on January 14, 2003, with the recommendation of his ad-hoc appointed panel of review on the

³⁵ The only comparison with this event in Thailand was when the King of Sukhothai era personally looked into grievances of villagers 700 years before. See "Thaksin's approach recall Sukhothai era," *The Nation*, December 21, 2002.

³⁶ Sunk cost syndrome represents a strong tendency to hold on to previous investments even if this is a rationally bad choice. For further explanation on sunk cost syndrome, please see Janssen et al. (2003) and Janssen and Scheffer (2004).

case. His panel of review made a recommendation based on three agencies—the Second Army, the Border Patrol Police, and the National Statistics Office. These agencies were selected in an ad-hoc fashion after the meeting with the villagers. They conducted a survey within less than a week on the opinions of hand-picked villagers who lived along the bank of the river. All of a sudden, the knowledge that had been produced by the four main research teams was ignored in the very last moment of decision making. The prime minister decided to use (1) the survey of three agencies he had selected; (2) his meeting with the villagers, and (3) his personal viewing of the dam and villages from helicopter and by boat as the bases for his final decision.

The final decision of the prime minister was to uphold the cabinet's decision of opening the dam sluice gates for four months per year and generating electricity in the remaining eight months. This decision was not very surprising to the observers and members of AOP, as they had predicted that the prime minister was buying time and massaging politics to reduce tensions and to build his image in the public as if he were a compromising leader among different actors. *The Nation* editorial on January 17, 2003, wrote:

The latest decision on the Pak Mool (Mun) Dam only confirms that the government will not accept the results of any study, even its own, if they fail to support its predetermined decision.

The Nation continued to animate its editorial:

When Thaksin held talks with villagers affected by the Pak Mool Dam at Government House, there were mixed reactions. Some hailed it as the single most generous gesture

any government or prime minister had ever made in regards to an attempt to resolve the controversial issue. Others, however, were skeptical as they suspected Thaksin might just want to pull another publicity stunt to show the government still cares about the poor.

Indeed, as I have presented throughout this paper, the voices and wisdom of the rural poor have not yet been considered worthy as a decision factor in Thai society. As such, local and tacit knowledge are considered unscientific and lack conventionally accepted authority to justify policy action. However, the decade-long struggle that the villagers had maintained did not go in vain. They at least won, for four months, opening of the dam gates, and their voices had been heard. Their struggle has been marked as a scar on Thailand's political development as well as on the development journey of Thai society. As illustrated, their voices, actions, and knowledge have become a force for transformation of institutional order in Thailand. The Pak Mun Dam case perhaps was the most significant case of rural villagers' influence in Thailand's development history, as we observed villagers' influence through their protests and self-organized Thai Baan research reaching to the level of the second-most powerful leader of the Kingdom.

Table 1.1. History of the Pak Mun Dam Struggle between Villagers and EGAT

Date	Demands
April 13, 1989	Ubon Ratchathani Natural Resource Conservation Group and Kaeng Sapur Protection Group submitted a paper requesting a reconsideration on the building of the dam to the government, claiming that the dam would cause flooding over Kaeng Sapur, Don Tart Temple, and Kaeng Tana and ecological destruction. “Kaeng” means combination of “rapid” and “cascade” form.
June 16, 1989	There was a walkout by opposition groups in the meeting between ministers, EGAT, and related groups in the case.
February 11-14, 1990	Kong Jiam District and Pibol Mangsaharn District’s residents gathered at Kaeng Sapur to protest and submit a reconsideration paper to Ubon Ratchathani Province’s Governor demanding the government to hold back the building of the dam.
April 30, 1990	President of Chiang Mai University Student Association and coordinators of Natural Resource and Environmental Conservation Committees of 16 institutes demanded the government and EGAT be responsible for mistakes that had been done up until the government permission on the building of the Pak Mun Dam.
May 15, 1990	The government through the cabinet resolution gave permission to start the construction of Pak Mun Dam.
May 16-17, 1990	700 residents gathered at Kaeng Sapur and announced that this cabinet resolution in building the dam was unacceptable.
March 19, 1991	The list of the opponents’ name was submitted to the World Bank office in Thailand.
March 16, 1992	Representatives of Pak Mun and non-government organizations (NGOs) gathered in front of the Cabinet House, calling the minister of the Prime Minister’s Office to be responsible and to stop the blasting of rapids within Kaeng Tana National Park.
August 13, 1992	NGOs claimed that the building of Pak Mun Dam would cause the spread of โรคพยาธิใบไม้ในเลือด disease and would destroy fish species.
February 27 – March 28, 1993	<p>NGOs and around 1000 residents gathered at the construction site of Pak Mun Dam to obstruct EGAT workers and submitted to EGAT three conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to survey water level again and make sure that it would not reach the 108-meter level - to promise that fish species would not be lost - to make a clear plan on compensation payment <p>EGAT agreed to follow the conditions on 18 March 1993 and on 20 March 1993 to set up a center to file complains at Amphur (district) Kong Jiam</p>

Date	Demands
October 12, 1993	<p>Assembly of the Poor (AOP, which was called the Committee on Life and Pak Mun Community Restoration back then) submitted a paper outlining 12 demands to the governor of Ubon Ratchathani and calling for the government to make compensation payments for the loss of income from the fishery for two years, counting from the beginning to the end of construction of the dam, 35,000 baht a year.</p> <p>The negotiation went on until the first payment was paid in June 1994: 2140 names of residents were submitted, the total sum of the compensation payment was 13.971 million baht (the lowest was 8 baht and the highest was 96,079 baht). It was later adjusted to 10,000 baht more for each and the total sum of the payment was increased to 27.57 million baht.</p>
December 15, 1993	The Committee for Assistance (Compensation) Consideration to Project-Affected People was set up by the Prime Minister Office's order No. 205/1993.
October 14, 1994 – March 23 1995	<p>Around 1,000 residents seized the administrative office of Ubon Ratchathani province and called for EGAT to call off the previous regulations on compensation payment. The demand was to make payment to 2,390 residents for 35,000 baht each for three years. The negotiation ended when the government set up a committee to give assistance to the development of a fishery, chaired by Director-General of Fishery Department Plodprasop Suraswadi, with NGOs and residents as members. 90,000 baht was agreed upon, 30,000 in cash and the other 60,000 came in a long-term fishery development cooperation form.</p>
March 23, 1995	<p>The protesters were satisfied, stopped the protest, and promised no more protest. On the last day of the protest (23 March 1995), Minister Korn Dhaparangi of the Prime Minister's Office witnessed activities to mark the end of the Pak Mun Dam protest. (After the protest, there were still many demands on payment submitted to the government until the last payment was paid on 25 January 2000, which made the total payment of 489.54 million baht to 6,176 residents.)</p>
December 10, 1995	Assembly of the Poor (AOP) was established by various NGOs.
April 10, 1996	AOP submitted a paper demanding that the government resolve the problems that had occurred due to the building of the dam, with one condition that was agreed upon by both sides that there would be no further demand for compensation payment.
January 17-19 1997	<p>AOP called the government to assist in solving 121 cases of problems from different groups. For some from the Pak Mun Dam, the government was called to allocate land for agriculture (20 rai [~8 acres] per family) for residents (altogether 3,301 families) whose fishery had to stop because of the building of the dam. Three negotiation sessions were held with the government—29 April 1997, 2 September 1997, and 21 April 1998—with these conclusions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In principal, there would be no compensation made backward for the dam that had already been built. 2. Agricultural-related cases would be analyzed case by case by committee for the approval from the Ministry of Agriculture.
March 23, 1999 – May 10, 2000	AOP seized part of construction site and built approximately 400 temporary shelters, requesting the government to compensate for their opportunity cost of 15 rai per family. A request was also made for protection from disease associated with water parasites along the Mun River.

Date	Demands
May 10, 2000	AOP submitted a request exclusively asking the government to open the sluice gate for one year so fish could breed.
May 15, 2000	AOP seized Pak Mun Dam's generator plant, stopping any operation by its officials and workers in order to negotiate with the government.
July 25, 2000	Government resolution dated 25 July 2000 ordered all eight gates to be opened for four months (May to August) so fish could travel upstream to breed. They also set up a committee to oversee the research project on fishery resources and ecological rehabilitation of the Mun River.
April 3, 2001	<p>AOP submitted the following demands;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to permanently open all eight sluice gates; 2. to resuscitate all cascades and natural resources of the Mun River; 3. to revive life and community affected by the building of the dam by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - compensating an 8-year opportunity cost for the fishery (576,000 baht per family), - compensating an 8-year opportunity cost for using natural resources along the river (432,000 baht per family), - paying an 8-year water consumption cost for not being able to use water from the river (9,600 baht per family); 4. to offer life-long healthcare for free to those affected by the building of the dam; 5. to set up a community center as a place to exchange intergenerational knowledge after the original place was obstructed by the building of the dam; 6. to offer debt delay and relief to those families affected by the building of the dam; 7. to compensate for damages caused by the fire of November 2000 calculated from real damages; and 8. to dismiss all law suits against residents.
June 14, 2001 – November 4, 2002	EGAT opened all sluice gates according to the government resolution of 17 April 2001 and 11 December 2001
December 20, 2002	Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra met with 30 representatives of Pak Mun villagers to hear their own voices.
January 14, 2003	Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra made the decision to uphold the cabinet's early resolution to open the dam gates four months per year. That was the final decision for the Pak Mun Dam case.

NOTE: Pak Mun Dam was first approved on its disciplines by the cabinet on April 8, 1989. The cabinet later gave permission to start its construction on May 15, 1990.

Source: A document (in Thai) obtained from the Southeast Asia Rivers Network (SEARIN), the Assembly of the Poor (AOP), and the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT). Translated by Sirithon Wairatpanij and myself.

Table 1.2 Compensation Rules for the Loss of Fishing Income

Stages	Rules for compensation	Number of villages	Residents (cases)	Total amount (million baht)	Comments
First	<p>Qualification for compensation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - must be a resident of affected area - compensation request submitted before 11 April 1994 - ownerships of fishery equipment <p>Rate in compensation calculated from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - amount of fishery equipment occupied - ratio of effects studied by academics - level of fishery considered by reps of fishery and reps from villages 	36	2,140	13.70	Resolutions of the cabinet-assigned committee dated June 2, 1994; highest received 96,079 baht, lowest received 8 baht
Second	Every resident would receive 10,000 baht, and lower for those who had been assisted before (first assistance above)	36	2,140	27.57	Resolution of the Committee 10/1994 dated October 23, 1994

Stages	Rules for compensation	Number of villages	Residents (cases)	Total amount (million baht)	Comments
Third	No more than 90,000 per case. Those who wanted assistance had to submit paper by 17 February 1995 and be residents of Amphur Pibol Mangsaharn or Ampur Kong Jiam or Amphur Sirindhorn and qualified as fisherman based on the following: (1) licensed on fishery, (2) possess fishery equipment, (3) expertise in using equipment, or (4) knowledge in boat rowing, or (5) able to swim, or (6) know fish species, or (7) had fishery as an occupation, and (8) certified by reps of fishermen and 7 in 10 officials that the resident is a fisherman - 90,000 will be paid, 30,000 in cash and 60,000 in a co-op form for career development (which cannot be withdrawn within six years)	55	3,966	356.94	Resolution of the committee on agricultural and fishery development for the affected residents 5/1995 dated May 3, 1995, and the cabinet resolution dated June 27, 1995 (and again of 9/1997 dated September 26, 1997)
Fourth	60,000 baht per case to those qualified to the rules explained in the third stage (above) but submitted paper after 17 February 1995 and would be held final	55	6,176	489.54	Resolution of the committee on agricultural and fishery development ...of 1/1999 dated April 19, 1999 and resolution of the cabinet meeting dated 25 January 2000

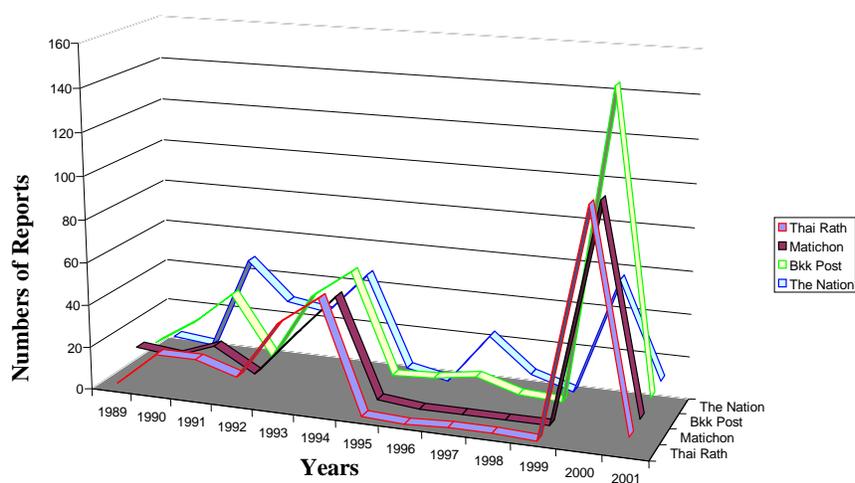
Source: EGAT's document titled *Information and Opinions toward the Assembly of the Poor's Demands on the Case of the Pak Mun Dam*, which was presented to the Central Committee in Resolution Findings for Assembly of the Poor published on June 12, 2000.

Note: 1994 currency exchange rate was US \$1 = 25 baht.

Table 1.3. Media Reports of Pak Mun Dam Struggle in Four Major Newspapers (1989-2001)

Year	<i>Thai Rath</i>	<i>Matchon</i>	<i>Bangkok Post</i>	<i>The Nation</i>
1989	2	13	9	6
1990	18	11	21	4
1991	18	18	37	48
1992	12	7	9	30
1993	39	28	40	27
1994	53	48	54	47
1995	1	2	7	4
1996	0	0	8	0
1997	1	0	11	24
1998	1	0	5	8
1999	0	0	4	2
2000	106	103	148	57
2001	7	8	11	12

Chart 1.1. Media Report of Pak Mun Dam Struggle (1989-2001)



Source of Data: Ishida (2002: 84).

Table 1.4. Sources of Influence for State and Non-State Actors

Factors	Actors	N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Scientific knowledge	State	8	8.13	3.044	-.025	.981	-.029
	Non-State	39	8.15	2.601			
Votes	State	8	5.00	3.464	.716	.491	.949
	Non-State	39	4.05	3.170			
Media and publicity	State	8	6.13	3.441	.369	.721	.484
	Non-State	39	5.64	3.082			
Independent research	State	8	7.13	2.100	-.245	.811	-.208
	Non-State	39	7.33	2.609			
Coalition or network	State	8	7.50	2.000	-.524	.610	-.423
	Non-State	39	7.92	2.432			
Demonstrations	State	8	4.50	3.780	-2.656	.011	-3.167
	Non-State	39	7.67	2.923			
Financial capital	State	8	3.75	3.694	-.819	.434	-1.147
	Non-State	39	4.90	3.177			
Public understanding	State	8	7.13	2.748	-.490	.635	-.516
	Non-State	39	7.64	2.529			
National law	State	8	5.00	3.207	.206	.841	.256
	Non-State	39	4.74	3.185			
International law	State	8	5.13	3.944	.170	.869	.253
	Non-State	39	4.87	3.238			

Table 1.5. Perception of Knowledge as Source of Influence

Key influential factor	esponses	Actors	
		% of State (n)	% of Non-state (n)
Knowledge	1	12.5% (1)	5.1% (2)
	2	0% (0)	% (0)
	3	0% (0)	5.1% (2)
	4	0% (0)	0% (0)
	5	0% (0)	7.7% (3)
	6	0% (0)	2.6% (1)
	7	12.5% (1)	2.6% (1)
	8	0% (0)	15.4% (6)
	9	37.5% (3)	15.4% (6)
	10	37.5% (3)	46.2% (18)
Total		100.0% (8)	100.0% (39)

Note: Responses scored 1 = least influential to 10 = most influential.

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