

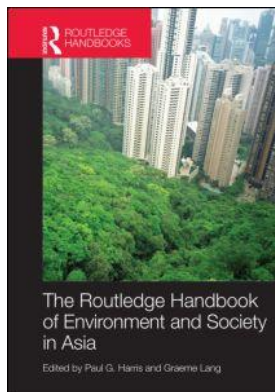
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Environmental justice and civil society

Case studies from Southeast Asia

Piya Pangsapa

One of the most important developments in environmental studies in recent years is the increasing recognition of the close interconnections between social and environmental justice. In conditions where rapid development and modernisation are the central goal, civil society action is even more relevant in pressing reluctant governments to regulate and be more accountable for their actions and for political institutions and private companies to be more responsible. Research and reports of illegal activities, such as the timber trade (Elliott 2007; Fahn 2004; Pangsapa & Smith 2008; Sample 2007; Unger & Siroros 2011) or species trafficking (Davenport 2011; Henry 2004; Karam 2010; Simpson 2012) as well as on legal but irresponsible activities resulting in environmental degradation indicate the range of challenges faced in Southeast Asia (Elliott 2004; Hirsch 2007; Litta 2010; Smith & Pangsapa 2008, 2009c).

The emergence of civil society action and movements in direct response to harmful environmental activities and specific social injustices provides us with an opportunity to consider how social justice issues and the political decisions that ignite social action can be better understood with an eye towards mutual engagement, dialogue and transformation. In addition, by allowing constituencies to become stakeholders (see Smith & Pangsapa 2008), such acts of citizenship (Isin 2008) can generate a set of working principles that acknowledge the complexity, uncertainty and interdependency between society and nature in order to develop flexible strategies for change and cooperation.

When we consider the practices of ecological citizenship, as part of the 'context-specific' ethico-political discourses, we can identify how competing ideas of moral community and political community are articulated. Civil society organisations working in concrete strategic situations inevitably draw on their own ethical traditions that they innovatively and creatively link to political activity and which they use effectively as part of their campaigns (Smith & Pangsapa 2009b: 328). In the context of Southeast Asia, such discourses draw heavily on Buddhist virtues about the environmental relationship with social acts as a basis for ethically informed decisions.

This chapter seeks to underline the connection between social and environmental justice through the comparison and analysis of activist and civil society groups in Southeast Asia in relation to a range of social and environmental problems. Drawing on new case study research

of industrial pollution in Thailand and illegal logging in Cambodia, this chapter will examine how social and environmental injustices are connected in the context of rapid development in the Southeast Asian mainland. A particular focus will be how the local and the transnational are configured in these contexts.

New developments on the Southeast Asia mainland

Environmental and community livelihood issues must be understood in the context of regional growth and development. Laos, a country that anticipates becoming the ‘battery of Asia’, already exports 75 per cent of its electricity to Thailand fuelling rapid export development. Gas pipelines from Burma also satisfy Thailand’s energy demands and the opening up of this resource-rich country signal its potential of becoming a major supplier of energy and natural resources in the region. Natural gas generated an estimated US\$2.7 billion for the Burmese military junta in 2007, ‘constituting almost half of its total exports’ (Carroll & Sovacool 2010: 632). The growth of commercial agriculture and the extension of textile manufacturing operations continue to propel Cambodia’s growth (generating labour shortages in some provinces) while Vietnam faces energy problems owing to its rapidly increasing urban and industrial expansion. Thailand has undoubtedly been a driving force in economic development in the region often facilitated by Thai industrial investment and trade ties to regional business networks.

The orientation of the Thai economy towards export-led growth (reaching a record high of 11.3 per cent in March 2012)¹ also means that expansion depends on resource grabs in neighbouring countries, whether for raw materials, energy or water. Land designated as forest and woodlands is now at half the level it was in 1960 making Thailand a big importer of wood. As Pangsapa and Smith indicate (2009), increasingly limited forest reserves and fewer suitable locations for large-scale hydroelectric dams since the 1990s have prompted the Thai government to encourage the exportation of environmentally degrading projects into neighbouring countries.

It is therefore crucial to understand the context in which environmental change is taking place. This means we should be thinking of social and environmental issues in terms of regional development. One aspect of this new regionalism is an ambitious plan to create an integrated ASEAN power grid among the countries of the Greater Mekong Region. Carroll and Sovacool examine the trans-ASEAN gas pipeline project (TAGP) as well as the political and economic factors that influence regional cohesion. Their analysis of Southeast Asian regionalism through the energy sector points to what they call ‘contested regionalism’, which essentially transcends the limits of state-centred analyses and sees regionalism as a process involving the competing interests of state and capital (Carroll & Sovacool 2010: 626).

Collaboration between governments as well as between state and non-state actors has also contributed to regional development in particular when this involves cross-border trade, investment and tourism. It also facilitates the provision of infrastructure such as roads, bridges and energy projects (Hughes 2011: 183). Community livelihood movements outside Thailand find it difficult to make their views heard due to the authoritarian nature of many SEA regimes. It is also important to note that rapid development often generates significant external costs that are borne unequally by some social groups more than others as well as environments on which communities depend for their livelihoods.

From a Thai focus to a regional focus?

China is both an important investor in Southeast Asian economies and a key customer for goods and services derived from these economies. China now figures prominently as both a key import

and export partner in the process of regional development, due to its demand for energy and the range of resources including both industrial purpose and luxury timber (Carroll & Sovacool 2010; Cronin 2012; Plokhi 2012b). Cronin has highlighted China's geopolitical interests in the Mekong as part of its perceived trading and strategic influence in the region. However, the policy of pursuing rapid development has resulted in serious environmental degradation and has also endangered human security in the region.

As a major donor to countries such as Laos and Cambodia, China has invested significant sums into a 'network of roads, bridges, dams and power lines' that have affected the millions of inhabitants who live along the Mekong in both positive and negative ways (Cronin 2012). When the environment is damaged in a way that affects how people can maintain their livelihoods, then, in the context of a developing society, that affects their ability to feed themselves, make handicrafts, grow crops for sale, produce a variety of other goods that communities can bring to the market; in short, it impedes their economic independence and that independence is a basis for social activism both here and in other parts of the world. The loss of forest resources for example is one of the most important ways in which communities are affected in a negative way. A joint 2012 UNEP and Interpol study states that illegal logging² accounts for up to 'thirty per cent of the global logging trade and contributes to more than fifty per cent of tropical deforestation in Central Africa, the Amazon Basin and South East Asia' (Interpol 2012). Illegal logging also inflicts serious damage on local communities that live in and around the forests through soil erosion, flooding, loss of biodiversity and the release of climate-warming carbon into the atmosphere (Lobe 2012).

It is important to note that when injustices occur they tend to occur in the same place (Smith & Pangsapa 2011), in other words, social and environmental impacts are often conjoined, and have been well documented in the research literature on the countries of the Mekong River Basin that has addressed key aspects of environmental degradation as well as the emergence of social movements, their alliances and civil society actors (Fahn 2004; Forsyth 1999, 2001, 2007; Hirsch 1997, 1998, 2001; Hirsch & Lohmann 1989; Hirsch & Warren 1998; Johnson & Forsyth 2002; Lazarus et al. 2011; Lestrelin et al. 2012; Molle et al. 2009; Pangsapa & Smith 2009; Smith & Pangsapa 2008, 2009a).

Activist networks have been particularly keen to minimise the negative impacts of hydropower development and focus on how benefits derived from hydropower can be improved in the Mekong water systems (Lazarus et al. 2011; Molle et al. 2009). They have concerns about how large-scale developments are proposed and justified as well as the social and environmental consequences of water resource development and management. This raises the important question of who development is oriented towards – is it for citizens, a community or social classes, a nation or a region? This question is particularly important for understanding and explaining the relations and processes that take place within the two case studies explored in this chapter.

Researchers suggest that development-driven agendas can be reconciled with the maintenance of community livelihood provided that the needs and concerns of those communities are recognised through participatory decision making or at least some kind of consultation based on local knowledge(s). As an example, Hirsch investigated forestry as a social movement from the perspective of marginal groups and points out that because community forestry is a contested issue between local people and state authorities, it needs to be approached in a 'more inclusive way' (Hirsch 1997: 16).

Similarly, on rights-based approaches to forest conservation in Thailand, Forsyth points out that efforts to support marginal groups in asserting their rights over livelihood issues are often undermined by state interests (Johnson & Forsyth 2002: 1591). However, in the last decade the

focus has shifted more to the complex relationships between rights and duties on environmental impacts as well as their underlying informal relationships between entitlements and obligations (see Smith & Pangspa 2008: 84). Recognising that environmental NGOs need to go beyond advocacy to stakeholding also implies an awareness of how rights and entitlements relate to duties and obligation.

Johnson & Forsyth (2002) highlight the role played by NGO alliances as advocacy NGOs become increasingly engaged in partnerships with governments as stakeholders in negotiations on policy making and implementation. By the same token, Hirsch (2001) explores resistance through specific case studies such as dam construction in Laos and Thailand. Hirsch points to a 'highly differentiated civil society and complex politics of legitimacy and resistance' associated with development agendas (Hirsch 2001: 239) and poses pertinent questions concerning the relation between environmental politics and the emergence of civil society structures and processes particularly when these actions seek legitimacy across national boundaries.

The recognition of the transnational nature of responsibilities, whether they are described as duties or obligations, implies that a variety of actors and organisations, indeed peoples, share responsibility for particular impacts. So if responsibility is both unevenly distributed and widely dispersed, we need to consider how different institutions and organisations can develop collaborative arrangements or partnerships that address rights and duties on both sides of the equation – in public and private spheres. Similarly, the literature on regional development indicates that we need to be more alert to the increased complexity of environmental problems in Southeast Asia and how responsibility is socially distributed as part of national and regional economic growth and expansion.

When considering the Southeast Asian mainland, it is clearly sensible, in the light of the above development, to develop a perspective that is less state centric and more focused on regional relations and processes, without, of course, forgetting the importance of states in the region. In short, this approach can be designated as *regional-optic* rather than *nation-optic* perspective, to bring these increased complexities into sharper focus. In subsequent sections, this chapter will explore such complexities through a series of cases involving deforestation and industrial pollution on the Southeast Asia mainland.

Our forest in Cambodia's Amazon

Without forest we would have no access to clean water as the source of life . . . Forest is like the skin covering our body.

(Chut Wutty 2012; Plokhii 2012b)

Forest degradation has long been an issue in Southeast Asia but, in spite of the actions of environmental NGOs, in some contexts it is accelerating rather than slowing down. 'Since 1990, Cambodia has experienced one of the fastest deforestation rates in the world, with some 6,200 square kilometres of old-growth woodlands and endangered timber cut down in the country's most pristine jungles', writes Plokhii (2012b). This kind of problem has a longer history, for in 1992, all the trees in a vast area near Cambodia's border with Thailand were wiped out (Wallace 1992). By the mid-1990s, ministers and officials of the royal Cambodian government were also heavily implicated in the destruction of Cambodia's forests (Gray 1996; see Global Witness 2004; Currey 2001; Currey et al. 2003, for in-depth reporting, investigation and documentation on illegal logging in Cambodia, Indonesia and other countries). By 2012, illegal logging had stripped the Cardamom Mountains considered to be the last intact species-rich forests in Southeast Asia.

As Plokhii identifies, 'In addition to outright illegal logging, land concessions for sugar, rubber, acacia and mining plantations are also a major cause of illegal clear-cutting' (Plokhii 2012b). This continual expansion, often to make way for hydropower dams and other state-supported business ventures, has angered residents whose livelihood depends on the forest. Their daily efforts to safeguard and protect their environment have also led to the risk of harassment, intimidation and violence. On 26 April 2012, the nation's leading environmental activist, Chut (or 'Chuy') Wutty, was killed during a stop at Veal Bei point in Mondul Seima district's Bak Klang commune in Koh Kong province (Schearf 2012; Titthara 2012).

In the absence of adequate ways for civil society movements to ensure demands are heard by government, direct action groups have emerged such as the community-based livelihood movement, the 'Prey Lang' ('Our Forest') Network, which was formed to stop illegal logging in the Prey Lang Forest. In March 2012, 200 members of this movement walked deep into the country's only rainforest 'to discover newly built roads and illegally logged timber' (Noun 2012). Led by Chuy Wutty, the group confiscated and damaged logging equipment and burned the cut wood. The forest, which is also home to more than 200,000 people including the indigenous Kuy people, has lost over 1 million hectares and the capture of an illegal logger by villagers only confirmed the fact that most loggers are doing it for the money. This makes Cambodia a good illustration of where cheap (and often desperate) labour and ample natural resources combined with the compliance of the local political system can lead to environmental destruction, corruption and human rights violations.

The Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN) emerged in 2007 following many years of advocacy and campaigning by localised groups. The PLCN was formed mainly by members of the Prey Lang forest communities who were instrumental in pressuring the government to end large-scale commercial logging in Cambodia.³ Today the Network is comprised of active members from more than half of Prey Lang's 339 communities across four provinces.⁴

In Cambodian law, all development projects are subject to environmental impact assessments along with consultations with affected communities. PLCN members and forest communities report that no such assessments have been undertaken on any of the major developments that have involved community consultation. Moreover, the disregard of Kuy people's legal rights and entitlement to the forest violates the constitution, which grants collective land ownership rights to indigenous communities. It is also contrary to the rights provided under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (2007), to which Cambodia is a signatory. The royal government of Cambodia recently drafted a sub-decree that would provide for the establishment of a Prey Lang Forestry Protected and Biodiversity Conservation Area but the designated area excludes important areas of forest while cutting off many of the surrounding communities from the forest.

Forests are (our) lives

We've borrowed the forest from our children. We must protect it for them.

(Pok Hong, a Preah Vihear mother of five (preylang.com))

Since 2009 the Prey Lang Network has petitioned the government to save the forest and to allow the Network to become co-managers of the forest. The PLCN lobbied the Forest Administration to hold public consultations on the sub-decree and has brought its concerns to media attention. As such, the community has come together to form a citizens' brigade taking its actions to local and national events. Community members would show up with their faces

painted in blue inspired by the film *Avatar* and they have staged repeated protests in and around Prey Lang, including a 10-day ‘occupation’ of the forest to call public attention to illegal logging and land concessions. They have also put up road blocks, collected 30,000 petition signatures, initiated forest patrols with youth groups, mapped various areas of the forest to track government concessions as well as illegal activities and conducted their own biodiversity surveys to document species biodiversity.

The vocal and visual campaign of these ‘avatar communities’ has enabled the network to develop a strong national following and media coverage, including ardent support from a wide coalition of civil society organisations (CSOs). In June 2012 a PLN coordinator participated in the CSO Green Development Conference that took place alongside the RIO+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Brazil. At the Conference, the coordinator highlighted how Cambodian communities are mobilising and forming alliances and how they are articulating these demands with the promotion and protection of human rights. The demands of the PLCN on the Cambodian government include halting forest crimes, government transparency and accountability, impact assessment of all projects with full community participation, the implementation of regulations concerning land concessions, and punishment of government official who engage in corrupt practices with log traders. These measures would demonstrate support and recognise the claims and demands of the Prey Lang communities.

Prey Lang forests can also be a matter of life and death

What happened today is meant to be a chilling message to us, the concerned citizens, the rights advocates: You mess with us, you pay with your life.

(Theory C. Seng, founding president of CIVICUS (Centre for Cambodia Civic Education) on the death of Chuy Wutty (preylang.com))

In October 2012 the Cambodian government made the decision to dismiss a judicial investigation into the April 2012 murder of Chuy Wutty. His position as President of the Phnom Penh-based Natural Resources Conservation Group (NRCG) provided a platform for criticising corruption in Cambodia at a national level and the destruction of the country’s natural resources in the Prey Lang forest (Schearf 2012; see also preylang.com):

Since 2010 we have seized and destroyed many machines that we have found in our Prey Lang Forest . . . When we see the tools used for cutting logs we must destroy them in this area after we take pictures as evidence . . . It is the only action we can do to crack down on the activities of illegal loggers.

Wutty highlighted that their investigation revealed that only 25 per cent of the forest is left and that as a result the government must prevent any further destruction from happening. When the Wutty team and the Prey Lang villagers burned 40 cubic metres of timber as a deliberate act of civil disobedience, they stated that it is ‘their only choice’ (Noun 2012).

Wutty’s campaign against the government’s granting of land concessions to develop 7,631 square kilometres (2,946 miles) of land in national parks and wildlife sanctuaries indicated the scale of the problem and the impact on local community livelihoods. This campaign was particularly critical of the role of the military police who were used primarily to protect private business interests (Cambodia Human Rights and Development Association 2012; Thul 2012). The campaign’s mission to empower communities to protect livelihoods was documented by

Mathieu Young who highlighted Wutty's two-pronged approach: i) on the ground, documenting evidence and stopping illegal activity as they found it in the forest; ii) in Phnom Penh, working to influence the government through petition and legal counsel through the NRCG (Young 2011).⁵ As a result of this combined approach in August 2012, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen cancelled four concessions in Prey Lang, protecting 40,000 hectares (100,000 acres) of forest and signalling a 'rare victory for those battling to preserve the Prey Lang forest' (Earth Action 2012). The PLCN posted a message stating that while it welcomes the RGC's cancellation of concessions in Prey Lang's core area, it remains concerned with the rampant illegal logging that is still going on and the continuation of other concessions that have destroyed many pristine areas of forest (ibid.).

Cambodia's forestry crisis is in part the result of external demand, in particular China's demand, for valuable and rare luxury timber such as rosewood used in furniture as well as specialist material for the manufacture of musical instruments (Plokhii 2012b; Reynolds 2005). The World Bank Report of March 2012, *Justice for Forests: Improving Criminal Justice Efforts to Combat Illegal Logging*, urged local and international enforcement to target organised crime syndicates that profit most from illegal logging. However, few preventive measures had any impact and some environmental groups suggest that the World Bank should consider how it contributes to this problem when financing large-scale development projects (Lobe 2012).

Despite the efforts of activists, advocacy groups and the local community, illegal logging is still taking place in Cambodia. It should be stated that this situation highlights how the concepts of rights, obligations, community, ethics and power are interconnected, and are central to understanding what constitutes social and environmental justice. Cultural values are also deeply impacted by social and environmental injustice – the Prey Lang campaign, for instance, is much more linked into Buddhist values especially since the forest is important 'both spiritually and economically' for a large majority of Cambodians (Beebe 2012). Prey Lang is also supported by Svay Phoeun – a Buddhist monk advocating for the protection of the forest. While this case highlights the close connections between loss of community livelihoods and environmental damage, the next one, on Map Ta Phut (MTP), indicates how questions of social and environmental injustice come together in an urban rather than a rural context.

Industrial pollution in urban Thailand

While the previous case study focused on the social environmental injustices that result from resource extraction in particular the effects of deforestation, in this case we explore how the same factors work together in an urban industrial setting in Southeast Thailand. While these two contexts are not far apart within the scope of the region as a whole, they highlight the important differences that occur when developing countries experience rapid change. As with many rapid developing countries and regions, we often witness the combination of both intensive resource exploitation at the same time as increased concentrations of industrial activity within economic zones that have enjoyed a combination of state subsidies, lax regulation and minimal taxation.

One particular province that has specialised in attracting investment in this way is Rayong province. Of particular importance within Rayong is Map Ta Phut (MTP) which has become one of the most intensive sites for industrial investment in the Thai economy. For some financiers, investing in the intensification of production in MTP makes sense because it keeps all the negative effects within that one location. For the people who live there, it is an entirely different matter. What this case study demonstrates is that despite the differences from Prey Lang in Cambodia, similar patterns seem to emerge. In particular, when environmental injustices occur social injustices

are present at the same time, as well as the potential for wider violations of human rights and labour standards. As a result, solutions to environmental problems have to take into account the social dimension just as solutions to social injustices often have an environmental dimension. What the MTP suggests is that the disproportionate distribution of environmental and social 'bads' tend to congregate in specific locations, as 'clusters of injustice'.

A swampy area in the late 1970s, MTP soon became a town following industrial development efforts that began to take shape in the early 1980s; by 1990 the MTP Industrial Estate was established, managed by the Industrial Estate Authority of Thailand under the Ministry of Industry. Financed in large part by Japanese investment during the decade 1982 to 1993, the development of the MTP industrial zone involved construction projects to accommodate heavy chemical industry (FOCUS 2012). As early as 1988, residents had started to complain about air pollution. By 1997 cases of severe health problems were being reported along with an incident that involved the hospitalisation of students and teachers after inhaling toxic air. An evaluation study in 2000 noted 'the need to look at measures for limiting environmental impact particularly for MTP area' (ibid.: 3). On 1 May 2009, after years of lobbying, MTP was declared a non-pollution zone. In the same year, the zone's continual expansion was brought to a halt. By this time, at least 2,000 people had died from cancer linked to the pollution generated by the industries in the estate (Kovidhavanij 2012).

A town and sub-district in Rayong Province, MTP is the site of Thailand's largest industrial park and the world's eighth largest petrochemical hub. For this reason, it is a vital part of the Thai economy and the prosperity generated through development for the country as a whole. Few parts of the world have the same degree of concentrated industrial production. The estate contains 45 petrochemical facilities, 12 fertilizer factories, eight coal-fired power plants and two oil refineries (Smith & Pangsapa 2008: 223). Today, the industrial zone also includes a 'high-volume, high-capacity' industrial port built to service the wide range of vessels, equipment and cargo for the area's heavy duty industries (FOCUS 2012). When industrial concentration is so intense without adequate regulatory oversight, the potential dangers are legion.

According to the Pollution Control Department (PCD), 25 chemical-related mishaps have taken place in Rayong since May 2009 that involve illegal dumping of chemical waste, transport-related accidents, as well as fatal accidents and injuries. There are also less frequent but potentially more damaging hazards in MTP. Deboonme reports that volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the form of toxic gases emitted from certain solids or liquids were discovered by the PCD in 2011 to March 2012. In May 2012 an explosion at a petrochemical factory killed 12 people and injured over 130 bringing to the fore concerns over safety. Residents of the 17 communities who live within a five-kilometre radius of the plant are now concerned about the chemicals in the air that cause breathing problems and skin irritation (Deboonme 2012).

With so many environmental problems affecting people in vulnerable communities there has been growing impetus for citizen action. As early as October 2005, a community campaign against toxic cocktails was launched in a joint effort with Greenpeace Southeast Asia (GPSEA), Campaign for Alternative Industry Network (CAIN) and Global Community Monitor (GCM) to demonstrate the extent of pollution released by the facilities in this 176,000-acre industrial zone (see Smith & Pangsapa 2008: 222). Building alliances between a range of different groups and interests including alliances between business and community groups, has consistently been a key feature of MTP campaigning. Using bucket brigade techniques, the GCM report claimed that the local communities experience airborne toxic chemicals between 60 and 3,000 times higher than EPA standards. This *community-based environmental monitoring technique* allows the communities to develop 'do-it-ourselves pollutant inventories' and test the collected samples.

Environmental activist Penchom Saetang of Ecological Alert and Recovery Thailand (Earth) had spent over 10 years studying and documenting the pollution problems at MTP. She indicates that the root cause of the crisis lies at the feet of government and the companies and points out that Thailand did not have any environmental regulation before 2009. Penchom highlights both the basic levels of the problem and their increased severity: 'Map Ta Phut is a modern industrial estate, but some local communities don't have supply of clean water; they have stopped using rain water because of contamination' (Hariharan, 2010). Penchom adds that locals formed a 'smelling group' and, using their noses, they walk around Map Ta Phut to detect the source of air pollution. The group found seven factories responsible for polluting the air and requested temporary closure of the factories. The residents of the more than 20 communities that live near the estate also have to contend with illegal dumping, which has been going on since 1998, as well as erosion of the coastal area.

It is important to note that MTP is also well known for having problems associated with social injustice in part because of the high level of poverty but also as a result of migrant workers who lack citizenship rights. Feldmann points to the range of social problems in MTP including crime, drug use, the spread of HIV and increasing incidents of suicide as a result of desperation (Feldmann 2012: 2). Suicide rates around the estate are reported to be 11 times higher than the national average and a serious public health concern caused by the problems of industrial expansion. The interviewees in his study expressed their fears about getting cancer, failed crops, personal safety and inadequate medical facilities should they fall ill or be injured through living and working in MTP. This study captures what livelihood means to the different social groups living in this context. For farmers and fishermen, it means the loss of their livelihood through failed crops and declining fish populations. For migrant workers, it means poor living and harmful work conditions. Contrariwise, for industry, it means the generation of revenue without any of the risks associated with having to provide compensation for those negatively affected. As such, MTP exemplifies a lived space in which 'the discrepancies and inequalities manifest themselves within the lives of the people' (Feldmann 2012: 6).

Industrial development has also impacted the local community in other ways. Monks at the local Buddhist temples in MTP have had to conduct their daily meditation separately rather than together and some temples have had to install glass windows and doors, which significantly alter the architectural style of traditional Buddhist temples (Vivatpanich 2010). Buddhist monks have also had to take on the role of consultants providing much needed counsel and spiritual guidance to individuals and their families instead of spreading *dhamma* and Buddhist teachings. Access to the temples is also proving to be difficult especially for elderly residents who are afraid to walk to their church because of heavy commercial traffic linked to the industrial estate.

The Map Ta Phut crisis

In September 2009 the Thai Supreme Court suspended 76 projects at the MTP Industrial Estate due to the absence of health impact assessments required under Article 67 of the 2007 Constitution (FOCUS 2012: 1). Suspension was soon lifted for 11 projects and in the end 74 of the 76 suspended projects were allowed to move ahead. Human Rights Osaka indicates in its June 2012 Focus Report that a 2010 analysis by Silapakorn University of the environmental and health impact studies (conducted by the companies concerned) found that 35 of the 76 industrial plants suspended in 2009 use hazardous chemicals that could cause health ailments and 21 plants use carcinogenic substances in their production. The reasons for the momentous decision and its dramatic reversal are the focus of this subsection.

In 2009 the Thai Supreme Court suspended these developments in MTP, halting projects worth around US\$10 million, directly as a result of legal cases initiated by community activists. These cases sought to block additional expansion of the MTP Industrial Estate on the grounds that on top of the existing air pollution and contamination problems these new facilities, particularly petrochemical projects, would intensify these problems even more. The residents of MTP used Paragraphs 2 and 3 of Section 67 on Community Rights of the 2007 Constitution of Thailand that recognises the right of the community to sue the government and other State agencies in their lawsuit (FOCUS 2012: 4). The adamant position of local residents and their desire to focus both on air pollution and illegal dumping in the coastal areas made it difficult for groups such as Ecological Alert and Recovery Thailand to remain neutral or look for compromise.

In 2010 the administration of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva (2008–2011) ordered a study of the problem through a panel under the auspices of the National Environment Committee (NEC) headed by former PM Anand Panyarachun. The NEC study initially identified 18 types of industrial project as harmful to the environment but inexplicably this list was subsequently shortened to 11 (Sarnsamak 2010). From the community's perspective, the government's amended list angered NGOs and villagers. Subsequently, they threatened to blockade the estate to force a review of this new shorter list proposed by the National Environment Board (NEB) and demanded that the original list should be used instead, taking full account of the range of problems affecting vulnerable communities in Rayong.

According to the chairman of the Environmental and Health Independent Organisation, the NEB accepted only five of the 18 harmful activities from the original list as being legitimate concerns. They then added them to the new list containing six other activities proposed by the board, with no clear explanation or justification (Sarnsamak 2010). Local community activists found it hard to comprehend the intent of those engaged in gathering evidence of the problems of MTP. In September 2010 the Eastern People's Network (EPN) called on the Senate to intervene and recommend that the government review this new list of 11 that would have harmful environmental and health impacts (*The Nation* 2010). The Network coordinator was accompanied by more than 30 residents when making the demand and petitions were submitted to Senate committees on all aspects of rights, protection and good governance. The chair of the senate committee noted that the fact that MTP had already been declared a pollution control zone was not taken into account (*ibid.*).

Clusters of injustice in Map Ta Phut

The publicity materials of the campaign have primarily focused on the disproportionate distribution of environmental 'bads' in MTP, especially with the increased concentration of industrial development in Rayong following these new projects. Nevertheless, the effects of pollution have impacted on community lives, the health and safety of workers in the industrial facilities and the prospects for local businesses and self-employed citizens. As a result, questions of social and environmental justice are inextricably linked on the ground. In addition, the GCM, which has been active throughout the campaign, has consistently stressed the combination of social and environmental injustices in this industrial zone. The development of community health monitoring and local alliances of citizens, labour unions, businesses and community organisations suggests that there is scope for the effective use of evidence on pollution that is somewhat short of a full public health survey. This campaign provides a concrete example of how communities mobilise against the combined effects of social and environmental injustices in urban and industrial contexts.

Rather than rely on protest and direct action, this alliance has also sought to challenge the increased concentration of industry in MTP through the legal system. On 7 December 2012 114 MTP residents filed a lawsuit against the Industrial Estate Authority of Thailand (IEAT) for 160 million baht (US\$5.2 million) in compensation for damages to the environment and public health. The EPN plans to collect evidence that would demonstrate how industrial development on the estate has affected people's health (*The Nation* 2012). So in this particular context, the combination of street protests and marches, alliance-building across a variety of interest groups and legal action has enabled the campaign movement to present obstacles to the implementation of increased industrial development.

Having reviewed the MTP case, authors of the 2012 Human Rights Osaka Focus Report consider whether people's health and wellbeing and protection of the environment can be guaranteed in maintaining this large-scale industrial zone. The authors contend that the link between industrial pollution and environmental and social harm cannot be denied and they emphasise the influential capacity of constitutional provisions on 'community rights, the action of the local residents to protect their rights, and the court decisions' as essential in preventing a worse-case scenario. The authors also point to a new multi-billion dollar deep-sea port and industrial zone being established in Dawei in Southern Burma, dubbed the 'new global gateway of Indo-China' (*ibid.*: 4–5). The likely environmental impacts in Dawei are likely to match the environmental and social impacts experienced in MTP.

In the Thai case, local residents have come together because their health and wellbeing are at risk and their livelihoods threatened. As a result, they are sensitised to the issues and ready to act when they respond to decisions that affect them directly. Along with support from advocacy and rights groups, environmental movements in Thailand have been successful in embarrassing successive governments on issues of environmental degradation as well as public health.

Forsyth (2001) suggests that the success of campaigns on industrial environmental issues is much more difficult to resolve as their effectiveness depends as much on scientific expertise as it does on activism. Given governments' pressing need for increased power generation, the vested interests of industrial sector funding, and the underlying problems of movements seeking to make a difference in political systems that have histories of graft, corruption and 'money politics' (Pasuk & Baker 1998), it is no surprise that activist groups need to align and work with international organisations to be effective.

Conclusion: towards a more integrated account of social and environmental injustice in Asia

Given the historical and social rootedness of environmental knowledge, it is important to consider how the actors in these kinds of campaign have engaged around specific issues in each location. While in both cases the political organisations of each movement have been successful in highlighting the issues involved, and in causing major difficulties for the businesses and policymakers to achieve their objectives, they have tended to adopt an advocacy group approach. To some extent, this is largely because of the limited political opportunity structures in each context but particularly in Cambodia (McAdam 1982; Tilly 1994). The movements in both cases have operated much more along the lines of the resource mobilisation approach (Tilly 1994).

Considering the successes and failures of both campaigns, each movement needs to become more embedded in the political processes that can secure an improved environment in MTP or to conserve the forest resources that sustain the livelihoods of the communities in Prey Lang.

Advocacy groups tend to focus on specific injustices such as air pollution or contamination to water supplies. Clearly, both the MTP and Prey Lang campaigns go much further than this,

drawing on their distinct cultural values to equip them with a more integrated account of the social and environmental problems they face. There are differences. The Prey Lang movement draws on Buddhist values concerning the need for a more harmonious and less exploitative relationship with their natural habitat as compared to their government's instrumental view of forests as resources to be harnessed. However, in MTP, Buddhist values have been relevant to the individuals in the campaign especially religious virtues of courage, sacrifice and care, and their political strategy has been through a combination of civil society alliance building (the aggregation of interest groups) and challenges through the courts. The latter has also involved the support of national and transnational environmental NGOs.

In order to engage in problem solving in the context of 'clusters of injustice', the movements need to become stakeholders in the processes that deliberate on these conjoined issues. Even major private companies involved in Rayong have recognised the need for building stakeholder deliberation. In 2011 industrial companies took the initiative, founding a community partnership association that would provide a forum for discussion and dialogue between MTP business owners, their staff and local residents (*Bangkok Post* 2011).

The two case studies illustrate the emergence of new groups and movements acting in response to distinct environmental problems and their ability to mobilise considerable resources with the support of other organisations and networks of alliances built over the years. It has long been pointed out that environmental activism alone is insufficient to address the concerns of those most affected by environmental impacts but that social movements are effective in representing local livelihood issues (Forsyth 1999: 697). Philip Hirsch indicates that civil society responses have emerged very unevenly in the region and are 'still shaped primarily by the nature of political space within national borders' but that political space is limited within most countries of the Mekong Region (Hirsch 2001: 244–245). However, given the continued push for regional economic integration, we may begin to see a regionalised civil society response to livelihood-related environmental threats (*ibid.*: 249) in future.

States are still important in environmental negotiations even though they have difficulties in representing the diverse views and interests of their citizens and cannot guarantee the compliance of actors responsible for environmental degradation (Smith & Pangsapa 2008). But as we have seen here, non-state actors and CSOs are increasingly significant in environmental negotiations in terms of influencing, if not also in the formulation of, policy and agreements. Much depends on the scope of civil society action in each location and whether policymakers see the wisdom in drawing such emergent groups and organisations into policymaking. Another important factor here is whether civil society formation is secure enough to allow external NGOs to provide movements with valuable capital.

The solution to environmental issues thus requires that social injustices are addressed as well. All actors – people, families, their communities, states and business – have obligations (sometimes different obligations) to act responsibly because everyone should have access to clean air, water and green spaces.

The two case studies in this chapter have been selected because of the insights they generate in the region more broadly. What is really distinctive about both is their capacity to concentrate some of the effects of regional development in one place (i.e., resource extraction in Cambodia compared to manufacturing and processing in Thailand). Looking further, especially for countries with less effective environmental regulation and weak regulatory frameworks on environmental impacts, such as China, where the local effects of rapid industrialisation have been described as disastrous (Economy 2004), it is still important to look at the empirical evidence and the context-specific values at work in each situation. While the Prey Lang (Cambodia) case highlights the impacts of resource extraction on community livelihoods in a rural context, the Map Ta Phut

(Thailand) case indicates how industrial zones generate similar tensions in urban environments. Environmental groups in Cambodia and Thailand have played an important part in raising awareness for their respective citizens. For countries that may have more limited political opportunity structures such as China, what these two case studies have demonstrated is that local peoples can still seriously and effectively challenge government and government policies by using a variety or combination of tactics to highlight the severity of their issues and generate greater public concern and take action.

One of the distinctive features of environmental movements on the SEA mainland is their capacity to bring in local knowledges in ways that often contradict accounts of outside experts and what we see are community campaigns drawing on local multigenerational knowledge through participatory research and action that involve community members collecting their own data for evidence (Smith & Pangsapa 2008). Moreover, there is variety of cultural beliefs in Southeast Asia – whether Buddhist, Confucian, Hindu etc. – and even within a specific cultural framework such as Buddhism there are quite distinctive traditions that influence practices. What these different religions have at their core are distinctive views on how to be environmentally responsible. While the emphasis they place on respect for nature as part of humanity may be at odds with a country's pursuit of material growth and development, culturally specific values can nevertheless be a great source of leverage in advocacy.

Future research should compare and analyse environmental activism between countries in Asia that may be experiencing similar problems but face differing challenges depending on the issue/s at stake, the political context, the role of environmental NGOs or power that they have. So while activism may be stifled by some states, activists can work towards connecting environmental and livelihood issues as a way of bringing together large numbers of people towards effecting social change. The connections are crucial because injustices are clustered. Effective solutions to Prey Lang, Mae Sot, Lampang, Pearl River Delta, Guiyu (China's recycling city), Guangdong, etc., in fact, throughout Asia, demand that we see environmental and social justice as connected and more often than not, these contexts also include violations of human rights and labour standards (Smith & Pangsapa 2011).

Environmental actors at the grassroots level are increasingly linking local activities to similar activities in other countries and developing networks that are transnational in character. Thus environmental NGOs are also beginning to change both their internal structures and their activities. They are developing new ways to be accountable to their members, transparent to civil society generally, and develop stronger links with other grassroots and community livelihood movements. By reaching out to other NGOs and movements covering environmental and development issues in order to exchange knowledge, they are building co-activist strategies that address the concerns of both partners in a more effective way. Movement effectiveness may be as strongly influenced by the context in which it is working as by the skill of actors and citizens in building and mobilising the resources it commands. In democratising countries, the political opportunities are becoming greater as a result of development. Resource mobilisation can still be seen as a threat to political institutions and when this happens the political opportunity structures are more limited. As such, one way for environmental movements to compensate is to draw on opportunities arising from transnational networking often with the help of international NGOs to place pressure on national governments and private corporations. Whether the latter develops practices and partnerships that embrace environmental responsibility is the next question for researchers in the field but one thing is central, if resources are to be mobilised to take advantage of the political opportunity structures that exist, then movements, community campaigns need to combine their advocacy work with stakeholder activities. While work is being conducted on environmental issues in Asia, connecting that work to all other forms of injustices that are associated with them is the next major task of Asian studies.

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Acronyms

ADHOC	Cambodia Human Rights and Development Association
CAIN	Campaign for Alternative Industry Network
CBO	community-based organisation
CIVICUS	Centre for Cambodia Civic Education
CSO	civil society organisation

EARTH	Ecological Alert and Recovery Thailand
EIA	Environmental Investigation Agency
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPN	Eastern People's Network
GCM	Global Community Monitor
GPSEA	Greenpeace Southeast Asia
HRO	Human Rights Osaka
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICIRD	International Conference on International Relations and Development
IEAT	Industrial Estate Authority of Thailand
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IO	international organisation
MRC	Mekong River Commission
MTP	Map Ta Phut
NEC	National Environment Committee
NGO	non-governmental organisation
PanNature	People and Nature Reconciliation
PCD	Pollution Control Department
PLCN	Prey Lang Community Network
PLN	Prey Lang Network
RECOFTC	Center for People and Forests
RGC	royal government of Cambodia
SEA	Southeast Asia
TAGP	trans-ASEAN gas pipeline project
TAN	transnational activist networks
TNC	transnational corporation
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
VOCs	volatile organic compounds
WB	World Bank

Notes

- 1 Thailand is a heavily export-dependent country with exports accounting for more than two-thirds of its GDP. <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/thailand/gdp-growth> and <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.EXP.GNFS.ZS>.
- 2 Illegal logging generates between US\$10 and 15 billion a year (World Bank 2012). The UNEP and INTERPOL report estimates between US\$30 and 100 billion are lost each year to the illegal timber trade. UNEP says deforestation is responsible for nearly 20 per cent of all global carbon emissions which is 50 per cent more than the amount from shipping, aviation and land transport put together (Eagle 2012).
- 3 The Cambodian government passed a new law in 2002 which gave the Forestry Administration authority to grant areas of forest to local communities and in 2003 a community forestry sub-decree officially recognised community forestry as a national policy (RECOFTC 2012). This legislation, however, was not legalised and it was only in 2006 that community forestry guidelines, called *prakas*, were introduced, which laid out clear procedural guidelines for identifying, legalising, and managing forests (*ibid.*).
- 4 The four provinces are Preah Vihear, Kampong Thom, Kratie and Stung Treng, which are located between the Mekong and Stung Sen Rivers. <http://preylang.com/the-forest/>.
- 5 Young posted a picture on his blog of a truck transporting unmarked resin timber out of the forest well after the company's concession had ended. <http://mathieuyoung.com/blog/?p=866>.